



The Post Cold War World and the Foreign Policy of India

Dr Shraddha Soral

Lecturer in Political science Govt. Girls College, Sirohi

Post-Cold War Era

For a student of international politics, the period of 1990 to 2010-11 can be classified into two parts: the post-cold war period and the post September 11 period.

The events between 1989 and 1991 brought about the end of the cold war era. “During 1989 and 1990, the Berlin Wall came down; borders opened, and free elections ousted Communist regimes everywhere in Eastern Europe. In late 1991 the Soviet Union itself dissolved into its component republics. With stunning speed, the Iron Curtain was lifted and the Cold War came to an end.”¹ And with it disappeared an international system within the framework of which the countries of the world had framed their foreign policies for the last almost fifty years. There is a lot of discussion about when actually did the Cold War end.² The most noteworthy point of the happenings was that the fall of the Soviet Union as well as the entire Communist bloc was brought about not by external forces but their own internal crisis and system break-up.

This was a period of major upheavals, restructuring as well as retrospection for the entire world. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the other communist states of East Europe caused major civil wars in these areas. These countries had witnessed great economic crisis. Their economies had been under great debts. Not only that, it also became clear that people had been denied basic civil rights and dictatorial regimes wrought with corruption were being run under the façade of communism. There was neither economic nor political well-being. A noteworthy point was that the fighting groups rallied around ethnic identities.

The factors, which brought about the end of the cold war not only caused systemic changes but also changed the connotations of power and security. The communist countries had fallen due to the failure of their economies. The world came to realize that mere military power could not guarantee the security of the country. For a country to be a power it needed to have domestic stability, which could be brought about only by a strong economy.

The whole of Eastern Europe was mired in ethnic wars. Violent clashes occurred between contending groups, which wanted to secede from their parent countries. The fights which were probably economic in their roots had come to assume ethnic forms. Thus Russians, Chechens, Georgians, Kazakhs, Czechs, Slovaks, Serbians all wanted separate countries. While Germany became one, USSR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia disintegrated.³ The entire political map of Eastern Europe changed.

The United States extended its sphere of influence by providing its security umbrella of North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) to Central and Eastern Europe. The new institution was as “an interim arrangement until it was able to fulfil the desire of erstwhile adversaries in Central Europe to join NATO as new members, or got security guarantees from it.”.... “The NACC included all of NATO's former adversaries, and six of the Central Asian and Caucasian Republics, but excluded neutral and non-aligned states. With 38 members, the new organisation made no political decisions but permitted consultation on security related issues and offered opportunities for dialogue with NATO members.”⁴ According to Michael Yahuda, “The division of Europe was no more and the way was open for the expansion of NATO and the widening of the European Union to embrace virtually all states up to the borders of Russia.” He adds further, “The end of the cold war in Europe led to a systemic

¹ <http://americanhistory.si.edu/subs/history/timeline/end/index.html>

² Mueller, John, *When Did the Cold War End?* Prepared for delivery at the 2002 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston (August 29-September 1), Copyright by the American Political Science Association, 2002, Source: <http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/faculty/jmueller/shafapsa.pdf>

³ BBC News, *Bosnia-Herzegovina Timeline*, (accessed on June 8, 2011) Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1066981.stm

⁴ Kumar, Satish, *The Post-Cold War International System: An Indian Perspective*, New Delhi: The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Source: <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-sep-2.html>



transformation as democracy and the market replaced communist rule and the command economy throughout the half of Europe formerly dominated by the Soviet Union.”⁵

In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. According to a BBC Report of the day of the Iraqi attack on Kuwait more than 100,000 Iraqi soldiers backed up by 700 tanks invaded the Gulf state of Kuwait in the early hours. Iraqi forces established a provisional government and their leader Saddam Hussein has threatened to turn Kuwait city into a "graveyard" if any other country dares to challenge the "take-over by force" the report said.⁶ The invasion obviously invited worldwide criticism and condemnation. The United Nations Security Council, in emergency session, called for the "immediate and unconditional" withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, branded the invasion as "absolutely unacceptable" while American president George Bush condemned the attack as "a naked act of aggression."⁷ A UN Security Council Resolution declared the Iraq's annexation of Kuwait null and void. Initially for three month, allied forces were deployed to the region as part of Operation Desert Shield. The Soviet Union stated it would not participate in military action. Iraq was undeterred and ignored all deadlines to vacate Kuwait. *Operation Desert Storm* was launched in January, 1991 which would prove to be the longest air strike in the history of aerial warfare. Iraq in reciprocation used the deadly Scud Missiles against Saudi Arabia and Israel in the attacks. "Fierce fighting continued until 28 February when Iraq, whose military capability had by now been seriously harmed, agreed to a ceasefire."⁸

The Gulf War established the United States of America, which led the coalition forces against Iraq, as the dominant power of the world. On 11 September, 1990, in his speech to the US Congress, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, President George Bush declared. "We stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective—a new world order—can emerge: a new era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony. A hundred generations have searched for this elusive path to peace, while a thousand wars raged across the span of human endeavour. Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we've known. A world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle. A world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice. A world where the strong respect the rights of the weak. This is the vision that I shared with President Gorbachev in Helsinki. He and other leaders from Europe, the Gulf, and around the world understand that how we manage this crisis today could shape the future for generations to come."⁹ The Presidential Speech proves clearly how the sole surviving super –power viewed the emerging world scenario as well as the role it saw for itself in the years to come.

The Gulf War had given to USA and to the world some more concepts, which had come to assume universal acceptance in the world as essential principles of governance of a civilized society but had not been used so much as foreign policy instruments. 'Democracy' and 'Humanitarian intervention' became the buzz-word of hitherto international politics. And USA took upon itself the responsibility of ensuring democratic governance and human rights to every part of the world. The two principles gave America a very convenient garb to justify its intervention in any country of the world. To Bill Clinton goes the credit of bringing this dimension to American Foreign Policy. "In his own keynote speech at the United Nations on September 27, 1993, President Clinton underlined that the 'overriding purpose' of American policy was to expand and strengthen the world's community of market-based democracies."¹⁰ The idea of having democratic systems in every corner of the world became so fanciful with time that an intergovernmental organization with the name of 'Community of Democracies' was established in Poland in June, 2000 with hundred countries from all over the world as its founding members.

Another fact that the Gulf War established in the post-cold war world was that the United Nations would entirely be run according to the wishes of the United States of America. During the cold war days, the world body had become an arena for the two superpowers to settle their scores. With one gone, it has become virtually a puppet in the hands of the other. From here onwards the United States got Security Resolutions passed against countries and leaders it disapproved and barred against those

⁵ Yahuda, Michael, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Routledge, 2011, pp.209

⁶ BBC, '1990: Iraq invades Kuwait (August 2, 1990)', *On This day 1950-2005*, Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/2/newsid_2526000/2526937.stm

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bush, George H. W., *Address Before a Joint Session of Congress* (September 11, 1990) Copyright: Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia, USA. Source: <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3425>

¹⁰ Muni, S. D. , *India's Foreign Policy :The Democracy Dimension*, Cambridge University Press, India Pvt. Ltd. 2009 pp.5



who were its allies. Thus, came in the nomenclature of ‘rogue state’.¹¹ Examples can be seen in the history of the Middle East of the last two decades. While Israel enjoyed the patronage and all UN Resolutions against its human rights violations were vetoed by the US. Iraq and Saddam Hussein invited the ire and all UN Resolutions against it were passed.¹²

The Western capitalist system of the United States of America and Western Europe, popularly known as Free Market economic system or open economic system started gaining momentum and a lot of countries including India underwent major economic structural adjustments resulting in the opening of their economies. The World Trade Organization that came into being at the end of the Uruguay Round of Talks of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1995. The WTO Website describes the organisation as follows, “The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. At its heart are the WTO agreements, negotiated and signed by the bulk of the world’s trading nations and ratified in their parliaments. The goal is to help producers of goods and services, exporters, and importers conduct their business.”¹³ For the developing countries or the countries of the South, the signing of the WTO Accord only meant the further consolidation of the Bretton Woods Institutions. The SAPs were basically to complement the World Trade Organization. The WTO only resulted in their further marginalization. “The WTO trade related global regimes neither had the development goals nor the interests of the developing countries as their inspiration or objective. An underlying message well known during centuries of colonialism and imperialism re-emerged into the open during this period that of the superiority of the North, its models and achievements and indeed its culture and civilization that others should follow and emulate. On the whole the developing countries found their policy space, domestic and external, increasingly circumscribed, an erosion which most perceived as erosion of national sovereignty and shrinking of their hard one political and economic independence.”¹⁴

As the world seemed to integrate and come closer, the idea of global commons and common concern for them also began to gain ground. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, popularly known as the Earth Summit is a reflection of this. The Conference was held after a gap of 20 years after the first Global Environment Conference in Stockholm in 1972. The Rio Conference was very far-reaching and drew an unprecedented attention from people all over the world. “The Summit’s message was transmitted by almost 10,000 on-site journalists and heard by millions around the world.”¹⁵ But the same gap of developed vs. developing or North vs. South had cropped up in the environmental organizations and continues till date. The Doha Round of talks are not being able to be finalized due to the differences between the developed and the developing countries.

The post-cold war also saw a further consolidation of what have been called ‘Denial Regimes’ akin to the Nuclear-Non-Proliferation Treaty. In 1987, The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) which prevents the export of technologies and equipment that could be used to produce missiles with a range beyond 300 km (187 miles) and a payload in excess of 500 kg. (1,102 pounds) was created. In 1992, the export guidelines were amended to cover also any missile capable of delivering chemical and biological weapons. In 1994, the COCOM Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Control (COCOM) was disbanded and was replaced by a successor regime of nuclear denial called Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-use Goods and Technologies. This arrangement targeted a new set of countries located in the Korean Peninsula, the Persian Gulf and South Asia.¹⁶

All we can say about the Indian Foreign policy in this era is that the need of pursuance of national interests has certainly brought a dramatic shift in our alignments. It is difficult to talk about some very consistent principles of our foreign policy in the post-cold war Era. As the world today is full of uncertainties and instabilities, so our foreign policy too misses consistencies. India may be charged with differing between preaching and professing but an introspection does go in the minds of our foreign policy practitioners which has its roots in the Nehruvian principles which we had begun. This is proved by the occasional stands India takes on behalf of the developing world in on world issues in United Nations, WTO and the Environmental Conferences.

¹¹ According to Noam Chomsky, “Washington and London declared Iraq a “rogue state”, a threat to its neighbors and to the entire world, an “outlaw nation” led by a reincarnation of Hitler who must be contained by the guardians of the world order, the United States and its British “junior partner”, to adopt the term ruefully employed by the British Foreign Office half a century ago.” Chomsky Noam: Z Magazine, 1998, Source: <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/199804--.htm>

¹² Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq, *UN Security Council resolutions relating to Iraq*, Source: <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/scriraq.html#1990>

¹³ World Trade Organisation, (accessed on May 2, 2011)

http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/whatis_e.htm

¹⁴ South Centre, *The Group Of 77 At Forty, Championing Multilateralism, A Democratic And Equitable World Order And South-South Cooperation And Development*, Geneva: South Centre, 2004, Source:

<http://www.southcentre.org/files/Old%20Books/The%20Global%2077%20at%20Forty%201964-2004.pdf>

¹⁵ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Rio-de Janeiro, June 3-4, *The Earth Summit*, 1992

<http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html>

¹⁶ Kumar, Satish, *Post Cold War International System: An Indian Perspective*, <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-sep-2.html>