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Refresher

Political Science

Class-XII

Part I : Contemporary World Politics
Part II : Politics in India Since Independence

For English Medium Students

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Political Science–Class 12

Contemporary World Politics (Part-I)

1 The End of Bipolarity

SUMMARY

Soviet System : (1) The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) came into being after the socialist revolution in Russia in 1917.

(2) The centre of the Soviet system was the Communist Party.

(3) The Soviet economy was planned and controlled by the state.

(4) After the Second World War, the east European countries that the Soviet army had liberated from the fascist forces came under the control of the USSR. The political and the economic systems of all these countries were modelled after the USSR. This group of countries was called the Second World or the 'socialist bloc'. The USSR was the leader of the bloc. Thus The Soviet Union became a great power after the Second World War.

(5) The Soviet economy was more developed than the rest of the world except for the U.S.

(6) But The Soviet system, became very bureaucratic and authoritarian, making life very difficult for its citizens. The Soviet Union was ruled by the Communist Party which had tight control over all institutions and was unaccountable to the people. The Russian Republic dominated in every respect among the 15 republics of the Soviet Union. Other regions felt neglected and often suppressed. In the arms race, the Soviet Union managed to match the US from time to time, but at great cost. The Soviet Union lagged behind the West in technology, infrastructure, and most importantly, in fulfilling the political or economic aspirations of citizens. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 weakened the system even further. The Soviet economy began to falter in the late 1970s.

Gorbachev and disintegration of the Soviet Union : In 1985, Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He decided to normalise relations with the West and democratise and reform the Soviet Union. This decision had unimaginable consequences :

(1) The communist governments of Eastern Europe fell one after another under public pressure. A democratic system established there.

(2) The economic-political reforms and democratisation within the country were opposed by the leaders of communist party but at the same time the people wanted more rapid reforms. As a result in 1991, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, three major republics of the USSR, declared that the Soviet Union was disbanded. Capitalism and democracy were adopted as the bases. They formed the Commonwealth of Independent States. The rest of the republics were made founding members of the Commonwealth.

(3) Russia got the seat of the Soviet Union in the Security Council. Russia was given the responsibility of carrying out the international agreements and treaties of the Soviet Union. Thus the Soviet Union collapsed.

Timeline of Disintegration of the Soviet Union—

1985 March	: Mikhail Gorbachev elected as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; appoints Boris Yeltsin as the head of the Communist Party in Moscow; initiates a series of reforms in the Soviet Union
1988	: Independence movement begins in Lithuania; later spreads to Estonia and Latvia
1989 October	: Soviet Union declares that the Warsaw Pact members are free to decide their own futures; Berlin Wall falls in November
1990 February	: Gorbachev strips the Soviet Communist Party of its 72-year-long monopoly on power by calling on the Soviet parliament (Duma) to permit multiparty politics
1990 March	: Lithuania becomes the first of the 15 Soviet republics to declare its independence
1990 June	: Russian parliament declares its independence from the Soviet Union
1991 June	: Yeltsin, no longer in the Communist Party, becomes the President of Russia
1991 August	: The Communist Party hardliners stage an abortive coup against Gorbachev
1991 September	: Three Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania become UN members (later join NATO in March 2004)
1991 December	: Russia, Belarus and Ukraine decide to annul the 1922 Treaty on the Creation of the USSR and establish the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan join the CIS (Georgia joins later in 1993); Russia takes over the USSR seat in the United Nations
25 December 1991	: Gorbachev resigns as the President of the Soviet Union; the end of the Soviet Union

Why did the Soviet Union Disintegrate?

(1) The internal weaknesses of Soviet political and economic institutions, which failed to meet the aspirations of the people. This was the main reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union.

(2) The Soviet economy used much of its resources in maintaining a nuclear and military arsenal and the development of its satellite states in Eastern Europe and within the Soviet system. This led to a huge economic burden that the system could not cope with.

(3) The people of the Soviet Union got this information about the progress of the Western countries that the Soviet Union is far behind the western countries. This caused a political-psychological shock to the public.

(4) People were alienated from governance due to slow and stifling administration, rampant corruption, party not being accountable to the people, lack of openness and centralized power. The government's support base had dropped.

(5) When Gorbachev implemented the reforms, the ruler could not face the tide of aspirations and expectations of the people. Where the general public wanted rapid reforms, the ruling class was dissatisfied that Gorbachev was showing too much haste in reforms. As a result, Gorbachev lost support from all side.

(6) The rise of nationalism and the desire for sovereignty within various republics including Russia and the Baltic Republics, Ukraine, Georgia, and others proved to be the immediate cause for the disintegration of the USSR.

Consequences of Disintegration : The main results from the disintegration of the Soviet Union were : (1) The end of the Cold War era. (2) America became the only superpower in the world. Thus a polar world arose. (3) Liberal democracy emerged as the best concept to structure political life. (4) Many new countries emerged from the Soviet Union.

Shock Therapy in Post-Communist Regimes : The collapse of communism was followed in most of these countries by a painful process of transition from an authoritarian socialist system to a democratic capitalist system. As :

(1) Recognition of private ownership : Emphasis was placed on privatization of state wealth and immediate adoption of the capitalist structure.

(2) Free Trade : Full adoption of free trade and FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) was considered necessary.

(3) Adoption of capitalist system : The policy of financial openness, mutual convertibility of currencies and free trade was emphasized for adopting the capitalist system.

(4) Establishment of direct relations with western countries : By eliminating the trade alliances that existed between the countries of the Soviet camp, each country was directly linked to the western countries and not to each other in the region.

Consequences of Shock Therapy—

(1) Shock therapy destroyed the economy of the entire region. The entire state-controlled industrial structure collapsed. 90 percent industries were sold to private companies.

(2) The value of the ruble, the Russian currency, declined dramatically. Inflation increased so much that people's savings kept going.

(3) No alternative system could be established in place of the old business structure.

(4) The old system of food security, social welfare was destroyed. This increased the gap between the rich and the poor.

(5) The construction of democratic institutions was not given priority as the demands of economic transformation. The judicial culture and independence of the judiciary could not be established.

(6) The reason for the revival for most of their economies was the export of natural resources like oil, natural gas and minerals.

Tensions and Conflicts—

(1) Civil wars and insurgencies took place in many republics.

(2) The interference of external power increased in these countries.

(3) Severe conflicts took place in many areas.

(4) Central Asian republics, due to vast oil reserves of petroleum, became the arena of mutual competition between external forces and oil companies. The US wanted military bases in the region and Russia perceives these states as its 'Near Abroad' and believes

that they should be under Russian influence. The Chinese have begun to settle around the borders and conduct trade.

India and Post-Communist Countries : India's relations with Russia are good. Indo-Russian relations are embedded in a history of trust and common interests and are matched by popular perceptions. Russia and India share a vision of a multipolar world order. India stands to benefit from its relationship with Russia on issues like Kashmir, energy supplies, and balancing its relations with China etc. Russia stands to benefit from this relationship because India is the second largest arms market for Russia. Russia has repeatedly come to the assistance of India during its oil crises. Russia is important for India's nuclear energy plans.

IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

Page No. 8

Q. 1. I heard someone say "The end of the Soviet Union does not mean the end of socialism." Is that possible?

Ans. It is true that the end of the Soviet Union is not the end of socialism. Although the Soviet Union was a strong supporter and symbol of socialist ideology, it was a symbol of a form of socialism. There are many forms of socialism and those forms of socialist ideology are still adopted by many countries of the world. Secondly, socialism is an ideology in which development has been happening according to the country, time and circumstances and development is still happening. So the end of the Soviet Union is not the end of socialism.

Q. 2. Locate the Central Asian Republics on the map given on page no. 8 of the textbook.

Ans. The independent Central Asian countries are : (1) Uzbekistan (2) Tajikistan (3) Kazakhstan (4) Kyrgyzstan (5) Turkmenistan.

Page No. 12

Q. 3. Write any five Cold War allies each of the Soviet Union and the US.

Ans. Five Cold War allies each of the Soviet Union and the US are following :

(1) American Allies : (1) United States of America (2) England (3) France (4) West Germany (5) Italy.

(2) Soviet Union Allies : (1) Soviet Union (2) East Germany (3) Poland (4) Romania (5) Hungary.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS

Q. 1. Which among the following statements that describe the nature of Soviet economy is wrong?

- (a) Socialism was the dominant ideology
- (b) State ownership/control existed over the factors of production
- (c) People enjoyed economic freedom
- (d) Every aspect of the economy was planned and controlled by the State

Ans. (c) People enjoyed economic freedom

Q. 2. Arrange the following in chronological order :

- (a) Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

- (b) Fall of the Berlin Wall
- (c) Disintegration of the Soviet Union
- (d) Russian Revolution

Ans. (d) Russian Revolution (1917); (a) Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979); (b) Fall of the Berlin Wall (1989); (c) Disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991).

Q. 3. Which among the following is NOT an outcome of the disintegration of the USSR?

- (a) End of the ideological war between the US and USSR
- (b) Birth of CIS

(c) Change in the balance of power in the world order

(d) Crises in the Middle East

Ans. (d) Crises in the Middle East

Q. 4. Match the following :

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| (i) Mikhail Gorbachev | (a) Successor of USSR |
| (ii) Shock Therapy | (b) Military pact |
| (iii) Russia | (c) Introduced reforms |
| (iv) Boris Yeltsin | (d) Economic model |
| (v) Warsaw | (e) President of Russia |

Ans.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| (i) Mikhail Gorbachev | (c) Introduced reforms |
| (ii) Shock Therapy | (d) Economic model |
| (iii) Russia | (a) Successor of USSR |
| (iv) Boris Yeltsin | (e) President of Russia |
| (v) Warsaw | (b) Military pact |

Q. 5. Fill in the blanks.

(a) The Soviet political system was based on ideology.

(b) was the military alliance started by the USSR.

(c) party dominated the Soviet Union's political system.

(d) initiated the reforms in the USSR in 1985.

(e) The fall of the symbolised the end of the Cold War.

Answers : (a) socialist

(b) Warsaw Pact

(c) Communist

(d) Mikhail Gorbachev

(e) Berlin wall.

Q. 6. Mention any three features that distinguish the Soviet economy from that of a capitalist country like the US.

OR

Highlight any two features that differentiate the Soviet economy from the economy of a capitalist country like the United States of America.

Ans. (1) The Soviet economy was planned and controlled by the state, while the policy of free trade was adopted in the capitalist countries.

(2) The Soviet economy was based on the socialist economy while the US adopted the capitalist economy.

(3) In the Soviet economy, the state owned and controlled land and other productive assets and the distribution system, while privatization was adopted in the capitalist countries.

Q. 7. What were the factors that forced Gorbachev to initiate the reforms in the USSR?

Ans. Reasons for the reforms in the Soviet Union by Gorbachev

Gorbachev was forced to reform in the Soviet Union due to following reasons :

(1) Stagnation of the economy : Soviet Union Economic stagnation for many years led to severe consumer shortages. People's life had become difficult. Gorbachev promised to reform the economy. Therefore he was compelled to reform.

(2) Lag behind western countries : The Soviet Union had lagged far behind western countries in terms of technology and infrastructure (for example: transportation, energy) in the arms-manufacturing race. Ordinary citizens became more knowledgeable about the economic advance of the West. The reality of its backwardness came as a political and psychological shock. Gorbachev promised to bring the Soviet Union on par with the West. So he was compelled to bring reforms.

(3) Errors in administrative set-up : Due to the stagnant administration of the Soviet Union, heavy corruption in the bureaucracy and centralization of power, the common people were alienated from the government. Gorbachev promised to relax the administrative structure to take the people into confidence. Therefore Gorbachev was compelled to bring reforms in the administrative structure.

Q. 8. What were the major consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet Union for countries like India?