

Course Name- B.A.L.L.B. VIth Sem.

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Topic- Detente

Detente: Meaning, Factors, Progress and New Détente

“Detente” is a French term which means the making of conscious attempts at the normalization or at least dilution of hostile and unfriendly relations.

Positively, it means attempts for the promotion of cooperative and collaborative relations in place of strained and tense cold war relations. During 1970s, both the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. decided to replace the cold war relations by collaborative-competitive relations. These efforts produced a positive change in international relations. The attempts made for normalization of their relations came to be known as Detente between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.

Meaning of Détente

‘Detente’ is a French term which literally means ‘relaxation’. The Random House Dictionary defines it as “relaxation of international relations.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines Detente in two ways as “the cessation of strained relations between states,” and “as promotion of friendly understanding between states.:

Prof. A.P. Rana defines Detente as “the Collaborative-competitive behaviour of the super powers.” Detente involves the attempts to replace cold war relations with co-operative- collaborative and healthy competitive relations. Detente means the existence of both collaboration and competition between the states which previously had been engaged in a cold war.

In simple words, Detente can be defined on “the process of normalization of relations and the development of friendly cooperation in place of strained, hostile, unhealthy and mutually harmful relations.” It, however does not mean the conclusion of agreements, treaties or trade pacts. Detente may or may not lead to such developments. It signifies the attempts made at the promotion of collaboration even within a competitive or even in a conflictual situation.

To sum up we can say that Detente envisages a conscious and deliberate reduction of tensions in mutual relations. While the Cold War involves a deliberate and conscious maintenance of tension at a relatively high level, Detente stands for reduction in cold war tensions and normalization of relations.

Factors Which Guided Detente:

After having remained engaged in Cold War relations between 1945-70, the USA and USSR got involved in a detente during 1970s. The following factors influenced the two in favour of detente.

1. Cuban Missile Crisis:

The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which had brought the two super powers to the brink of a war, made them conscious of the need to limit the scope of cold war by developing collaborative and friendly relations.

2. Fear of Nuclear War:

The fear of the nuclear war that resulted from the unbridled armament race between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. also strengthened the view against the cold w

3. Increased differences between the USSR and China:

The emergence of differences between China and U.S.S.R. also influenced the USSR in favour of detente. It also influenced the U.S.A. to develop relations with the communist states.

4. Increasing role of USSR and its bloc in World Politics:

The increased influence of the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc in international relations also influenced the U.S.A. in favour of detente.

5. Soviet Policy of “Peaceful Co-existence”:

The change in Soviet foreign policy in favour of “No War” and “Peaceful Coexistence,” also influenced the thinking in favour of detente.

6. Role of NAM:

The progress of Non-Aligned Movement and the success with which the Non-aligned countries, like India, could develop friendly relations with both the communist and non- communist states also

compelled the USA and USSR to accept the possibilities of friendship and cooperation between Communist and Democratic nations. It encouraged them to work for the development of friendly cooperat

7. Failure of the U.S.A. in Vietnam War:

The growing opposition to U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the American realization about the futility of Vietnam War also influenced it to accept the need for a detente in international relations. All these factors influenced the two super powers to adopt detente and suspend cold war in international relations.

Progress of Detente of 1970s:

During the period of Detente, a conscious attempt was made by the USA & USSR to reduce areas of tension, to prevent the further escalation of cold war and to attempt the development of friendly co-operation and collaboration in their bilateral relations. This development came to be popularly named as Detente.

During the 1970s, on the hand several key issues and problems of international relations were peacefully resolved and on the other hand a rapprochement between the U.S.A. and China got under way. There appeared a visible improvement in the relation between the communist and non-communist states.

During the period of Detente 1971-79 several important agreements were reached by various state and these showed the new spirit of cooperation.

(i) Moscow-Bonn Agreement 1970

(ii) Berlin Agreement 1971

(iii) Korean-Agreement 1972

(iv) East Germany-West Germany Agreement 1972

(v) Helsinki Conference (1973) and Helsinki Agreement 1975

(vi) End of war in Cambodia (1975)

(vii) End of Vietnam War 1975

(viii) U.S.A.-China Rapprochement and Development of bilateral relations.

(ix) Third European Security Conference 1977

(x) Camp David Accord between Egypt and Israel 1979

Along with these major agreements, the USA & USSR were successful in improving their bilateral relations. Both increased their contacts, trade relations and signed two important arms control agreements SALT I & SALT II.

Thus during 1971-79 periods several bold and positive developments took place in the mutual relations of the USSA & USSR. The development of friendly cooperation, against cold war

that had characterised their relations since the emergence of cold war in 1947. Such a detente between the two super powers led to a decline of cold war in international relations. Unfortunately, however, detente could not continue for a long time and towards the end of 1979, a new cold war appeared on the international scene.

Setbacks to the Detente of 1970s:

The detente of 1970s, however, suffered a decline around 1979. Towards the end of 1979, the two super powers once again got involved in a cold war. They abandoned detente in favour of securing their narrowly conceived power goals in international relations.

USA-USSR Opposition:

Due to USSR's intervention in Afghanistan and several other decisions, aimed at increasing its power and influence, the USA got dissatisfied with detente. The USA then decided to become number one power in the world and with this end in view took several decisions aimed at increasing its power and role in international relations. This US decision was opposed by the USSR. Hence a new cold war came to develop in international relations and the detente of 1970s got replaced by a New Cold War in 1980s.

Emergence of a New Cold War in Place of Détente:

The emergence of a new Cold War made the international scene once again highly confusing, tense and quite explosive. The nature and future of the international system became again dependent upon the policies and decisions of the two super powers.

The role of their alliance partners suffered a decline. The strength which armaments race gained constituted a very big threat to international peace and security. The conflict between China and the U.S.S.R. added a new dimension to the new Cold War. The emergence of Washington-Beijing-Pindi-Tokyo group versus Moscow-Hanoi- Kabul group came as a very dangerous development.

The increased complexity of international relations, the big and ever- increasing gap between the North and South, the reduced role of the U.N.O., the inability of the NAM to pursue the attainment of several desired objectives vis-a-vis the super powers and their blocs, the possibility of a limited nuclear war in international relations, and several similar developments, combined to give the new Cold War a more dangerous dress. After having experienced the relief of the period of Detente of 1970s, the world community got greatly disturbed by the New Cold War.

The end of detente in the early years of 1980s came as an unfortunate and dangerous development. However, fortunately around 1985-87 there took place several positive developments and these gave rise to a new detente in international relations. Once

again the humankind felt relieved of the pressures created by the New Cold War.

The New Détente:

Within five years of the emergence of New Cold War, the USA & USSR and their supporters, once again, came to realize the need to check the new Cold War. Rise of strong world public opinion in favour of nuclear arms control and disarmament, the birth of well organised peace movements, the efforts made by the non-aligned nations to impress upon the two super-powers of the need for elimination of arms race, the internal pressure exerted by the NATO nations on the USA to accept and match Soviet offers regarding arms control and disarmament, and the efforts made by the UN Secretary General towards amicable resolution of several international disputes and wars, all combined to secure a much needed improvement in the international environment of late 1980s.

The Some Positive Changes in Soviet and American Perceptions of new needs of International Relations. Around 1985, the New Cold War began diluting and the USA & the USSR once again decided to come out of it or at least to accept the need to limit the area, scope and intensity of New Cold War.

The welcome break through came in the form of bold initiatives taken by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Acting under the concepts of Perestroika and Glasnost and respecting the demands of world public opinion and non-aligned countries, the Soviet leader

came forward to accept certain moves in the direction of Arms Control and Disarmament.

The willing recognition of this on the part of the USA set the stage for a very positive development—the signing of the historic INF Treaty (1987) under which both the USA and the USSR agreed to destroy, under joint supervision, medium range missiles which stood deployed in Europe. This historic agreement and the speed with which it was implemented in reality gave a positive and qualitative change to the international relations.

The change got reflected in certain events: End of Iran-Iraq war, Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Four party agreement regarding the independence of Namibia, Arms cuts announced by the Soviet Union, Arms cuts accepted by the USA.

Agreement over the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, the growing possibility of unification of Koreas, Recognition of Israel by Palestine, direct talks between the USA and PLO over Palestine, direct dialogue between the leaders to the Greek and Turkish communities of divided Cyprus, new and stronger faith in the United Nation's role in crisis management in international relations, and New Delhi Declaration made by India and the USSR in favour of a non-violent, non-nuclear world, reflected fully that a new detente had emerged in international relations of post 1985 years.

The new detente was successful in ending the new cold war in international relations. It produced a welcome change in the international system. Within four years of its emergence, the world

was successful in expressing a new faith in peace and peaceful co-existence in international relations.

The collapse of the USSR in 1991, and the changes that it affected in the international system together with the spirit of new detente helped the humankind to come out of the jaws of the new cold war and to get ushered into an age of peace, prosperity and development.

The dilution of new Cold War came with the emergence of New Detente between the USA & USSR. During 1987-91 the progress of this detente, the collapse of the USSR, the liberalisation of Eastern European countries, the unification of Germany and the trend in favour of international cooperation as reflected in the Gulf war (1991), all ensured the end of New Cold War. The success of New Detente became manifested in 1990s with the final end of New Cold War in international relations.