

Containment – Q + A Exemplars

Describe it for 4 marks

Marks awarded - One mark for each relevant point; additional mark for supporting detail [1–4]

Describe relations between the USA and Cuba between 1959 and the end of March 1961.

- 'The US was unhappy Batista had been overthrown.'
- 'Castro promised to reduce American influence in the country.'
- 'The US was concerned at its loss of influence over Cuba.' (Monroe Doctrine 1823)
- 'The US was concerned at the possible spread of Communist ideas so close to the USA.'
- 'Castro took many American assets by nationalisation.'
- 'Much land owned by Americans was redistributed amongst Cubans.'
- 'Many Cuban exiles put pressure on the US government to take action against Castro.'
- 'Eisenhower introduced economic sanctions.'
- 'The USA refused to buy Cuban raw materials, tobacco and sugar.'
- 'In the summer of 1960, Castro negotiated trade agreements with the USSR to export sugar.'
- 'Khrushchev agreed to send Castro military advisers and equipment.'
- 'In January 1961, the US broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba.'
- 'Eisenhower approved US plans to attempt to remove Castro.'
- 'Through Cuban intelligence, Castro was aware of potential threats.'
- 'The US media broadcast a relentless stream of criticism of Castro.'
- 'There were assassination attempts against Castro.'

What was the 38th Parallel in relation to the Korean War?

- e.g. 'It is the line (of latitude) that separates North Korea and South Korea.'
- 'It was the boundary of the Communist North with the capitalist South.'
- 'It was chosen as the frontier between the American and Soviet sectors of Korea in 1945.'
- 'It was intended as a temporary dividing line.'
- 'The 38th Parallel marks the approximate start of the two sides in the Korean War.'
- 'It was the finishing position of the two sides at the end of the Korean War.'
- 'It was the crossing of this boundary which resulted in United Nations action.'

Describe the Bay of Pigs invasion.

- 'The invasion happened in April 1961.'
- '1400 troops landed on the beaches along the Bay of Pigs.'
- 'Limited air support'
- 'Castro was prepared for the attack and led the resistance.'
- 'The exiles were met by 20 000 Cuban troops.'
- 'The invasion forces immediately came under heavy fire.'
- 'Some of the invasion forces escaped into the sea.'
- 'Most men in the invasion forces were killed or captured, within 72 hours'
- 'The supporting air strikes missed many of their targets.'
- 'Few, if any, Cubans joined the invaders.' – no popular uprising.

What did the Geneva Agreements of 1954 propose for Vietnam?

- e.g. 'There should be a ceasefire – with France'
- 'There should be an exchange of prisoners.'
- 'A withdrawal of all foreign forces.'
- 'Vietnam to gain independence from France.'
- 'Vietnam was to be temporarily divided into North and South Vietnam.'
- 'The boundary was the 17th Parallel.'
- 'Ho Chi Minh's government was recognised in the North.'
- 'Ngo Diem's government was recognised in the South.'
- 'Elections were to take place for a united Vietnam within two years.' (1956)

What was the 'domino effect' in relation to Vietnam?

- 'President Eisenhower thought if Vietnam fell to communism, the surrounding countries would soon fall.'
- 'With the fall of China and North Korea to communism, the US thought Vietnam would be next.'
- 'If it fell to communism, then Laos and Cambodia would be next.'
- 'There was a possibility that after those two, others would follow such as Thailand, Indonesia and Burma.'

Explain it for 6 marks

Marks awarded - Explains One reason (4-5), 5 for a fully developed answer.

Why was the Cuban Revolution seen as a threat to the USA?

The revolution of 1959, was seen as a political threat, especially as Castro became closer to the USSR over the next couple of years. The Monroe doctrine (1823) put Cuba in the US sphere of influence- anything to upset this would be seen as a potential threat.

The Cuban Revolution was also seen as a threat because it reduced American influence in Cuba. American companies such as oil refining, fruit farming and railways had dominated much of the Cuban economy, but Castro nationalised many industries and this took power and money away from American business interests which was an economic threat.

(This example is clearly laid out in two separate paragraphs and provides two clear reasons. It would be awarded six marks)

Why was Kennedy humiliated by the failure at the Bay of Pigs in 1961?

Ultimately, the failure to remove Castro humiliated Kennedy and made him look weak because it strengthened Castro's position with his own people and strengthened relations with the USSR, who went on to launch operation Anadyr in secret. Instead of stamping out communism near its borders, the USA had now encouraged further communist take-overs in Latin America which was against the Monroe Doctrine as this was all in the USA's sphere of influence.

Also, JFK had made a big noise about Castro being a 'communist menace', and that the operation failed made US intelligence look poor – even the CIA called it a 'perfect failure'! They even had to pay compensation to Cuba to get all the Cuban exiles released.

(This answer has two clear explanations and uses very specific supporting detail. It's a good example of how to approach explain question)

Why did the USA become involved in the conflict in Vietnam?

The basic reason why the US became increasingly involved was that Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, were convinced that China and the USSR were planning to spread communism throughout Asia. Eisenhower was referred to as the Domino Theory. If Vietnam fell to communism then Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand and even India might also fall, just like a row of dominoes. The Americans were determined to resist the spread of communism in Vietnam which they saw as the first domino in the row.

(This is a very good example of a full explanation for five marks. For six marks he would need to add a second brief explanation)

Why did North Korea invade South Korea in June 1950?

Essentially Kim Il-Sung wanted to re-unite Korea under Communist rule and he thought this was possible because he had the political support of fellow Communist leaders, Stalin and Mao Zedong.

Stalin had originally been against it (but now the USSR had the atomic bomb) so he supported it. The USSR also provided Kim with military hardware.
Also, Kim thought it was unlikely that the USA would respond.

(This example might just be awarded six marks as there are two reasons provided – although the second reason is not fully developed)

Why did Nixon find it difficult withdraw from Vietnam?

Essentially Nixon found it **difficult** because he didn't want the world to think the US has 'lost'. His strategy was to 'bomb' the North to the negotiating table, but that involved extending bombing to Laos and Cambodia. News was leaked and his bombing strategy was **criticized** and this led to demonstrations, such as the one at Kent State University where four students were killed by National Guardsmen.

In addition, the US withdrawal was based on his 'vietnamisation' programme. Basically training up and equipping the south Vietnamese army to fight its own war. This took time and was even **criticized** by some of the Generals who said the ARVN would never be good enough. They turned out to be right as Saigon fell only 2 years after the US left.

(This is a tough question, but note how it focuses strongly on the reasons rather than describing the bombing campaigns or the policy of Vietnam isolation)

Weigh-up for 10 marks

‘America was more successful in Korea than it was in Vietnam.’ How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

Arguably the Korean War was a success for US foreign policy as they did contain communism. The USA was determined to end the aggression of North Korea in 1950. Although it did not unite Korea under Syngman Rhee, it pushed back the communists to the 38th Parallel after a daring amphibious landing at Inchon by Gen. Douglas McArthur.

By contrast, the war in Vietnam was a disaster for US foreign policy. The US wanted to stop the domino effect whereby if one country fell to communism then the surrounding ones would follow. As a result of Vietnam becoming Communist in 1975, so did Laos and Cambodia.’

(This answer is a classic two paragraph for 6 marks. In order to be awarded more marks it would need to either develop one of the two paragraphs for +2 marks, or add a third paragraph providing further comment on the question. Look closely at the third example below which provide more supporting detail which could be used in this answer)

‘The US policy of containment was more successful in Korea than in Cuba.’ How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

‘The US policy of containment was largely successful in Korea. Acting on behalf of the UN, the US amphibious landing at Inchon, forced the communist forces from China and North Korea to retreat to the 38th Parallel. A bloody war of attrition followed for 3 years after which an armistice was agreed meaning South Korea had been saved from a communist takeover.’

Arguably, the US policy of containment was not as successful in Cuba. Although JFK managed to get the missiles removed he had to agree to never invade Cuba again. Therefore, Cuba, in spite of the Monroe doctrine, remained communist and it became an important base for communist supporters in South America. The US had to accept that there was a communist state very close to American shores.’

(This answer is a classic two paragraph for 6 marks. In order to be awarded more marks it would need to either develop one of the two paragraphs for +2 marks, or add a third paragraph providing further comment on the question)

How successful was the USA’s containment policy? Explain your answer. (Note this question has no dates so you can include everything) 😊

The US policy certainly saw some success in Europe - ‘In 1947, Britain declared that it could not continue to support the Greek government in its civil war against Communists. The Greek government appealed to the USA and Truman agreed to help and provide \$400 million in aid. It saved Greece from Communism.’ AND, the US successfully prevented Stalin from forcing the West out of Berlin after he blockaded it. The West’s response was a highly successful airlift for over 300 days – 278,000 flights.

Further success was had in Asia – between 1950 & 53 the US prevented South Korea from becoming communist after the North (backed by Stalin) invaded the south (June 1950). The invasion would have

been successful had it not been for the USA's quick response and the Inchon amphibious landings which saw the north pushed back beyond the 38th parallel.

However, the US containment policy did have its failures.

The Vietnam War saw the loss of the whole of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to Communism. This showed the failure of containment, although other states, such as Thailand, Burma and Malaysia, did not fall. It was a political failure as the US public turned against the war, especially after 1968 and the Tet offensive, when Walter Cronkite called it a 'bloody stalemate'. It was a military failure as US tactics, such as mass bombing, (operation rolling thunder) search and destroy missions and use of defoliants such as napalm, failed to destroy the VC supply route – the Ho Chi Minh trail. It was a moral failure too, especially after news of the My Lai massacre was leaked – the US looked like brutal occupiers not liberators. It was also an economic failure - In Vietnam it was estimated that it cost \$400,000 to kill a single VC! The USA spent billions for nothing.

(This answer is a very good example of the 2-1 strategy. Two clear paragraphs suggesting the success of containment, followed by a well developed third paragraph offering a counter argument. This answer would get 7 marks for the three paragraphs and an additional 2 for the developed paragraph on Vietnam. It could achieve 10, if it had included and conclusion which commented on how far?)

Cuban missile crisis was a success for US containment policy. How far do you Agree?

The main outcome of the crisis was that Soviet missiles were removed from Cuba which must be seen as success for US containment policy as a significant military and psychological threat had been removed. JFK's unwillingness to allow Soviet missiles on Cuba even though they were US missiles in Europe and his decision to impose a quarantine around Cuba was vindicated. In this case The US had contained the USSR's military influence. Having such a threat of destruction on the US doorstep was unthinkable- JFK had this threat 'contained'.

Arguably , it was also a success for containment because although as part of the deal, the US had to remove the missiles from Italy and Turkey, this part of the deal remained secret. Therefore, the USA's policy of containment looked to be a strong policy. Moreover, China criticized Khrushchev's handling of the missile crisis which was also seen as a success for the containment policy because it had divided the two main communist nations known as the sino-soviet split.

Nonetheless, although the military threat was removed, Cuba remained a communist country with close links to the USSR through trade, diplomacy and ideology. Cuba, with the support of the USSR, could still be used to spread communism into Central America and the northern part of South America. In fact, Castro went on to support socialist movements in South America and even in Africa.

(This is another very good example of the three paragraph essay, two paragraphs clearly developing the idea of the success of containment and one paragraph offering a counter argument. Each paragraph is supported with precise supporting factual detail)

In Vietnam Kennedy was more successful than Johnson. How far do you agree?

JFK's strategy in Vietnam was to avoid a full scale US intervention in Vietnam. He wanted to give the VC the means to stem Vietcong attacks by supporting the South Vietnamese army with equipment, such as helicopters, and military advisers. By 1963 there were 16 000 US military advisers in Vietnam

but he did not commit US troops despite Vietcong successes, so in this respect his strategy had succeeded.

However, his strategy had limited impact in Vietnam. One very unsuccessful strategy was the strategic hamlet programme. Building fortified villages to prevent them from being infiltrated by the VC. This was a miserable failure. The South Vietnamese hated them as they required them to move from their ancestral bases which was hated. Also, it had limited impact as it was also difficult to identify potential Vietcong from peasants as they had no uniform, meaning Vietcong could infiltrate loyal areas anyway!

Strategically, Johnson thought Operation Rolling Thunder would last only take a few weeks to 'bomb the north into submission'. Operation Rolling Thunder was a miserable failure. It failed to destroy the Ho Chi Minh trail and meant he had to commit ground troops to do the job. Under Johnson there were 500,000 US boots on the ground but they could not bring a quick end to the war. In 1968, the Tet Offensive showed that the communists could still attack Southern cities including Saigon and even the American Embassy. Demonstrators in the USA used to chant, 'hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?' The US was losing the war and Johnson did not seek a second term as president!

*(The success in these questions is to focus on the concept of **strategy**. Think about each of the president's **strategy** in Vietnam and way up its successes and failures. In this essay you can see this is clearly done and an effective well structured answer with precise supporting detail is the result)*

Your Turn

Now you have seen and read a few exemplars – how would you address the following questions?

4 marks – note they don't ask you to 'describe', but that's basically what you are doing.

1. What was Eisenhower's policy towards Vietnam? (4)
2. What was the importance of the 38th parallel in relation to Korea? (4)
3. What happened to Vietnam immediately following the Geneva Peace Accords of 1954? (4)
4. What was MacArthur's role in the Korean War?

6 marks – try and think of a main reason which you can develop and a 'sub' reason to gain you the whole 6 marks.

1. Why was the USA unhappy with the changes Castro introduced immediately following the Cuban Revolution? (6)
2. Why did the USA become involved in resisting the invasion of South Korea? (6)
3. Why did Khrushchev place nuclear weapons in Cuba? (6)
4. Why was Chinese support for North Korea important? (6)

10 marks – as for the 6 marks, think of three starter sentences and go from there.. 😊

1. 'The American policy of containment between 1950 and 1973 was successful.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (10)
2. 'America failed to contain Communism.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (10)
3. 'America succeeded in containing communism. "How far do you agree with the statement? Explain your answer. (10)
4. How far was the outcome of the Korean War a success for the USA? Explain your answer. (10)