



# POST-COLD WAR DEVELOPMENTS

Prepared by,  
Mr. Thomas G.M.,  
Associate Professor,  
Pompei College Aikala DK

# Introduction:

- The post-cold war era began immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union and ended on Sept. 11, 2001.
- “With the demise of the cold war the world seems to have been liberated to some extent from the shackles of a debilitating competition.” says Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali.
- This post cold war era has witnessed a number of developments both positive & negative.

# Introduction .....

- Socialist bloc led by Soviet union disintegrated,
- Soviet Union was disintegrated which led to the establishment of a commonwealth of independent nations.
- The Berlin wall stood buried & Germany became a unified single state.
- The days of geo-political contest between capitalists and communist ideologies were over.
- Governments were willing to work together through the UN & other Multilateral Channels to resolve international conflicts.

# Introduction .....

- The USA became the sole surviving superpower & started to play a dominant role in world politics.
- The number of vetoes exercised in the Security Council has reduced dramatically.
- War is losing favour as an instrument of national policy among nation states.
- International economic relations and globalizations came to be a more dominant feature of international relations.

# Post-cold war developments:

- Most important developments that has taken place in the post-cold war may be listed as follows –
  1. Soviet Union & the Post-cold war,
  2. USA & the Post-cold war,
  3. Growing power of the Economic Union,
  4. Growing International terrorism,
  5. The Issue of Nuclear Proliferation,
  6. Stronger role of the UN,
  7. Role of the Non-State Actors,
  8. Emergence of China as a Major power,
  9. Changing role of the NAM,
  10. Globalization,
  11. Building up a new World Order

# I. Soviet Union & the Post-Cold

## War:

- The disintegration of the Soviet Union paved the way for the establishment of a Commonwealth of Independent States(CIS) i.e. an association of 9 independent republics of erstwhile USSR.
- In the place of former Soviet Union, Russia emerged as the successor state.
- The domestic political uncertainty and economic dependence upon the US & other western countries kept Russia weak though it had nuclear weapons.
- The Warsaw pact died a natural death.

## 2. USA & the Post-Cold War:

- After the disintegration of the USSR, USA became the sole surviving superpower.
- It began to dominate the international system in general & Security Council in particular.
- The virtual absence of any power capable of challenging the US power enabled it to play a dominant role in world politics.
- Thus, uni-polarity came to characterize the international system.
- For example, the Gulf war operations were virtually the US operations under the UN flag.
- Several UN decisions were greatly influenced by the US has made the critics to opine that the UNO has been behaving as USO in cases like sanctions against Iraq & measures against Libya, etc.

# 3. Growing power of the Economic Union:

- Another significant development in the post-cold war era is the growing political and economic power of the European Union.
- The adoption of the Euro & expansion of European Union membership to new states has marked a rise in the collective economic influence of Europe as a whole.
- Many claimed that the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be the century of Europe since European model had been attractive as a civilian and moral superpower.
- Even though many members had joined the European Union, there was no European foreign policy. And its independent diplomatic initiatives failed in the Middle East.

## 4. Growing International Terrorism:

- The last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century experienced the emergence of international terrorism in a big way.
- Various forms of terrorism like Cross-border terrorism, Religious terrorism, Fundamentalist terrorism, Narco-terrorism, Jihadi terrorism occurred in the different parts of the world.
- Several terrorist groups were highly organized, actively using the weapons of terror for securing their narrowly conceived goals.
- This menace which posed serious challenges in preserving peace & security in the international society.

# 5. The Issue of Nuclear Proliferation:

- The post-cold war era has not reduced the threat of nuclear weapons.
- No agreement has been reached between the nuclear states & non-nuclear states with regard to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.
- The nuclear powers(P-5) want the non-nuclear states to refrain from making nuclear weapons at the same time they are not ready to give up their nuclear statuses.
- It cannot be taken for granted that those in possession of weapons of mass destruction will act as rationally as the two sides of the cold war did.
- This kind of danger has become significant in the post-cold war era, as there is no arbiter, no ultimate authority for the resolution of the conflicts between the nations.

## 6. Stronger Role of the UN:

- The post-cold war era has witnessed a stronger role of the UN in international relations.
- It played an important role in ending the Gulf crisis resulting from the occupation Kuwait by Iraq.
- It was successful in bringing peace to war torn Cambodia and Afghanistan.
- It has succeeded in bringing peace in the Balkans by getting resolved the ethnic war between Muslim Serbs and Croats of the Former Yugoslavia.
- The number of vetoes exercised in the UN Security Council has come down to a mere 3 times so far in the post-cold war era.
- All states have now realized the importance of UN & its potential as a global agency for peace & security.

## 7. Role of the Non-State Actors:

- Another important trend in the post-cold war era has been the emergence of several powerful non-state actors like NGOs, MNCs, Human Rights Groups, etc.
- These actors often engage in actions which transcend national units, bridging nation states into inter-locking sets of economic, social, political & cultural ties.
- These have been playing a key role in increasing the speed of global inter-dependence.

# 8. Emergence of China as a Major power:

- A series of wars against terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq one after another by the US against Al Qaeda, Taliban, Saddam Hussein & others deeply damaged the image of the US in the international community.
- It caused tension among many key NATO allies and international public opinion went against the US.
- Due to these wars the prosperous economy of the US has slid into recession which badly affected the USA's global political and economic dominance in a big way.
- Along with this relative decline in the USA's global influence, is the simultaneous 'peaceful rise of China'.
- China's economy is growing faster than the US economy. Now, China is playing the role of global moneylender. China is emerging as a new superpower.
- Thus, politically, economically and militarily there is a decline in the USA's influence whereas there is an increase in China's influence which is a significant post-cold war development of the post-cold war era.

# 9. Changing Role of the NAM:

- NAM was relevant in the cold war politics.
- Many critics were of the opinion that the NAM has become irrelevant & obsolete after the end of the cold war as super power rivalry ended.
- However, the advocates of NAM holds that it is still relevant even in the post-cold war era as a global movement as it is in favour of protection of environment, end of protectionism & exploitation in international trade, disarmament and arms control, protection of human rights of all races and peoples, elimination of nuclear weapons, ending of racial discriminations & all sorts of inequalities in contemporary international relations.
- It is a global movement against Neo-colonialism, hegemony, protectionism, inequalities and discriminations and under developments as it is reflected in its recent 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> NAM Summits.

# 10. Globalization:

- The movement for globalization has been currently commanding the increasing attention and interests of nations.
- Globalization means integrating the economy of a country with world economy.
- It is expected to act as a means both for real economic, political and cultural transformation of the world into a global village as well as for securing the objective of sustainable development.
- However, the critics of globalization hold that it is really a corporate agenda for dominating international business and economy.
- Existing global economic recession has been considered as a adverse affect of the globalization process in the world affairs.

# 11. Building up a new World Order:

- According to Henry Kissinger, after the end of the cold war the world is in a disarray.
- Contemporary politicians are so pre-occupied with resolving current tensions and conflicts that they ignore a more ambitious goal, the creation of the new world order.
- New international orders are established as a result of great wars.
- So a new world order has to be established based on peace security and development.

# Conclusion:

- Above are some of the major changes that have taken place in the international order in the post-cold war era.
- In fact it has provided an extra-ordinary opportunities for solving many problems resulting from the tension inherent to a bi-polar world system.
- But unfortunately the end of the cold war created more instability, more security challenges and more sources of international conflict.
- It is time that a new world order based on cooperation rather than conflict is to be created for a lasting world peace.
- The 5 dimensional agenda for the world peace as suggested by Richard A. Falk are -1) Denuclearization, 2) Demilitarization, 3) Depolarization, 4) Development & 5)Democratization.