

Have the causes of
conflict altered in the
post-cold war period



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The end of the Cold War meant that the ideological conflict of dominance between East (Soviet Union and Eastern Europe) and West (USA and Western Europe) was over. Contrary to the expectations that world would be much safer in the post-Cold War, United States and Soviet Union were faced with new security issues that they did not know how to deal with. The objective of this essay is to show that with all these changes that occurred with the end of the Cold War, causes of the conflict indeed altered from the classic ones.

First the end of the Cold War and the changes in the world order that followed will be outlined. Secondly, the increase in wars within states and the question of whether today's conflicts are, in fact, new, will be discussed. Finally this essay will argue that there is a new type of threat: worldwide terrorism, and it will look at what measures are being taken to tackle this problem. The end of bipolarism The democratic countries (USA and Western Europe), enjoyed 50 years of peace and economic development, because of the measures they took after the World War II, not to repeat the same mistakes that initiated the previous wars.

They developed a democratic-political culture, which emphasised respect for human rights, rule of law, civil society, and independent media. However, apart from 1953, 1956 and 1968, the eastern bloc enjoyed peace and relative stability as well. The military power of both the super powers made US and Soviet leaders very reluctant to start a war. This was clearly illustrated by the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. The end of the Cold War ended the superpower rivalry and their dominance and protection, which they provided for their " satellite states". Snow (1991, p.

4) states that “[i]n ‘ simpler’ days during Cold War, possession of nuclear weapons was thought to provide the possessors with the special power, that could be translated into usable influence in the international system”. This means that some conflicts were kept under control because the world was ruled by bipolar system (USA and Soviet Union). However, conflicts were not absent during this period, but the parties in a conflict would often seek assistance from one of the superpowers and hence strengthen the conception of a bipolar world (e. g. the Vietnam War).

With the end of the Cold War this system transformed into a multipolar system where new conflicts emerged. As Mearsheimer states, key elements in the Long Peace was bipolarity, an equal balance of military power and nuclear weapons. (Mearsheimer 1990, “ Why We Will Soon Miss The Cold War”). This factor was now no longer present, although some scholars argue that this era is characterised by unipolarism (i.

e. US hegemony), rather than multipolarism. From wars between states to wars within states The vast majority of conflicts before and during the Cold War were between states.?? Read aboutIn the post-Cold War period the number of interstate wars decreased, and new threats occurred, such as ethnic conflicts, rise of nationalism, global threats to the environment and terrorism.

These were dominant factors that altered global security. The United States, Russia and United Nations were caught unprepared to handle all these new challenges, especially the conflicts that erupted within the new states of the former USSR and in Yugoslavia. Protecting the unitary state, rather than

encouraging self-determination, had since WW1 been the main focus in conflict resolution. Now this focus was changing, and the world saw new states emerging and being recognised on a large scale. However, there were no clear guidelines as to when to intervene in conflicts. Hitchcock and Kennedy stated that “[n]either UN nor International Law provides clear authorisation for intervention in matters once considered “ internal affairs” of states, even when these matters have clear regional security implications.

” (Hitchcock and Kennedy 2000, “ From War to Peace: Altered Strategic Landscapes in the Twentieth Century”)New conflicts or old conflicts revived? Many observers have argued that most of the ethnic conflicts did not result from the end of the Cold War but deep religious and ethnic disputes that had been going on for centuries. “ Many historians claim that these conflicts had been put on ice during the East-West conflict or even since World War I and resurfaced when the authoritarian communist lid was lifted. ” (Pfetich and Rohloff 2001, “ Global Change, Conflicts and Conflict Research – New Data on Armed Conflict “)All the former communist states experienced – and is still experiencing – difficulties during the transition to democracy, but only in former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia did obstacles translate into wars. Within these states ethnical groups that were dissatisfied with their position in society and wanted to participate to political decisions to a larger degree, to have more rights, and in some cases even independence, started voicing their concerns and demands.

Sens argues that multiple causal factors were behind the outbreak of conflicts, such as those in these former communist federations. Among other examples, he mentions “ confrontation between state nationalism and ethnic
<https://assignbuster.com/have-the-causes-of-conflict-altered-in-the-post-cold-war-period/>

nationalism; and the inability of the state to maintain order and prevent domestic anarchy". He continues: "[t]he violence and brutality of contemporary communal conflicts has shocked and appalled most observers, as these wars have witnessed the re-introduction of " ethnic cleansing" and " genocide" into contemporary international politics " (Sens 2000, " Canada on the Security Council: International Security in the 21 Century"). This contributed to a higher degree of intervention in internal conflicts – militarily through Nato and diplomatically through the CSCE/OSCE. As Clark stated: " Modern information technology have had a powerful impact at a political levels – the instantaneous flow of news and especially imagery could overwhelm the ability of governments to explain, investigate, coordinate, and confirm.

This is known as " CNN factor" (Clark 2001, p. 8). This decreased the flexibility of the governments to intervene without the support from the public opinion. However, the Security Council has broken the strict interpretation of Article 1 paragraph 7 of UN Charter, which prohibits intervention in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of a member state (Muldoon 1999, " The Challenges of Multilateral Diplomacy in 1999"). The early 90s saw the increased interest and later intervention of major powers in internal conflicts such as the wars in Yugoslavia.

Some scholars question the reasons for this form of involvement. Chomsky (2001) argues that this form of intervention has been motivated more by self-interest rather than humanitarian factors. " The language of humanitarianism is thus merely a tool of Western supremacy, wielded when useful, and discarded as ' idealistic' when it cannot be bent to serve Western

<https://assignbuster.com/have-the-causes-of-conflict-altered-in-the-post-cold-war-period/>

strategic interests – the strategic interests of Western powers involved in Kosovo were stacked in favour of using the opportunity to express Natos's global military supremacy. " The new threat: global terrorismThe terrorist attacks on 11th of September showed that the American supremacy was more vulnerable than it was considered earlier, and also marked a new threat to global peace. A new form of a war has been declared – a supranational war between Islamic fundamentalists and western style political systems. This new war has become known as the War on Terror.

As Prime Minister Tony Blair warned in his recent speech: " This is a new type of war, fought in different way by different means". (The Independent 2002)During the Cold War it was known who possessed nuclear weapons, but the use was prevented by the superpowers. USA, as the only remaining superpower, along with its European allies, is trying to control the situation so that the states possessing weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons) are reduced to a minimum. But the main concern is that to prevent these weapons to fall in " wrong hands" (e.

g. Iraqi president Saddam Hussein), and also to the terrorist groups, which are operating worldwide. Islamic fundamentalists claim that until Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not resolved, they will continue with terrorist attacks against USA and its allies such as United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Australia, because they support the Israeli government. Most western governments, with the US as the main leader, have proclaimed that they are willing to use military power to tackle this ever-growing threat, but they do not always agree (especially Germany and France) to support US foreign policy, to use military power every time they want to achieve their aims.
<https://assignbuster.com/have-the-causes-of-conflict-altered-in-the-post-cold-war-period/>

This is one of the examples showing problem that exist between US and its allies on different issues in the post- Cold War period. But even though this disagreement exists, this would not stop USA to act alone. Conclusion In conclusion this essay has shown that causes of conflict have largely altered in post-Cold War period. The fall of the Berlin Wall was one of the significant signs that an era of changes is beginning not only for the Communist East, but also for the for democratic West.

With a new balance of power the nature of conflicts have changed due to the shift away from the bipolar world that was dominant during the Cold War. Many new states have emerged, and new conflicts as well as revival of old feuds, have characterised the past decade. Because of the new changes that occurred since the fall of Communist bloc, UN has adapted to deal with the new challenges. USA is considered the only superpower but even so it has experienced major threats to its security. Bibliography<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/foreign/mearsh.htm>