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# Disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of Bi-Polarity: Its causes and impact on international relations

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After the Second World War the whole world was divided into two blocs Western Bloc (USA) and Eastern Bloc (USSR). They were clearly the masters of the world, they were ahead of all the other countries in power and influences so they were called the Superpowers. USSR wanted to spread communism while USA wanted to control the spread of communism. Relations between USA and USSR became cold and deteriorate such an extent that in spite of the absence of a direct military conflict between the capitalist and communist camps there began a mutually opposing political propaganda war fought with news papers and water paper cannon balls and this hostility continued for the next 45 years and at last ended with the fall of one powerful bloc i.e.(U.S.S.R) on 25 December 1991. In this study an attempt has been made to question the major causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its impact on International relations.

**Keywords:** Disintegration, Causes and Impact on International Relations.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Union of Soviet socialistic republics has been formed after the famous Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. The revolution was based on the ideals of socialism and sought to establish an egalitarian society. The Bolshevik revolution opposed capitalism and worked for creation a society based on the principle of equality and abolition of private property. The Bolshevik party had an important role in creation of such a system based on centralized planning and state control. No other political party in opposition was allowed to operate. This Bolshevik control was known as the Soviet system it was even implemented in several east European states. After the Second World War the whole world was divided into two blocs Western Bloc (USA) and Eastern Bloc (USSR). They were clearly the masters of the world, they

were ahead of all the other countries in power and influences so they were called the Superpowers. USSR wanted to spread communism while USA wanted to control the spread of communism. Many east European states under fascist control were liberated by Soviet Union during the Second World War. (Rastogi & Verma, 2014:20) After the war these countries also came under the influence of soviet union, The socio economic and political systems of these nations were patterned on the Soviet system. This bloc of countries was called "Second world" or the socialist bloc. USSR Led this bloc and a military alliance called the Warsaw pact, bound them together. Soviet union had emerged as a big power after the Second World War. The soviet economy was one of the most advanced and competed with the USA. The

features of the Soviet economy making it a role model were

- The vast network of communication, huge generation of energy resources which included oil, steel and iron.
- Huge network of machinery production and a well developed, integrated system of transport connecting even its most remote areas.
- It ensured a minimum subsistence level for all citizens. People enjoyed an optimum standard of living and basic necessities like Education, Childcare, Health and welfare of all were provided by the state. The dominant form of ownership was state control .Land and productive assets were managed and regulated by the state. (ibid:21)

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Thompson J “Revolutionary Russia, 1917”.October, 1996**, analyzed that The Russian Revolution of 1917 profoundly affected the recent history of the world. Its impact has been felt in every corner of the globe. People, ideas, and events have all been touched by it. This thought-provoking study not only offers a short, clear narrative of what happened in 1917, but also analyzes and discusses the whys of the revolution. Within bounds of reasonable speculation, the author raises interpretive questions about the events of 1917 in an effort to stimulate the interest and thinking of readers.

*Edward Walker “Dissolution: Sovereignty and the Breakup of the Soviet Union (The Soviet Bloc and After)”*

*March 19, 2003.* The author analyzed that In December 1991, the Soviet Union passed into history as a legal entity, breaking apart into 15 successor states. Walker argues against much of the conventional wisdom and scholarly literature on the breakup, which emphasizes what he calls the 'demand side' of the problem, or the role of nationalist mobilization and the rise of separatist aspirations in the USSR's union republics. He points out that support for dissolution was limited to a handful of republics that included only a small portion of the Soviet population. Instead, the author highlights the critical role played by the USSR's ethno-federal system, as well as the normative claims and legitimizing myths of Soviet nationality policy

**David R,Marples “The Collapse of the Soviet Union, 1985-1991”April 28, 2004:** The author analyzed that the collapse of the Soviet Union has widely been seen as the result of the arms race and Cold War, and the failure of the Soviet side to keep pace with new technology. This

study argues that the disintegration was mainly a result of two interrelated factors: the rise of the Soviet national republics and the manipulation of the new Russian presidency by Boris Yeltsin in what became a direct power struggle between Yeltsin and the Soviet leader, Gorbachev.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To highlight the causes responsible for the Disintegration of the Soviet Union.
- To study the impact of the Disintegration of Soviet Union on International Relations.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present study mostly secondary data has been used. Secondary data have been collected from various books, research papers and articles. In addition to this study, data have been collected from various journals also. The research is also based on the referred sources-published, unpublished and electronic.

### *Causes of Disintegration of Soviet Union*

The disintegration of Soviet union is one of the most important events in the history of mankind it has transformed the whole nature of global politics and dramatically altered the basic parameters in which the various relationships between nations, states and classes have hitherto operated .On Christmas day 1991, the soviet flag flew over the Kremlin in Moscow for the last time. A few days earlier, representatives from eleven soviet republics met in the Kazakh city of Alma-Ata and announced that they would no longer be part of the Soviet Union. Instead, they declared that they would establish a common wealth of Independent states. Because the three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) had already declared their independence from the USSR, only one of its fifteen republics, Georgia remained. The once mighty Soviet Union had fallen largely due to the great number of radical reforms that soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev had implemented during his six years as the leader of the USSR. However Gorbachev was disappointed in the dissolution of his nation and resigned from his job on Dec.25.It was a peaceful end to a long, terrifying and sometimes bloody epoch in world history .It is very difficult for analysts to find answer to the question as to why did the +soviet union disintegrate perhaps there were the following causes responsible for the disintegration of soviet union.

**Economic Stagnation:** The soviet union maintained a

huge nuclear a military arsenal which was used to develop and maintain its satellite states in eastern Europe and its soviet republics particularly the five central Asian republics. It led to a huge burden on its economy and resources. People on Soviet Union could not advance as rapidly as their Western adversaries'. Gradually people realized the disparity between their system and the western capitalism. Despite tall claims about the success of socialism, its hollowness was exposed .It was proved that western capitalism was better which was a sock for people of Soviet union affecting their psychology and faith in the efficiency of the political system.

**Political and Administrative Stagnation:** Soviet Union also suffered from political and administrative stagnation .The ruling CPSU was unaccountable to the people. People felt alienated by the Stifling administration there was rampant corruption and the political elites did not try to rectify their mistakes by allowing openness in the government and decentralization of authority on a wet land .To make matters worse the Bureaucratic privileges made the people feel isolated from the common mainstream people were unable to correlate themselves with the rulers and prevailing system .it made the CPSU highly unpopular .Thus political and administrative stagnation was also responsible for the ultimate collapse of the soviet union .

**Role of Gorbachev:** Gorbachev's overzealous programme of reformation was the biggest cause of soviet disintegration .Gorbachev introduce the "Perestroika "and "Glasnost" to reform their economy, democratize the political system, loosen the strings of administration and bridge the gap with the west .Though Gorbachev was right in initiating reforms in reality when the reformation process set in, it loosened the system and set in motion factors and forces that few could control. Sections of the soviet society believed that Gorbachev mood gradually with his reforms while expectations were for a rapid rate of development.

**Rise of Nationalism and Desire for Sovereignty :**A major reason for collapse of soviet union was the rise of nationalism and desire for sovereignty within various soviet republic like Russia, Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania ,Ukraine Georgia etc this proved to be culminating point in the disintegration of soviet union ,optimists are divided over this factor the first school of opinionists believes that feelings and urges of nationalism worked throughout the existences of soviet union and an internal struggle was inevitable in soviet union. Given the vastness, size and diversity of Soviet Union, such an opinion cannot be rejected out rightly. The second school of opinionists believed that the reformation started by Gorbachev speeded up the nationalist urge and

dissatisfaction to a level where it went beyond the control of the CPSU and rulers leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

**Desire to get rid of Backward Central Asian Republics:** It is ironical that during the cold war years it was always suggested that the nationalists urge would always be strong in Central Asian Republics, due to the economic backwardness and ethnic and religious differences. However, as events gained momentum nationalist urge emerged the strongest. This is termed as the European and Balkan part of Soviet Union which included Russia, Ukraine and Georgia. People here felt isolated and felt that they were paying too heavy an economic price to keep depleted Central Asian Republics in Soviet Union. This led to the ultimate disintegration of Soviet Union.

### ***Impact of Disintegration of Soviet Union on International Relations***

Before analyzing the impact of the collapse of the USSR and the liquidation of socialist bloc on the international relations, it may be noted that the collapse of the Soviet Union was both total as well as partial. Total in the sense that the USSR got replaced by Russia, CIS, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania .It was total in the sense that it reflected the end of the era of communism in this part of the world. However the collapse of soviet union was also partial in the sense that the successor of the erstwhile Ussr, I,e Russia inherited  $\frac{3}{4}$  of territory, population ,resources and the whole of nuclear arsenal of the parent Ussr. Russia took over all assets and liabilities of the erstwhile USSR .The impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union which also involved the collapse of the socialist bloc in international relations was indeed very profound and big. It can be analyzed under the following heads.

**End of cold war:** The biggest implication of the collapse of the Soviet Union was the end of the cold war .The ideological rivalry between socialism and capitalism came to an end .The ideological conflict had led to the evolution of military alliance like NATO, SEATO and CENTO, led by the U.S.A and Warsaw pact led by the Soviet Union. It had triggered a hostile arms race and accumulation of nuclear weapons by the two blocs. The end of cold war ,made the end of arms race possible and establishing new peace.

**Rise of Uni polarity in International Relations:** The disintegration of the socialist bloc ,the termination of the Warsaw pact and the collapse of the Ussr created uni polarity in international relations with the U.S.A. as the sole surviving super power in the world .The uni polarity

in the international relations got reflected from the continued presence of NATO, the dominant position of the U.S.A in the world in general and the UN in particular, and the inability or unwillingness on the part of the major powers to oppose are challenge the US power in the world.

**Ideological Uni Polarasim:** The collapse of the socialist USSR as well as the other socialist countries of the Europe gave a serious and fatal blow to the ideology of communism. Further, the acceptance and adoption of liberalization, democracy, decentralization and market economy by almost all the states gave a further blow to the popularity of communism in the world.

**Change in the politics of Europe:** The collapse of socialist bloc and the USSR was accompanied by the end of Russian rule in European politics. The rise of non communist regimes through movements for democracy and liberalization in the eastern European states gave a new look to European politics.

**Emergence of New States:** The collapse of the soviet bloc led to the emergence of many new countries. With their own autonomous choices and aspirations ,many of these states especially the Baltic and East European states wanted to join the European union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization(NATO) .Along with these states ,the Central Asian Republics also wanted to continue their intimate ties with Russia while paving for closer ties with US, China, Western Europe and other states .The collapse of bi-polarity, therefore witnessed the emergence of new players each with their own identity ,interest ,economic and political problems.

## CONCLUSION

The above discussion is more or less a comprehensive account on the reasons of the fall of the Soviet Union and

its impact on international relations. It gives us an idea of what is it that should be considered as the cause of the disintegration of the USSR. It was found that the major cause of fall of the Soviet Union is the Soviet model of socialism itself. The other causes that seem to exacerbate the disintegration process are more or less the rise of nationalism and also the desire of the people for sovereignty, Desire to get rid of Backward Central Asian Republics and Hence, the Soviet model of socialism is at odds with the socialism in many respects, it is, therefore, argued that the Soviet communism rather than socialism should be considered as the major cause of the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It has been also concluded from the above study that the collapse of the Soviet Union along with the end of cold war, liberalization of eastern Europe and emergence of uni Polarasim in power structure and ideological environment acted as a source of profound and big changes in the international relations of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century .The emergence of unipolarity with the U.S.A as the sole surviving super power, the changes in the politics of Europe, the increase in the number of new nation states came to the major realities of the post USSR international relations.

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