
UNIT 11 POST-COLD WAR AFRICA

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

The end of Cold War necessitates a study of the changing realities in Africa. Like most of the world, Africa has been attempting to adjust to the end of bipolarity in which socialism as a system of ideas and as a socio-political project has exhausted its potentialities. The adoption of political liberalism in the form of multi-party system, and the rise of ethnicism, separatism, and religious obscurantism along with an open economy model have adversely affected the regional integration of Africa. That is to say, Africa as a region of the world has, over the past decade or so, witnessed heightened marginalisation in world economy, politics and strategy.

In this Unit we will examine the impact of the end of Cold War on Africa and try to understand changes in its political, economic and social relations.

11.2 AFRICA DURING THE COLD WAR

11.2.1 Africa and Non-Alignment

During the 1960s, the intensity of the Cold War in Africa declined. Independent countries in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) opted for non-alignment as part of their foreign policy. In reality, they could not break away from the former colonial masters. Non-Alignment suited their needs and reduced conflict with both blocs. Besides, Washington ensured that these countries did

not fall into the crutches of Moscow. For this reason and until the late 1980s, Washington's policy was geared towards preventing Moscow from dominating Africa.

11.2.2 Soviet Support

Khrushchev was rebuffed in Liberia, but Eisenhower's administration viewed it as a Soviet device for Communist penetration of the continent of Africa. Soviets however, did not give up. Soviet Union next tried to get its foot in Ghana, which became independent in 1957. Again the US government viewed such Soviet overture as dangerous and the US State Department came down hard. In a position paper on the possible exchange of ambassadors between the Soviet Union and Ghana that year, it emphasised:

In light of Soviet policy since the end of Second World War, it can be safely assumed that Russia's primary objective in establishing diplomatic and consular offices in Africa is to undermine the fledgling political institutions of countries just emerged from colonial status to independence.

For its part Soviet Union was happy to give military support to the governments of Angola and Mozambique and to the African National Congress (ANC). They had tried to achieve their goals of majority rule through peaceful means but failed. Now they had to contemplate encouraging violent means.

Apart from the military aid, the Soviet Union also offered a number of educational scholarships to young people, mainly in the former English and Portuguese territories.

But the Soviet Union gave little in the way of aid or trade. There was no great Soviet strategy for taking over Africa, and generally the Soviet Union was under-informed about the history, political structures and the needs of the countries it supported.

11.2.3 Support from the West

The South African government found support from the Portuguese colonial regimes of Angola and Mozambique, which hung on until 1975. Five years later, the government of Ian Smith of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), yielded to majority rule in 1980.

All these regimes equated political opposition with a desire to overthrow capitalism and nationalise the private sector. In this they were discreetly supported by Western Europe and the US. The West turned a blind eye to the institutionalised racism and minority rule government, if that meant keeping commercial and mining investments safe from nationalisation.

11.3 AFRICA AFTER THE COLD WAR

Africa during the post-Cold War years faced the following problems. First, failures of development strategies inflicted by wide spread economic crisis caused by reducing the space for independent policy for diversification and self-reliance, famine and food mismanagement, corruption, debt burden, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank's formulae or models of structural adjustment. Second, the unresolved issues of political liberalism or multi-party system in replacement

of discredited one party system. Third, political instability caused by national discord or religious obscurantism, internal and external conflicts. Fourth, was disintegration, chaos and anarchy.

In order to understand the new phenomenon in its proper perspective, we shall analyse the political scenario, especially the nationality and regional conflicts that have, in the last decade, emerged in various parts of Africa in the form of armed conflicts to the detriment of regional integration.

11.3.1 United States' New Role

The end of the Cold War meant the rise of the US as a hegemonic power more than ever before. It acquired an unparalleled positioning in the United Nations and assigned itself the role of championing the cause of safeguarding human rights and good governance. This military-political hegemonic role began with the invasion of Grenada, Panama and the bombing of Libya—*all* in the 1980s and culminated in the destruction of Iraq in the Gulf War of 1991, and more recently the Gulf War II, 2003 that resulted in an even greater destruction of the state of Iraq. The US mobilisation of the majority of UN members for defeating, crippling, and humiliating Iraq has frightened many Third World countries.

Washington's hegemonic position in the post-Cold War world has, influenced life in all countries of Africa. It has affected former pro-Soviet countries more than the pro-Western countries in many ways. First, the withdrawal of Soviet help to such countries as Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, etc., exposed them to the interests of the West. Second, the US effort has been to obliterate the Marxist-Leninists from these countries. Third, propping up anti-Communist forces into ruling position as was done in Ethiopia or replacing them in the position of equal political partners as is being attempted in Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa etc. Fourth, was the introduction or reinforcement of ethnicism, tribalism, regionalism, through the demand of "political pluralism" and "good governance". Fifth, the persistent and consistent efforts by Western donors and the Bretton Woods institutions to break state power and reduce its role under the formula of economic liberalisation. The overall design under the new world order, therefore, is to make the applicability of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) ineffective through integration and subordination within the hierarchical in-egalitarian structure of international capitalism.

11.4 SUPPRESSION OF REBELLIONS

It is important to remember that whenever any African country leaned towards the Soviet Union, especially if the ruling party declared its allegiance to Marxism and Leninism, it faced internal rebellion—backed by the West, as in Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique. Rebellion became the major political programme and this led to diversion of scarce funds, which were wastefully spent, on war and large military hardware.

The contention in some diplomatic and academic circles is that among the advantages of the end of the Cold War and changed global situation was the independence of Namibia, the dismantling of *apartheid* and the multi-racial elections (1994) that brought the African National Congress (ANC) and its leader, Nelson Mandela, the first black president of South Africa to power. However, the end of a long, barbarous and brutal war as a result of the end of the Cold War did not quite materialise. It is true that the cease-fire agreement between the Soviet-supported MPLA government and the US and South Africa backed UNITA rebels which would not have been possible under the Cold War or bipolar world.

11.5 CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

With the conclusion of the Cold War, some of the major tensions between East and West in Africa became markedly less. South Africa and Namibia installed democratically elected governments. Relative peace and stability was established in Mozambique after three decades of confrontation between warring parties. Several dozens of African countries held democratic elections. Unquestionably, all these are positive and significant signs towards peace and stability. However, while many parts of the world moved toward greater stability and political and economic cooperation, Africa remained a region of instability. Political insecurity, violent internal conflicts with deep historical roots flared up. Against such a backdrop, peace and peace making in Africa emerged as one of the critical issues in global politics.

In fact, the states that had been overly dependent on Cold War patronage like former Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Zaire, Somalia and Liberia began to disintegrate fast thereafter. Not surprisingly also, old conflicts which, for a long time had been buried under the cover of the Cold War, started to re-surface with deeper and more violent vengeance as states grew weaker and weaker, and small arms and mercenaries became readily available.

One of the primary defining features of post-Cold War Africa is the increase in the number, scope, and intensity of domestic conflicts that have spilled, or have the potential to spill across national borders into neighbouring states. Almost half (16) of the 35 wars waged throughout the world, with battle deaths exceeding one thousand per year, have taken place in Africa. Beyond the direct toll on death, violent conflicts in Africa have periodically assumed horrendous proportions, spawning population displacements, refugees and migration.

It is important to note that during the Cold War period, the division of labour between the roles of the sub-regional, regional and international organisations were clear. While the traditional role of the UN was to mount peacekeeping operations, and to deploy political missions, regional and sub-regional organisations concentrated largely on preventive diplomacy.

In recent years, a new international security management paradigm seems to be emerging. It consists essentially of regions and sub-regions accepting co-responsibility and sharing the burden to police themselves and, consequently, a dilution of the central responsibility that the UN played in this regard. It is demanding cooperation and burden sharing by all others. This is a harbinger of what is evolving as a generalised global security management doctrine.

It bears repeating that with the end of the Cold War, Africa's importance and relevance to the West has diminished markedly. Following the end of Cold War it was also hoped that the UN would be able to adopt a more balanced and enhanced role as the world peacekeeper and peacemaker. The subsequent UN debacle of peacekeeping efforts in Somalia in October of 1993 radically changed Western intervention policies in Africa. From that point on, the US and other large contributors required the UN Security Council to be more selective in its approach to conflict, especially the internal variety that has been wreaking so much havoc in Africa. There has developed, in fact, a distasteful mood of "afro-pessimism" and "conflict fatigue." Since then, the Security Council's slow and sometimes feeble initial approaches to the internal conflicts in Burundi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo have all reflected the more cautious approach of the United States. It also demonstrated inaction in the face of genocide in Rwanda; vacillations during the refugee crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo and reluctance to act even when the elected governments of Congo and the Ivory Coast were overthrown. Furthermore, it showed a

willingness to accept the governments with dubious electoral mandates and poor human rights records when such governments suited their interests in stability, as in Ethiopia, Uganda and Gabon.

11.6 ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)

The OAU's peacemaking efforts during the 1960s and 1970s were few and far between. As intra-state conflicts skyrocketed in the 1990s, it became increasingly apparent that the *ad hoc* conflict management of the 1970s and 1980s were not up to the task. At the 1993 OAU Summit in Cairo, African heads of state agreed to establish the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The Mechanism was charged with anticipating and preventing conflicts, and engaging in peacemaking and peace-building activities. In this, there is a provision for OAU cooperation with the UN in the evolution of peacekeeping strategy.

Since the establishment of the Mechanism of Conflict Management, OAU has taken a wide-range of measures and initiatives at anticipating and preventing conflicts on the continent. These include, among others, the development of an early warning system, and an analytical capacity to provide the organisation with an advance notice of impending conflict situations. Moreover, various preventive diplomacy efforts through the use of the OAU Special Envoys to crisis areas, for example the Comoros, 1997; Congo-Brazzaville in 1993; Ethiopia-Eritrea in 1998; Cote d'Ivoire in 2000, as well as limited preventive deployments to contain conflict escalation have been mounted.

Disenchanted by the UN and the OAU record in peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts since the 1990s, various African states, civil societies and international non-governmental organisations assumed greater responsibility for conflict management, as a means of creating an environment where peace, stability and democracy are the norm. In West Africa, the first institutional arrangements to guarantee sub-regional security initially consisted of a Protocol of Mutual Assistance in Defence matters signed in 1981. However, the spontaneous formation of the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in August 1990 was a direct response to the precarious security realities of the sub-region. Thus, in less than a decade, ECOMOG went full circle from peacekeeping and peace enforcement in Liberia to restorative intervention in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. In June 1996, the Organ on Politics, Security and Defence was added to the SADC (South Africa Development Community) Treaty. Under the SADC auspices, South Africa and Botswana successfully reversed a palace coup in Lesotho by applying diplomatic pressure, threatening with economic sanctions, and staging a seven-month long intervention operation to deal with a deteriorating security situation.

11.7 POLITICAL PLURALISM.

Democracy and good governance came in a big way to the African Agenda in late the 1980s. The Khartoum Declaration of 1988 specifically called for the guarantee of basic individual freedom and democratic participation to ensure accountability on the part of those in authority. In 1986, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights came into force after ratification by about 40 countries. An important addition to these efforts was the 1990 Arusha Declaration in the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, which received widespread endorsement of the OAU. These declarations coincided with drastic changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The Western powers amended their Africa policy. They began insisting on political liberalism and good governance,

The impact of the collapse of communist regimes under the pressure of mass demonstrations and mass actions encouraged anti-government forces in Africa to rebel. The upsurge to change first appeared in the West African state of Benin in 1989 and steadily gained momentum in the following years until it swept through virtually all the African countries. In the early 1990s, it was almost a storm to usher in political pluralism in Gabon, Congo, Mali, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Niger, Togo, Zaire, Sao Tome and Principe, Cape Verde, Somalia, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Zambia and Kenya.

11.8 CRISIS IN AFRICA

11.8.1 Poverty

Over half of the people of Africa live in abject poverty. Over thirty million are facing famine, and thousands keep dying. More than 100,000 qualified Africans left for the industrialised North. Unemployment is soaring. The crisis in Africa is therefore, deepening with no structural changes being introduced.

At the beginning of the new millennium, it is now more explicitly known that Africans had no choice but to go to the West. The socialist bloc countries did not have the financial capacity to make them self-reliant. Though Soviet trade turnover with the African states grew steadily, reaching 3400 million in 1984, in terms of total trade turnover, it was only 3 per cent. Over 50 per cent of the Soviet exports to Africa constituted the machinery and equipment and 15 per cent was fuel. The thirty years, i.e., between 1960 and 1990 witnessed the Soviet Union entering into agreements on technical economic cooperation with 37 African states. However, 50 per cent of the total credits granted were for Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea and Mozambique. In these countries and a few others, the Soviets undertook 650 projects of which 348 were completed. The Soviet Union received in exchange oil from Algeria and Libya, coffee from Ethiopia, Uganda and Madagascar, bauxite from Guinea, cloves from Madagascar and cashew from Mozambique and some consumer goods from Algeria and Egypt.

On the other hand, trade with the Western countries was closely interlinked with the world capitalist economy. Due to this linkage, Africa incurred a debt of over 300 billion dollars to the Western countries. This debt consumed 30-35 per cent of its export earnings. On the other hand, there was no international help to date to Africa to cope with the devastating effects of low commodity prices or price fluctuations. This bleak picture is further compounded by a food crisis.

11.8.2 Food Crisis

In many parts of Africa, food crisis added to prevailing economic problems—debt, falling rate of growth and prices of export commodities. According to the UN World Food Programme's Study — *Food Aid in Africa: An Agenda for 1990s*, the food crisis in Africa is so grave that during the 1990s the number of undernourished people in Africa rose to 200 million. During the 1983-85 period, when Africa faced the most severe shortage of food, it was estimated to be 142 million. Unfortunately, there are many factors that reduce food production. These include the environmental crisis brought about by both natural and human causes. Ironically, thirty years ago, Africa was a major food exporter.

The net value of food aid to Africa over the ten year period beginning 1990 averaged nearly one billion dollar a year, an amount equivalent to the annual net financial transfers to the continent by

the World Bank. On an average, food aid, according to a UN study, makes up about 7 per cent of all official development assistance to Africa. In some countries such as Ethiopia, it rises to as much as a fifth. It generally accounts for about 20 per cent of the continent's food imports. It is estimated that by the year 2010 the annual food imports in Africa could total to over 30 billion dollars.

The economic situation in Africa is so grave that efforts of most to enhance a faster growth rate continue to be frustrated by a number of factors. These include denial of market access, disturbing trend in the negative flow of global financial resources, insufficiency of foreign investment flows, a crushing debt burden, restrictions on transfer of technology and inequalities in the global, monetary, and financial and trade systems.

11.9 AFRICA IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Several new trends are evident. Since the departure of foreign powers, pre-colonial ethnic conflicts—exploited by local political forces—have resurfaced with a vengeance. Nationality and clan based political identities are also re-emerging in Africa. In Nigeria, they fuel a regionally based opposition movement to the central government. In Sudan there exists an armed rebel group—the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA)—that demands secession. And in places like the Somali Republic (and Liberia until recently), they have turned nations to anarchy.

An equally disturbing trend is the propensity of the African states to invade each other. Apart from deploying combat troops, Rwanda helped plan, organise and led the rebel campaign that deposed Mobutu in 1997. Angola marched against Mobutu and so did Uganda. Angola also had a hand in Congo Brazzaville's more recent leadership struggle. Uganda, which has a history of backing military campaigns in the Great Lakes regional, is now allied with Ethiopia and Eritrea in support of rebels in Sudan. Ethiopia is also backing forces in Somalia. Nigeria has deployed peacekeepers under dubious mandates in Liberia and Sierra Leone but after much concern from elsewhere, has agreed to withdraw its forces from these countries.

Some of these states are coalescing into a new political and military bloc that, although relatively small, aspires to remake much of the continent. At its core are Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, with Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa playing minor roles. These countries enjoy sympathies from Tanzania, Zambia and Burundi. Having ousted Mobutu, the bloc sought to topple the Islamist regime in Sudan and influence Chad, the Central African Republic and Somalia. While these leaders disagree over tactics, they share the goal of ending the cronyism and instability that has epitomised post-colonial Africa. By default, rather than design, Washington has gained influence. Both the Clinton as well as Bush administrations have played 'catch-up' in response to events in Africa, with guidance flowing as much from foreign missions to Washington as the other way round. The American policy makers have been mostly sanguine about the new bloc and its aims. Yet, on key issues affecting Africa, they remain divided.

11.10 SUMMARY

In the early 1990s, many of Africa's dictatorships (both military and civilian) collapsed, giving Africans an opportunity to establish more transparent, participatory, and accountable political and economic systems. In addition, the end of *apartheid* in South Africa has given a significant boost to the continent's efforts to establish participatory governance structures. Although the transition appears to be progressing well in a few countries, little progress has been made in most of the continent.

The end of the Cold War created a politico-economic vacuum in the continent. While the influence of the Soviets decreased with the Soviet dismemberment and the end of Cold War, Washington became more aggressive in offering a renewed "Marshall Plan" for the African states. It has been understood that nation-building and good governance should be brought to the centre stage of continental politics and international relations. The introduction of multi-party system in many African states and the return of constitutional systems are strongly backed by Washington.

Africa is tormented by natural calamities like famine and droughts. This is further compounded by the crumbling economic situation. With the drying up of Soviet help and aid, African countries are today becoming more dependent on Western aid. Internal conflicts have made matters worse. This has created a volatile security environment. Arguably, the international cooperation requires, as a prerequisite, that the individual member states command a critical minimum of institutional, economic and social coherence. Indeed, without strong, efficient and responsive states, there will be no security, national or otherwise. Africa's collective security arrangements are, more often than not, an aggregation of weakness. As pointed out earlier, state-building, nation-building and democratic governance in the post-Cold War era in most of Africa have not produced robust foundations on which to construct an environment for constitutional democracy and security arrangements.

11.11 EXERCISES

- 1) Explain US interests and objectives in Africa during the 1990s.
- 2) Examine the process of conflict and conflict management in the post-Cold War Africa.
- 3) What role has OAU played in bringing peace and democracy in Africa?
- 4) To what extent has the return of democracy diminished the internal conflicts among African states?