
'UNIT9 COLD WAR, NON ALIGNMENT AND AFRICA

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Cold War came to Africa in 1956, the year the Soviet government sent a delegation to attend the inauguration of Liberia's new president. It was the first visit of an official Soviet delegation to tropical Africa and a vivid manifestation of Khrushchev's new activist approach to the developing countries.

The year 1945 was a benchmark in international relations. It marked the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War. The two super powers, i.e., the US and the Soviet Union represented two rival socio-economic systems. In terms of power, the US became the leader of world capitalism as represented by the Western bloc, while the Soviet Union emerged as the leader of world socialism as represented by the Eastern bloc.

Our objective in this Unit is to note that, in response to Cold War, the nations of Asia and Africa adopted a policy to stay away from bloc power politics. Non-alignment was therefore a reaction to Cold War characterised by aggressive bloc building. The weaker nations and newly independent states of Asia and Africa felt the need to protect themselves.

9.2 COLD WAR COMES TO AFRICA

In the global fight of the United States against communist threat, it favoured integrating Africa into the Western defence system. The US naturally included Ethiopia in the constitution of a "Southern Tier" in West Asia. At the Nairobi Conference in 1951, and at the Dakar Conference in 1954, the United States pressed for inclusion of Africa into NATO's defence system.

Stalinist Russia did not reap any benefits from this situation. It was only after Stalin's death, that the Soviet Union became involved in African affairs. Its first African experience was with Guinea, stimulated in large part by Khrushchev's initial activism. The sharpness of Guinea's rupture with France was hailed as a "decisive blow" at colonialism, even though its recurrence in the rest of the continent was not expected. From February 1959 onwards, the Soviet Union offered to buy Guinean

agricultural products that France no longer wanted. Thanks to an initial \$35 million loan, Guinea was offered the opportunity to import Soviet equipment without laying out any cash. Furthermore, as of 1961 the number of socialist countries figuring in Guinea's foreign trade reached about 35 per cent.

In March 1960, Czechoslovakia delivered the first arms shipment to Guinea, which had received no response to its request for military aid from the US in December 1958. The Soviet Union was now ready to extend similar assistance to other African states, especially Ghana. In August 1960, while the US was still hesitating whether to contribute to the building of the Akosombo Dam project, Khrushchev proposed to a Ghanaian delegation that the Soviets could take the operation in hand and expressed willingness to open a \$40 million line of credit.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Kenya and Somalia gained independence, but the situation was soured by the question of their borders with Ethiopia. Worried about Somali irredentism, the Ethiopian government insisted that the emancipation of the country be subordinated to the final delimitation of borders, as provided by a 1948 accord. Threatened by the territory's new independence, the Ethiopian emperor attempted in Moscow to gain support. At the end of 1959, Ethiopia had a promise from Moscow to train a ten-thousand imperial guard army as well as \$100 million credit for the building of a refinery in Eritrea and a technological institute.

In fact, one of the essential dimensions of Khrushchevian strategy involved making clear decisions about all of the conflicts between the African countries and Western powers but it also included abstaining from interference in inter-African conflicts. In 1963, on the eve of Kenya's independence, Somalia received \$10 million of military aid from the US, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Italy, on the express condition that it turns down all other sources of supplies. At the same time, Mogadishu preferred to turn to Moscow, which, without any conditional rider, offered \$22 million more. It then proposed military aid to Ethiopia in excess of that granted to Somalia, in exchange for breaking its military ties with the United States. The Soviet Union tried to extend its alliance with Kenya, a country that interested the Soviet Union even before its independence.

9.2.1 The Conge Crisis

Paradoxically, the crisis in the Congo, considered as a major crisis of decolonisation, failed to demonstrate how much the Soviets wished to prevent an American presence in Africa at the height of the Cold War.

From the start, the Congo affair developed poorly for the Soviet Union. In a very assertive way, the United States, Belgium and the United Nations all agreed to keep the Soviet Union out. The Soviet Union did not have a network of influence at its disposal, as its main African allies, Ghana and Guinea, were geographically remote from Congo.

At the United Nations, the Soviets advocated maximalist amendments in the Western and Afro-Asian resolutions. Its commitment in the field was of a modest sort in spite of the anticommunist drama deliberately orchestrated by Patrice Lumumba's adversaries. At Lumumba's request in July 1960, Khrushchev declared that he was ready to take decisive measures to curtail aggression. As a first step, Soviet logistical support consisted primarily of shipping food and transporting a Ghanaian contingent. This helped Patrice Lumumba's troops to regain control of the Kasai province. But the fact that the Congolese airports were closed to foreign aircraft—a measure taken specifically to prevent Soviet intervention—ruined Soviet chances. For the Soviet Union, the involvement in the Congo was over for the time being; but for the United States, it was all just beginning.

9.2.2 Crisis in Angola

The Angolan crisis constitutes a line of fracture in the relations between the great powers and Africa. On the eve of nationalist insurrection of 1961, the Angolan society was sharply divided. The nationalist struggle failed to overcome ethnic divisions moulded by Portuguese colonialism. Beyond ethnic diversity, what characterised the Angolan society even more on the eve of the nationalist insurrection was the absence of interaction between important ethnic groups, i.e., Bakongo, Mbundu and Ovimbundu.

Until the crisis in Angola, the involvement of the super powers in Africa was minimal. The 1960 crisis in the Congo therefore did not affect the 1963 signing of accords between the Soviet Union and the United States on nuclear testing. The Nigerian crisis also did not affect the initiation of a nuclear non-proliferation treaty. On the other hand, the crisis in Angola, followed shortly thereafter by the Shaba and Ethiopian crisis, contributed to the US raising the question of compatibility between the global and regional levels of Soviet policy. From this point of view, Angola served as a testing ground for America's linkage theory. While the US decided in January 1975 to secretly support FNLA, Soviet Union delivered arms to the MPLA in March 1975.

The US overlooked, as in Angola, the developments in Ethiopia. Yet, the Angolan crisis revealed active involvement of the African system into the East-West framework. It thus broke away from the traditional separation between global and local sites of superpower intervention. For the most part, actions of the two super powers enlarged their involvement in Africa.

9.2.3 The Horn of Africa

The intervention of the great powers in the Horn of Africa was due to a search for military facilities in a strategic area. The US did not establish a presence in Ethiopia to make that country a model of democracy any more than the Soviet arms to Somalia made it a paragon of socialism. Conversely, Ethiopia and Somalia looked at the great powers as sources of military aid, not as political or social models.

The US policy towards Ethiopia and Somalia was influenced by three major concerns: maintaining access to Kagnew Station, opposing Soviet presence in the Horn and the Red Sea and developing a new policy towards Africa. The US had during the 1960s and 1970s concentrated its aid and efforts in a few countries where it had special interests. Ethiopia was one of the areas where the US had such special interests because of the importance of Kagnew Station and the growing Soviet presence in Somalia. The harmony among the various goals of US policy in the Horn of Africa started breaking down in the mid-1970s. Several developments took place simultaneously at this time. In Ethiopia, the overthrow of the emperor and the rise to power of the radicals in the Dreg shook the long-standing relations with the US. The conflict in Eritrea leached dangerous dimensions that could no longer be ignored. The Soviet Union seemed to initiate a policy of much greater involvement in Africa: Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola, the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Somalia, and building up of a naval installation at Berbera all helped activate US interest in Africa.

But the Horn did not fit into a more African-oriented policy. In the early days of the Carter administration, when this new interest in Africa was more pronounced, the burning issues of the continent were those of liberation of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. The Horn was rather a marginal area. Moreover, the African position that the colonial borders should not be modified went against the US interests in the Horn after the Soviet Union established its presence in Ethiopia,

making it difficult to offer aid to Somalia. The outcome of this was that even by the late 1970s, the US was not able to formulate a policy toward the Horn that simultaneously met the African geopolitical and regional interests,

9.3 AFRICA AND NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

During the 1960s, with the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the intensity of the Cold War in Africa declined. The independent countries, which formed the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, opted for non-alignment as part of their foreign policy. In reality, these countries had no possibility of joining the Soviet military pact and due to their structural and technical dependence on the West they could not break with the former colonial powers. Non-Alignment suited their needs and reduced conflict with both blocs.

9.3.1 NAM and India-Africa Relations

The first criterion of the policy of non-alignment is a policy of independence, based on the principles of active and peaceful coexistence. Second, the policy of non-aligned movement lies in its anti-colonial character. The third criterion defines its stand towards big power military-political alliances in the context of the Cold War:

The first Asian-African conference, known as the Bandung Conference, which laid the foundation of the Non-Aligned Movement, made Jawaharlal Nehru, and Gamal Abdel Nasser close friends. Later Tito joined them. Then supported by Sukarno and Nkrumah, they paved the way for the first NAM summit in Belgrade. Prior to Bandung Conference, Nehru had stated in the first Asian Relations Conference in 1947:

Asia stretches out her hand in friendship to Europe and America as well as to suffering brethren in Africa. We of Asia have a special responsibility to the people of Africa. The freedom that we envisage is not to be confined to this nation or that or to a particular people but must spread out over the whole human race.

India, in the first summit of NAM, welcomed the liberation movements of several African colonies but frankly discouraged Afro-Asian military action against colonialism.

India continued to persuade France to grant freedom to Algeria and Britain to accord independence to Cyprus. India criticised Portugal for its indifference towards the freedom of its dependent peoples. These clear-cut approaches of India drew the participants' attention and helped to reach an agreement on the final *communiqué*. Later, the conference adopted a special document: "*Danger of War and Appeal for Peace*". In a 27-point declaration, the Belgrade Conference made the following demands:

- Immediate cession of all forms of counter revolution, intervention and invasion of Asia, Africa and Latin America;
- Granting of independence to Algeria and Angola; withdrawal of French troops from Tunisia and termination of the imperialist intervention in Congo;
- An end to the policy of *apartheid* in South Africa and restoration of the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine.

The remarks made by the Indian prime minister in the second NAM conference in Cairo in September 1964 attracted all African leaders. At the third NAM conference, held at Lusaka in 1970, the Indian prime minister was given a red carpet welcome. Breaking protocol, president Kaunda came to the airport to receive the Indian prime minister, who was elected one of the six vice-chairpersons of the movement. Extension of India's support to the freedom fighters of Africa was largely the fulfilment of the Bandung principles according to which India refused to be entangled in the Cold War. India had thus evolved, during the Nehru years, a comprehensive African policy. The post-Nehru phase has attempted to develop a system approach so that leadership function is directed along institutional lines devised under NAM precepts and "South-South" cooperation. The emphasis since has gradually moved from liberation issues to greater stress on mutually beneficial economic relationship to underscore the role of people-to-people contact on a more systematic South-South basis.

9.3.2 NAM and Africa

On the economic front, the imperialist powers tried to stage a comeback under the cover of multinational corporations (MNCs). Neo-colonialism came under the guise of aid—a major instrument of Cold War. In the process of change from colonialism to neo-colonialism certain structural changes also occurred. The US, which was not a traditional colonial power, became a partner in neo-colonial exploitation. Similarly, the Germans, which had lost all colonies during the great wars, entered the field through investments and aid programmes. Through MNCs and other methods, colonialism took the form of *collective colonialism*. Another form of *collective colonialism* was the formation of monopolistic unions, e.g., The European Economic Community, the European Common Market and more recently, the European Union. The Common Market tinned the newly free countries into agrarian raw material appendages of a group of powers instead of a single power.

Structural changes took place in the anti-colonial camp too. In the developing countries, forces of unity and cooperation strengthened. In spite of serious differences, the radical and moderate states of Africa succeeded in setting up the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 with 30 members. This was an important development because the OAU affirmed the policy of non-alignment with regard to all blocs, and expressed their determination to "provide a solid foundation for peaceful and positive cooperation among states."

At the Cairo Conference (1964), the non-aligned countries adopted an enlarged programme of struggle for peace and against colonialism and neo-colonialism. The development strategies, as propagated by the former colonial powers, failed to relieve, to any substantial extent, poverty of the developing countries. The need to remove economic imbalance inherited from colonialism and imperialism was emphasised and the demand for just terms of trade for the economically less developing countries was made. By early 1970s, this assumed the form of a movement with the demand for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) seeking an equitable participation in the global economy wherein the terms of trade are not pitted against the developing countries. More and more developing countries came to realise that their economic situation had continued to deteriorate and the resultant debt burden on them had reached intolerable levels. These countries noted that if the deficit in the balance of payments rose, it could reach the figure of \$112 billion by 1980, cross \$200 billion by 1990 and could be as high as \$400 billion at the turn of the century. This figure was barely \$12.2 billion in 1973.

The Lusaka Conference (1970) pledged to actively cultivate the spirit of self-reliance through collective bargaining strength. The approach was based upon permanent sovereignty over natural

resources, independent economic activities, formation of producers' association and the proclamation in the United Nations of the New International Economic Order. For this, the Belgrade Summit already paved the way for the establishment of UNCTAD. The Cairo Summit (1964) called upon the international community to restructure the world economy in a manner conducive to the urgent economic needs of the developing countries. The Lusaka Summit (1970) pledged to actively cultivate the spirit of self-reliance.

"Since Algiers Summit conference in 1973," president Kaunda stated, "major economic changes affecting the developing countries had taken place. The expectation that Third World would get a fair deal from the industrially rich countries had been foiled. The developing countries faced a very grave and common problem. They were linked with the international system which worked against their interests." The growing demand was that the monopoly in decision-making by the developed countries must end.

The African contribution to non-alignment is not only in terms of numerical preponderance but also a determination to keep Big Powers out of Africa's internal crisis. The Africans voted en-bloc in international conferences to become a force in itself. For the Africans, non-alignment became a source of strength for survival, preservation of freedom and self-reliance. Africans believed that the struggle for political and economic independence for full sovereignty over natural resources and domestic activities and for greater participation of developing countries in the production and distribution of goods and the rendering of services and basic changes in the international division of labour assumed the highest priority.

9.3.3 Africa's Contribution to Non-Alignment

Africa is the only continent, which can be identified with the Non-Alignment Movement. The African presence in the movement not only gives a numerical strength in the UN but also gives firm anti-racial and anti-colonial content to the movement. Almost every meeting of the non-aligned countries took up African issues and discussed ravages of colonialism and racialism.

The Africans also realised that the real and urgent threat to independence of almost all the African countries came not so much from the military but from the economic power of big states. They believed that their highest priority should be struggle for political and economic independence for full sovereignty over natural resources and domestic activities, greater participation of the developing countries in the production and distribution of goods, and effecting basic changes in the international division of labour. There is an increasing realisation that the struggle for a new economic order represents the primary task of the non-aligned and other developing countries. Africa insists that the non-aligned nations need to be directed against domination of imperialism.

9.4 SUMMARY

The bi-polar world power structure in which non-alignment was born has gradually been replaced by new patterns of relationships in which many countries had evolved military links with big powers. They are also asserting sovereignty and are exerting more control over the use and disposition of their natural resources. The pressure of colonial exploitation, emerging neo-colonialism and the efforts of big powers to look for newer markets for their defence equipments, all put together strengthened the resolve of the newly independent states in Africa to redeem themselves from "bloc politics" and explore alternatives. The confrontation of yesterday has now been replaced by growing dialogue.

9.5 EXERCISES

- 1) Explain the legacy of Big Power involvement in African politics.
- 2) What, in your view, are various phases of the evolution of Cold War in Africa?
- 3) Non-Aligned Movement is an offshoot of the Cold War. Give reasons.
- 4) What is Africa's contribution to the Non-Alignment Movement?