

Unit 6. Revolutions of 1989 and the Fall of Communism



Communism – during the period from 1920s to 1980s – remained as a prominent alternate philosophy to Capitalism of the West. USSR (a confederation of 15 republics) was the leader of the Soviet Bloc. But around 1989, almost all on sudden, many nations which leaned towards communist ideologies separated from it.

The revolutions of 1989 was just a beginning. It spread to the Soviet Bloc and finally led to the disintegration of Soviet Union. The events – more or less led to the end of Second World, which was based on Communist ideology.

This post is about a broad topic which includes anti-communist movements in the period 1989-1992 in many nations – Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Russia and even China. While discussing the **fall of communism** – a broad topic – the ideal point from where we should start is ‘the revolutions of 1989’.

Revolutions of 1989



The Revolutions of 1989 were part of a revolutionary wave that resulted in the Fall of Communism in the Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. The period is

sometimes called the Autumn of Nations. There were many revolutions in the period 1989 to 1992, against the existing communist governments in Europe. As we discussed in last post on this section, there were mass protests, many communist governments started to fall in countries like Poland, Hungary etc (1989). Revolutions in East Germany resulted in the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989 November. Revolutions didn't end there, it went on disintegrating the mighty USSR (1991).

Anti-communist sentiments

Anti-communist movements in the period 1989-1992 in many nations – Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Russia and even China – toppled many of the authoritarian regimes in Europe, establishing capitalist, liberal democracies. Most of the mass movements were non-violent. Romania was an exemption. The anti-communist movements gained success in most countries, but it was suppressed in China.

Results of the anti-communist revolutions of 1989



1. Peaceful transfer of power to non-Communist governments in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Albania.
2. **German reunification: East Germany with West Germany.**
3. Violent transfer of power to a non-Communist government in Romania.
4. Breakup of the Soviet Union.
5. End of the Soviet Union as a superpower.
6. Formation of the Russian Federation.
7. **Breakup of Czechoslovakia:** Czech Republic and Slovakia.
8. **Breakup of Yugoslavia:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro.
9. Violent suppression of the Chinese democracy movement: Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.
10. Dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.
11. All Soviet military troops withdraw from Afghanistan.
12. Intensification of the process of European integration.
13. Skepticism about Communism all over the world associated with decreasing support for communist parties, especially in Europe.

- 14.Changes in dozens of other countries, especially involving the rise of consumerism.
- 15.Yemeni reunification.
- 16.New states created from former Soviet Union.
- 17.Collapse of Communism in Mongolia, Ethiopia and Yemen.
- 18.Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia ends.
- 19.End of the Cold War.
- 20.The spread of American culture and capitalism to previously sealed-off Communist countries.
- 21.Integration of most former Warsaw Pact members into NATO.
- 22.United States sphere of influence grows.
- 23.New World Order.
- 24.Spread of electoral democracy.

Present Communist Countries

Though there are few communist party representations in ruling coalitions in democratic countries, at present there are only five countries, where communist party rules the state.

1. China.
2. Vietnam.
3. Laos.
4. Cuba.
5. North Korea.

PS: Apart from North Korea, and to an extent in Cuba, all the present communist nations initiated market reforms under their single party communist rule.

Questions for UPSC Mains

1. Qn: The ‘Autumn of nations’ achieved what ‘Springtime of nations’ couldn’t achieve. Compare and contrast the revolutions of 1989 with the revolutions of 1848 in Europe. (Hint – Revolutions of 1848 were also known as ‘Springtime of nations’. They were a series of republican revolts against European monarchies in France, Germany, Italy, and the Austrian Empire. They all ended in failure and repression, and were followed by widespread disillusionment among liberals.)
2. Qn: Even though the revolutions of 1989 toppled many communist regimes it was not successful in China. Trace the reasons.



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