

Ideological Bubbles during Cold War

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ABSTRACT

As the guns were silent after the Second World War, the two superpowers, viz., the USA and USSR, emerged as the major opposition blocs. On the one side, whereas President, Henry Truman was a believer of democracy, liberalism, free market and capitalism, on the other side was the USSR, whose leader, Joseph Stalin, believed in self-reliance, communism and material gains for his country and citizens. Both the political leaders had different ideologies. They both had conflicting philosophies. These ideological bubbles acted as the driving force for the development of Cold War. The consequences of cold war was not only faced by the both superpowers but also witnessed by the whole world in many ways. Many countries became victim of proxy war between the two. Winston Churchill in his speech termed the cold war as an “iron curtain”. The present article gives an overview of two superpowers that how their ideological viewpoints were different from each other in terms of capitalism versus communism. The article is structured as follows: following a brief regarding economic differences between the USA and USSR, the study provides an overview regarding the political representation and the concept of rights. Thereafter, the research design for the study is provided wherein dominance theory has been invoked for delineating the ideological standpoints. The study is rounded off with concluding statements as deduced from the analysis.

Keywords: USSR, USA, Cold war, Ideology.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of dominance, it is important to understand that the International Relations (IR) domain is fraught with diversities in terms of power capacities and capabilities. Thus, with the military prowess and economic disparities, the nature and scope of struggles between the power blocs assumes critical importance. The contestation of ideologies between the two major blocs- United States of America (USA) and the USSR (formerly, Soviet Union)- for achieving control over territories and lands is all the more important because of the asymmetries in terms of power and control. Depending upon the resources at hand, both the blocs are vying for control over other countries in terms of currency dominance as well and this sparks off differences in economic

standing in trade relations as well. The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the manner in which the two power blocs behaved in the aftermath of the Cold War. Based on the two pillars of capitalism and communism, it is important to appreciate that the two power blocs conducted themselves in their own ways as far as the framing and implementation of public policies and international policies were concerned. Such ideological differences shaped the global order in a unique manner and the same gets reflected in the outcome of the different wars and conflicts that have been waged after the Second World War. The present research article presents arguments based on documentary evidences and summarizes the key differences in ideologies that have had a huge bearing on the IR trajectory across time and space. The research paper concludes with limitations and directions for further research.

Economic Difference

Let's begin with the foremost difference of economy. Both the United States and Soviet Union had diverse views related to economy (Harris, 2015). The ideological stance of capitalism was seeded in the leadership of United States. But what does capitalism means? The concept behind this is that what drives the economy is the fact that the farms, factories and industries all belong to individuals called capitalists. A capitalist is one who invests money for profit. In capitalist system, work is not done by the owner but it was done by the employee, who are hired and paid as wages for their work. Capitalist is a system based on individual freedom. This ideology believes in individual freedom and concept of laissez-faire or free market. This economic system wants least intervention of the state. It believes that government should remain out of the economy and individuals should allow tackling their economic affairs freely. Capitalist is a right wing philosophy, it is based on free trade, private ownership, profit, and theory of supply and demand. Those who believed in capitalism considered it as an ideal and free society. It gives freedom to everyone for implementing new ideas and also creates competition which ensures low prices of products. This system is criticized by many as it creates social inequality, cycles of prosperity and recessions.

Communism is an economic system that is based on socialism. This system is inspired by Marxist dogma. Karl Marx, the profounder of this theory, expressed his views in his famous book "Communist Manifesto". It focuses on the working class instead of owners. It believed in the classless society and rule of proletariat. The Soviet Union runs a socialist economy. In socialist economy all factories, business and farms are belong to everyone. They believe on cooperation rather than competition. The Soviet Union planned all economic activities to be done through government rather than individuals thereby proving the hegemony of the state. The political leaders of Soviet Union believed that this system would be helpful in eradicating unemployment and ensure equitable distribution of resources. This system is entirely opposite to capitalist system and encouraged government control over production and economic activities. This system is also known as command economy. However, the critique of this system points out that collective ownership is not of individuals but of government. This system leads to single control, mismanagement and mass starvation.

Political Representation

Another stark difference between United States and Soviet Union was political representation. They both followed democracy but in a very different manner. In Soviet Union, elections would be held

based on the single party system without offering a basket of choices for the electorate. Furthermore, there were conflicting views within the political party that often proved to counterintuitive for realizing the party's vision. The Soviets believed in the Karl Marx's concept of Dictatorship of Proletariat which implies that the proletariat shall emerge at the helm of affairs in a stateless and classless society (Sikora-Fernandez, 2018). Stalin, who was the main actor during cold war era, was considered to be more authoritarian than his contemporaries or those in the future periods. The United States followed the system of Representative Democracy wherein government is elected by the citizens. John Locke, founder of Modern Liberal Thought, had a profound impact on the development and progression of United States' political milieu in terms of the political party system, representative institutions and policy reforms. Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of American Constitution and the author of the Declaration of Independence, was highly influenced by the idea of Lockian idea of natural law. To summarise, both the countries espoused different ideological formats in terms of democratic and authoritarian edifices.

Concept of Rights

Another important difference between both the ideologies related to the concept of rights. United States, being a liberal country, emphasised on the right to freedom for its citizens (Kenney-Lazar & Kay, 2017). It considered that the government should protect the rights of the citizens. Equality of opportunity was the main agenda of the state. Equality of opportunity meant that everyone has equal rights to succeed irrespective of their birth. American idea of rights centered on personal liberties and choices. Personal liberties and choices did not imply that it guaranteed success of the individuals but every reward depended upon the hard work put in by an individual in an enterprise. The Soviet Union had different approach towards concept of rights. They did not believe in the capitalist society of Americans. They believed that a capitalist society hampers the rights of the working class and exploits them for their own profit. There is an old saying that Americans were scientists while the Soviets were engineers (Milic & Zhou, 2018). In other words, one can say that Americans focused on theories and idealism whereas the Soviets believed on what has to be done practically. The concept of rights, according to the Soviets, is to provide food, shelter and jobs to its citizens. It is the role of the government to fulfill the basic necessities to its citizens. The Soviets' view of equality and rights for citizens smacked of its own hypocrisy when it compared the lifestyle of Soviet leaders to that of the common Soviet man. Americans, on the other hand, believed that capitalism and liberalism as the only ways to end tyranny from the globe. The Soviets in, juxtaposition to it, believe in the power of the State and giving impetus to enterprise and endeavors of the people across different economic sectors. Thus, implicitly, there is a difference in terms of the nature and scope of rights that are being enjoyed by the US and USSR blocs. In the context of the former, the Americans are liberal and the right to express themselves is amply evident in the Constitution and in other statutes. People have the rights of profess religion of their choice and there is no restriction in terms of free speech as long as the same does not infringe upon the freedom of others. After all, the rule of law is supreme and has to be respected everywhere and at all times. In the Soviet bloc, there is restriction in terms of the rights enjoyed by the people. People may speak and express themselves in writing but the same should not be derogatory to the State else the State shall incarcerate the concerned individuals. Rights of the people are also limited to the extent that no offense should be made to the feelings and sentiments of other people.

Concept of free trade

Free trade implies that there shall be no restrictions as far as trade and commercial relations are concerned between the countries. Thus, a particular nation is open to exchanging goods and services with others in terms of any commodities and services and there are no barriers in terms of such exchanges. Free trade and commerce also implies that only a rudimentary set of policies shall be laid down for the documentation purpose (Ortiz, 2016). As far as the ideological and practical differences between the major power blocs are concerned, it needs to be underscored that the same get reflected in the policies regarding trade and commerce. In the case of the US which follows a capitalist stance, the notion of trade and commerce assumes a different meaning in contrast with that of the USSR which adopts a socialist stance (Bleha & Durcek, 2019). Thus, there are more restrictions in terms of doing trade and commerce with other countries as far as the capitalist countries are concerned in contrast with the socialist countries. Capitalist countries maintain that the power and autonomy needs to be maintained and, thus, only select countries shall be traded with who are able to pay back to the capitalist countries as far as the monetary compensation is concerned. The capitalist countries spell out their own conditions as far as the currency of payment is concerned (Robinson, 2017). Likewise, there are conditions regarding the routes to be followed by the ships or aircrafts for shipment of goods and services. Socialist countries are more accommodative in nature and they engage in trade and commerce with other countries depending upon the ties and needs of the other partnering nations. Sometimes, the socialist countries are able to engage in trade relations on the basis of magnanimity and they provide support to the nations on humanitarian grounds.

Conclusion

The present research was based on documentary evidence and it is exploratory in nature. To put forth the nature and extent of the differences in ideologies as far as the capitalist and socialist countries are concerned, it is important to understand that the mindset of the two groups varied across time and space especially in the inter-war period and after the Cold War. Both the power blocs emerged on the fore in separate ways and they were able to express themselves differently on the international for a as far as the dominance over the other nations was concerned. The present study was limited in the sense that only a theoretical view was provided on several aspects. Further studies are recommended to appreciate the perspectives of the people living in both the power blocs as to how they perceive the international and domestic policies. Furthermore, research is warranted in terms of the conflicts across the developing and underdeveloped nations amidst their relations with the power blocs. Finally, research is warranted to appreciate the implications of the finer strands identified in the present study (economic and political) for future course of action and how the same may determine the global landscape.

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