

Forum: 4th Committee (Political)

Issue: The need for détente in international relations

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Introduction

The word détente, which means “relaxation” in French was first used as a political term in 1908. In 1969, the term became widely used as a reference to the general easing of the geo-political tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. However, after the end of the Cold War, détente is generally used as a term referring to easing of strained relations, especially in political situations between major world powers. Instead of directly ending disagreements, the real goal of détente is to lessen the occasions of conflict, which will lead to eventual resolution of the problem. Nowadays, the détente is especially in need as a number of problems such as war, immigration crisis, the arbitrariness of the authorities, economic crisis, and religious conflicts are increasing tension all around the world. Without détente, the boiling tension can lead to war and perpetual conflicts while working for détente can provide opportunities for the achievement of common goals which include peace, stability, and various social problems.. Taking into account all mentioned aspects of the problem, we must make efforts to prevent the rising tension of the world as it is a crucial step for countering devastating consequences of lasting conflicts.

Currently there are a few main areas of conflict that involve the major world powers - escalating the level of tension in international relations. To promote détente at present - each of these areas should be addressed.

- **Syrian Civil War:** (March 2011 - ongoing) A civil war between the government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian Opposition, is currently at a ceasefire, with both sides on an offensive against terrorists in the region. Although the United States and the Russian Federation agreed that attacking terror groups was a priority, they disagree on a few significant matters. One, is that they disagree on which groups to call

terrorists, which hinders the process for a full-fledged ceasefire. If the United States and the Russian Federation address their disagreements and start pushing toward common goals, they could be more efficient in tackle problems that need to be solved, such as the elimination of terrorist groups and the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East.

- **South China Sea Territorial Disputes:** Territorial disputes in the South China Sea over sovereignty of the ocean region is also a growing conflict. The United States has sent military planes and ships to observe the area, irritating the government of the People's Republic of China, and both countries accuse the other of "militarizing" the South China Sea area. Due to the constant instability in the waters, a simple miscalculation or misunderstanding can lead to a maritime incident, accelerating to a major political crisis. Without any détente, this strategic ocean route can hinder or stop maritime commerce for numerous countries. Détente is needed to ensure the protection of regional countries and ensure the principles of the freedom of the seas.
- **Ukrainian Territorial Sovereignty Disputes:** The Russian Federation put troops in Ukrainian territory. There has been an escalation of tension between Russia and Ukraine, with the possibility of economic sanctions, and possible exclusions from political summits. This conflict mostly adds tension between NATO and Russia. The de-escalation of this issue can help the world powers to focus on ending other conflicts such as the Syrian Civil War.

Countries involved

- **People's Republic of China** - The People's Republic of China, headed by President Xi Jinping, conflicts with the United States of America in the following areas: Philippines- The People's Republic of China and Philippines are having conflict on South China Sea and USA, Japan, and UN are on Philippines side; Taiwan- The People's Republic of China does not admit Taiwan as a state but part of the Republic of China; economic issues- The People's Republic of China

is trying to control the international economy by making Renminbi stronger than US dollars;

- **USA** - The United States of America, headed by President Donald Trump, allies with the UN, EU, Japan, conflicts with the Russian Federation in the following areas: Ukraine- the USA and the Russian Federation have been opposed on Crimea; Syria- the USA and the Russian Federation have been fighting in Syria without using their actual forces; general human rights issues: The United States of America criticizes Russia about human rights;
- **Russian Federation** - The Russian Federation, headed by President Vladimir Putin, conflicts with the United States of America in the following areas: Ukraine - USA wants Ukraine to join in the EU and Russian Federation does not; Syria - USA supporting the Opposition and Russian Federation supporting the Government; Global Arms Control - armed strength ranking, first place is USA followed by Russian Federation;

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The need of detente is becoming more and more acknowledged all over the world, but due to the complexity of the issue, many international organizations and global powers lack of finding success in taking decisive measures for the issue.

Nevertheless, there are some notable past attempts that worked;

- **Arms Control during the Cold war** - Detente is widely known as a period of improved relations between the United States and the Soviet Union that began tentatively in 1971 by both leaders signing seven agreements covering the prevention of military clashes and eventually reducing the danger of nuclear warfare and ending the cold war
- **Ping-pong Diplomacy** - Although China have been isolated from the world for decades, in 1971 a move was made to improve relationships between China and the world when China invited an American table tennis team to China. USA's response was to support China's entry into the UN, which eventually happened in October that year. After that, China was involved in various cooperations among the world's major powers

- **Russian Reset** - The Russian reset was an attempt by the Obama administration to improve relations between the United States and Russia in 2009 through various peace talks, which led to both sides agreeing to cooperate. However, due to various disputes and disagreements regarding the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Syrian Civil War, the reset was described in the press as “failed”
- **Turkey’s Detente with Russia** - On November 24, 2015, Turkish forces shot down a Russian aircraft, citing a momentary violation of Turkish airspace, along the country’s southern border with Syria. The incident caused economic sanctions, including the visa restrictions for Turkish citizens and detention of groups of Turkish businessmen travelling to Russia. However, the normalization between Turkey and Russia successfully took place after Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan apologized to Putin for the incident. Recently Turkey and Russia brokered a Syrian ceasefire to find a resolution to the civil war in Syria.

Possible Solutions

There are many areas that can be worked on that could encourage detente in world politics particularly between the USA, Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China. The point of detente is not to solve any of the conflicts listed above, but rather help the countries of the world be better placed to improve their relationships and thus de-escalate tension, and prevent new conflicts, and end old conflicts.

Prerequisites to De-escalation:

- Both sides must avoid using violence for any means. And acknowledge the fact that conflicts typically de-escalate after a “hurting stalemate,” in which both sides suffer.

Education:

- Education is a possible way to help people to have international thoughts which leads to correction of people’s misconceptions and Globalization, thinking everything in international level. As a result of such education,

social, economic, and cultural life from the protection of basic human rights might improve, also people should be educated to respect the values of other people and cultures, and not have stereotypes and false prejudices.

Media:

- Social media plays a significant role in the de-escalation of war. Radio and television also play an important role by expressing the opinions of both sides to keep everyone informed with accurate information about the issues currently being argued narrowly focused and isolated from other issues. The media also has potential to reduce the tensions between the countries and also can stimulate to the social understanding of the situation of the war.

Adversaries' roles:

- First, adversaries should avoid defiant actions and speeches against the other country. Development of shared goals and collaborative projects helps to be detente because this keeps away from the clash of two countries. Also both sides keep working on non-political things that can help build a better society is a step for detente. Also creating conditions under which many identity groups can cooperate, for example, develop group, networks or organizations including the people from the opposing sides.

World Leaders:

- First, world leadership needs to be democratic, with no dictators. There should also be cooperation between world leaders, both recognizing the national interests of each country and respecting the leaders. Also leaders are required to acknowledge some responsibility for the conflict.

Third Party Mediation:

- The third parties can provide a way to de-escalate through an outside point of view or serve as intermediaries to suggest agreements. Also, the third parties can stop either side to stop using overly destructive ways and avoid innocent people's deaths. Thus, when third parties are active and

have a positive role in war management, it is more likely to succeed in lowering tension.

Reliable useful links

- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38821078>
- <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html>
- <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/detente>
- <http://www.history.com/news/ping-pong-diplomacy>