



Mikhail Gorbachev and Cold War

For Prelims: Mikhail Gorbachev, Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Glasnost and Perestroika, World War, Cold War, Warsaw Pact, Soviet Union, Non-Alignment Movement.

For Mains: Cold War and Non alignment Movement.

Why in News?

Recently, the last leader of the Soviet Union, **Mikhail Gorbachev** died at the age of 91.

What was the contribution of Mikhail Gorbachev?

▪ About:

- He joined **Communist Party of the Soviet Union** as a youth, and after Stalin's death, he became a **keen proponent of De-Stalinisation reforms started by Nikita Khrushchev**.
- He was selected as the First Party Secretary of the Stavropol Regional Committee in 1970.
- In 1985 when he was elected as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in other words, **the de facto ruler of the government**.

▪ Achievements:

◦ Major Reforms:

- He introduced the policies of **"glasnost" and "perestroika"** which helped in **freedom of speech** and press and **the economic expansion** of the economy.
 - **Perestroika** means **"restructuring,"** specifically of the **Communist economy and political** system, by incorporating some features of a market economy into the Soviet economy. It also resulted in the decentralization of financial decision-making.
 - **Glasnost** means **"openness,"** particularly openness of information and began the democratization of the Soviet Union.

◦ Focused on Arms Reduction:

- He forged arms reduction deals with the United States and partnerships with Western powers to **remove the Iron Curtain** that had divided Europe since World War Two and reunify Germany.
 - **Iron curtain** is the political, military, and **ideological barrier erected by the Soviet Union after World War II** to seal off itself and its dependent eastern and central European allies from open contact with the West and other noncommunist areas.

◦ Ended the Cold War:

- Gorbachev is credited with bringing the [Cold War](#) to an end, **which resulted in the dissolution of the USSR into separate countries**.

◦ Nobel Peace Prize:

- He was awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) in 1990 for his efforts to end the **Cold War between the US and USSR**.

▪ Indian Connection:

- Gorbachev **visited India twice, in 1986 and 1988.**
- His objective was **to extend his disarmament initiatives in Europe to Asia and to secure Indian cooperation.**
- It was Gorbachev's **first visit to a non-Warsaw Pact country** after taking over as leader of the Soviet Union.
- The then Prime Minister Rajiv hailed Gorbachev as a **"crusader for peace"**.
- His address to **India's Parliament** during the visit received hyperbolic coverage in the Indian and Soviet press and was seen as a high point of Indian diplomacy.

What was the Cold War?

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▪ About:

- The Cold War was a **division between Russia and western countries (the US and its allies, like Britain)**, which started in the 1940s and lasted until 1991.
- It was a war between **two ideas and ways of ruling - communism** (the east) and **capitalism** (the west).
- The Russians operated a communist state (from 1922 to 1991), while western countries like the US were capitalist countries.
- Throughout the Cold War, **communist and capitalist nations tried to outdo each other**, competing to develop the best technologies and weapons.

▪ India's Role:

◦ Non-Alignment Movement:

- The policy of **Non Alignment Movement (NAM)** did not seek to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union, but sought to remain independent or neutral.
- The basic concept for the group originated in 1955 during discussions that took place at the **Asia-Africa Bandung Conference** held in Indonesia.
- The **first NAM Summit Conference** took place in Belgrade, **Yugoslavia, in September 1961.**
- **Purpose:**
 - The purpose of the organization was enumerated in **Havana Declaration of 1979** to ensure "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign subjugation.
 - During the cold war era the NAM played a vital role in stabilizing the world order and preserving peace and security.

◦ **Neutral Stand:**

- India was able to take **decisions and stances at the international level serving its own interest** rather than serving the interest of the superpowers.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Among the following Presidents of India, who was also the Secretary General of Non-Aligned Movement for some period? (2009)

- (a)** Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan
- (b)** Varahagiri Venkatagiri
- (c)** Giani Zail Singh
- (d)** Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was created and founded by the developing countries during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the people of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the world and at the height of the Cold War.
- Some of the decolonized countries decided to stay away from joining any of the two major power poles that developed post-Second World War during the Cold War era.
- The final resolution of Bandung Conference of 1955 laid the foundation for the Non Aligned Movement (NAM).
- **Giani Zail Singh served as the Chairperson of NAM from 1983-86. He was the second Indian to chair the NAM after Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, who chaired the NAM during 1983. Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. What problems were germane to the decolonization process in the Malay Peninsula? (2017)

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