
UNIT 15 PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHANGING WORLD ORDER

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Meaning and Dimensions of a New World Order
 - 15.2.1 Summary of Different Perspective
- 15.3 The Realist Perspective
- 15.4 The Liberal Perspective
- 15.5 The Marxist Perspective
- 15.6 The Perspective of Different Countries
 - 15.6.1 The American Perspective
 - 15.6.2 The European Perspective
 - 15.6.3 The Chinese Perspective
 - 15.6.4 The Russian Perspective
 - 15.6.5 The Developing Countries' Perspective
- 15.7 The Current Situation and Future Prospects
- 15.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.9 Key Words
- 15.10 Some Useful Books
- 15.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

15.0 OBJECTIVES

The break up of the Socialist bloc and the disintegration of Soviet Union, have an impact on world under. What are features of this new world order, how do different Schools of thought and actors on the international stage perceive this order. This unit deals with these questions. After going through this unit you should be able to

- explain the meaning and dimension, of the New World Order.
- identify the realist, liberal and Marxist perspectives on NWO, and
- recognise the broad perspectives of important actor, on the New world Order.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

It was President George Bush of the United States of America who began to first speak of a "new international order" at what was thought to be the successful conclusion of the Gulf War. The obvious questions that first come up are : what is a world order and what is new about it? Generally, a world order would describe the arrangement in which international relations are organised and carried out and so, a new world order would mean that a new such arrangement has come about, which is different from that which preceded it. More specifically, when we say that the present era is one which is characterised by a new world order, we mean that the old order, which was based on a bipolar division of the world as result of the Cold War, which characterized and overshadowed international regulations and global politics, has gone.

It was the disintegration of the Socialist Bloc in 1989 and subsequently the break up of the Soviet Union which finally and formally brought an end to the bipolar world order. Only after these developments, it came to be heard and read with increasing frequency that a New World Order (NWO) had come into existence. This term should not be taken to mean that there is a new system of international relations. Like the old world order, the NWO also continues to rest on the foundations of the sovereign state system which has been in place since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The NWO, born around 1991 suggests something else : that significant changes have come about in the structure of power relations in the world.

15.2 MEANING AND DIMENSIONS OF A NEW WORLD ORDER

At its core, the NWO suggests, first, that the rankings of the major actors or in other words, the order of importance of the various states have changed significantly and, therefore, the distribution of power in the world has also changed. More importantly, not only have the rankings changed but some states have vanished, while new ones have come into being. To give some examples : The Soviet Union no longer exists – instead there are fifteen new republics; Germany has reunified and there are strong prospects of the two Koreas – North and South – coming together in the future, Yugoslavia has experienced tremendous ethnic conflicts and appears to be fragmented into nearly five states. In addition to these developments, far-reaching systemic changes have come about in some other countries. For example, the states of the Socialist bloc have replaced the communist party rule with western style multiparty democratic systems.

There are several other factors which have greatly changed the system of power in the NWO. As mentioned earlier, although the sovereign state system continues to be the foundation of international relations, this sovereign state has to deal with a number of factors which have greatly transformed the nature of its functioning. Moreover, national boundaries are no longer posing any barriers to intervention of different kinds, even though nationalism is becoming a strong force in many parts of the world. Large Trans national Corporations (TNCs) with global strategies distribute resources for gaining more and more profit. Technologies and weapons of mass destruction are slowly spreading across borders – the collapse of the Soviet Union, in fact, removed one of the factors which had checked the spread of nuclear weapons in the old world order, i.e., tight Soviet technological controls and influence over its constituent states. Other global forces which greatly challenge the powers of the sovereign state are – the drug trade, terrorism, the spread of AIDS and environmental problems like global warming. In the NWO, international relations are going to be dominated by thinking about collective efforts to tackle these global problems.

Everybody therefore agrees that the world has changed – but the meaning and interpretation of these changes differ greatly across the world. Both these developments and their analyses are being done differently by different countries, depending upon their situation, ranking in the world order, and the degree to which they have been affected by these changes. In fact, in this unit, as we make a survey of the different perspectives on the NWO, we will see how fundamentally different assessments and points of view emerge and how different is the perception of the nature of the changes and how they see the kind of future that is shaping now.

15.2.1 Summary of Different Perspective

In the United States, there was a feeling of having won the Cold War and together with it, a sense of relief that the Soviet Union was, as it were, exhausted by the struggle. In Europe, there is a sense of opportunity, of regaining lost power and reassuming a larger role, a greater leverage, in world affairs. In China, as well, there is also a sense of opportunity, but this is mixed with a sense of isolation as the number of the Communist states becomes less and less and as the United States tries to play a more and more dominating role. In Russia, the erstwhile Soviet Union, there is a lot of confusion. While many view the developments as a victory of the struggle for freedom, on the other hand, they lost the Cold War. In the majority of the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, there is none of the optimism about the future. For these countries in the developing world, there seems to be very little that has changed in the New World Order. First of all, the rankings of these states stayed the same, or in some cases, become worse – they were at the bottom before; they are at the bottom now. Furthermore, what little aid these countries could expect for their socio-economic development, is now lessened by the flow of funds to the former USSR and countries of Eastern Europe for their reconstruction. Thus we see that there are very different assessments of the changes all around.

The end of the bipolar world has led many to argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union has left the world with one dominant power – the United States, and so, it is not multipolarity but unipolarity which is the basis of the NWO. They point out that the five powers i.e. United States, Europe, Japan, Russia and China, are not equally balanced : Russia will continue to suffer from economic problems as it carries on with its reforms, China is still a developing country despite its impressive growth, Europe, although equal to the US in economic and human resources, does not have the necessary political unity to act as a single power, and Japan, although economically and technologically superior is limited in the military field. But this argument has been criticized by some on the ground that what we are witnessing in the NWO is an era of multipolarity, where the world order rests on a balance of five roughly equal powers. This is because, in today's world, it is not political or military power, but economic power which is increasingly determining the status of a country in the world order. In the economic field, there is no one single power which can dominate over the others.

15.3 THE REALIST PERSPECTIVE

From the perspective of the Realist School of International Relations, there is definitely a New World Order, but it did not begin with the Gulf War. For the realists, it is not 'justice', but the distribution of power among states that is the determining feature of a world order. Therefore, it was with the collapse of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe in the autumn of 1989, that the New World Order came into being. The rapid decline of the Soviet Union led to the end of the bipolar world which had provided a certain stability to the world and had persisted for nearly half a century. Certainly, the old world order had provided a stability of a kind. While the Cold War generated and fuelled a number of Third World conflicts, if not actual wars, involving the two super powers on either side, by proxy, but economic conflicts among the United States, Europe and Japan were kept in check by common concerns regarding the Soviet military threat. Bitter ethnic divisions in Eastern Europe for example, were kept under a tight lid by the Soviet presence there. (It is often argued that if the Socialist bloc had not disintegrated, Yugoslavia would not have become the hotbed of conflict that it is now.) In fact, a number of Third World conflicts were averted or shortened when

the superpowers feared that their clients might drag them to the point of a nuclear confrontation. The various Arab-Israeli conflicts were, for example, brief. In fact, some experts believe that a stronger Soviet Union would never have allowed its Iraqi client to invade Kuwait. If so, contrary to what some American analysts believe, Kuwait can be seen as a victim, rather than the cause of the NWO.

15.4 THE LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE

Some analysts see the collapse of the bipolar world and the end of the Cold War as the victory of liberal capitalism and the end of the large ideological divides which were responsible for the great international conflicts of this century. This was the "end of history" thesis, propounded by Francis Fukuyama, according to which there is now no single, great competitor to liberal capitalism, in ideological terms. International relations have thus, to that extent, become more simplified because it is a single, unified world system that we live in today. The illusion, that there was a separate socio-economic system in the process of construction, has been destroyed—and a unification of world politics is underway. Various factors have promoted this tendency, the globalization of capital, the industrialization of many areas of the third world, large scale movements of people from poor to rich countries and the development of transcontinental communication networks. However, this view is not without its drawbacks.

There are many people within the liberal framework who point out that the collapse of communism has brought about a situation where there are now a great many sources of international conflict. Liberal capitalism has many competitors now, although they are fragmented and divided. For example, the indigenous neo-Maoism of Peru's Shining Path guerrilla movement; the many varieties of Islamic fundamentalism and the rise of ethnic nationalism.

15.5 THE MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

There are great many variants in the Marxist perspective on the NWO and each of them is an extremely complex attempt to come to terms with the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But there are certain core features which could be said to constitute this view. First of all, the collapse of the Socialist bloc and the Soviet Union has been a major blow to the Marxist paradigm since it is interpreted by the West as the end of any kind of socialist alternative to capitalism. But Marxists believe that this is not the end of socialism – rather it an opportunity to once again gather strength, get rid of the distortions that had plagued socialism and emerge with a better alternative. They believe that the fundamental injustices of the capitalist system – exploitation is inequity – will ultimately create the conditions for its downfall.

Check Your Progress 1

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

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What is the meaning of a NWO and what is new about it?

.....

.....

.....

- 2) What are the major theoretical perspectives on the NWO and what is the major difference between them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

15.6 THE PERSPECTIVE OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Before we begin to outline the different perspectives, it must be kept in mind that what we are going to examine is the official or governmental perspective on the NWO and not the views of intellectuals, theorists, scholars or individual political leaders. There is often such a diversity of views prevailing within a single country, which is also very often conflicting with each other, that it would be impossible to put them all down. We must also understand that there would be differences among the different countries of regions such as Europe or the developing areas – and again it would require a book to explain each country's position, or every individual viewpoint. What we are attempting to do is to broadly categorize the different perspectives according to the common interest that prevail among different countries, and these interests are largely economic, political and cultural.

15.6.1 The American Perspective

From the American point of view, there is only one Superpower in the world now, i.e., the United States, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar world order. The US has therefore to perform a leading role in this post Cold War World, which involves (a) preserving international stability and (b) leading a world wide movement for democracy. Both these objectives (which are criticized for being contradictory in nature) are based on the belief that the US can do what it likes, without fear of any serious opposition, because there is no Soviet Union and because Europe is largely an ally of the US. America's leading role also arises from the fact that it is the only country with the necessary military, diplomatic, political and economic power. But the US also realizes that such a unipolar system will not last for long because the international system has always been characterised by instability and dynamism, so that changes are recurring all the time. The end of the Cold War does not mean that this characteristic of instability has also come to an end and the US knows that the other members of the international community are not going to automatically agree with everything the US wishes to do. In fact, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which was the common enemy of the West European countries and the US for so long, the differences among the latter are coming out into the open. So the US will have to keep this in mind. But on the whole, on major international issues, both the US and West European countries tend to adopt broadly similar positions – particularly where common economic and strategic interests are involved.

15.6.2 The European Perspective

The Maastricht Treaty which was formally enforced on November 1, 1993, brought into being the long awaited European Union. But despite this apparently big step towards European integration, it must be remembered that there are major

differences among the countries of Western Europe on many fundamental issues, which reveals the absence of a genuine political will towards closer integration and also shown that beneath the efforts for a Union, strong nationalistic feeling continue to exist. Therefore, it is obvious that there are going to be differences in the perspectives of these countries as regards the NWO. In general, the collapse of the Soviet Union was seen in terms of a victory of the Western bloc in the Cold War, but the disintegration of the Socialist bloc fundamentally transformed the political and security environment in Europe.

With the removal of the factor that had kept them strongly united, the other important interests came into prominence, and it was now possible to pursue those interests more freely. After unification, Germany has emerged as the predominant force of Europe at the global level and a united, strong and economically powerful Germany has generated fears among the others. The countries of Europe are unevenly matched economically, they have major differences in the area of foreign and defence policies and there are historical problems also. However, a broad area of convergence of interests exists and it can be said to constitute the core of the European perspective : they see the need to coordinate efforts to promote the market economy in Eastern Europe and thus assist the process of incorporating the erstwhile Socialist bloc into the world capitalist system, to keep the national and ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe under control and prevent the influx of the large number of refugees into their countries. In this manner, the perspective of the European countries is mainly Europe-centered. And as the economic disparity between the North and South widens, Europe needs to coordinate its position on the debt issue, on trade and aid problems and the matter of nuclear proliferation.

15.6.3 The Chinese Perspective

The Chinese view of the NWO is a rather ambivalent one – in the sense that it has elements of both optimism and pessimism. They agree on the whole that the old order has come to an end, but believe that a NWO has yet to take shape. In other words, we are going through a process of transition. While the international situation is more relaxed, factors threatening world peace and causing tension have not been removed completely. While some old problems have disappeared, new ones have cropped up, which could become destabilizing forces in future. For example, the Middle East Question remains unresolved after the Gulf War and the peace talks between Israel and the Arab countries are likely to be long and difficult process. Ethnic problems in some European countries are threatening to take on very serious proportions and the gap between the rich and poor countries is increasing. In other words, the present situation is at a vital turning point. On the whole, while it is not a unipolar world, we are moving in a direction of multipolarity and in order that the new structures and institutions contribute to peace and development, the NWO should be established on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the **Panchsheel**, the core of which is non-interference in each other internal affairs. More importantly, the people and governments of all countries are entitled to adopt the social and political system and ideology of their own choice, keeping in view their national conditions. This perspective is clearly shaped by China's circumstances and requirements. Internally, China is undergoing a lot of changes and she realizes that her modernization process will take a long time. In that context, she shares some concerns with the developing countries. China is also being pressured by the US and the West on issues of human rights and opening up of the Chinese market. Yet it is an important power in the world today.

15.6.4 The Russian Perspective

As mentioned earlier, from the Russian point of view, the end of the bipolar world order was both a failure and a victory. On balance, the Russian perspective is predominately inward-looking and the concerns are mainly domestic since the crucial question for Russia is the fate of democracy and market reforms in the country on the one hand and the management of conflict in the CIS on the other hand. Priority is therefore given to the fulfillment of its national interests which means that all efforts would be concentrated on making a success of the free market economy, the privatisation and liberalisation of the entire economy, which would mean carrying out some extremely unpopular measures as well. To that end, there is a greater involvement in international organisations such as the IMF, the World Bank and GATT, and also actively relating to various regional organisations. Russian leaders are keen to establish Russia as a reliable and predictable partner in the international community and they believe that Russia will not cease to be a great power, even if it is no longer a superpower. Russia's global aims – disarmament and limitation of the arms race to release greater funds for socio-economic reforms and development – would be given due importance as also normalization of relations with the US, Japan and Europe.

15.6.5 The Developing Countries' Perspective

From the perspective of the developing world, the NWO has brought about a different division of the world into sharper focus. Whereas earlier, it was essentially ideological – between the capitalist West and the Communist East, now the divide is between the rich North and the poor South. And as the NWO takes more concrete shape, the iron curtain will be replaced by an economic curtain, leading to an increasing marginalisation of the poorest countries. The fear that prevails is that international relations would once again come to be dominated by Euro-Centrism, which had been kept in check by the bipolar structure and the Cold War. Some people point out that the need for raw materials and oil (which is possessed by the developing countries) will ensure that the South is not ignored or neglected too much, but in real terms, these countries would not be able to play an effective or important role in the NWO. The disintegration of the Socialist bloc has also led to a situation where the bulk of aid and trade is now being concentrated on the countries of Eastern Europe, since the overall economic and political stability of Europe is of greater concern. Consequently, humanitarian aid to the developing world would be greatly reduced. Not only that, greater conditions will be imposed on the aid given to the South, such as allowing free access to TNCs, severe limits on the amount of energy used for developmental projects, strict lowering of birth rates, interference in the domestic politics and imposition of Western style of democracy and multiparty politics, the introduction of a free market economy and selective transfer of technology, most of which is outdated and irrelevant. The developing countries also believe that greater priority will be given to global issues of vital importance to the rich North – such as environmental problems, human rights and nuclear proliferation. The need of the hour is a strong and united organisation, both at the regional level as well as within the developing world as a whole, to push for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), New International Political Order (NIPO) and New International Information Order (NIIO) as well as to transform the United Nations into a stronger and more effective organisation. On the whole, given the controversial and conflicting relations among the countries of the South, the outlook is not very promising.

Check Your Progress 2

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

ii) Check your answer with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What are the main differences in the American and European perspective on the NWO?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Describe the special features of the Chinese view point and the perspective of the developing countries.

.....

.....

.....

.....

15.7 THE CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Thus, we can see that the present situation is anything but clear cut and well defined. There are many uncertainties and a wide variety of circumstances and it is obvious that things will take some time before a clear picture of the NWO can emerge. It may be called a period of transition where trends are indicative of an emerging multipolarity and naturally there are a great many deferences in the approach and perspectives towards the NWO. The future will depend greatly on how the different countries can solve their problems – domestically, bilaterally and multilaterally – and how they can together work for peace and development in the world.

15.8 LET US SUM UP

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the demise of the Cold War have given birth of a New World Order. Now the bipolar world has been replaced by US led Unipolar world. The world is no longer divided into different socio-economic systems. Now the capitalist system has been the dominant force in the world. The local wars and the civil wars that were being fought during the period of previous world order, were generally the anti-imperialist nation liberation wars. They have now been replaced by parochial ethic and religious fundamentalist civil wars or terrorist insurgencies. A new world trade system has come into existence and the World Trade Organisation has been formed. Trade barriers between the sovereign states are being relaxed. Embargoes on free flow of capital are being gradually withdrawn. Free competition and market economy are replacing the system of economy which was being so long dominated by state controlled economy.

15.9 KEY WORDS

| | | |
|---------------------|---|---|
| NWO | : | New World Order |
| TNCs | : | Trans National Corporations |
| AIDS | : | Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| CIS | : | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| GATT | : | General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade |
| Euro-centric | : | A situation where the focus of all policies as well as benefits, is confined to Europe. |

15.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Olson, William C., and Groom, A.J.R., (1991), **International Relation then and Now : Origins and Trends in Interpretation**, Harper Collins Academic, London.
Kurth, James, "The Shape of the New World Order", **National Interest**, 24, Summer 1991.

Roberts, Admn., "A New Age in International Relations", **International Affairs**, 67, 1992, pp. 509-25.

15.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) A new world order implies that the arrangement in which international relations are organised and carried out, has changed. What is new about is, that the old order which was based on the bipolar division of the world has gone and has been replaced by a system in which power relations and hierarchy have undergone changes as well.
- 2) The major theoretical perspectives on the NWO are the Realist, the Liberal and the Marxist. The Realist perspective focuses only on the power factor in international relations and does not pass any judgement on the morality or justice of the relations. The Liberal perspective sees the NWO as victory of Capitalism and the Liberal-capitalist ethnic while the Marxist perspective stresses the inherently unjust nature of the NWO and believes that the internal contradictions of capitalism would soon bring about its destruction.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The American and European perspectives are broadly similar but the major concerns are obviously different. The US obviously sees a global role for itself whereas Europe's concerns are focused more on the continent. The immediate political and security goals of both are also somewhat different; whereas in the economic field, elements of competition are becoming stronger.

- 2) While China and the developing countries also share many similar concerns, the main differences arise out of the relative difference in power and status that they have. As a major power in the world, China has obviously a greater degree of leverage than the poorer and less powerful developing countries, and is less likely to be victim of exploitation and dictation by the developed countries.

NOTES