

❖ The War in Vietnam



1. The policy of containment led to the US involvement in a protracted war in Vietnam. In September, 1945. Ho Chi Minh the Nationalistic Communist leader had declared the independence of Vietnam and set up the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The French tried to restore their rule there after the war. In this, they were aided by Britain and, later, by the US. Thus, from 1946, France was drawn into a war. Because the nationalist forces in Vietnam were led by the Communist Party, Dulles advocated direct involvement of the US in the Vietnam War and continues to press France to continue the war in which the US provided the funds. The Vietnamese forces led by Ho Chi Minh received help from the Soviet Union and China but they relied mainly on their own strength and the popular support they enjoyed within. In July, 1954 an agreement was signed at Geneva according to which French rule in Vietnam ended. Vietnam was temporarily divided into North Vietnam and South Vietnam but his country was to be reunited after elections which would be held in 1956.
2. However, the US started building South Vietnam as an independent State under the dictatorial and corrupt rule of Ngo Dinh Diem. It was universally believed that Ho chi Minh's Party was certain to win the elections. Diem's Government, on the advice of and with the support of the US refused to comply with the decision to hold elections. The US started building the South Vietnamese army to resist the North Vietnamese Army. In spite of US support, Diem's Government was on the verge of collapse in 1963 due to its growing unpopularity.
3. The US policy makers advocated what was called the domino theory. According to this theory, if South Vietnam fell to the communists, all other South-East Asian countries would also collapse and come under communist rule and this would lead to the expansion of communism all over the Asia. The US started sending her own troops. To begin with as military advisers, but by the end of 1967, the number of US troops fighting in Vietnam had gone up to 500,000.
4. The US war in Vietnam was the most unpopular US war in history. It was condemned by people all over the world, including in the United States. No other single event in the years after 1945 had united people all over the world as the opposition to the war in Vietnam. The US troops withdrew from Vietnam in 1973 By April 1975, the South Vietnamese army was routed and the last of the US advisers also left. Vietnam soon emerged as a united country. The defeat of the greatest military⁷ power in the world by the people of a small country in Asia was an event of great significance in the history of the contemporary world.



❖ Conflict in the Arab World

1. The conflict found expression in Arab world too. The main cause of conflicts in the Arab world during the post-war period was the hostility of the United States and her allies to the spread of Arab nationalism. This was done in the name of preventing communism the Western countries determination to retain their control over the oil resources of this region was great. Another major source of tension in this area and the main ally of the US, was the State of Israel.
2. In November 1947, the United Nations had agreed to partition Palestine into an Arab State and a Jewish State. However, on 14 May 1948, Britain which held Palestine as a mandate withdrew from there before partition could be affected. The Jewish State of Israel was proclaimed which was recognized by the United States the very next day. The establishment of the State of Israel was followed by an Arab-Israel War (1956 in which the Arabs were deprived of their lands and homes and over a million of them had to live as refugees in other Arab countries.
3. With the help of the US, Israel began to be built up as a powerful state in the region. The Arab States refused to recognize the State of Israel and the Arab nationalists viewed her as an instrument to curb the rising strength of Arab nationalism.
4. In 1967, another war broke out between Israel, on one side and Egypt, Jordan and Syria on the other. This is known as the Six Day War. The Arab States were defeated and Israel occupied Egyptian territory in the Sinai Peninsula, the Palestinian territory on the West Bank of the river Jordan (from Jordan) and Gaza Strip, and a Part of the territory of Syria called Golan Heights. Israel also established her control over the entire city of Jerusalem.
5. On 29, October 1956, Israel invaded Egypt and on the next day British and French troops were landed there to occupy the Suez Canal. The British-French-Israel invasion of Egypt aroused world-wide protests, including in Britain and France. The United Nations, with the support of the US, also condemned the invasion. On 5 November, the Soviet Union issued an ultimatum to the invaders to withdraw from Egypt and threatened to use missiles to defend Egypt. On 7 November 1956, the British-French military operations in Egypt were ended and their troops were withdrawn. Egypt and Israel agreed to a cease-fire.
6. In 1973, there was another Arab-Israel war. During this war, the oil-producing Arab States announced that they would stop shipment of oil to countries which were supporting Israel. This meant mainly the United States and her NATO allies. The European members of NATO, however, refused to align themselves with the US in her support to Israel and US herself was compelled to persuade Israel to agree to a cease-

fire. Israel has refused to vacate the main Arab territories that she occupied during the wars in 1956, 1967 and 1973.

7. Egypt, under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser, represented the forces of Nationalism in the 1950s and the 1960s. Britain, in 1954, was asked to withdraw her troops from Egypt. At this time, Egypt also began to build her independent military strength with the help of arms from the Soviet Union. The US had offered to help Egypt build the Aswan Dam. Egypt started receiving Soviet arms and US aid for the Aswan Dam was stopped. On 26 July 1956, the Suez Canal was nationalized.
8. The end of the 1956 war in Egypt was acclaimed as a victory of Arab nationalism. It also led to the strengthening of the Soviet influence in the region. Egypt had now turned to the Soviet Union for help in building the Aswan Dam. Nasser also tried to strengthen Arab unity by uniting various Arab States. The US, alarmed at this development, proclaimed what is called the Eisenhower Doctrine, named after the US President. According to this Doctrine, the US decided to give economic and military aid to the countries in this region to protect them from what is called international communism. In July 1958, however, the pro-western government in Iraq was overthrown. US and British troops were sent to Lebanon and Jordan to prevent the pro-Western governments of these countries from falling. The US also continued to arm Israel.



❖ DISINTEGRATION OF THE SOVIET UNION

1. Conservatism of the communist rule adversely affected some vital factors of integration of USSR. There emerged a crisis – mainly an economic crisis. Declining agriculture, industry, export, increasing imports, were all signs of a crisis situation.
2. Gorbachev's coming to power represented a new outlook. It stood for crucial changes in the communist rule.
3. He stood for **Glasnost** (openness) and **Prestroika** (restructuring) and **Uskorenie** (acceleration.) He wanted to infuse a new strength and vigour by making the system more humane and democratic.
4. In fact his approach was not anti-communist. He stood for saving communism.
5. He initiated a process of widespread reforms in USSR. In political field he ended communist party's constitutional monopoly and made a move towards multiparty system. He favored abandoning Marxism-Leninism as the role of party ideology.
6. In economic field too, he took certain revolutionary steps. He introduced private leasing rights on land held collectively or on state farms; he made a move toward decollectivisation of agriculture farms. He tried to give up the system of complete state

ownership of business and factories. He made a move towards free market economy and doubted the efficacy of centralized planning.

7. In socio-cultural field also be dismantled control and restrictions, manifestation of this were freedom of press.
8. Gorbachev's economic reforms failed in USSR. But his liberal policies had aroused the people and the republics of the USSR. Both the radicals and the conservatives of the Communist Party stood in opposition to the reform processes. Failure of the reforms disillusioned people at large.
9. This reform process gave rise to two kinds of reactions. The party was split, one group being conservative wanted no reforms at all while the showing more radical approach towards still greater reforms. So there was a split in the party and Gorbachev failed to reconcile or satisfy both the groups.
10. The reforms process too could not yield positive results in immediate terms. There took place a general rise in prices and shortage of goods and commodities in the market. The **Law of State Enterprises** introduced by Gorbachev had adverse results i.e., there arose an inflationary situation in USSR which caused great frustration among the people.
11. So reforms could not yield immediate results. The period witnessed major strikes of coal miners and overall situation was that of chaos. Gorbachev now began to lose control over his reforms and USSR was now heading towards a crisis.
12. On the other hand, the republics started reacting. Under stalinist regime these reactions could be checked but Gorbachev's reforms had aroused people to have more reforms, more powers and greater autonomy. On his part Gorbachev tried to save the Union but failed to do so. The various options put forward by him to save the union failed and republics began to secede one by one.
13. Boris Yeltsin emerged as a new leader who had got popular support. He too was a votary of reforms and market economy, but his approach was more radical and wanted more reforms. People disillusioned with Gorbachev rendered support to Yeltsin. Thus, emergence of Boris Yeltsin symbolized emergence of a political substitute as a strong leader.
14. Because of the failure of Gorbachev's economic policies and the demand for greater autonomy by the end of 1990, it was clear that the Soviet Union could not continue to exist as a State in its old form.
15. The three Baltic States-Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania- had decided to become independent and the other republics had decided to assert the supremacy of their laws over the laws of the Union.

16. To prevent the break-up of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev negotiated a new treaty with ten republics. The new treaty would have granted greater autonomy to the republics but maintained the Union.
17. However, before the new treaty could be signed, some leaders of the Soviet Communist party tried to stage a coup against Gorbachev on 19 August 1991 by removing him from the President ship of the Soviet Union and putting him under house arrest.
18. There was widespread opposition to the coup, including by the army, and its was thwarted on 21 August though Gorbachev resumed office as President, the attempt at a coup accelerated the process of disintegration.
19. Boris Yeltsin, who had been elected President of the Russian Republic, emerged as the most powerful leader during this period. He had played the leading role in foiling the coup.
20. Gorbachev resigned from the communist party and all activities of the Communist party were ordered to be suspended. Gorbachev's effort to preserve the Soviet Union on the basis of a new treaty came to naught by November 1991. 13 of the republics had declared their independence.
21. Early in December 1991, Boris Yeltsin, the Russian president along with the presidents of two other republics announced that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist. They invited other republics to join a new federation called the Commonwealth of Independent States.
22. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as President and the Soviet Union formally ceased to exist. Its place was taken by 15 independent States which had constituted USSR. Twelve of them, including four Asian republics, became member of the Commonwealth of Independent States.