

Chapter 3: Modernity and the evolution of world society

1. Read pages 56-58 of your textbook. The following attempts to depict Enlightenment Thought have some merit, though some more than others. One in particular tells us more about its quintessential character; can you identify which one?

- (a) It arose from the cumulative knowledge of a series of eighteenth century enlightened and sophisticated European thinkers who displayed strong personal cosmopolitan and scientific orientations.
- (b) Enlightenment Thought was strongly opposed to all forms of religious belief and ritual on the grounds that religion stifled ideas and clear thinking.
- (c) The Enlightenment thinkers argued that human progress in the form of individual and social development, through the exercise of rational thought, mutual tolerance and greater political and civil equality, was possible, highly desirable and probably inevitable.
- (d) The thinkers of the Enlightenment were nearly all practising scientists of one sort or another and conducted different kinds of laboratory experiments.
- (e) Most of the Enlightenment thinkers were at the forefront of political movements designed to bring about the abolition of European monarchies.

2. Read the section on the rise of the nation-state and the advent of modernity (pages 53 – 56 of your textbook). Which of the following statements is true and which is false?

- (a) From the fifteenth century onwards European rulers did everything they could to strengthen the state with the intention of preparing the way for the rise of industrial capitalism.
- (b) During the same period Europe was dominated by two or three powerful empires which were engaged in perpetual war with each other and with lesser kingdoms.
- (c) Many European states encouraged international trade and the rise of a class of artisans and small entrepreneurs within their national boundaries, often reluctantly, because they realized this would increase their potential tax revenues from economic activity.
- (d) Even before the rise of industrial capitalism, the slow but cumulative impact of the economic growth taking place across much of Europe helped to generate dense urban business, intellectual and artisan networks. Many became sympathetic to ideas of democracy and civil rights.

(e) The American and French Revolutions of 1776 and 1789 were direct results of the rise of industrial capitalism.

3. Read the section on Marx and the rise of industrial capitalism carefully on pages 59 and 60 of your textbook. Now provide brief answers to the following two questions - perhaps by providing short lists.

(a) Marx provided a number of explanations for modern capitalism's unparalleled, in-built and immense productive power. For example, the ability of entrepreneurs to impose their own efficient work practices on their labourers since the latter no longer own the means of independent livelihood. There are at least four other bases for this productive power. Can you find out what these are?

(b) Marx and Engels claimed that industrial capitalists were driven by competition and profit to expand their business empires across the world. But in what ways and why did they suggest that these non-Western markets would eventually succumb to capitalism?

4. Look over pages 63-65 of your textbook. The global situation prevailing after 1945 allied to its own national concerns and interests provided opportunities for the US government to assume leadership of the Non-Communist world until the late 1960s.

The text discusses several key factors which help to explain the above. One involves the emergence of the Cold War in 1947 where the USA and the USSR, supported by their various allies, began a long period of sustained military, economic and ideological competition and conflict. Investigate, identify and outline the other factors and circumstances.

5. The gradual emergence of a more complex, multi-polar world since 1989 and the slow, relative economic decline of American global power over several decades are inextricably entwined. One way of disentangling this story while trying to build an overall picture is to match certain key dates to particular events and processes. Study the textbook from pages 65 to 69 then try to link the dates on the left in the table below to the processes and events outlined on the right.

1970s onwards	President Reagan's 'Star Wars' policy aims to provide the USA with a blanket nuclear defence against any invading missiles but proves to be extremely costly.
1981-89	A US-led military force, backed by the UN, invades Iraq following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait after a quarrel over oil rights.

1981-2007	15 new states are formed out of the collapse of the USSR empire and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact alliance.
1989-92	Al-Quaeda destroys the WTO twin towers in New York resulting in the death of more than three thousand people.
2003	Japanese and South Korean manufactured exports begin to make huge inroads into US and European home and export markets.
1992	The USA and its allies – without a mandate from the UN – invade Iraq for the second time but this meets with worldwide condemnation.
1992-96	The Cold War ends with the economic bankruptcy and eventual collapse of the USSR and its unwillingness (President Gorbachev in 1989) to support the regimes of Eastern Europe when internal mass insurrection takes place.
2000 till now	The rise of the BRIC countries is increasingly recognized as their economic growth begins to push up the prices of global commodities such as oil while their manufactured exports to Western economies increase ineluctably - especially those from China.
2001	The 'Arab Spring' erupts first in Tunisia but soon engulfs Egypt, Libya and other Middle Eastern regimes.
2011 and 2012	The 'Washington Consensus', pursued by the USA in alliance with the other G7 economies and supported by the IMF and WB, results in the imposition of tough neo-liberal policies on many Third World economies. This opened the latter to Western market competition and business penetration.

