

The Cold War Era In World Politics

Cold War:

Cold War is a state of tension between two big powers. In contemporary world politics, cold war is referred to the period which emerged after the Second World War. When the Second World War ended, the United States of America (U.S.A) and Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (U.S.S.R) were clearly the masters of the world. They were so far ahead of all the other countries in power and influence that they were called the 'Superpower'. During the Second World War, both USA and USSR along with Britain and France had fought that war together against the Axis powers – Germany, Italy, and Japan. However, as soon as the war got over conflicts and tension started merging between the two super powers. Relations between USA and USSR became cold and deteriorated such an extent that in spite of the absence of direct military conflict between the capitalist and communist camps, there began a mutually opposing political propaganda war fought with newspapers and water paper can on balls.

Cuban Missile Crisis:

The biggest crisis during the cold war arena was the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962. USA in its pursuance to contain communism had even supported certain corrupt right wing governments. One such government was of Batista in Cuba. In 1959, this government was over – thrown by Fidel Castro. To be free of US control, Castro took support of USSR. In 1961, the USA backed an attempted invasion of Cuba at Bay of Pigs. It was at this time in 1962 that US spy planes took photographs of Russian Missile bases in Cuba. Soviet missile in Cuba could have tilted the balance in their favour. The US President John F. Kennedy dared not appear weak in the face of the threat. He told his armed forces to prepare for a nuclear attack on USSR and demanded that Khrushchev withdraw his missiles. As Soviet Ship with missile on board steamed towards Cuba, the world faced the first direct Nuclear Holocaust between the two superpowers.

Conclusion: The Cuban Missile crisis was a high point of what came to be known as the cold war. The cold war referred to the competition, the tensions, and a series of confrontations between the United States and Soviet Union, backed by their respective allies. Fortunately, however, it never escalated into a hot war, that is, a full scale war between these two powers. There were wars in various regions, with the two powers and their allies involved in warfare and in supporting regional allies, but at least the world avoided another global war.

The Emergence of two Power Block:

The two superpowers were keen on expanding their spheres of influence in different parts of the world. In a world sharply divided between the two alliance systems, a state was supposed to remain tied to its protective superpower to limit the influence of the other superpower and its allies.

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The smaller states in the alliances used the link to the superpowers for their own purposes. They got the promise of protection, weapons, and economic aid against their local rivals, mostly regional neighbours with whom they had rivalries. The alliance system led by the two super powers, therefore, threatened to divide the entire world into two camps. Its division happened first in Europe. Most countries of Western Europe sided with the US and those of Eastern Europe joined the Soviet camp. That is why these were also called the 'Western' and the 'Eastern' alliances. The western alliance was formalized into an organization, the North Atlantic treaty organization (NATO), which came into existence in April 1949. It was an association of twelve states which declared that armed attack on any one of them in Europe or North America would be regarded as an Attack on all of them. Each of these states would be obliged to help the other. The eastern alliance, known as the Warsaw pact, was led by the Soviet Union. It was created in 1955 and its principle function was to counter NATO's forces in Europe.

Conclusion: International alliances during the cold war era were determined by the requirements of the superpowers and the calculations of the smaller states.

Challenge to bipolarity:

Cold War had divided the world into two blocs. USA and USSR. The end of Second World War had seen the emergence of a bipolar world haunted by bloc rivalry between the two superpowers. The bipolar world was engulfed by suspicion, hatred, and hostility. At this crucial juncture many countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa, which had suffered the onslaught of colonialism for centuries became independent. These were known as "Third World" States. Most of these countries did not want to join any block or new military alliances as it would have again ended their newly founded freedom. These countries therefore, decided to pursue the path of Non-Alignment for a new international order based on equality and mutual Co-existence. Non-Alignment and New international Economic order (NIEO), therefore, emerged as new challenges to Bipolarity.

(1) Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) challenge to Bipolarity:

Non-Alignment as a movement traces its roots to First Indian premier Jawaharlal Nehru, who gave the Idea of an organization of newly independent states of Africa and Asia in the a radio speech as early as 1946. The Nehruvian Idea of Non-Alignment found favour with certain other newly independent states. These included Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Col Abdul Nasser of Egypt, Sukarno of Indonesia, and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. These five leaders were known as the founders of NAM. The first non-aligned summit was held in 1961 at Belgrade. The Summit was the meeting point of three important factors.

- (a) Cooperation between the five above mentioned states;
- (b) Cooperation in the wake of escalating cold war conflicts and its arena;

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- (c) Dramatic entry of newly independent African States on the globe. In 1960, 16 new African states became the members of U.N.O giving Voice to third world States. The first NAM Summit was held at Belgrade in 1961. It was attended by 25 member states. The Summit took three crucial decisions:
- (d) Not to join any power bloc of the Cold War era.
- (e) To increase cooperation between the third world countries.
- (f) To foster cooperation to reduce Cold War tension.

(2) New International Economic order (NIEO):

Non-aligned Countries acted as mediators during the Cold War era. Most of the Non-aligned states were poor and economically backward. They were therefore known as least developed countries (LDCS). Economic development of these countries was a necessity to preserve their freedom. In the absence of sustained development, these countries could not attain real freedom. They, in fact, would have become dependent upon the colonial powers or rich countries.

It was this situation which gave birth to the Idea of NIEO. The United Nations conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) came out with a report in 1972 entitled towards a New Trade policy on Economic Development. The report suggested for a reformation in the trading system at the global level. Its aim was to:

- (a) Provide control to LDCS over their natural resources exploited by developed western countries.
- (b) Give access in the western market to LDCS so that the latter could sell their products and make trade more beneficial for themselves.
- (c) Western countries should reduce the cost of providing technology to LDCS.
- (d) LDCS should be given a major role in international economic institutions.

In NAM isolationism?

The policy of keeping away from alliances cannot be termed as 'isolationism'. 'neutrality'. Non-Alignment is not isolationism. Isolationism means to keep aloof from global affairs. Isolationism was part of US foreign policy after the American war of independence (1787) till the origin of First World War. In contrast non-aligned countries including India have played an acute and vibrant role in mediating the cause of peace and stability between the two cold war rivals. Their strength stemmed from the need to remain united and their resolve to

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pursue non-alignment despite the attempt by the two hostile camps to take these countries in their alliance system.

Is NAM Neutrality:

Non-Alignment is not neutrality. Neutrality is in principle a condition of not taking sides between two warring parties. European countries pursued such a policy in the 18th century when Britain and France were involved in a conflict for supremacy. States following this policy do not make efforts to end a war. They are not concerned with the casualties of a war. Non-aligned states, including India did not pursue neutrality. In fact they were involved in actual wars for a variety of reason. They tried to prevent war between other nations of the world and initiated efforts to end wars, Non – alignment was, therefore, pursuance of an independent approach in world affairs aiming to promote world peace.

End of Cold War: Is Nam Relevant Now:

Nam involved as a strategy during the cold war period. Thus, with the end of cold war and the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, NAM as a principle of India's foreign policy and as a global movement became somewhat irrelevant. However, this is not true. NAM contained certain core ideas and enduring values. It was premised on the contention that it was a movement of decolonized states who shared a historical affinity and aimed to integrate their force collectively as a single entity at the international level. What it meant was that, small, poor and less developed, states, had no need to follow big power hegemony. They could continue with an independent foreign policy. It was based on the idea to democratize the global system by creating a new world order based on fairness and equality. Problem likes racial discrimination, global warming, North – South cooperation, South – South cooperation, terrorism, violation of human rights and protectionism from core areas of cooperation. These core issues remain relevant even after, the end of cold war and therefore, NAM is still a relevant entity. It is a voice forum for all the suppressed nations to fight collectively against hegemonisation of big powers.

