

4 CHAPTER

International Historical Context and World History for International Relations in the World After the Cold War

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- The ending of Cold War and rise of Global War on Terrorism.
- The conceptual shifts in the trends of international politics post-Cold War
- Key trends in the post-Cold War era

THE WORLD AFTER COLD WAR

As we have noted previously, as the WW-II concluded, a deep suspicion emerged amongst the two superpowers, the USSR and the USA. Both were hostile to each other's ideologies and were determined to ensure the containment of the other. The idea to contain another's ideology brought almost the entire world into the aegis of the two ideologies. The insecurity generated by each created an arms race which eventually transformed into a nuclear arms race. But the Cold War did establish its norms of governance of the international society. One thing was clear, both wanted to contain the other but the containment happened cautiously. Both powers avoided nuclear exchanges despite coming extremely close to the brink of a nuclear war in Cuba in 1962.

As the Cold War ended, one thing was clear: the prospect of the USSR being the sole contender to the power of the US went out of the scene. Similarly, due to USA's presence in West Europe during Cold War, it continued to enjoy their patronage. More so, the military balance was now only in favour of US as no other power remained after 1989 to challenge the US. One can easily assert that this was the time when the US became the sole unipolar superpower. Thus, when the Cold War ended, a new world order dominated by US supremacy was a reality. The USA, throughout the Cold War, had been a champion of human rights, liberal democracy and justice. But when the Cold War ended, there were many countries that had not accepted these values which the US had stood for. Although the US now, at the end of the Cold War, had the power necessary to spread these values amongst these nations, it instead preferred to remain silent in the first decade after the end of the Cold War. After 9/11, when the US voted against the UN to control terror and ended up launching its own Global War on Terror, it irked many nations. The exceptionalism exhibited by the US post 9/11 did not go well with many Third World Nations.

Another factor that erupted as a strain was the reluctance of the US to accommodate

rising economies as instruments of economic governance. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) created after WW-II, was designed to help nations with monetary assistance to remove non-performing threads in an economy. But IMF assistance was conditional for nations and were offered specifically where IMF was allowed to interfere in the domestic affairs of the economy of a country, making many nations feel as if they were dependents or satellites of the IMF.

As far as the United States is concerned, as the Cold War ended, it understood that it has both power and capabilities but to some extent, it was confused with regard to what it should do beyond the expected and necessary demonstrations with respect to democracy and globalisation. Almost till 9/11, it remained a superpower without a mission. The European continent at the end of the Cold War also took steps to integrate further leading to the birth of European Union. It was a predictable integration as they had been steadily witnessing integration even during the Cold War era.

As the US, in the second decade of the post-Cold War era, got militarily occupied in wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), on the East came up a strong superpower, China. China aggressively accelerated its economic recovery and began to emerge a strong economic power in the East. It is only in the third decade at the end of the Cold War today that the US has adequately acknowledged the 'rising China' as a threat to the global hegemony of the US. It has since taken steps to counter the hegemonic rise of China through Trans Pacific Partnership (T.P.P.) and the 'Pivot to Asia' missions.

The world today no doubt witnesses the unipolarity of USA, but many rising nations like China, India, and Russia (after Putin in power) have restored the balance more towards multipolarity. Globalisation will continue to integrate the world and countries have realised non-military means to ensure peace in the system, but how far counter hegemonic initiatives work in restraining nations from the course of war needs to be seen. Also, the world now witnesses multiple new threats in the form of terrorism, poverty, rising inequality and climate change. It is to be seen how the globalised world resorts to solving these.

The challenges in the 21st century require a new form of diplomacy. Some of the challenges like the containment of piracy in Africa, poverty in Asia, nation building in the Middle East are some regional challenges. Arab Spring is throwing up new challenges in the Middle East and it is still an ongoing transformation. Climate change and environment diplomacy is now the next big global challenge where attainment of consensus on the most viable course of action remains missing. The emerging economies are now exerting pressures on institutions established by the west and are asserting force in favour of reforms. A failure to reform institutions like the World Bank and IMF is encouraging the emerging market economies to establish their own regional institutions, for instance, the New Development Bank established by the BRICS countries. All these challenges require a new level of cooperation which is now the main task of the state actors and diplomats globally after the end of the Cold War.

End of Section Questions

1. How different are Medieval Islamic and Christian underpinnings of International society?

2. Examine the concept of International Society propounded by Headley Bull?
3. "The Peace of Westphalia-1648 laid down the foundation of modern international society." Examine?
4. "The Treaty of Versailles contributed to the birth of all conflicts in the world post World War-I." Do you agree?
5. "Nuclearisation of the world after 1945 helped in maintaining a stable Europe." Analyze.
6. "Cuban Missile crisis of 1962 and Berlin Crisis of 1961 brought the world on the brink of a nuclear war." Discuss.
7. Why did the world slip into a Cold War? Examine the cases when the Cold War almost turned into a Hot War?
8. In the post-Cold War World Order, can Russia led by Putin emerge as threat to the West?
9. Keeping in mind the rising Chinese aspirations, can the post-Cold War world order be dominated by China?
10. Is the US President Donald Trump responding to the problem of terrorism strategically?