

Political Science (Honours), 4th Semester

CC-10 titled 'Global Politics & Issues Since 1945'

Unit 4- Cold War

The origin, meaning and reasons of Cold War:

When the Second World War was over in 1945, the European countries witnessed considerable decline of their political and economic clout. The vacuum which was created in the global politics following the decline of European players soon filled by two emerging superpowers namely USA and USSR. However, both the countries had different ideological orientation. As a result, both the countries began to reduce each other's power. The power struggle and the competition between the Super Powers led to the origin of Cold War which continued till 1991 when the USSR was disintegrated. During the Cold War, the world was divided into two hostile camps with America assuming the leadership of Capitalist world, and Soviet Union took the leadership of all the Communist Countries.

Meaning of the Cold War:

In the words of Hartman, "Cold War is a state of tension between countries in which each side adopts policies designed to strengthen it and weaken the other by falling short by actual war". The Cold war was a battle of ideas, it was battle of nerves, a battle of minds. It was a psychological warfare, a diplomatic war in which both the sides never took on each other face to face in the battlefield rather continued to fight in the shadows through proxy wars in different nook and corner of the world.

Origin of Cold War:

It is difficult to say as to when did the Cold War start actually? There are different views of different scholars. Some scholars are of the opinion that Cold War started in 1945 after the end of the World War 2. While other suggest that the battle of ideas began much before the Second World War. They say the emergence of Communist Russia after Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 will never be able to reconcile with the Capitalist West. In such a situation, they argue, conflict is inevitable between the two. Even though, Soviet Union and the West fought the Second world war together against the Axis powers. But the West was not in favour of Soviet Union's decision to implement communist ideals in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania

the countries liberated by USSR from Germany. America and the Western powers became suspicious of Soviet Union under Stalin as a result of which the Cold War started.

The Prime Minister of England Winston Churchill in his 'Fulton Speech' on 5 March 1946 said, "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent." It is widely believed that Churchill's speech might have triggered the beginning of Cold War.

Reasons behind the Cold War:

As already mentioned briefly, many reasons account for the origin of the cold war. Those reasons are:

- 1) The ideological distinction between the USSR and USA with the former being a capitalist country and the latter a communist one. There is very less possibility that the two ideologies can exist peacefully with each other. Each will try to dominate the global politics which will definitely pave the way for conflict.
- 2) The armament competition between USSR and USA could also be a reason behind the Cold War. Each side tried to increase their military capacity after the Second World War which posed a direct threat to the other side. As a result of which the other side also tried to increase its military capacity. The whole world virtually got divided into two competing power blocs to produce different armaments such as Atom Bomb, Nuclear Weapon, Hydrogen Bomb and other lethal weapons.
- 3) The spread of communist ideologies in different European countries, and the setting up of communist governments threatened the capitalist expansion. Each side began to contain each other's influence which resulted into the Cold War.
- 4) Although, the Soviet Union and the United States together fought against the Axis power comprising Germany, Italy and Japan in the Second World War. But they lacked real cooperation as both used to suspect each other which soon transformed into a full scale mutual distrust immediately after the Second World War which ultimately led to the beginning Cold War.