



BLOCK-IV
CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS

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CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Block-IV discusses major themes in Contemporary IR. These are: Cold War and its different phases; anti-colonial movements and decolonization; end of Cold War and the emergence of global order/disorder; and finally, the changing nature of the UN system. Historians continue to debate the genesis of Cold War including the period when it started. Nevertheless, the end of Second World War saw US and its allies on one hand and Soviet Union on the other hand engaged in a tense competition to carve out spheres of influence in Europe and elsewhere particularly in Asia. In the name of ideological rivalry, whether socialism delivers justice or whether capitalism delivers prosperity, Cold War was marked by bloc politics, arms race, proxy wars and satellite regimes. The two sides were so heavily armed that there emerged concepts like ‘balance of terror’, and ‘mutually assured destruction’ (MAD). Cold War went through different phases of highs and lows. It was a period of tension and subdued hostility. Many crises occurred from the 1940s to the early 1990s which had the potential of direct confrontation between the two nuclear armed superpowers. The major crises that dominated international relations were the Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam, Hungary, the Berlin wall and Korea crisis.

No denying, the Cold War helped shape Modern World History. On a positive note, one can say that it provided massive opportunities for political, economic and social development of the nations. Modern World History would be different if not for the occurrence of the Cold War. The collapse of the USSR and its communist system provided considerable changes in foreign policies of many countries, including the United States. As the 1990s began, the Cold War was finally over and the United States was the sole remaining superpower. But hopes for a safer, more peaceful world would be dashed as regional conflicts and global problems challenged the American foreign policy establishment to chart a new course for the United State. As unipolarity dawned, US in a mood of Triumphalism thought of remaking the world after its own image; and that meant interventions of different types with or without UN approval.

Decolonization is the defining feature of the second half of the 20th century; legacies of colonialism continue to shape and impede the prospects of development and freedom in the erstwhile colonies in Africa, Asia and the Latin American-Caribbean region.

What is decolonization? In the International Relations and Global history, distinctions are often drawn between empire (a political and economic structure); imperialism (the practice of creating such structures, as well as ideological and cultural justifications for them); colonization (the actual settlement and peopling of territories); and colonialism (advocating and supporting such settlement and domination of the local people and culture). Decolonization, however, is a concept that encompasses actions and processes that counteract, reverse, or terminate all of these phenomena.

Formal “independence” – the achievement of sovereign nation-statehood by a previously colonized territory – is the most common understanding of what Decolonization entails. The most enduring outcome of decolonization is that it

brought the concept of empires as constituting international system to an end; and very successfully substituted empires with nation-states. As empires declined, scores of old and new nation-states were ready to assume membership of the international system. The international system that emerged in 1945 was thus normatively very different from all others which had preceded it. It is amazing to see the evolution of the idea of nation and nation-state gain universality through decolonization. Very diverse pluralities of tribal, ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious types gelled together under the banner of a 'nation' and, through decolonization, sought to have a state of their own which would work to realize and advance the goals of 'nationhood'. "Nationhood" was the goal of anti-colonial movements; "state" was the tool to translate the dream of 'nation' into reality, hence anticolonial movements desired a lot to gain control of the colonial state.

The events that occurred during 1989-92 in Soviet Russia, East and West Germany, East Europe, and Yugoslavia are considered to be the end of the Cold War. Subsequently, it led to the emergence of the 'New World Order/ Disorder'. The new order/disorder that emerged has been interpreted variedly by various experts; it is still unfolding and therefore its interpretations also continue to accumulate. For Francis Fukuyama, end of Cold War meant the onset of 'end of history'. Capitalism and liberal democracy have triumphed; nothing new shall replace them. Walter Russell Mead and others saw the rise of economic regionalism. Their three bloc geoeconomic model saw the rise of three regional economic poles centred in the US-led North America, Europe as a single union and a Japanese-led South East Asia. There was no answer to the question whether regionalization is building bloc or stumbling bloc for globalization? Realists saw in the end of Cold War a return to a 'revitalized balance of power'. The world has returned to being multipolar and, therefore, peace and stability rest on balance of power among the four major powers – US, Europe, Russia and China. Samuel Huntington saw the clash of civilizations coming. The end of Cold War means reactivation of cultural fault lines among world's leading civilizations particularly between Islam and the West. Then of course there was the thesis of US unipolar moment which, it was hoped, would last several decades. There is sort of a predicament to global governance which is most evident in the functioning of the UN system. The UN remains indispensable to maintain international peace and security; though it is found wanting on many occasions when events overtake UN's capability. There have been instances of genocides and brutal foreign interventions with UN watching events unfold helplessly. How to reform the UN is a key question on the global agenda for the last almost 25 years. There is a felt need to enhance its capability and effectiveness besides to enhance its representative character. But how to go about reforming the UN; the issues get embroiled in power politics.

UNIT 12 COLD WAR: DIFFERENT PHASES*

Structure

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

It is impossible to understand contemporary international politics without first understanding the dynamics of the Cold War, and the legacy it left behind. This Unit will introduce you to all the crucial events of the Cold War and its different phases. After reading this unit you should be able to:

- Explain the defining features of the Cold War
- Distinguish different phases of the Cold War
- Identify major events and developments during each phase of the war and
- Explain the impact of the Cold War on world politics.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

From the dying embers of the Second World War rose the Cold War. Even before World War II had reached its conclusion, the foundations of a new hostility were laid. These hostilities took the form of a major ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, which was reflected in a major arms race between the two superpowers (these weapons, however, were never employed against each other directly). This intense rivalry could also be witnessed in the attempts by these two superpowers to meddle in the affairs of other countries to check the other's influence while increasing their own. However, the war can be considered 'cold' only in the limited sense that it never took the form of another ghastly world war, or that the two superpowers never directly faced each other on the battlefield. For all other purposes, the world at large remained embroiled in complications resulting from the intense Soviet-American rivalry and their thirst for global domination. The term 'Cold War' was first used by the British

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writer George Orwell in 1945 and has since been used to describe “the undeclared state of war” that had existed between United and Soviet Union since the end of World War II (Westad, 2010, p 3).

12.2 THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD WAR

The exact date of the start of the Cold War cannot be ascertained the way one would pinpoint the commencement date of conventional war (for example, the Second World War started on 1st September 1939). Instead, the origins of the Cold War can be seen in the pattern of interactions between the Western powers and the Soviet Union, which roughly began in 1945.

The end of World War II saw major shifts in international politics. From being multi-polar, the world became bi-polar. This essentially meant that before the World War, there were many powerful countries which were capable of extending their influence beyond their borders - for example, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, France, United States etc. The Second World War, however, brought with it a decisive wave of decolonisation around the globe which heralded the end of formal empires. Britain and France, in particular, were spent forces after the war and could no longer claim a superpower status. Their severely depleted material resources forced them to now primarily look after their affairs first, instead of influencing the course of world events.

The power vacuum left by colonialism was filled by the dynamics of the Cold War. In this new phase, neither the USA nor the Soviet Union occupied or created colonies in the way the European powers had done. However, they did try and create their respective zones of influence that would ensure their security, by primarily checking the influence of the other. This behavioural pattern was first witnessed in Europe during the war, at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, where the Western Allies and the Soviet Union divided Europe into their respective spheres of influence. Under this arrangement, most of Eastern Europe came under formal Soviet influence, and most of Western Europe was under American influence by extension. Similarly, Germany was divided into East and West Germany, and the German capital of Berlin was also similarly divided. USSR, however, was not completely happy with the division of Berlin which was deep in the territory under Soviet influence. In 1948, it put a blockade on the ground between Western Germany and Berlin. This was known as the **Berlin Blockade** and lasted for about a year during which the Western allies airlifted supplies to West Berlin to curtail Soviet expansion. This blockade was one of the first major confrontations of the Cold War.

To rebuild Europe after the massive destruction wrought by the Second World War, the United States embarked on a massive mission under the **Marshal Plan** to pump in money and resources in order to rebuild infrastructure in Europe. In 1949, it also signed a pact with prominent Western European nations called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This was a significant move and would remain a major feature of the Cold War for decades to come. It is vital to understand the importance of this alliance. This treaty *formally* committed the United States to ensure the security of its Western allies. Henceforth, if any country were to declare war on a NATO signatory, the US was bound to treat it as an act of hostility against itself as well and jump into the war. In essence, NATO ensured that Western Europe remained under the security umbrella of the United States.

A similar treaty was signed by the USSR with its allies in 1955, known as the WARSAW Pact. This essentially meant that for decades the world again stood at the brink of another deadly world war, this time under the shadow of nuclear weapons.

During 1945 and 1953, which is generally considered the onset of the Cold War, there were instances of conflict and tensions that saw the USSR and USA involved in conflict although never directly. Two significant instances in this phase were the Berlin Blockade (explained earlier) and the Korean War. Since the end of the Second World War, the United States had officially followed a policy of containment, i.e., containing the spread of Communism. It was primarily propagated by US President Truman, and generally known by the name of the Truman Doctrine. This doctrine resulted from the perception that Soviet actions towards the end of World War II were aimed at spreading their ideology around the world.

The creation of an Eastern European buffer zone between Western Europe and Soviet Russia fuelled Western suspicions that the Soviet objective went beyond merely a benign attempt to secure their country from future aggressions. This zone comprised of territories that were either formally a part of the Soviet Union, or had governments which had ideological ties with the Soviet Union. The Korean War reflected the clash of these two strategies.

12.2.1 The Korean War

Under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had seized control of China in 1949 after a prolonged civil war. At the same time, tensions were growing in neighbouring Korea between its Communist Party and non-communist forces. Both these forces wanted control of the entire Korean peninsula. Guided by their strategic interest and the dynamics of the Cold War, both the USA and the USSR supported different sides. Negotiations didn't yield any results, and in 1950, with the approval of the USSR, North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel and attacked South Korea. USSR initially gave orders to China to send its forces to reinforce the war effort of the regime in North Korea while choosing to not send the Red Army there directly. Mao at that juncture was eager to please Stalin who was the undoubted head of Communist regimes around the world. USSR wasn't very sure of Chinese loyalty and of its commitment to supporting communist revolutions in other countries, hence, Stalin decided to test the Chinese resolve by instructing them to send their forces into North Korea. Mao Zedong obliged and at this crucial juncture, Chinese troops overturned the advances of UN troops led by the USA. This now meant that a war that everyone thought would be over in under a month stretched to over three years, claiming millions of lives. Eventually, with Stalin's death in 1953, the opportunity presented itself for the hostilities to end, and both forces withdrew to either side of the 38th parallel, which became the official border between North and South Korea (Westad 2017).

The war demonstrated how a conflict in this new phase of global history would look, with the two superpowers being directly or indirectly involved. This also solidified the military alliances of the two blocs and precipitated an arms race that the world is still trying to control.

12.3 SECOND PHASE OF THE COLD WAR

Stalin, the man who led Soviet Russia from the Second World War into the Cold War, died in 1953. He was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev, and with that began the second phase of the Cold War, marked by many crises, some of them quite grave, like the Berlin Crisis in 1961 and the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962.

12.3.1 The Berlin Crisis

As Kennedy became the 35th President of the United States of America in January 1961, he was confronted with a major challenge in the form of the Berlin Crisis of 1961. After the Second World War, Berlin had been divided between the victors of the war into zones of influence. West Berlin, like West Germany, was to remain within the Western sphere of influence, and the Eastern half of Germany, as well as the City of Berlin, was to remain within the Soviet sphere. This separation was seen as critical to maintaining the delicate balance of power in Europe. However, as time passed, West Germany developed economically at a higher pace compared to its Eastern counterpart. This resulted in a situation where many people staying in Eastern Berlin preferred to work in the western part of the city as they were getting higher wages. Besides being humiliating for Soviet rule, this also resulted in East Berlin losing skilled labour to West Berlin.

Officials in East Berlin knew that the issue would not be solved merely by increasing the wages of workers in East Berlin since the Soviet market did not offer consumer goods at levels adequate to satisfy that kind of purchasing power. Wanting to do something about this situation, yet not wanting to provoke it to the point of war, Khrushchev resorted to building a wall in Germany and putting a concrete line between the zones of influence. Overnight the lives of people changed, families were split, neighbourhoods were split and at times even the streets were split with houses (with their doors sealed by the wall) being on one side and the street on the other. People were not allowed to cross from one side to another. Those who attempted it were either punished or shot. As glaring a human rights violation as it was, it did not fundamentally alter the balance of power in Germany, and hence the Western Allies could not do much about it, short of opening hostilities and declaring a war. Since that would have been too extreme a step, Kennedy essentially left the wall standing, much to the anguish of his other Western Allies. The wall was erected on 13th August 1961 and remained an enduring symbol of Cold War politics for nearly thirty years. Consequently, the most lasting image of the end of the Cold War is the breaking of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (Westad 2017).

12.3.2 Cuban Missile Crisis

A pressing problem which came very close to triggering a nuclear war was the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The United States had very bad relations with Cuba (a state just 90 miles from the coast of Florida) and its Communist government under Fidel Castro. Khrushchev had pledged support to protect Castro's regime from repeated American harassment. However, his options for doing so were limited, considering how close Cuba is to the US mainland. He resorted to a radical step that he thought might show the Americans the extent he would go to, to fulfil his resolve and protect an ally. Between July and October 1962, the Soviets built multiple missile sites in Cuba with both defensive and

offensive capabilities. This was extremely dangerous, and any wrong move by any leader could have plunged the world into a world war - which would now have meant a nuclear war. Through sheer tact and diplomacy over a span of 13 days, the crisis was brought to an agreeable end, with the Soviets withdrawing their missiles from Cuba. The USA agreed to not invade Cuba, and also removed its missiles from Turkey, which could have been employed against the USSR. Khrushchev was eager to avoid a nuclear war and accepted these terms, dissipating the immediate tensions (Hersberg, 2010)

This phase had many active conflicts which can be looked at as setting the tone of the Cold War. The Korean War had shown what it would mean for external powers to get involved in the internal crisis of a state, and it didn't paint a pretty picture. A similar situation would later be seen in Vietnam, too. One crisis however that was slightly different in its scope at the beginning of the Cold War was the Suez Crisis.

12.3.3 Suez Crisis

Egypt under President Nasser had nationalised the Suez Canal, which was previously (primarily) owned by Britain and France. It was a crucial and strategic waterway, ensuring short and safe passage for their naval and merchant ships. This overnight nationalisation was a big jolt to Britain and France, and they planned a military solution. Under this plan, Israel attacked Egypt in the Sinai Peninsula, and the British and French forces followed. There was one fatal flaw in the plan: Britain didn't inform the Americans, who were furious (Little, 2010).

This became a source of considerable tension in the British-American alliance. Under American and Soviet pressure, Britain, Israel and France had to end hostilities. Britain learnt the hard way that Cold War dynamics were here to stay, and it could no longer afford to unilaterally call the shots in the world anymore.

This second phase of the war also coincided with a very important change in world politics: the massive wave of decolonisation in Asia and Africa. Although the Cold War did not trigger this process, it nevertheless complicated it. We will be discussing this aspect in detail in the next unit.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is the 38th parallel in Korea?

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2) What was the defining feature of the Berlin crisis of 1961?

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3) What was the core basis of rivalry in the Cold War?

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12.4 THIRD PHASE: DETENTE

As the 1960s ended, a major shift in Cold War patterns could be observed. This is often described by the French word *‘detente’*, which means releasing stress or tension, and is used to denote a thaw in tensions between hostile nations. The *détente* between USSR and USA also had a French connection. In the 1960s intending to reduce American influence in Europe, Charles de Gaulle pushed for the greater integration of Europe. The economic strength and stability of West Germany and France laid the foundations of the European Economic Community (EEC). The French President began to actively reach out to Eastern European nations to forge a broader European identity. *Detente*, or a period of reduced tensions between the US and USSR, was crucial to this effort. During the 1965 elections in West Germany, Willy Brandt (the head of the Social Democratic Party) also called for building bridges with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He put some of these views into action as Foreign Minister in 1966. In 1969, Brandt became head of the government and continued this effort through a policy that he called *Ostpolitik*. Brandt knew that a credible *détente* could not be managed without engaging the Soviet Union, so he openly negotiated with the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev. Willy Brandt could afford to do so without seeming treacherous because the USA under President Nixon was embarking on a similar mission of *détente* with the Soviets. Nixon was eager to disengage the US from Indo-China, and to do so he knew that he had to approach China and the USSR, and not just by negotiating with Vietnamese factions in Hanoi (Hanhimäki, 2010).

A key feature of this phase was the increase in tensions between the USSR and the PRC and a corresponding improvement in relations between the USA and PRC. The trajectory of the changes in these relations is very interesting. As shown earlier, the phase immediately after the Korean War had seen an increased

closeness between China and the Soviet Union. Mao Zedong had passed the test of commitment that Stalin had set for him. The period after the Korean War saw increased Soviet support for the post-war rebuilding effort in China, both economic and military (Zhang, 2010).

This was not to last long and by 1969 relations between the two countries had deteriorated to the point of border skirmishes and hostilities. China's internal problems, compounded by Mao's **Great Leap Forward** and the **Cultural Revolution**, considerably affected its diplomatic relations with other Asian and African nations, to the point where it could have become a serious liability for the USSR. The breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations presented the Americans with an opportunity to improve relations with the PRC, and so it was that President Nixon and Henry Kissinger began to engineer a rapprochement (Radchenko, 2010).

Another major change was noticed in a deliberate attempt by the two superpowers to lessen tensions *between them*. Both sides recognised the dangers of an uncontrolled arms race and the spread of nuclear weapons across the world. There were formal efforts towards this objective, and in 1968 these efforts bore fruit in the form of the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT.

12.4.1 The Cold War and Arms Race

The trajectory of the Cold War is intricately linked with the simultaneous and inevitable onset of an arms race and in particular the spread of nuclear weapons. With the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the Nuclear Age had begun. To ensure their security, states had to either build a capacity for nuclear weapons or have credible military alliances with states that had this capacity. The insecurity generated by the Cold War rivalry provided the perfect setting for states to spur each other towards a deadly arms race. Each side wanted to create better and deadlier weapons than the other. Weapons stockpiles, especially with the two superpowers, increased massively. This massive increase in nuclear weapons at one level created panic at the possibility of immense destruction that these weapons could have caused. At another level, many policymakers felt that fear of such destruction also leads to the tempering of rash behaviour of states. This might have led to cautious behaviour from states to avoid nuclear destruction and has created what some analysts call the "long peace" (Gavin, 2010, p 395).

Nuclear weapons were a tool to provide credible deterrence, as well as help in providing a counterweight to conventional military might. This was especially true in the initial phase of the war, where the US depended on nuclear weapons to counter the Soviet Union's superior conventional military might in Europe. It was a necessity, from the American point of view, to ensure the security of its NATO allies in Europe. Contrary to American expectations, the nuclear monopoly that it enjoyed in Europe soon ended with the Soviet Union conducting its nuclear tests in August 1949. This now paved the way for a nuclear arms race that would threaten the security of the whole world (Westad, 2017).

The intensity with which the Cold War was waged was directly reflected in the increase or decrease in the arms build-up. A decrease in tensions was often accompanied by a mutual pledge of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons or a self-imposed restraint on arms production.

12.5 COLLAPSE OF DETENTE AND RE- EMERGENCE OF COLD WAR HOSTILITIES

As discussed, from the late 1960s till around the mid-1970s, the world was witnessing a relatively calmer period of the Cold War, known as the *detente*. Optimists believed that this would slowly lead to the building of confidence between the two sides and eventually might even end the Cold War. The sceptics largely believed that the Cold War was here to stay, but had been transformed into a firmly entrenched bi-polar system, where the two superpowers would continue to influence their part of the world, albeit in a less confrontational manner.

Not everyone was happy with the *detente* status-quo, especially in America, and internal pressure built on the American government to do something decisive about the reported Human Rights violations in the Eastern bloc. Many Americans also started feeling that the US had become content with taking second place in the world, and they felt this did not align well with the country's security interests. International events further perpetuated this belief. With the promise of support from Moscow, the North Vietnam government in Hanoi attacked South Vietnam in December 1974 (Logevall, 2010). America had already cut aid to South Vietnam by half and was not looking forward to re-joining the war, either. The remaining American forces were hurriedly evacuated from Saigon, and Vietnam was united under the North Vietnam leadership. A Communist government was set up (Westad, 2017).

The spread of Communism in Indo-China, and its barbarity, was further highlighted by the situation in Cambodia. Here a fanatical group of Communists under Pol Pot took control of Cambodia after the collapse of the US-backed government there. To rid the country of external influence, Pol Pot went on to purge nearly two and a half million people in Cambodia, including minorities from China and Vietnam (Westad, 2017). The Carter presidency had to deal with many such crises, in countries ranging from Angola to Iran. However, the final blow to *Détente* came in the form of the Afghanistan situation. The Soviets militarily intervened in Afghanistan to defend the communist regime in Kabul from factions that wanted a more Islamist government.

This was viewed by the USA as a direct challenge to its power in Asia, and more specifically their oil interests. Carter government then imposed all sorts of bans on cultural, economic and trade relations with USSR, and the West even boycotted the Moscow Olympics. The military budget was again increased to the highest levels that peacetime USA had seen.

With this, *Detente* was officially buried in the sands of time, and the sense of hostility and mistrust between the two sides increased. Carter also lost the next US presidential election to Ronald Reagan, who now promised to restore America's 'lost' prestige in the world (Fischer, 2010). Whether Reagan had any concrete solutions to the problem or not is a different story; however, his rhetoric of restoring American greatness was received with some panic and paranoia in Moscow, which took it as a sign that America might be signalling the start of another world war.

12.6 THE END OF THE COLD WAR

A return to the Cold War tensions, however, could not be sustained for a long time as the USSR had its troubles, many of them economic. With a fall in oil prices, their revenue was decreasing. The war in Afghanistan, which they had assumed would quickly be tackled, now dragged on, with the Americans assisting the Mujahidin in their fight with the Soviets. In Europe, the gap in economic progress between the Western and Eastern blocs was increasing rapidly. USSR and Eastern Europe often faced shortages of even the most basic consumer goods and this, combined with the knowledge that people in western Europe were living in much better conditions, contributed to widespread discontent. Ironically, it was during the Detente period that communication between Eastern and Western blocs in Europe had increased, and consequently, the disparities were all the starker and more noticeable.

Another important change was: the generations born and raised after the Second World War had no lingering memories of Hitler's Germany, and did not perceive it as a threat. Having witnessed the horrors unleashed by Hitler's Germany, many had put up with Soviet-backed regimes in the hope of being protected against any future German aggression. With this threat greatly reduced, the rationale of remaining under the Soviet umbrella sans economic security seemed an increasingly daunting prospect.

Another related problem came to the fore in Poland. To find a way out of the financial crisis it was in, the Government of Poland tried to borrow money. Western banks were initially eager to lend them money, thinking that Poland still had a few strong export sectors that it could rely on to pay back that debt. However, with time they realised that Polish goods were uncompetitive, due to low-quality production processes, and their sales suffered. The debt crisis intensified, and the government was forced to increase prices again.

A similar trend could also be seen in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. They were also increasingly disillusioned by the system in Eastern Europe when compared to Western Europe, and they increasingly began to refer to themselves as being central Europeans who were under the occupation of Soviet culture (Westad 2017). East Germany also had a similar tale of economic stagnation and discontent to tell.

To face these myriad challenges, the Soviet Union chose the 54-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev, the youngest member of its Politburo, as the General Secretary of the Party. Gorbachev set about reforming the Soviet Union as he saw best, but there were no easy solutions. He had to find a way of reducing defence spending without compromising on the USSR's superpower status. Hence, improving the economy was crucial, which Gorbachev now understood could not be achieved without some cooperation with the West. He did not have much hope or trust in dealing with the Americans, but he did place some hope in dealing with Western European countries.

Meanwhile, Reagan was increasingly getting worried about starting a nuclear war by pushing the paranoid Russians too far. It was in this backdrop that he suggested a joint summit to address the issue of nuclear weapons. Gorbachev did not completely believe him, but went anyway to ease tensions between USSR

and USA, and buy time to set the Soviet economy in place. Besides the issue of nuclear weapons, Gorbachev also indicated to Reagan his willingness to work together to address regional conflicts, and of his plans to open up and reform the Soviet economy. It was a daunting task, with rampant sluggishness in the systems of the Soviet Union, and also its commitments in Afghanistan, which were showing no signs of abating.

By 1986, Gorbachev was working on his new initiatives called *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness). He wanted to fundamentally restructure the Soviet economy and hoped to increase efficiency and accountability with these approaches. He started giving more autonomy to factories to set their own goals and even sell surplus directly to consumers. Private ownership of business in some sectors was also allowed. However, it was difficult to introduce radical reforms in a society too set in its ways. As a result, what little reform was introduced did more harm than good and the Soviet economy weakened further (Brown, 2010).

His policy of glasnost, which allowed criticism of the system and the government to improve its functioning, opened the floodgates for an outpouring of frustrations that people had experienced for a long time, without the liberty to express them. Under this influence, the Soviet press started digging into the past excesses of the Soviet regime right from the Stalin era. Gorbachev felt that this outpouring of criticisms of past deeds would help him in consolidating his position for the current reforms that he was proposing. But by 1988-89, food shortages were rampant and political unrest was growing.

In March 1989, for the first time, the USSR held elections to a new parliament. Gorbachev felt that the Cold War had reached its end and wanted to focus on restructuring the Soviet Union. However, by 1991 even this objective was being called into question, and most constituents gradually decided to break away from the Soviet Union (Pravda, 2010).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is detente? Why was it important?

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2) Why did detente collapse? Highlight key reasons.

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3) What were some of the main reasons for the collapse of USSR?

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

Cold War has been one of the most defining features of the 20th century. It was the result of an intense ideological rivalry between the USA and USSR. The Cold War began right after the Second World War in 1945 and continued till 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed. The two superpowers aimed to spread their influence while checking the spread of their opponent's influence. The Cold War saw a huge build-up of nuclear and conventional weapons by both the superpowers. There was a real threat of a nuclear war specially during the Cuban Missile crisis. In a bid to ensure that governments sympathetic to their ideology was in place in different countries of the world, USA and USSR often got involved in different conflicts, many of them stretched for years, like the Korean War, Vietnam War and the war in Afghanistan. In the latter part of the 1960s, there was a period of relative easing of tensions between the two adversaries known as détente. It lasted for a few years and then the rivalry peaked again. However, by the end of the 1980s, USSR and European countries under the Eastern bloc were increasingly getting disillusioned with the Soviet agenda owing to large scale economic issues. Although Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union did try to introduce much needed economic reforms, it was too little and too late. Eventually, in 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War ended with the USA remaining as the sole superpower. The effects of the Cold War still linger in world politics even today.

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12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) It is the latitude degree that is taken as the internationally accepted border between North and South Korea.
- 2) The construction of the Berlin wall was the defining feature of the Berlin crisis. It divided East and West Berlin and was an important symbol of the Cold War.
- 3) The Cold War was the result of intense ideological rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States of America that resulted in each side influencing world events to safeguard and propagate their own ideology and establish global dominance.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The relative easing of active tensions and hostilities between the USA and USSR towards the end of the 1960s is known as détente. It marked the beginning of a period of European integration which eventually evolved into the European Union. It was also the period in which Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated and Sino-American relations were normalised.
- 2) Detente primarily collapsed because of American public opinion that perceived a decrease in American influence in the world after the Vietnam War and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. This put pressure on the US government to take a tougher stance against USSR.
- 3) Widespread economic disenchantment with the Soviet economic model compared to a more robust economic model of the west. In addition to this, reform measures like perestroika and glasnost propagated by Gorbachev failed and in the absence of another drastic solution, the Soviet Union eventually collapsed.



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UNIT 13 ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENTS AND DECOLONISATION*

Structure

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13.1 Introduction

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13.0 OBJECTIVES

As the Second World War ended it gave rise to a new world order which was characterised by the process of decolonisation. Myriad Asian and African countries that had been living under the rule of imperialist European nations were now free actors in the world. The process and implications of decolonisation help one understand global politics better. After reading this unit you should be able to:

- Explain the reasons for decolonisation
- Discuss the impact of the Cold War on the process of decolonisation
- Identify important aspects of how newly independent nations navigated the Cold War; and
- Explain how the anti-imperialist movement in India helps it in shaping its foreign policy eventually.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

From the 15th century onwards, large parts of Asia, Africa and South America experienced a systematic violation of dignity and human rights. They were to become colonies for the imperialistic ambitions of European countries. In most places, this process typically started with a European country sending traders, and then slowly gaining political control of the territory. The result was that

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most non-European countries were governed by European countries either directly or indirectly. Strong colonial empires were built by British, French, Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish invaders. Japan was the only Asian country to become a coloniser during this phase.

Broadly speaking, decolonisation can be understood as the process of transferring “of sovereignty from the imperial powers to their former colonies after 1945. Overall, the process of decolonisation took decades to unfold completely. It was not an easy process and had myriad, often long-lasting consequences for world politics. Where this process led to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement, on the one hand, on the other, it often resulted in long intractable conflicts and enduring rivalries. Many of these rivalries still exist, and world politics cannot be understood without first understanding them.

13.1.1 Understanding Anti-Colonial Movements in a Global Context

Typically, a European empire was built by not only establishing a political hold over a country but also by maintaining a direct or indirect influence on all the strategic places in the neighbourhood of that colony, to forestall any threats to the colony from their European rivals. The British in India make for a classic example. Their primary objective was to secure all land and sea routes to India, to maintain a hold on their most precious colony.

Every colony had its own unique experience with Imperialism, however, most of these narratives were similar in their tragic experience of plunder, loot, exploitation and misgovernance. In most countries, many local movements to gain independence from European colonisers began to take root (Bradley, 2010). However, this process was never going to be easy, given the vastly superior material might of the colonising nations. Consequently, it often took decades to achieve independence.

Most anticolonial movements in the world gained momentum post-1919 even if in their respective countries they would have started even before 1919. Certain global events contributed to it. Woodrow Wilson’s promotion of self-determination post First World War and the setting up of the League of Nations provided a platform for many anti-colonial leaders to come to Paris in the hopes of pushing for greater autonomy. The League itself proved to be a failed enterprise for several reasons, however, this momentum of building solidarities between native leaders fighting for independence in various countries didn’t abate. This was further helped by solidarities built between leaders who gravitated towards the socialist way or the path of the Bolshevik Revolution. These conferences were often organised by different Communist platforms of Europe. Apart from this, there was an effort to build pan-Asian and pan-African solidarities based on the shared experience of trauma and oppression. These solidarities played a crucial role for decades to come. These “transnational currents of anticolonial thought” deepened in the interwar years and its unpleasant vagaries like the Great Depression (Bradley 2010, p 468). With mass leaders, M.K Gandhi, Ho Chi Minh and Nehru to name a few, giving direction to mass movements in their respective countries, this trickle of global anti-colonial resistance, soon became a flood.

13.2 DECOLONISATION IN THE BACKDROP OF THE COLD WAR

Irrespective of when the anticolonial movement started in a country, it was mostly in the late 1940s and 1950s-60s that bulk of the Asian, African and Latin American countries gained independence. The scale of the number of such independent countries can be gauged from the fact that in 1945, the UN had 51 states as their member. By 1965, this number had jumped to 117 as the number of states that gained independence increased (Bradley, 2010: 464).

As might be evident, this was the time immediately after the Second World War and at the onset of the Cold War. Hence, the process of decolonisation had to also navigate the increasingly tricky waters of Cold War politics. This is not to say that the Cold War started this process, only that it added to the complexities of the decolonisation process.

The process of decolonisation was catalysed by major events elsewhere. Firstly, erstwhile colonisers like Britain and France were rendered catastrophically weak after fighting two gruesome world wars. The Second World War was particularly damaging in terms of the massive loss of life and overall destruction to property that it caused. The War was not only fought on battlegrounds, but also in towns and cities. Waves of armies moved through densely populated urban regions, either to defend them or capture them. Heavy bombardment and regular airstrikes meant that most of Europe were reduced to rubble. Everything had to be built afresh, and ensuring the security of their own country took priority. Europe was forced to look inwards. It simply did not have the material strength left to govern her colonies and fiercely stomp out the ever-increasing dissent and turmoil in their colonies.

Second, two new superpowers were now calling the shots around the world - USA and USSR. They strove to increase their respective influence in the world; however, in a sharp departure from earlier trends, they often did so indirectly. Hence, they tried to have only those governments in place that would be within their security umbrella or be an alliance partner and do their bidding. However, although this was complicated in its way, it did mark a departure from previous practices of physically ruling or governing that country. Both the USA and USSR maintained strong anti-imperialistic rhetoric and often criticised Britain and France for such tendencies. The process of decolonisation served their interests because it meant that more countries were now free of their traditional colonisers and this would, in turn, offer the Superpowers opportunities to increase their influence in these regions, especially regions that were strategically or economically important. Having strategically important military bases throughout the world was a major foreign policy objective for both sides.

13.2.1 USA and Decolonisation

As Westad (2017) shows us, the United States of America offers a rather curious case in terms of its role and reaction with respect to decolonisation. As a rule, most Americans are opposed to the concept of colonisation. After all, they also won their freedom from the British and prided themselves on the importance that they gave to values like liberty, freedom and democracy. The American opposition to Communism as an ideology was also largely based on the fact that

they saw Communism as the antithesis of many of these values that they cherished. Somewhat hypocritically, USA always feared that people in the Third World might not know what's best for them and get swayed by Communism. It is this fear that guided American actions to interfere in a country's internal affairs. As a result, American anti-colonial instincts were often overshadowed by their fear of Communism and their desire to win the Cold War.

13.2.2 USSR and Decolonisation

Westad (2017) also shows us the fascinating role that USSR played in the decolonization process. The Soviet Union was formed on the principles of fighting Capitalism around the world. In this understanding, capitalism and imperialism had an intricate link as one enabled the other and hence both had to be fought. They saw the revolution as an inevitability and set about enabling this process by organising training institutes in the USSR for communists from all over the world.

In 1921, the Communist University of the Toilers of the East was set up in Moscow. It had branches in Baku, Irkutsk and even Tashkent. It trained a significant list of leaders, which included names like Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam and Deng Xiaoping of China amongst others. Besides, given the rather public anti-imperialist stance advocated by the USSR, many students from Asia and Africa chose to study in Soviet universities – irrespective of whether they were communists or not. For the USSR, nurturing such a network made strategic sense and might have later helped in supporting an anti-colonial revolution which would have hit directly at the imperial centres of Europe like London and Paris (Westad 2017). Conferences like the first International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism which was held in Brussels in 1927 went a long way in forging international solidarities between the leaders of various countries fighting colonialism. This conference was attended by participants from different nations of the world, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Sun Yat-Sen and Albert Einstein. Such conferences provided precious networking opportunities for many activists looking for support and ideas to fight imperialism in their respective counties.

As the Cold War progressed it could be seen that many newly independent countries were attracted towards the Soviet-style of planned economies, even if they weren't communist countries e.g. India. As the Cold War unfurled it could be seen that many countries who had openly pledged support to the non-aligned cause still relied on Soviet help to navigate world politics especially where the USA was involved. Again, India's closeness to the USSR without being formally aligned with it is well-known. Pakistan, India's principal adversary in South Asia, was formally aligned with the USA under CENTO, and by the 1960s India had an additional adversary on its borders in the form of China. Under such adverse circumstances, Indian closeness to the USSR made strategic sense, considering that USSR was America's principal opponent and also had strained relations with China.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What were the reasons for decolonisation to occur?

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2) What was the American attitude towards decolonisation?

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3) What was the attitude of USSR towards decolonisation?

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13.3 EFFECTS OF DECOLONISATION ON WORLD POLITICS

The goal of the newly independent nations, particularly in Asia and Africa, was to not only become politically independent but also to be recognised in the world as an entity in their own right, with equal rights to have their say in world affairs. From the perspective of many Asian and African countries, the control exerted over them by USA and USSR during the Cold War were, in essence, no different from the control exerted over them by their formal colonisers. As far as they were concerned, the two situations didn't look very different. Not wanting to get involved in alliances headed by USA or USSR, most newly independent nations joined the Non-Aligned Movement in a bid to stay neutral. They knew that being part of such military or political alliances would mean that already scarce resources would go in maintaining Cold War objectives, and would not be used in much-needed development work. However, not every newly-created or newly independent country felt this way: Pakistan for example officially aligned with the US by joining the Central Treaty Organization or CENTO.

The first major step towards building solidarity between the newly-independent nations of Asia and Africa was the Bandung Conference of 1955. This was then followed up by the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, which sought to solidify Third World solidarity to stem the tide in a world that was increasingly divided between USA and USSR. NAM aimed to be the third power bloc by not being aligned to either superpower.

13.3.1 Redrawing Borders and the Creation of New States

One very important legacy of the process of decolonisation is the redrawing of international boundaries between states or the creation of new states, e.g. Pakistan and Israel. Sadly, this political shock often leads to intractable conflicts or enduring rivalries that become a sustained feature of regional or world politics (Bradley 2010). Research has shown that most enduring rivalries often tend to originate over the question of territory (Licklider, 2005). Considering the importance of defining territory for a nation in terms of its security or prestige, these conflicts prove very difficult to solve in the long run. There are two issues at work here that often feed off each other.

Firstly, many boundaries in Asia and Africa were drawn by the European powers while they were ruling. The rationale for drawing these boundaries had more to do with the balance of power considerations in Europe, and less to do with the actual religious or ethnic realities on the ground. It is these boundaries that remained after European nation left the colony. Secondly, the boundaries were maintained only as long as the European colonisers employed their material might on the ground. However, as soon as they left, large-scale religious or ethnic violence often broke out. In many cases, this led to a redrawing of the political map. This meant that, more often than not, a long-standing boundary dispute was a legacy of decolonisation. In many cases, these nascent boundary disputes got embroiled in the complications of the Cold War, which further rendered them intractable. Prominent examples like the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Indo-Pak conflict - especially over Kashmir - are categorised as enduring rivalries, and have been an enduring feature of world politics.

13.4 ANTICOLONIAL MOVEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN POLICY: THE INDIAN CASE

There are many ways in which the colonial experience of a country continues to influence its decisions even as a post-colonial state. Independence from colonisers is never a clean break. Legacies of the colony remain and can be seen in various fields. To truly understand the politics of a nation, the continued reflection of the colonial experience needs to also be studied. One such arena where this can be studied is the foreign policy of a Nation. In the following section, we will see how the anti-colonial movement in India under the Indian National Congress came to hold relevance for Indian Foreign Policy post-independence. Linkages can also be seen in terms of INC's pre-independence ideas of being neutral and what Nehru later converted into the Non-Aligned Movement.

13.4.1 Colonial Past and its Relevance

Heimsath and Mansingh (1971) argue that Indian foreign policy shows a lot of continuity and consistency after Independence even though India had a choice of breaking free completely from its colonial past in this regard. The reason for such a step, Mansingh and Heimsath argue, is that India had achieved a quasi-independent status in world affairs after the First World War. Formally, Indian leaders were subservient to the British Crown and could not advocate a distinct foreign policy of their own, but the end of the First World War saw dramatic

changes in world politics. Myriad international platforms like the League of Nations began to materialise and India was an enthusiastic member and participant in many of them. Indian leaders were constantly in touch with other world leaders. In essence, through all this India got a head start of almost 30 years before its independence to interact and engage actively with the rest of the world and obtain a very clear idea about the kind of foreign policy it would later want. Articulating similar ideas in an attempt to understand the pre-independence origins of Indian diplomacy Keenleyside (1992, p 42) writes “... India emerged from colonial rule with both a reservoir of diplomatic talent and an incipient orientation for its diplomacy, including a range of general foreign policy goals.” At this juncture, Mansingh and Heimsath (1971) distinguish foreign relations and foreign policy. Hence, according to their understanding, the Indian National Congress’ foreign relations became foreign policy after independence.

13.4.2 Indian National Congress and Foreign Relations before Independence

There are two ways in which the pre-independence foreign policy activities of the Indian National Congress can be categorised. The first would be the manner of interaction between Congress leaders and the international community. The second would be the ideological direction that Congress leaders thought that an independent India should have. Different phases can be discerned in terms of the level of involvement with the outside world, and the growing ideological conceptions about foreign policy.

According to Bipan Chandra (1989), three trends can be discerned in the nationalist foreign policy before the First World War. The first was: support and solidarity with other nations fighting for their independence. The second was the rise of Asian consciousness and a realisation of a common Asian identity. The third trend dealt with the growing understanding of the economic rationale behind the growth of imperialism. Post-1914, the nationalist foreign policy shifted towards opposing political and economic imperialism, and cooperation between all nations for world peace. Nehru (1927) himself writes about how, in the face of a larger goal like world peace, India would not mind giving up elements of its sovereignty, to a just international body, provided other countries also did it.

13.4.3 Reaching out to the World and Expressing Solidarity

In one of its early attempts to reach out to the world, the Congress set up the British Committee. The primary aim of this committee was to carry out propaganda in England to convince the British public of the righteousness of India’s cause. This, however, did not produce the desired result and the committee was wound up in 1920 by the Nagpur Congress. It was realised by the Congress leaders that effective action at home through the platform of the Non-Cooperation Movement was bringing them more publicity in England, and other parts of the world, even when they did not actively seek it like before. Hence, the resolve to spend their energy and resources at home was further strengthened. At the same time, Nehru was painfully aware of the fact that Indians were not liked in countries like China, Egypt, Burma, Afghanistan and many other regions of the Middle East, where the British took them as manpower in the British army or the police. Nehru thought that Congress should work towards removing these Indians soldiers

and policemen from foreign countries, and establish an environment of amity and friendship, as these nations, like India, suffered from colonial oppression.

Consequently, as Bipan Chandra (1989) points out, the Indian National Congress was extremely concerned about showing solidarity with overseas efforts to fight imperialism. Chandra (1989), further shows that Congress leaders in India publicly denounced and voiced their dissent of the British policy of waging wars with India's neighbouring regions and, in some cases annexing their territories. This was not a completely new practice. When Burma was annexed towards the end of 1885, Indian nationalists condemned this act as immoral and unjust, in unison. Surendranath Banerjea branded the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80) as a sheer act of aggression. Lord Curzon's attack on Tibet in 1903 met with similar outrage. However, such criticisms now took the shape of a coherent and clear-sighted policy.

13.4.4 Attempts at Conceptualising India's Foreign Policy

In November 1921, the Congress adopted the first formal declaration of independence from British foreign policy; through it, the Congress wanted to convey to other countries that the Government of India did not represent Indian opinion and that its policies were aimed at subjugating India rather than protecting its borders. India as a self-governing country did not have any designs on its neighbours or any other state. This was drafted by Gandhi who felt that India, as it matured for 'Swaraj' was bound to tell the world, the kind of relations that India wished to have with them (Prasad 1962). This book by Prasad, *The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy: The Indian National Congress and World Affairs*, discusses the Indian National Congress's role in world affairs from 1885 to 1947. The idea that the Congress leaders had, about the positive influence that independent India might have on the peace and security of the world, is further reiterated by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In a memorandum to George Clemenceau, Tilak has highlighted that a strong and independent India would be a source of stability for the world. Tilak also envisaged strong ties with Britain in India's foreign and defence policies (Mehta, 2009, 213). Similar ideas were also echoed by Nehru when he claimed that India's resistance was against the British policies and domination of India; however, cooperation with the British people would be welcomed "on the basis of Indian independence" (Kapoor 2011, p 61).

The role that different Congress leaders played through their interactions with the international community, and the ideologies that governed such interactions, need to be further explored. India's policy towards West Asia, Israel and Palestine specifically, is an interesting case for exploring the influence that prominent leaders had in laying the foundations of bilateral relations. Kumaraswamy (2010) effectively shows the role that M.K. Gandhi played for a prolonged period, which later greatly influenced India's relations with Israel and West Asia. Gandhi's views on that region often reflected the same inconsistencies that India, at a later stage, showed in its relations with Israel. While being deeply understanding and sympathetic to the situation of the Jews, Gandhi never formally supported the Palestine partition plan for the creation of Israel and on occasions spoke against such a move. The subtleties and compulsions in Gandhi's views on the Middle East are described in detail in the work of Brick (2008).

As Indian National Congress leaders began to demand independence for India, they came to realise that a very large part of preparing for Independence was to conceptualise what kind of foreign policy Independent India would have. It was further realised that building connections with other world leaders and organisations - especially with nations that were also fighting colonialism - helped in creating a solidarity network, that could work together to fight colonialism. These associations went a long way in laying the foundations of India's diplomacy. Besides the personal bonds that were forged between different world leaders, what also emerged as a growing experience of interacting at myriad international platforms and forums (McQuade 2020). Thakur (2017) shows in detail the influence that Indian Liberals (often part of British India's diplomatic delegations) had on Foreign Policy in the nearly three decades preceding Independence and thereafter as well. This experience gave Indian leaders exposure to different worldviews and relevant global issues of that time. More importantly, it gave them much-needed time to understand the intricacies of world politics and get their chance at forming conceptions about a foreign policy for an independent India. The following section highlights a concrete example of how these thinking and conceptions took the form of concrete policy as well.

13.4.5 Non-Aligned Movement and 'One World'

In terms of the roots of the non-aligned movement, scholars like Willetts (1978) have noted that there are some arguments made about the ideological origins of the non-aligned movement being in the 1940s and not solely in 1961, though it was known by different names at different times. Even though Willetts, himself disregards such assertions, his reasons for doing so are not entirely convincing, and are open to debate, as in doing so, he tends to confuse non-alignment with neutrality which other scholars like Murty (1964) and even Raghavan (2010) have argued against. However, there might be some substance in the assertion that the ideas of non-alignment existed before Independence, because as Bimla Prasad (1962, p 28) shows, on 7th September 1946, Nehru declared that India had to keep as far away as possible from the power groups opposed to each other in the world. Hence, it was an attempt to have a friendly relationship with all, and hostility towards none. Considering that this was the crude ideology behind the Non-Aligned Movement later, the assertion that the roots of its ideology were present before 1947 can be seen and explored further. Manu Bhagavan (2012, p xi) argues that Non-alignment was "but one element of his [Nehru's] larger goal, which was One World". In this understanding, non-alignment didn't mean just being neutral but in a true Gandhian sense it was to equally engage with two warring factions. As the Second World War was ending, there was an attempt to set up an international organisation to promote world peace. Bhagavan (2012) shows that this was a chance that Nehru took to take Gandhi's message of non-violence to the world in the form of 'One World'. Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was the most powerful proponent and advocate of this cause during the setting up of the United Nations. As shown by Manu Bhagavan this concept of 'One World' was influential in framing of global discourses on human rights

It can be seen from the discussion above that many basic tenets of India's international personality stemmed from its colonial experience. The act of being subjugated as a colony and how a nation decides to fight that subjugation helps in defining what that country comes to see itself as in the international arena.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) How did newly independent nations navigate the Cold War?

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2) Is there a link between decolonisation and intractable conflicts?

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3) How did anti-colonialism help shape India's foreign policy?

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13.5 LET US SUM UP

Many colonised countries got their independence between the late 1940s till about the late 1960s. This was precipitated by many factors; however, some key factors were weakening of Imperial European powers and the setting in of the Cold War. USA and USSR sought to dominate world politics and have a direct say in the politics of other nations, however, they both for their separate reasons had strong anti-imperialist rhetoric and hence did not seek to directly rule a country. Irrespective of this, however, they interfered extensively in the affairs of other nations if it suited their global agenda.

These newly independent nations took their place in the world and began actively shaping world affairs. A defining feature of their brand of politics was their advocacy of Non-alignment as an alternative to joining either power blocs. The division of the world into two hostile camps was not conducive to ensuring development for the newly independent nations and hence many nations chose not to formally align with any bloc. Another important feature of the process of

decolonisation was that it often gave rise to intractable conflicts and enduring rivalries. Often these would arise out of boundary disputes as a result of a complication of decolonisation, e.g., creation of a new state.

This unit further explored the influence of anti-imperialist movements over the foreign policy of a country by taking the Indian example. Decolonisation often does not and cannot result in a clean break from the past for countries. The result is that the experience of being colonised and fighting the coloniser helps shape that country's policy post its independence too. Hence, it's important to also look at how the pre-colonial past of a country relates to the post-colonial present of a nation.

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13.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) There were primarily three reasons for decolonisation to occur. First was the weakening of Imperial European states post-second world war. The second was the strong anti-colonial movements in many countries against foreign rule. Third, the onset of the Cold War, both the USA and USSR didn't consider ruling nations in their strategic interests, they instead wanted countries to remain within their respective zones of influence.
- 2) Most Americans didn't support colonisation, however, for them, it was very important to ensure that Communism didn't spread to the newly independent colonies either.
- 3) The understanding in USSR was that colonialism stemmed from Imperialism which was intricately linked to capitalism. Hence, they didn't support such an ideology. However, they felt it was important to facilitate a revolution in other places too and provided the means to enable it.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Newly independent states chose to navigate the Cold War by choosing to not join any power, bloc and by forming their own. This was known as the Non-Aligned Movement.
- 2) Yes, often the process of decolonisation leaves behind territorial disputes that often become intractable.
- 3) It was during the struggle for independence that Indian leaders woke up to the need for articulating a foreign policy for free India. There was a lot of emphasis on solidarity between newly independent nations and maintaining India's autonomy and independence in foreign policy choices.

UNIT 14 END OF COLD WAR: EMERGENCE OF GLOBAL ORDER/DISORDER*

Structure

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- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Factors Leading to End of Cold War
- 14.3 Images of Global Order/Disorder in Post-Cold War World
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14.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you will be reading about the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a new global order/ disorder. After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the factors that led to the end of the Cold War
- Describe the varied, yet connected, images and explanations of the post-Cold War global order/ disorder that were developed by American scholars and the
- Analyse the evolving trends in the international system.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

The Berlin Wall began to be dismantled on 9th November 1989 sounding the death knell of erstwhile Cold War. Mikhail Gorbachev the then General Secretary-General of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) and President of USSR (United Soviet Socialist Republic) resigned on 25th December 1991 and transferred the Soviet Nuclear Codes to Russian President Boris Yeltsin. The Communist flag over the Kremlin was replaced by the Russian flag, and USSR officially split into fifteen independent Republics, marking the collapse of the Soviet Union and its final dismemberment.

The events that occurred during 1989-92 in Soviet Russia, East and West Germany, East Europe, and Yugoslavia marked the end of the Cold War. The world ushered into a new international system. The New World Order that emerged has been interpreted variedly by various experts and is still unfolding itself. One group of scholars believed it has marked the 'End of History'. According, to another group of experts, the world order was asserted to be unipolar where United States of America (USA) was the lone superpower. According, to yet another group, the world has entered into an era of peace with the end of hostilities and competition between the two blocs. It raised a pertinent question: what kind of world order has emerged or is emerging? There were apprehensions and misgivings: what was emerging at the global level looked more like a world disorder.

Much of the theorization about the end of the Cold War and the nature of emerging world order/disorder soon fell into disrepute. There is lots of fluidity and some uncertainty in what is happening at the global level. Not that there is anarchy or chaos at the international level; things are still being managed and international organizations are working. But the pace of change and fluidity is enormous. Russia has resurged; its action in Ukraine and Syria are good examples. This has made many to see the return of Cold War II. Others see in the rise of China the coming of a new bipolarity. US and China, the G-2 will do mutual handholding to dominate and govern in their respective spheres of influence. Then there is the thesis of multipolarity. The emergence of new powers, such as India, China, Brazil, South Africa Russia, and others indicate the arrival of multipolarity. There is redistribution of economic and political power at the global level; power is shifting from trans-Atlantic to Indo-Pacific region. Most of the theories that emerged seem to have been shaken over the last three decades since the end of the Cold War. Post-Cold War world thus has been a subject of interpretation as to whether it is one of order or disorder? Different images of the world as interpreted by a cross-section of experts since the end of the cold war have been described and enumerated below.

14.2 FACTORS LEADING TO THE END OF COLD WAR

Following factors led to the end of the Cold War.

- a) **Reforms in Soviet Union:** Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the reins of power in 1985 and introduced the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. *Glasnost* or 'openness' meant political liberalization. It meant a greater willingness on the part of Soviet officials to allow discussion of political and social issues and adoption of some Western ideas and goods into the USSR. *Perestroika* meant economic restructuring - was an initiative that allowed limited market incentives to Soviet citizens. He introduced these reforms with the hope that they would be enough to spark the sluggish Soviet economy. Freedom is often addictive and people in different parts of Eastern Europe started craving for more of it creating a dominos effect all over. The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declared independence. Similar talks started happening in Ukraine, the Caucasus, and the Central Asian states. Ukraine, Byelorussia and Russia itself declared independence in December 1991, leading to the dissolution of Soviet Union. Gorbachev became President without a country.

- b) ***Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe:*** The unravelling of the Soviet Bloc began in Poland in June 1989. Despite previous Soviet military interventions in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland itself, Polish voters elected a non-communist opposition government to their legislature. The world watched anxiously, expecting Soviet tanks to roll into Poland to prevent the new government from taking power. Gorbachev refused to act and Communists were ousted thereby creating again a dominos effect in Eastern Europe. Subsequently, Communist regimes were ousted in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. On the Christmas Day of 1989, the brutal Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were summarily executed on live television. Yugoslavia threw off the yoke of communism only to dissolve quickly and ushering into a violent civil war.
- c) ***Fall of Berlin Wall:*** The East and West Germans tore down the Berlin Wall with pickaxes. Many took axes and picks to the Wall upon the collapse of Communism in Germany in 1989. However, the official destruction of the Berlin Wall did not begin until June 1990.
- d) ***Economic Collapse of the Soviet Union:*** The Soviet Union could not sustain the arms race further. Its military-industrial complex was highly developed and consumer industry was highly underdeveloped. Hence, people had to stand in queue running into several kilometres even for a loaf of bread. This created dissensions and discontentment among citizens.

14.3 IMAGES OF GLOBAL ORDER/DISORDER IN POST-COLD WAR WORLD

Since 1945, majority of the world population were born and brought up into the Cold War culture that featured McCarthyistic witch-hunting in the US; American destabilization and interventions in the name of fighting ‘International Communism’; Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia; proxy wars, an arms race; space race, Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam war, detente, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Star Wars proposal. Once the enemy is gone, the world slipped into an era which according to many turned out to be unsafe. Some Americans advocated that facing one superpower was simpler than challenging dozens of ‘rogue’ states and ‘renegade’ groups sponsoring global terrorism. Subsequently, several models, images or paradigms of the international system or world order/disorder that emerged after the end of the Cold War have been provided by different experts of world political system and international relations. Nevertheless, it has caused widespread confusion over how to characterize contemporary global order, international politics and how to project trends and scenarios for the future.

14.4 END OF HISTORY: FRANCIS FUKUYAMA

Francis Fukuyama, in his 1989 essay “The End of History?” (which was expanded into a book, *The End of History and The Last Man* in 1992) argued that the advent of Western Liberal Democracy may signal the endpoint of humanity’s sociocultural evolution and the final form of human government. He wrote: “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is the endpoint of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western

Liberal Democracy as the final form of human government.” What Fukuyama said was the triumph of liberal democracy and market economy is final and ultimate; this is the end to all debates on alternatives to capitalist democracy. The end of the Cold War is also the end of communism. Thus, Marxist’s prophecy that communism will displace capitalism has been disproved, as the end of the cold war led to the demise of communism.

However, this thesis of Fukuyama was favoured as well as criticised equally by a cross-section of scholars. Jacques Derrida criticised Fukuyama, whereas ‘democratic peace theorists’ favoured him. However, the evolution of the post-Cold War world reveals that both democracies and dictatorships have declined in the world; whereas communism continues in certain parts of the world. ‘The end of history’ thesis reflects the great urge to ensure the “death of Marx”. Derrida rejected the glorification of capitalism and liberal democracy: “no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, have so many men, women and children been subjugated, starved or exterminated on the earth” as under capitalist democracy. Apologists of the ‘end of history’ disinterred Immanuel Kant to celebrate his thesis that democracies don’t fight against each other, and therefore the creation of a zone of democracies is necessary to establish a zone of peace and security.

14.5 THE THREE-BLOC GEO-ECONOMICS MODEL

This model has been visualised by Walter Russell Mead, Jeffrey Garten, Edward Luttwak, Lester Thurow etc. The advocates of this model argued that in the new international system geo-economics has replaced geopolitics as the crucial determinant of the rise or decline of nations; , and that military power was thus becoming increasingly less relevant, hence wasteful, in the context of global competition. They further advocated that the world is evolving into three competitive economic blocs: (i) a Japan-led Pacific Rim region including Korea, Southeast Asia, and presumably China; (ii) a US-led Western Hemisphere bloc centred on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and potentially encompassing Latin America; and (iii) a German-centred European bloc, assumed to include Russia and other ex-Soviet states and perhaps also North Africa. It thus makes it obvious that the less-developed regions of Africa and South Asia, and the Middle East stand relegated to the status of neo-colonial resource zones to be courted by the three major blocs.

Thurow predicted that in the race ahead, one of the three great economic powers is apt to pull ahead of the other two. Whichever pulls ahead is apt to stay ahead. That country or region of the globe will own the twenty-first century in the sense that the United Kingdom owned the nineteenth century and the United States owned the twentieth century (Thurow, 1992). It is yet to be witnessed as China is not in the queue.

Joseph Nye has made three basic criticisms of the three-bloc thesis. First, he says it “runs counter to the thrust of global technological trends,” and that ‘while regional trade will certainly grow, many firms would not want to be limited to one-third of the global market and would resist restrictive regionalism.’(Nye, 1992). Secondly, “restrictive regional blocs run against nationalistic concerns of

some of the lesser states that need a global system to protect themselves against domination by their large neighbours.” Thirdly, the three-bloc vision is too dismissive of security concerns, for instance, the need of Germany and Japan for a continuing US security umbrella in case Russia or China emerge as a threat. This theory seems to be a dominant theory of regionalism even today and as a common-sense categorization of world order could be that militarily the world may be a unipolar world with the USA as the sole superpower. However, from the viewpoint of economic strength and activity, there are multiple regional centres of economic power and hence world order is multipolar.

14.6 THE REVITALISED BALANCE OF POWER MODEL

Within the Realist school of International Relations, some traditionalists envisioned that future could not differ more sharply from that of the geo-economists. According to them, security and brute power relationships always function as the most fundamental determinants of international systems. The end of the Cold War makes a return to multipolarity and balance of power almost inevitable. This model argued that four powers were likely to define the emerging pattern of the twenty-first century: the United States, China, Russia and Europe.

As predicted, the most likely scenario was to be a loose alliance among Europe, America and Russia for the containment of China, while Japan intimidated by China’s growing power, and needing America’s protection, would stay modestly at sub-great power level. A second likely scenario predicted was an alignment between rising China and the Islamic world, which would in turn push Russia and Europe closer together. Another and the third scenario that was envisaged was of a rising China at loggerheads with the containment alliance comprising of the United States, Japan and India with Korea tilting towards the latter combination and Russia playing a neutral role and selling arms and energy to China. Yet another scenario was that of a China-Japan-Korea alliance aimed at driving US influence out of Asia, with Russia and Europe remaining on the sidelines (Harkavy, 1997). The third prediction is currently visible to a great extent in the contemporary world with the ‘bromance’ between Russia and China gaining lots of traction.

Kissinger’s analysis of a new, emerging balance of power is somewhat similar. He advocated that a cohesive if not fully integrated Europe and is perhaps more inclined to foresee a gradual decline of America’s relative power. The US would remain *primus inter pares* as the greatest and most powerful nation, but a nation with peers. He further emphasised that “The absence of both an overriding ideological or strategic threat frees nations to pursue foreign policies based increasingly on their immediate national interest” (Kissinger, 1994).

Joseph Nye criticized this multipolar model as a false analogy with the nineteenth-century order that rested upon a balance of five roughly equal powers, i.e. Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia (Nye, 1992). Russia’s economic weakness, China’s status as a developing country, Japan’s limited military power, and Europe’s lack of political unity suffices in his view to refute Kissinger’s historical analogy.

Richard Rosecrance also questioned the validity of the traditional balance of power thinking in the post-Cold War age. He agrees that the balance of power

held sway during most of the nineteenth and the first half part of the twentieth century, but it was an inefficient mechanism at best, providing no automatic equilibration of power relationships, and gave rise to the world wars of this century (Rosecrance, 1992). Unlike most other forecasters, Rosecrance saw danger emanating from Japan rather than China. According to him:

“The most potent future antagonism the world could witness is a radical division between the United States and Japan. The Westernization of contemporary Japan is as yet incomplete. Beneath the external policy of a Japanese trading state boil nationalist resentments directed at a half-century of American tutelage and Western neglect....If current trends continue, it may not be too long before ideological rationalizations of Confucian strength and vitality are propounded by Japan as antidotes to supposed Western decadence and lethargy”.

Rosecrance was hoping that a concert of like-minded states would be dashed if one or more of its major members turned revisionist in pursuit of territorial aspirations or to erase a historical sense of humiliation or lost status. Thus, Russia, humiliated by its loss of the Cold War, near-collapse of its economy, and territorial dismemberment could well play the role of a disruptive expansionist. China nurtures revisionist territorial aims with respect to some or all of the South China Sea islands, portions of Siberia, and perhaps of Kazakhstan, all of which were once in the Chinese orbit. China’s long humiliation at the hands of Western “barbarian” has also made it especially sensitive to perceived unequal treatment and desirous of a “place in the sun.”(Lilly, 1996)

The most recent formation of ‘Quadrilateral Security Dialogue’ consisting of US, Japan, Australia and India is an endeavour to balance China’s assertion in the South China Sea and its growing dominance in Indo Pacific Ocean. Changing narrative from ‘Asia-Pacific’ to ‘Indo-Pacific’ too is an endeavour in this direction. Thus, this image of the global order also has some value and relevance.

14.7 CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS MODEL

Another image of the future world order is the “clash of civilizations’ thesis model as proposed by Samuel P. Huntington. Huntington wrote in 1993:

“It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation-states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future”.

It meant that the coming age was going to be unique in the sense that henceforth the great conflicts may occur between, and not within, civilizations.

Huntington defined civilizations as “the highest cultural grouping and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species,”; and identified seven or eight major civilizations of the contemporary world: - Western, Confucian (Sinic), Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly the African.

Stating that fault lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flashpoints for crisis and bloodshed, Huntington focuses particularly on cultural lines of demarcation between Western Christianity and Orthodox Christianity in Europe, and between the latter and Islam. Other fault lines that contain potential for large-scale future conflict include that between Arab Islamic civilization and the animist or Christian Africa to the south, and that between the Muslim and Hindu civilizations in South Asia. One might also interpret the potential conflict between the United States and either Japan or China as a clash between Western and Confucian civilizations. With the conflict in Bosnia, the Persian Gulf, and the Caucasus in mind, Huntington predicted that the next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations. He was keener on the potency of cultural clash between the West and Islam. All civilization to him appears to be a giant monolith – unalloyed and uninfluenced by anything else except their adversarial cultural cores and doctrinaire obsessions.

Huntington's theory gained increased prominence when America's World Trade Centre was attacked by Al-Qaeda terrorists on September 11, 2001 (often referred to as 9/11). Most realist scholars began to look at the world order or the international political system from the prism of 'clash of civilizations'. However, going by the Huntington's categorization of civilizations the recent developments within the civilization called Islam disproves the theory of 'Clash of Civilizations' and presents a scenario for theorization in context with 'Clash within Civilizations'. Within the Islamic world, not only the sub-Islamic civilizations called Shia and Sunni were found standing like gladiators against each other but there was also a clash within the organizations of Sunnis for one-up-man-ship; as well as a power struggle for assuming the leadership of the Islamic world. The advent of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its resumption of terroristic activities in Iraq and Syria and the subsequent declaration of Caliphate whereby Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had declared himself as the Caliph and pronounced for the allegiance of the Islamic people all over the world not only set the tone for clear-cut 'Clash within Civilizations' but also demonstrated in its deeds and actions. Interestingly, the rise of ISIS and al-Qaeda marked another fault line in the so-called Islamic world: established regimes, mostly monarchic and autocratic found themselves being challenged by powerful non-state actors carrying the banners of very divergent agendas.

The pronouncement of 'Caliphate' was soon subtly contested by erstwhile al-Qaeda when its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri announced for the creation of South Asian wing of al-Qaeda and pledged renewed loyalty to Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar. The most important development to be noted here was that both ISIS and al-Qaeda are Sunni Terrorist outfits and the former is a break-away group of the latter. Even within Iraq and Syria, the turf was not wide open for ISIS, as another group owing allegiance to al-Qaeda and supported by it, Jabhat al-Nushra was active and fighting in Syria against the forces of Syrian State. Hence, 'Clash of Civilizations' seems to have given way to 'Clash within Civilizations' and consequent imperatives for new theorization. It led to the almost complete destruction of Syria and devastation of Iraq where Russian and American forces were involved to demonstrate their military prowess. The continued wars in the Arab world where multiple stakeholders, local, regional, and international, are engaged with myriad agendas and grievances shatter the American thesis of the so-called unified 'Muslim World'. In reality, there is nothing to call 'Muslim World'.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is the central argument of ‘Clash of Civilizations’?.

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14.8 THE ‘UNIPOLAR MOMENT’ WORLD

Charles Krauthammer argued that the end of the Cold War had left the United States in the position of the sole superpower. Thus, the post-Cold War international system is unipolar. He described the period immediately after the end of the Cold War as the ‘unipolar moment’ in IR; and Krauthammer knew that like all moments, it would pass soon. But how soon? Krauthammer’s thesis, echoed by many other experts of International Relations, that was summed up: as “The most striking feature of the post-cold war world is its unipolarity. No doubt, multipolarity will come in time. In perhaps another generation or so there will be great powers coequal with the United States, and the world will, in structure, resemble the pre-World War I era. But we are not there yet, nor will we be for decades. Now is the unipolar moment.” Thus, ‘unipolar moment’ was supposed to last for decades; which it did not.

Those who argued for the US being in the position of sole superpower, and thus made the world unipolar in the aftermath of the Cold War, had first to contend with, the ‘declinist’ theories that posited an exhausted America; second, the geo-economic assumption that military power was passe; and finally, the ‘chaos’ theorists who saw America as incapable of dealing with the real problems that would define the next age of history, including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, local famines and genocides, pollution, and resource depletion.

It was also argued that America’s ability to maintain hegemony will depend greatly on the extent to which it can maintain leadership of the now widely heralded Military Technical Revolution or Revolution in Military Affairs (MTR/RMA) made manifest in the Gulf War of 1991. Observers differ as to American prospects. Some point out that leadership in new technology is never more than temporary because of rapid diffusion. Others insist that the quantum leap made by the United States in the ‘systems of systems’ approach, integrating space technology, smart weapons, computers, and communications, was beyond the reach of any competitor in the then world. In sum, the ‘unipolar moment’ may last, but only so long as Russia, Europe, Japan, and China are unable or unwilling to replicate the sinews of high-technology warfare pioneered by the United States.

14.8.1 Age of Triumphalism

The end of the Cold War marked the dawn of the American Triumphalism. The US took the credit for the demise of the ideology of socialism and the disintegration of Soviet Union – its Cold War adversary. No one was ready to accept the truth that the Soviet Union collapsed under its weight – a system that had brought misery to its people had been dead for long. Triumphalism had another sinister dimension: everything about American culture, politics and economics came to be portrayed as ‘virtuous’; and that the US has a right to set the world right – after its own image. Proponents of Triumphalism explained the implications of these two notions in their distinctive ways. As noted earlier, Francis Fukuyama wrote that the triumph of Western liberalism is the endpoint of time; nothing new or improved would come hereafter. For Charles Krauthammer, this was the ‘unipolar moment’ which would last for decades; there is no military adversary in sight to challenge the US for generations.

Triumphalist ideas continued to flow in the 1990s. William Kristol and Robert Kagan, the two neoconservatives, wrote that the post-Cold War is fulfilling history’s purpose and perpetuating American primacy. Like two sides of the same coin, American assertiveness would hasten history’s arrival at its predetermined destination where American values would prevail everywhere. America has the “responsibility to lead the world”; it must follow the strategy of “benevolent global hegemony” backed by its military power and moral values. Thomas Friedman equated globalization with Americanization and suggested that the spread of free-market be backed by America’s ‘hard’ power.

The terrorist events of 9/11 turned Triumphalism into the official credo. Imbued with his divine mission, President George W Bush declared the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). He declared free-market democracy as “a single sustainable model for national success”; and secondly, that no one should ever entertain the ambition of ever “surpassing, or even equalling, the (military) power of the United States.” And thirdly, no international law could ever stop the US from unleashing its military might against a perceived challenger.

Before his term was out in 2008, President Bush discovered that free-market stood discredited; foremost in the US itself with the collapse of the Lehman Brothers and the onset of the Global Financial Crisis. Instead of the free market, the US economy had turned into the heavily state-owned and state-backed economy through stimulus packages. Unipolarity was a chimaera. The Age of Triumphalism had collapsed. Multipolarity had gained ground. US remains engaged in its GWOT in Afghanistan, and Iraq and Syria with no end in sight; yet prepares for interventions in an ever-growing list of countries – Libya, Venezuela, Iran and North Korea. It has defeated ISIS, al-Qaeda on battlefields but not at the intellectual level. American Triumphalism continues to produce reactions and rejections. It was American Triumphalism and humiliation of Russians which is responsible for the resurgence of Russian nationalism and the rise of Vladimir Putin.

14.8.2 The ‘Declinist’ Thesis

Robert Pape of the University of Chicago argued in *The National Interest* that the United States is in unprecedented decline and without deliberate actions, the fall of American power will be more precipitous with the progress of time. He

further pointed out that economic power provides the wherewithal to meet global commitments and advance national interests. America's overall share of gross world product is falling while others' shares are rising. America's current position of primacy is deteriorating rapidly, in part because other states are rising but also because the Bush administration (2000-08) managed to mismanage foreign policy and fiscal policy simultaneously (See Walt, 2009).

At its most basic level, the declinist thesis argues that the United States of America is in a period of - some say terminal - decline from its position of hegemony over the rest of the world. On most fronts - technological, economic, military - the US has neither the will nor the capability to project effective power; and shall soon be overtaken by others. It does not have the will and means to reverse this trend either. The US will soon have to adjust to the reality that it is no longer the preeminent power. The declinist thesis is not new in the US. It had its origin in the early years of Cold War in the backdrop of arms and space race when many Americans began saying that it is not too far when Soviet Union would overtake the US in military and technological terms. The thesis surfaced a second time in the 1970s in the wake of US defeat in Vietnam war, detente which many read as a sign of America's military weakness, and economic rise of Germany and Japan. Both times, US overcame the 'declinist' syndrome: John F Kennedy in the 1960s energised American idealism of global engagement and in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan went on the offensive by launching the second Cold War. The thesis resurfaced the third time in the context of emerging economies and declining US share in global GDP. Hence, US President Donald Trump started trade and tariff war against adversaries and allies alike.

14.9 ZONES OF PEACE AND ZONES OF TURMOIL

Another way of understanding the post-Cold War international system or world order has been suggested in terms of 'Zones of Peace' versus 'Zones of Turmoil' dichotomy popularized by Max Singer and the Aaron Wildavsky in *The Real World Order*. According to them, "the key to understanding the real world is to separate the world into two parts", one part of which, the 'Zone of peace, wealth and democracy' includes Western Europe, the US, Canada, Japan and the Antipodes, comprising some 15 per cent of the world's population, and the other of which, the 'zone of turmoil, war and development' includes the lands of the former Soviet Empire, and most of Asia, Africa, and Latin America

The main thesis of their book is that the political relations among the countries in the zones of peace and democracy will not be influenced by relative military power. Nor will those nations be divided into competing for military blocs seeking to balance each other's power. There probably will be plenty of national and other conflicts, but the decisive special characteristic of this conflict is that no one will believe that it can lead to war. However, some writers insist on to broader construction of these issues under the banner of what has come to be known as 'endism'. This is reviewed in Samuel Huntington, in which 'endism' is seen to incorporate notions about the end of warfare among civilized and wealthy states, the war proneness and democracy thesis and the 'end of history' thesis which celebrates the unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism (Huntington, 1989). Singer and Wildavsky expect permanent peace in the first global zone because a central pillar of the next world order is that modern democracies...do not even seriously imagine the possibility of being at war with one another.

Zones of turmoil, by definition, are by comparison poor, overpopulated, disaster-prone, and virtually ungovernable. Robert D. Kaplan in his *The Coming Anarchy* sets out to show how scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet (Kaplan, 1994). This theory again holds enough water as the world indeed seems to be divided into zones of peace and chaos which may not be specific to the form of government, yet it is there.

14.10 THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

There are yet another group of scholars whose viewpoint has been that the coming age will be the one in which unity—the “global village”—will be finally realized. Their argument is based on the on-going advances in telecommunications and data processing as the strongest forces in world affairs. The term means simplifying the whole world into one village through the revolution in telecommunication and computers. The term was coined by Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan and popularised in his book *The Guttenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, (1962), and *Understanding Media* (1964). He argued that the instantaneous movement of information from one point of the world to others has led to the contraction of the world.

They note that the popular American television programmes and rock music video cassettes/DVDs can be found in the remotest villages of Africa and Latin America and that the whole world is adopting the technologies, values, lifestyles, and aspirations of the West. They heralded the Internet, stressed global interdependence, not only in matters of trade, investment and raw materials but concerning such global issues as environmental pollution, water shortages, weather, and population movements—solutions to which can only be found through global cooperation and by evolving global regimes of norms and mechanisms.

Here again, this trend is growing at a faster pace with Globalisation, despite fragmentation in different parts of the world. There is increased movement of goods, services, capital and people across the world which carries local cultures with them to different parts of the world. It has also led to growing cultural connectivity among nation-states and non-state actors of the world. Yet, the ushering of the world into the Digital Era and Globalisation sounded true for the thesis of the Global Village theorists. However, Trump’s policy of American First has led to theorization about ‘End of Globalisation’.

14.11 INCIPIENT BIPOLAR SYSTEM

Despite the current talk of the unipolar and multipolar world, the eventual possibility of a return to bipolarity cannot be ruled out. Some experts think that a new form of US-Russian conflict may take place in future after regaining power by Russia. Moreover, a bipolar bloc system may well evolve from the current or anticipated multipolar one as a China-Russia bloc faces American-led Western bloc against the combination, or an All-Asia bloc confronts a US-Europe-Russia one, thus belying hopes of global villagers. However, it has been observed that in Syria both US and Russia were once again at loggerheads. They confronted each other on Iran as well as on NATO’s eastward expansion.

There could be another analysis of bipolarity in terms of the Chinese challenge to US hegemony, a new Cold war, and a new 'containment' strategy; or US and China could form the G-2 with a pledge not to interfere in their respective zones of influence. This theory has been popularized of late by Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro (1997). A bipolar world system might evolve from the current or anticipated multipolar one as a China-Russia bloc faces off against US-Europe combination.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

- 1) Explain the concept of 'global village'.

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- 2) Comment on 'Zones of Peace' and 'Zones of Turmoil' categorization of the world political system.

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14.12 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have seen that much of the theorization about the end of the Cold War and the nature of emerging world order/disorder has fallen into disrepute. There is lots of fluidity and some uncertainty in what is happening at the global level. Not that there is anarchy or chaos at the international level; things are still being managed and international organizations are working. But, as we saw, the pace of change and fluidity is enormous.

Americans were pleasantly shocked at the fall of communism all over Eastern Europe. They were quick to claim credit for winning the Cold War. The Age of Triumphalism dawned and would rule the roost in American academia for nearly two decades.

Several others have claimed that no one won the Cold War. The US spent trillions of dollars arming itself themselves for a confrontation with the Soviet Union that fortunately never came. Moreover, thousands of American lives were lost waging proxy wars in Korea and Vietnam. Hundreds of thousands perished in the proxy wars the two sides waged through their allies and puppet regimes in

Africa, Asia and Latin America. Post-Cold War era was marked by both order and disorder. There were global orders in the sense that the world passed through unipolarity, multipolarity to sometimes bi-polarity; and disorder in the sense that both Russia and America were trying to demonstrate their military prowess against each other in Syria, Iran and in different other parts of the world on different occasions. Yet, nothing could be said with certainty as to who won and who lost. There are limitations to American power in the world and so is the case with Russia, China and other major powers. Hence, the kerfuffle that was created by the demise of the Cold War had disturbed the entropy of the globe to such an extent that it is yet to settle in some order.

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14.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The central argument of the Clash of Civilisation is that the primary sources of conflict in the future are not ideological or economic factors, but cultural divisions. In other words, conflicts in the future may occur between, and not within, civilisations.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Initially advanced by media theorists to refer to the interconnected world, the concept of the global village has acquired wider connotations with growing interdependence. The concept is used to address common or global problems (environment, health, migration etc) through global cooperation and by evolving appropriate global intuitions and mechanisms.

- 2) This thesis is a combination of democratic peace theory and the familiar division of the world into developed and the developing regions. The Zone of Peace roughly coincides with the developed countries of the North that are mostly democratic and economically well off while the Zone of turmoil include countries of the South and former Soviet empire where democratic institutions struggle to cope with challenges of economic development and internal conflicts.



UNIT 15 CHANGING NATURE OF THE UN SYSTEM*

Structure

15.0 Objectives

15.1 Introduction

15.2 What constitutes 'the UN System'?

15.2.1 Objectives, Principles, Structure and Role of the UN

15.2.2 UN Specialized Agencies and their Role

15.2.3 UN Programmes

15.2.4 NGOs in UN System

15.3 Changing Nature of the UN System: UN's Role, Achievements and Challenges

15.4 Democratization of the UN System

15.5 The Future of the UN System

15.6 Let Us Sum Up

15.7 References

15.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

15.0 OBJECTIVES

The United Nations has been the centrepiece of global governance in the post-war years. This Unit will examine the UN system including its goals, organs and agencies, and achievements and limitations. The unit also discusses the changing nature and dynamics of the UN and the debate on reforming the UN. After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- State the objectives/ purposes of the UN
- Describe the principles and the principal organs of the UN
- Explain the role of the UN System, functions of its specialized Agencies, various Programmes and funding, and the functioning of the Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Debate on the democratization of the UN System and
- Explain the prospects of the UN System.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) was established on 24 October 1945. Since World War II, it has been the centrepiece of global governance. It is the only truly universal and global intergovernmental organization created to date with global scope and nearly universal membership, and its agenda encompasses the broadest range of governance issues. It was founded with 51 nations. Its membership has now expanded to 193 member States. The UN continues to be the only global international organization and actor that has an agenda encompassing the broadest range of governance issues. As the world's only truly global organization, the

UN has become the foremost forum to address issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone. It is a complex system that serves as the central site for multilateral diplomacy, with the UN's General Assembly as centre stage. Three weeks of the general debate at the opening of each annual session of General Assembly in September draws foreign ministers and heads of states from small and large states alike, to take advantage of the opportunity to address the nations of the world and to engage in intensive diplomacy.

Conor Cruise O'Brien, one-time Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, described the UN as "stage set for a continuous dramatization of world history" (1968). This metaphorical view is perhaps better explained by Clive Archer: "the UN is often seen as solely an 'arena' in which member states can advance their viewpoints and suggestions in a public and open forum". The Member States, observers and NGOs use UN fora as an 'arena' to voice their opinions and to set forth their agenda (1983).

15.2 WHAT CONSTITUTES 'THE UN SYSTEM'?

The UN system consists of the UN family of organizations. It includes the secretariat, the UN funds and programmes, the 15 specialized agencies, and other related organizations. The funds, programmes and offices are subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly. The specialized agencies are linked to the United Nations through individual agreements and report to the Economic and Social Council and/or the Assembly. Related organizations, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and IOM (International Organization for Migration) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have their legislative bodies and budgets. These programmes, funds, and specialized agencies, together with the UN itself, constitute the UN System. The members of the UN system address all areas of cultural, economic, scientific and social endeavours.

15.2.1 Objectives, Principles, Structure and Role of the UN

The UN Charter explains that it has four purposes:

- i) to maintain international peace and security
- ii) to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples
- iii) to cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and
- iv) to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these common ends.

In other words, the UN is mandated to safeguard peace and security "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights; to uphold respect for international law, and to promote social progress and better standards of life. UN's original vision was built on four pillars; the first three – peace, development and human rights – have become increasingly intertwined and support a consistent and integrated framework of national and international priorities. The UN's fourth founding pillar – sovereign independence – although largely achieved during the UN's first two decades through

decolonization, is now under scrutiny because of a concern for reasonable limits on state sovereignty.

The United Nations acts, to pursue its objectives, in accordance with the following principles:

- It is based on the sovereign equality of all its members
- All members are to fulfil in good faith their Charter obligations
- They are to settle their international disputes by peaceful means and without endangering international peace and security and justice
- They are to refrain from the threat or use of force against any other state
- Neither they nor any member of the UN interferes in domestic matters of any State.

To enable the UN to achieve its stated purposes and objectives the organization has been equipped with a structure of six main Organs.

- 1) **The General Assembly:** perhaps the closest approximation of a world parliament, is the main deliberative and legislative body. It is designed to utilize the time-honoured technique of resolving problems by free and frank discussions. It is to function as the world's permanent forum and a meeting place. It is created on the assumption that "war of words" is better than war fought with bombs and weapons. All UN Members are represented in it and each has one vote based on sovereign equality. Decisions on ordinary matters are taken by a simple majority. Important questions require two-thirds of the vote.

The Assembly has the right to discuss and make recommendations on all matters within the scope of the UN Charter. Its decisions are not binding on member states, but they carry the weight of world public opinion. Thus, it does not legislate like a national parliament. But in the meeting rooms and corridors of the UN, representatives of almost all countries of the world – large and small, rich and poor, from diverse political and social systems – have a voice and vote in shaping the policies of the international community.

- 2) **The Security Council** is the organ to which the Charter gives primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It can be convened at any time, even at midnight when peace is threatened. Member States are obligated to carry out its decisions. It has 15 members. Five of these – China, France, the Russian Federation, the UK, and the US – are permanent members, known as P5. The other 10 are elected by the Assembly for two-year terms. A decision cannot be taken if there is "no" or negative vote by a permanent member (known as "veto") on substantive questions. In common parlance, the veto is known in the UN Charter as "Great Power unanimity" rule.

When a threat to *peace* is brought before the Council, it usually first asks the parties to reach an agreement by peaceful means. The Council may undertake mediation or set forth principles for a settlement. It may request the Secretary-General to investigate and report on a situation. If fighting breaks out, the Council tries to secure a ceasefire. It may send peace-keeping units (observers or troops) to troubled areas, with the consent of the parties

involved, to reduce tension and keep opposing forces apart. Unlike the General Assembly resolutions, its decisions are binding and it has the power to enforce its decisions by imposing economic sanctions and by ordering military action under the principle of “collective security”.

Absence or prevention of war does not automatically ensure a peaceful international system. To diminish the underlying causes of future conflicts that might lead to such threats to the peace or breach of peace, the founding fathers of the UN also provided mechanisms for economic and social progress and development and to promote higher standards of living. This job has been assigned to the third organ.

- 3) **The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** is the third main organ of the UN. The ECOSOC has 54 members. It usually holds a two-month long session each year. It coordinates the economic and social work of the UN and other specialized agencies and institutions. It recommends and directs activities aimed at, among others, promoting economic growth of developing countries, administering development and humanitarian assistance projects, promoting the observance of human rights, ending discrimination against minorities, spreading the benefits of science and technology, and fostering world cooperation in areas such as better housing, family planning and crime prevention.
- 4) **The Trusteeship Council** was created to supervise the administration of 11 Trust Territories and to ensure that Governments responsible for their administration take adequate steps to prepare them for self-government and independence. It is gratifying to note that all these territories have attained independence by the end of 1994 and now this body has little work.
- 5) **The International Court of Justice** consists of 15 judges who are elected concurrently by the General Assembly and the Security Council. It resolves legal issues and interprets international treaties.
- 6) **The Secretariat** is the sixth main organ of the UN. It consists of a Secretary-General and other staff and personnel who run the UN administration and carry out day-to-day work of the UN. Staff members are drawn from 193 members of the UN. As international civil servants, they work for the UN and pledge not to take or seek instructions from any government or outside authority. Calling upon some 41,000 staff members worldwide, the Secretariat services the other principal organs of the UN and administers the programmes and policies established by them. At its head is the Secretary-General, who is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. Till now the office of the Secretary-General has been occupied by nine incumbents: Trygve Lie (Norway), Dag Hammarskjold (Sweden), U. Thant (Myanmar), Kurt Waldheim (Austria), Javier Perez de Cuellar (Peru), Boutros Boutros Ghali (Egypt), Kofi Annan (Ghana), Ban Ki-moon (Republic of Korea) and Antonio Guterres (Portugal).

15.2.2 UN Specialized Agencies and Their Role

In addition to its programmes, the UN General Assembly maintains formal ties with about 20 autonomous international agencies not under its control.

The agency in international security affairs is the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), headquartered in Vienna, Austria. It was established under the UN but is formally autonomous. Although the IAEA has an economic role in helping develop civilian nuclear power plants, it mainly works to prevent nuclear proliferation. The IAEA was responsible for inspections in Iraq in 2002–2003, which found no evidence of a secret nuclear weapons programme. It is involved in monitoring Iran's nuclear programme to the extent Iran allows. The IAEA and its Director-General Mohamed El Baradei won the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize, “for their efforts to prevent nuclear energy from being used for military purposes and to ensure that nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is used in the safest possible way.”

In the area of health care, the Geneva-based World Health Organization (WHO) provides technical assistance to improve conditions and conduct major immunization campaigns in poor countries. In the 1960s and 1970s, WHO led one of the great public health victories of all time — the worldwide eradication of smallpox. Today, WHO is a leading player in the worldwide fight to control AIDS, COVID 19 and other viruses.

In agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is the lead agency. In labour standards, it is the International Labour Organization (ILO). UNESCO — the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization — facilitates international communication and scientific collaboration. The UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) promotes industrialization in the Global South.

The Specialized Agencies dealing with technical aspects of international coordination such as aviation and postal exchange have most successful records. For instance, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) allocates radio frequencies. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) sets standards for international mail, while the International Civil Aviation Organization sets binding standards for international air traffic. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) facilitates international cooperation on shipping at sea. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) seeks world compliance with copyrights and patents and promotes development and technology transfer within a legal framework that protects such intellectual property. Finally, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) oversees a world weather watch and promotes the exchange of weather information.

The major coordinating agencies of the world economy are also UN-affiliated agencies. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) give loans, grants, and technical assistance for economic development (and the IMF manages international balance-of-payments accounting). The World Trade Organization (WTO) sets rules for international trade.

Overall, the density of connections across national borders, both in the UN system and through other International Organizations, is increasing year by year. In a less tangible way, people are also becoming connected across international borders through the meshing of ideas, including norms and rules. And gradually the rules are becoming international laws.

15.2.3 UN Programmes

Through the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly oversees more than a dozen major programmes to advance economic development and social stability in poor states of the Global South. Through its programmes, the UN helps manage global North-South relations: it organizes a flow of resources and skills from the richer parts of the world to support development in the poorer parts.

The programmes are funded partly by General Assembly allocations and partly by contributions that the programmes raise directly from member states, businesses, or private charitable contributors. The degree of General Assembly funding, and of operational autonomy from the Assembly, varies from one programme to another. Each UN programme has a staff, a headquarters, and various operations in the field, where it works with host governments in member states.

Several of these programmes are of growing importance. The **UN Environment Programme** (UNEP) became more prominent in the 1990s as the economic development of the Global South and the growing economies of the industrialized world took a toll on the world environment. The UNEP grapples with global environmental strategies. It provides technical assistance to member states, monitors environmental conditions globally, develops standards, and recommends alternative energy sources.

UNICEF is the **UN Children's Fund**, which gives technical and financial assistance to poor countries for programmes benefiting children. Unfortunately, the needs of children in many countries are still urgent, and UNICEF is kept busy. Financed by voluntary contributions, UNICEF has for decades organized U.S. children in an annual Halloween fund drive on behalf of their counterparts in poorer countries.

The **Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees** (UNHCR) is also busy. UNHCR coordinates efforts to protect, assist, and eventually repatriate the many refugees who flee across international borders each year to escape war and political violence. The longer-standing problem of Palestinian refugees is handled by a different programme, the UN Relief Works Agency (UNRWA).

The **UN Development Programme** (UNDP), funded by voluntary contributions, coordinates all UN efforts related to development in poor countries. With about 5,000 projects operating simultaneously around the world, UNDP is the world's largest international agency for technical development assistance. The UN also runs several development related agencies for training and for promoting women's role in development.

Many poor countries depend on export revenues to finance economic development, making them vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices and other international trade problems. The **UN Conference on Trade and Development** (UNCTAD) negotiates international trade agreements to stabilize commodity prices and promote development. Because countries of the Global South do not have much power in the international economy, however, UNCTAD has little leverage to promote their interests in trade. The World Trade Organization has thus become the main organization dealing with trade issues.

Human Rights Council, replacing a Human Rights Commission notorious for including human rights abusers as member states. The new Council has expanded powers and more selective membership.

Other UN programmes manage problems such as disaster relief, food aid, housing, and population issues. Throughout the poorer countries, the UN maintains an active presence in economic and social affairs.

15.2.4 NGOs in the UN System

NGOs role in global governance has been provided under Article 71 of the Charter. The role of NGOs has been increasing over the years in matters of management and governance at the global level. They represent the “conscience” of “the people” in whose name the UN Charter was drafted. They are increasingly exerting their voices on global issues along with other civil society groups. They have been described by Thomas Weiss as a “Third UN”, to complement Inis Claude’s distinction between the *first UN*, consisting of the arenas where member states debate issues and make recommendations and decisions, and the *second UN*, consisting of the UN and specialized agency secretariats. The roles of the *third UN* include advocacy, research, policy analysis, and the promotion of ideas and nowadays even delivery of services at the grassroots level. Its members frequently provide new ideas, advocate new policies, and mobilize public support for UN activities (2009). It may be noted that more than 5000 NGOs are accredited to the UN.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Briefly describe the structure of the UN.

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2) What is the role of specialized agencies in the UN system?

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3) What is meant by the ‘Third UN’?

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15.3 CHANGING NATURE OF THE UN SYSTEM: UN'S ROLE, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

During the last 70 years, the UN is trying to emerge as a global democratic organization (rather than government) to address the socio-economic problems of the 'Peoples of the United Nations'. The term 'democracy' does not appear in the UN Charter either as a condition of membership or as a goal of the UN. Yet, the ideal of democratic governance underpins much of the UN's contemporary work. When the UN was founded, in addition to being an alliance against aggression, it was founded on the belief that stable, peaceful conditions within states would underpin peaceful and stable relations between them. Moreover, the Charter was written in the name of "We the Peoples of the United Nations", rather than in the name of High Contracting Parties. The UN Charter did have the seeds of democracy in its text, as like any democratic state it wanted the well-being of entire mankind. Article 55 of the UN Charter spells out details of its resolve to work for socio-economic development of human beings.

The UN's democratic engagement can be explained by documenting its work in many ways. The following points may be noted:

- 1) Although most people associate the United Nations with the issues of peace and security, the vast majority of the Organization's resources are devoted to advancing the *Charter's* pledge to "promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development" (Article 55 of the UN Charter) for "we the people of the United Nations." United Nations development efforts have profoundly affected the lives and well-being of millions of people throughout the world. Guiding the UN endeavours is the conviction that lasting international peace and security are possible only if the economic and social well-being of people everywhere is assured.
- 2) Many of the economic and social transformations that have taken place globally since 1945 have been significantly affected in their direction and shape by the work of the United Nations. As the global centre for consensus-building, the UN has set priorities and goals for international cooperation to assist countries in their development efforts and to foster a supportive global economic environment. The UN has provided a platform for formulating and promoting key new developmental objectives on the international agenda through a series of global conferences. It has articulated the need for incorporating issues such as the advancement of women, human rights, sustainable development, environmental protection and good governance into the development paradigm. Over the years, the world view of development has changed. Today, countries agree that sustainable development – a development that promotes prosperity and economic opportunity, greater social wellbeing while remaining environmentally sustainable, and protection of the environment – offers the best path forward for improving the lives of people everywhere. Today the UN provides food and assistance to 80 million people in 80 countries, supplies vaccine to millions of the world's children and helps save 3 million lives a year, and assists and protects 67.7 million people fleeing war, famine and persecution.

It fights extreme poverty, helping improve the lives of more than one billion people. It supports maternal health, helping over 1 million women a month overcome pregnancy risks.

- 3) At their Millennium Summit in 2000, member states adopted the 'Millennium Declaration', which contained a set of wide-ranging goals for the future course of the UN. The Declaration was translated into a roadmap that included eight time-bound and measurable goals to be reached by 2015, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs aim to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and the empowerment of women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development.
- 4) In September 2015, world leaders adopted the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda officially came into force on 1 January 2016, marking a new course for the UN towards ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all by 2030. Three other accords adopted in 2015 play critical roles in the global development agenda: the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the *Sendai Framework* on disaster risk reduction.
- 5) One of the greatest achievements of the UN is its role in the field of decolonization. It gave inspiration to millions of Africans and Asians people, who were under colonial rule, to claim the right of self-determination and independence. When the UN was founded in 1945, 80 of the present UN members were colonies. The UN helped many of them, having 750 million people, to achieve independence. With this development, the International Relations have been democratized.
- 6) As a democratic state is usually successful in resolving domestic conflicts, the UN does the same job at the international level. The UN has an impressive record of resolving many international conflicts. U.N. peacekeepers have, since 1945, undertaken over 60 field missions and negotiated 172 peaceful settlements that ended regional conflicts. Right now, peacekeepers are in 20 hot spots around the world trying to save lives and avert wars. Today the UN keeps peace with 104, 000 peacekeepers in 14 operations around the world.
- 7) One of the most significant achievements of the UN is the creation of a comprehensive body of human rights law – a universal and internationally protected code to which all nations can subscribe and all people aspire. It has defined a broad range of internationally accepted rights, including civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights. It has International Bill of Human Rights (consisting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, and the two International Covenants on civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, 1966). Besides the International Bill of Rights, it has adopted nearly 80 human rights treaties or declarations. It has also established mechanisms to promote and protect these rights and to assist states in carrying out their responsibilities.

- 8) It is gratifying to note that more international law has been created through the UN in the last seven decades than in the entire previous history of mankind. It has made major contributions towards expanding 'the rule of law' among nations through the codification of international law.
- 9) A new doctrine of R2P (the Responsibility to Protect) was endorsed by all UN Members at the 2005 world Summit in order to address its four key concerns: to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The principle of R2P is based upon the underlying premise that sovereignty entails a responsibility to protect all populations from mass atrocity crimes and human rights violations. This doctrine was originally proposed in 2001 by the independent International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. R2P was developed to replace the much-abused concept of "humanitarian intervention".
- 10) UN's great intellectual contribution, in fact, achievement, has been to develop new ideas, analysis, and policymaking in the economic and social arenas. UN's thinking and ideas in these areas have had a major positive impact on the politics and governance of many countries. These ideas have helped UN Members to frame issues at global and national forums. Let us describe here some of these ideas/concepts. Since its founding, the UN has given birth to new concepts, like, "human rights", "human development", "human security", "sustainable development", "gender equality", and so on. Let us elaborate here just one concept, i.e. sustainable development. It must be noted that UN developed a more integrated approach and defined sustainable development as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable development requires us to conserve more and waste less. In industrialized nations, many people live beyond nature's means. For example, one person in a very rich country uses as much energy as 80 people in a very poor country. Overconsumption leads to waste, which pollutes our environment and uses our resources.
- 11) The regular biennial budget of the UN for 2016-2017 was \$5.4 billion, which pays for UN activities, staff and basic infrastructure. For peacekeeping, the budget for the year 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 was \$ 7.87 billion. In comparison, every year the world spends nearly \$2 trillion on military expenditure. **Peace is far cheaper than war and a good value for money. (The Essential UN, 2018)**
- 12) UNHCR is one of the world's foremost humanitarian organizations during some of the most serious displacement crisis in decades. Today's conflicts have led to a huge rise in UNHCR's activities as the number of people displaced rose from 38 million in 2005 to over 65 million in 2017.
- 13) The UN's multifarious activities include many things. It works with 195 nations to keep the global temperature rise below 2°C/3.6 F. It tackles the global water crisis affecting over 2 billion people worldwide. It coordinates the US \$24.7 billion appeals for the humanitarian needs of 145 million people. It uses diplomacy to prevent conflicts and assists some 50 countries a year with their elections.

- 14) UN's success can be gauged from the fact that 12 Nobel Peace Prize have been awarded to it, its specialized agencies, programmes and staff. This included an award in 1988 to the UN Peacekeeping Forces, and in 2001 to the UN and its Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.
- 15) The Security Council established two international criminal tribunals to prosecute those responsible for war crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda during the 1990s. Following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001, the Council established its Counter-Terrorism Committee to help States increase their capacity to combat terrorism.

All the great expectations from the UN have not been realized. Many failures and challenges are haunting the organization. All of them cannot be recapitulated here. But some of them can be recalled here especially its failure to maintain international peace. Member States accuse the Security Council of being arrogant, secretive and undemocratic but the veto powers resist change. Meanwhile, violations of the UN Charter obligations by powerful countries continue to erode the effectiveness of the United Nations. Excessive use/ misuse of veto is cited as the reason for the ineffective UN. Look at the titles of three books on the UN: Ramesh Thakur titled his edited book, *Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*; Roberts and Kingsbury titled their edited book, *United Nations, Divided World*; and Kate Seaman titled her book, *UN-Tied Nations – The United Nations Peacekeeping and Global Governance* (2014). These titles speak volumes about UN failures and challenges. To make the UN system more relevant and robust there is need to democratize and reform it.

In 2004, former Israeli ambassador to the UN, Dore Gold, in his book *Tower of Babel: How the United Nations Has Fuelled Chaos* (2005), criticized what he called the organization's 'moral relativism' in the face of (and occasional support of) genocide and terrorism that occurred between the moral clarity of its founding period and the present day. The inability of the UN to prevent conflicts in the 21st century, e.g. the most prominent and dramatic example of the war in Darfur in 2003, is the best case in point. In Darfur war, in which Arab Janjaweed militias, supported by the Sudanese government, committed repeated acts of ethnic cleansing and genocide against the indigenous population. Thus far, an estimated 400,000 civilians have been killed in what is the largest case of mass murder in the history of the region, yet the UN has continuously failed to act against this gross violation of human rights. Since the Sudanese government refused to receive UN peacekeeping force the UN has been forced to outsource some of its peacekeeping to such regional organizations as the African Union. Due to Darfur conflict, at least 2 million refugees fled. Talk of genocide and comparisons to Rwanda in 1993-94 were rampant (Hanhimaski, 2007).

Nonetheless, the failures of the UN should be seen as the failures of its members. The UN is only a mirror of world politics, which the sovereign states enact. UN is like a tool in the hands of its members; they may use it for their benefit or refuse to take advantage of this unique and only global tool available for member states. Instead of blaming the UN (i.e. the 'second' and the 'third' UN) for its failures, we should blame the 'first' UN (composed of its members). One should always recall former Secretary-General Dag

Hammaraskjold’s remark when he said speaking to the Foreign Policy Association in New York: **“The United Nations was not created to take humanity to heaven but to save it from hell”.**

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is the contribution of the UN in protecting and promoting human rights?

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2) What are the objectives of Sustainable Development Goals of 2030?

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15.4 DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE UN SYSTEM

The UN has been engaged in democratizing its System. At the outset, let us discuss what we mean by ‘democratization’. Former Secretary-General, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, defines “democratization as a process which leads to a more open, more participatory, less authoritarian society. Democracy is a system of government which embodies, in a variety of institutions and mechanisms, the ideal of political power based on the will of the people” (1996). According to Boutros-Ghali, there is a growing interest and demand among member states in the democratization of the UN. At the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly held from 22-24 October 1995 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the UN, nearly every speaker, including 128 Heads of State or Government addressed this important issue.

Member States accuse the Security Council of being arrogant, secretive and undemocratic but the veto powers resist change. Meanwhile, violations of the UN Charter by powerful countries continue to erode the effectiveness of the United Nations. Therefore, a call for democratizing the UN began with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Since the meeting of the Heads of Government of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, a global debate on the restructuring of the UN System has begun. Many proposals have been made in this regard. The main objective of such reform proposals is to make the UN, especially its Security Council, more democratic, efficient and adaptable to the changing international milieu. Since the UN responsibilities

and concerns are world-wide and are now expanding to virtually every conceivable area of human activity, it is imperative to re-design the UN structure so that it can meet the challenges of the 21st century.

One of the suggestions included that the Security Council (SC) should be expanded from 15 to 23 or 24, out of which 5 should be additional permanent members – two industrialized countries (Japan and Germany), and three large developing countries (Brazil, India and Nigeria). Names of South Africa, Egypt are also discussed for permanent membership of the Council. More than 25 years have passed since the debate of expanding Security Council began, no consensus has emerged among veto possessed P5 (five policemen of the world) to come to any conclusion, as they enjoy special status currently. They are not agreeing for Security Council expansion to include emerging nations to be part of the executive body of the UN. Resolving the issue has proved impossible till now. There is no agreement on what process or formula should be used to determine who would get new permanent seats. There are three likely African candidates for permanent membership (Nigeria, Egypt, and South Africa). Countries (such as Pakistan) know that a rival (such as India) is more likely to be a candidate tends to oppose adding any permanent seats. Thus, Italy opposes a seat for Germany, and Argentina challenges Brazil's candidacy. The US endorsed India for a permanent seat in 2010; China has opposed seats for both India and Japan. The Chinese position explains how the interests of all P5 states prevent Security Council reform. China champions Latin American and African participation as indicative of its support for developing countries but opposes more participation from Asia. Not surprisingly, China opposes any reforms linked to democratization. In short, China prefers to keep the size of the Council small, to maintain its veto for historic reasons, and to be the sole representative of a major continent.

It may be recalled that in advance of the World Summit in 2005, Kofi Annan and several member states pressed hard to get a resolution passed. Four countries, the G-4, that have quietly campaigned for permanent seats in the SC – Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil – went public on the issue in an effort to line up votes. This Group of Four suggested a 24 member SC, including six permanent seats, four of which would be reserved for them. The African Union supported a different plan, adding eleven seats, two of which would be reserved for Africa. Still another group of middle powers – including Italy and Pakistan, proposed a 25 member SC with 10 rotating seats. The US has not taken a position on the veto for any new members.

There is an alternative view which argues that the objective of SC reform should be to make it more 'representative' rather than more 'democratic'. Commonly the claim that the SC should be more representative means affording greater representation to certain categories of historically unrepresented states. There is merit in this view. Contemporary geopolitical realities will reflect if the composition of SC is expanded. The world population and the GDP of the emerging states should be represented in the Council's permanent and semi-permanent members. The SC should not only reflect greater diversity but also should give place to underrepresented regions, such as the Americas, Asia, and Africa. It must be recalled that only six countries from Asia and Africa were founding members of the UN, but they now make up more than half of the UN membership. Therefore, the claim of these Afro-Asian states is very strong to be ignored.

In short, there is no agreement precisely because the issue of representation in the Security Council is so important. As Edward C. Luck, pointed out:

It involves profound and persistent divisions about which and how many countries should sit around the table, whether permanent status should be extended; what the balance among regions and groups should be; whether the veto should be retained, modified, or eliminated; how decisions should be made; and whether its working methods should be further refined The very fact that none of this has been resolved . . . testifies . . . to the divergent perspectives and interests among member states, and to the value capitals place on the work of the Council (2005).

Despite the frustration and disappointment in some quarters when the 2005 discussion came to nought, the issue persists. “It would be a grave error for those who think that Security Council reform will go”, Nirupam Sen of India said. “They believe it would be like the Cheshire cat, where you have the smile without the cat, but they will find that the cat has nine lives” (The New York Times, Nov 2005). The lesson is that formal reforms such as this are difficult to achieve and likely to take a long time. However, some administrative reforms were carried out by trimming the Secretariat during the tenures of Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon.

15.5 THE FUTURE OF THE UN SYSTEM

The future of the UN System depends on its ability to adapt itself to address the complexities of the changing world and the issues confronting the peoples of the world. It goes without saying that this adaptability is possible only when UN members work in tandem to revitalize the UN System. Let us mention here the report of the High-Level-Panel of sixteen eminent persons appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and distributed on 2 December 2004. This report has identified seven important weaknesses of the United Nations including:

- Loss of vitality by the General Assembly.
- The Security Council will need to be proactive in the future.
- A major institutional gap in addressing countries under stress and countries emerging from conflict.
- The Security Council has not made the most of the potential advantages of working with regional and sub-regional organizations.
- There must be new institutional arrangements to address the economic and social threats to international security.
- There is a need for a more professional and better organized Secretariat.

During recent years a lot has been done to address these weaknesses and to revitalize the United Nations as well as to fight injustice and inequalities, international terror and crime, and to protect the environment on our globe. It must be noted that the United Nations’ Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1), as well as recommendations in the Report of the High-Leveled-Panel, were developed during long months of talks and consultations reflecting the views of world leaders, scholars and interested people.

Unless the UN undergoes a thorough reform, it may not be able to meet the great demands it faces in the service of mankind. This Unit presents ideas and suggestions intending to increase the efficiency of the United Nations in solving current international problems including the reform of the Security Council and restoration of its role in world affairs. The reform should strengthen decision-making, implement multilateral arrangements, improve the United Nations ability to undertake collective action and resist unilateral tendencies to use force without Security Council authorization. In our view, two amendments to the UN Charter in honouring Article 3 seem to be most relevant: the enlargement of the Security Council; and a considerable restriction of the right to veto.

Moreover, the composition of the Security Council should reflect both the political changes since World War II and the contribution of the States to the activity of the United Nations. It would be vital and logical to increase the number of permanent seats on the Council by one State each from Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well as by Japan and Germany.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is the focus of the current debate on restructuring the UN system?

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15.6 LET US SUM UP

The UN represents the only and truly a global intergovernmental organization to serve the people of the world by maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations on the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and by promoting universally their human rights. It has been providing a global forum to member nations for harmonizing their actions for attaining their common ends. Over the years, due to the Cold War and (dis)United Nations, its role in maintaining international peace and security is far from gratification. However, its role in encouraging decolonization, promoting socio-economic development and addressing problems of poor people in global South has been remarkable. These achievements are the result of coordinated efforts of the “first UN”, which it undertakes in collaboration with the “second and third UN”. The full potentials of the UN can be achieved if the Organization is reformed and democratized. Demands for expansion of the Security Council to reflect geopolitical realities of the contemporary world are advocated by newly emerging states from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Unless the UN adapts itself to the changing realities of the world, it cannot come of age and ensure a bright future for itself.

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15.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) The UN has six main organs (the General Assembly, the Security Council, ECOSOC, The Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, the Secretariat. There are also a host of specialised agencies and programmes.
- 2) United Nations Specialized Agencies are autonomous organizations working with the UN and each other. They may or may not have been created by the UN but they are incorporated into the UN system.
- 3) It refers to large number of civil society organisations providing new ideas, advocate new policies and mobilise public support for UN activities.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) It has helped in the creation of a comprehensive body of human rights law- the UDHR, two international covenants on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and several declarations and resolutions to protect and promote human rights.
- 2) SDGs focus on ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Current debate on restructuring of the UN system is focused on making the Security Council more democratic, efficient and adaptable to the changing international milieu

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