CLASS 12 · POLITICAL SCIENCE · ENGLISH MEDIUM

Contemporary World Politics

Chapter 1: The End of Bipolarity

Question-Answer Notes & Objective Practice · 44 Questions

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What is bipolarity?

Answer: Bipolarity is a world order dominated by two major powers or power blocs. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union led rival blocs with different political and economic systems.

Q2. What was the Soviet system?

Answer: The Soviet system combined Communist Party rule with a centrally planned economy. The state controlled major industries and provided basic services. Political competition was restricted, and decision-making became highly centralised.

Q3. Mention two achievements of the Soviet Union.

Answer: It developed a strong industrial base and advanced science and defence capabilities. It also provided education, healthcare and employment support to large sections of its population, although access and quality were not uniform.

Q4. Why did the Soviet economy become weak?

Answer: Heavy defence expenditure, technological backwardness in many civilian sectors and inefficient planning slowed growth. Consumer goods were often scarce, and the system struggled to satisfy rising public expectations.

Q5. Who was Mikhail Gorbachev?

Answer: Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. He introduced reforms to improve the economy and make public life more open. These reforms also exposed deep weaknesses in the Soviet system.

Q6. Distinguish glasnost from perestroika.

Answer: Glasnost referred to greater openness, discussion and transparency. Perestroika referred to restructuring the economy and political institutions. Both aimed to reform the Soviet system, but they generated pressures that the leadership could not fully control.

Q7. Why was the fall of the Berlin Wall significant?

Answer: The Wall fell in November 1989. It symbolised the weakening of communist rule in Eastern Europe and the decline of Cold War divisions. German reunification followed in 1990.

Q8. What was shock therapy?

Answer: Shock therapy was a rapid transition from state socialism to a market economy in former communist countries. It involved privatisation, freer trade and reduced state control, often under the influence of international financial institutions.

Q9. What is the Commonwealth of Independent States?

Answer: The CIS was formed in 1991 by several former Soviet republics after the USSR broke up. It provided a framework for cooperation among participating independent states. It was not a continuation of the Soviet Union as one country.

Q10. Why are India-Russia relations important?

Answer: The relationship includes defence cooperation, energy, scientific cooperation and diplomatic consultation. Russia inherited many links developed during the Soviet period. India has maintained these ties while also building relations with other major powers.

Q11. Why did national identities become important during the Soviet breakup?

Answer: Many republics had distinct languages, histories and political aspirations. As central authority weakened, local leaders and movements demanded control over resources and institutions. National identity became a basis for seeking autonomy or independence.

Q12. What difficulties affected post-Soviet countries?

Answer: Several faced economic collapse, weak institutions and disputes over territory or identity. Conflicts developed in parts of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Their experiences varied, so the former Soviet region should not be treated as one uniform political system.

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Long Answer Questions

Q1. Explain the main causes of the Soviet Union's disintegration.

Answer:

1. Economic stagnation weakened confidence in the system: planning could not provide enough consumer goods or keep pace with many new technologies.
2. Heavy military spending and the cost of supporting allies diverted resources from domestic welfare.
3. One-party rule, bureaucratic privilege and limited political freedoms alienated many citizens.
4. Gorbachev's reforms opened space for criticism but did not produce quick economic improvement; reformers and conservatives opposed him for different reasons.
5. Nationalist demands grew in Soviet republics. The failed coup of August 1991 further weakened central authority, and the USSR dissolved in December 1991.

Q2. Describe the major consequences of the end of bipolarity.

Answer:

1. The ideological and military rivalry between the two superpower blocs ended, reducing the central Cold War confrontation.
2. The United States emerged as the most powerful state in the immediate post-Cold War period.
3. Several independent countries appeared after the Soviet breakup, changing boundaries and regional relationships.
4. Market-oriented policies gained influence, and international financial institutions became important in economic transition.
5. New conflicts, identity disputes and economic difficulties developed in parts of the former Soviet region. Countries such as India had to adjust their foreign relations while retaining valuable partnerships.

Q3. Assess the effects of shock therapy.

Answer:

1. Many public enterprises were sold rapidly, sometimes at very low prices; valuable assets became concentrated in a few hands.
2. Industrial production declined sharply in several transition economies. Inflation and currency instability damaged savings.
3. Unemployment, inequality and poverty increased as state welfare arrangements weakened.
4. Trade links among former Soviet republics were disrupted before new arrangements were fully established.
5. The transition created opportunities for private enterprise, but its social costs showed why market reform requires effective institutions, social protection and careful sequencing. Its results differed across countries.

Q4. Why could Soviet reforms not save the Soviet Union?

Answer:

1. Reforms began after economic and political weaknesses had already become serious.
2. Greater openness allowed citizens to discuss corruption, privilege and shortages, reducing the authority of the ruling party.
3. Economic restructuring disturbed old controls without immediately creating a stable alternative, so living conditions did not improve quickly.
4. Nationalist movements used the new political space to demand greater autonomy or independence.
5. Conservative resistance and the failed 1991 coup undermined Gorbachev. The leadership could neither restore the old system nor hold the republics together through a widely accepted reformed arrangement.

Objective Questions

A. Multiple Choice Questions

1. In which year did the USSR dissolve?

(A) 1991 (B) 2001
(C) 1962 (D) 1945

2. Which leader initiated Soviet reforms in 1985?

(A) Joseph Stalin (B) Vladimir Lenin
(C) Mikhail Gorbachev (D) Nikita Khrushchev

3. The Soviet economy relied mainly on:

(A) Central planning (B) Colonial trade

(C) Village barter alone (D) Unrestricted private ownership

4. The Berlin Wall fell in:

(A) 1989 (B) 1955

(C) 1999 (D) 1917

5. Shock therapy aimed at a rapid transition towards:

(A) Military alliances only (B) Complete economic isolation

(C) Feudal rule (D) A market economy

6. Which party dominated Soviet politics?

(A) Republican Party (B) Labour Party

(C) Communist Party (D) Conservative Party

7. Which state became the principal successor to the USSR in international institutions?

(A) Romania (B) Poland

(C) Russia (D) Hungary

8. Which term means greater openness?

(A) Privatisation (B) Perestroika

(C) Glasnost (D) Bipolarity

Answers: 1. A 2. C 3. A 4. A 5. D 6. C 7. C 8. C

B. Fill in the Blanks

1. The Soviet Union broke up in _____.
2. Economic restructuring was called _____.
3. The military alliance led by the USSR was the _____ Pact.
4. The Berlin Wall fell in _____.
5. Several former Soviet republics formed the _____ in 1991.

Answers: 1. 1991 2. Perestroika 3. Warsaw 4. 1989 5. CIS

C. True or False

1. The Soviet system permitted unrestricted multiparty competition.
2. Nationalist movements contributed to the Soviet breakup.
3. Shock therapy restored central planning everywhere.
4. Russia continued to be an important partner of India.
5. The end of bipolarity removed every international conflict.

Answers: 1. False 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. False

D. One Word / Short Phrase

1. Name the last leader of the Soviet Union.
2. Name the Russian leader associated with the Soviet breakup.
3. Which city's wall symbolised the Cold War division?
4. What is the rapid market-transition policy called?
5. Name the ideology associated with the Soviet economic system.

Answers: 1. Mikhail Gorbachev 2. Boris Yeltsin 3. Berlin 4. Shock therapy 5. Socialism

E. Match the Columns

Column A	Column B
1. Glasnost	A. Soviet-led military alliance
2. Perestroika	B. Two dominant power blocs
3. Warsaw Pact	C. Greater openness
4. CIS	D. Restructuring
5. Bipolarity	E. Cooperation among former Soviet republics

Answers: 1-C; 2-D; 3-A; 4-E; 5-B