**Was détente a success or failure?**

* **What was Détente?**
* “Détente” - means a “relaxing of tension”
* Between 1968-1980, USA, USSR, PR and European nations pursued policies to:  
  - Design establish more stable relations  
  ​- Reduce the threat of nuclear war
* Similar to the “thaw” in tensions of the 1950s
* Despite policy successes of détente, it didn’t alter or alleviate the fundamental nature of the conflict
* Both sides still competing for influence and power throughout the world especially in Middle East and Africa
* Détente would finally collapse with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979
* Key historiographical debate about détente revolves around whether détente was a success or not
* Success:  
  - Reduced tensions  
  - Led to nuclear arms reductions  
  - Necessary strategy to manage Cold War competition  
  - Better relations with China  
  - Stability in Europe  
  ​- Never intended to end arms race
* Failure:  
  - Allowed USSR to strengthen economy  
  - Achieve nuclear parity with USA, seen as Soviet “trick”  
  - Cold War moved to Middle East/Africa  
  - Soviets invaded Afghanistan, continued arms race

**Soviet Reasons for Détente**

* USSR’s economy as stagnating by late 1960s
* Planned economy prioritised arms production over consumer goods
* Result was low living standards
* Fuelled unrest
* 1969, Sino-Soviet relationship was in tatters after the short border war
* USSR sought to isolate China
* Better relations with the West could enable this
* 1969, USSR had achieved nuclear parity with the USA
* Could negotiate from a position of strength

**American reasons for Détente**

* Vietnam War isolated USA internationally
* Caused tensions amongst its allies
* Sucked up billions of US dollars
* Seemed to be doing nothing to stop communism spreading
* US needed a way to end war
* President Nixon (1968) and foreign policy advisor Kissinger called for “realpolitik” foreign policy
* “Realpolitik” could flexibly explore divisions between USSR and China through negotiation
* Hope détente with USSR and China would put pressure on North Vietnam to end the war

**China’s reasons for Détente**

* After 1969 Border War with USSR, China sought better relations with the USA
* Way to deter and gain leverage over the USSR
* Diplomatically, China hoped that better relations with the USA would help its long-term aim of regaining Taiwan
* Economically, China was keen to gain access to Western technology ie. Oil extraction
* After 1976, new reforming leadership in China sought greater trade relations with West
* Détente would help achieve all these aims

**European Reasons for Détente**

* Crises of 1960s over Cuba and Berlin had worried European nations who were on the front-line of any potential nuclear war  
  - Tensions encouraged protests in both Czechoslovakia and France in 1968
* East West aware of the need to improve relations for social stability  
  ​- Chancellor Brandt in West Germany called for “ostpolitik” in foreign policy
* Soviet Bloc also keen for formal peace treaty  
  - Accepted new post-war borders in Europe  
  - Gained acceptance for division of Germany  
  - Détente would lead to better economic and political relations for both sides

**Successes of Détente - SALT 1:**

* Biggest policy success of détente in the area of nuclear arms reductions

Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT1) in 1972 was a landmark treaty

* Covered:  
  1. ABM Treaty - Anti-ballistic Missiles were allowed at only 2 sites, no more than 100 missiles. Ensured the continuation of MAD as a deterrent = both sides felt secure  
  2. Interim Treaty - Places limits on numbers of ICBMs and SLBMs  
  ​3. Basic Principles Agreement - Created rules for the conduct of nuclear war, committed both sides to promote “peaceful co-existence”
* Spirit of co-operation achieved by SALT 1 was followed up by visits to Moscow by Nixon in 1972 and 1974
* Brezhnev also visited Washington in 1973
* SALT 1 was a landmark agreement  
  - It’s “institutionalised” arms control and committed both nations to formal rules and goals
* Some criticised it for not going far enough  
  - Only regulated nuclear war  
  - Didn’t call for disarmament  
  - Only allowed both nations to maintain MIRVs  
  - Highly destructive

**Successes of Détente - SALT 2:**

* SALT 1 followed up by discussions over another treaty, SALT 2
* Negotiations began in 1974, dragged on until 1979 as relations stalled
* Called for:  
  - Limit on nuclear delivery vehicles e.g. ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers  
  ​- Ban on testing new types of ICBMs and new weapon systems
* Negotiations criticised within USA  
  - Many believed it only limited US power  
  - Enabled USSR to catch up with USA

**Successes of Détente - Europe:**

* Moscow Treaty 1970:

- Signed by USSR, West Germany and Poland  
- Accepted border between East/West Germany  
- Post-1945 re-drawn border between Poland and East Germany  
Final Quadripartite Protocol 1972:  
- Confirmed division of Berlin  
- Legally allowed Western access  
- Ensured security

* Basic Treaty 1972:

- Signed by East and West Germany  
- Accepting the existence of each other  
- Both promised to increase trade links  
Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War 1973  
- Both promised to enter consultations in the event of future crisis

* Agreements between 2 Germany’s led to huge reduction in tensions
* Both sides began to normalise relations
* 1973, UN recognised both West and East Germany as sovereign states and East Germany was recognised by the USA
* West Germany even stopped calling for reunification
* USSR happy as West accepted control over Eastern Europe
* Many in the West criticised agreements as they gave legal recognition to Soviet control

**Successes of Détente - China:**

* After visit of Nixon to China 1972 relations between China and USA began to be normalised
* USA dropped objections to China by:

- Taking a seat on the UN Security Council  
- Replacing Taiwan as the official representative of China  
Trade and travel restrictions also lifted  
Both nations began cultural exchanges  
China allowed students to study in West  
Better relations with China gave USA leverage over USSR in negotiations  
  
  
**Successes of Détente - Helsinki:**  
Final Act Agreement of European Security Conference  
- Began in Helsinki 1973  
- Signed on 1st august 1975  
- Another landmark agreement committing both sides to co-operation  
Basket 1 - Security:  
- Europe’s frontiers were “inviolable”  
- National sovereignty and non-interference   
Baster 2 - Cooperation:  
- Closer ties in economics, science and culture  
Basket 3 - Human Rights:  
- Respect for human rights and individual freedom on both sides  
Final act was viewed as a success by both sides but for different reasons  
USA believed it had committed the USSR to giving more political freedom to people in Eastern Europe  
- Which would hopefully undermine Soviet control  
USSR pleased to gain acceptance of Eastern Europe’s borders  
- Strengthening its control over Eastern block  
- Thought it could ignore Basket 3  
- However many dissidents within Eastern Europe would use Basket 3 to challenge Soviet control  
  
  
**Why did détente fail? - Yom Kippur:**  
Despite success, many right-wing politicians within USA criticised SALT and Helsinki agreements  
- By giving strategic advantages to USSR and for morally accepting Soviet domination of free countries  
Many feared USSR was “tricking” the USA  
- Events throughout the world seemed to confirm this  
October 1973, Yom Kippur War began  
- Egypt and other Arab states launched a surprise attack on Israel  
Israel was US ally in the region  
- Under 1973 Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, both sides promised to inform each other if a conflict threatened world peace  
Israel and USA shocked by the surprise attack by Soviet allies  
- Looked as if Israel was about to be wiped out by Soviet-backed forces  
Israel won war  
- Conflict had undermined US trust of USSR  
- Damaged the spirit of détente  
**Why did détente fail? - Africa:**  
In Africa, USSR funded and supported revolutionary movements that looked to upset the balance of power in the region  
1975, USSR massive increased its funding for Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) during the Angolan Civil War  
Looked as if USSR was seeking to increase its influence in Africa  
Repeated by the USSR in 1977  
- Sent military supplies to Ethiopia during its invasion of Somalia  
- Seemed to confirm Soviet intentions in Africa  
  
  
**Why did détente fail? - Economics:**  
Economic factors also led to the end of détente  
Late 1970s, USA economy recovered from devastating oil price crisis in 1973  
OPEC launched an oil embargo against Western allies of Israel  
USA had begun to strengthen its economic allies around the world  
Set up G7 group  
USA had less need for economic co-operation with USSR  
Soviet economy declined 3% growth by the late 1970s  
USA clearly in a stronger economic position  
Had less need for détente policies  
  
  
**Why did détente fail? - Afghanistan:**  
1979 USSR invaded Afghanistan  
USA already concerned about Soviet influence in Middle East  
Confirmed to Carter Administration in the USA that the USSR seek to undermine the balance of power in the world  
USA responded to the invasion by refusing to sign SALT 2  
- Stopping electronic exports to the USSR  
- Boycotting 1980 Moscow Olympics  
Carter Doctrine committed the USA to intervention in Middle East to defend US interests in Persian Gulf  
  
  
**The Second Cold War - 1890s:**  
Carter was severely damaged by his handling of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran  
- Islamist led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini forced the anti-Communist US-backed Shah out of power  
End of détente in 1979  
USA reacted by electing strongly anti-Communist Ronald Reagan to office in 1980  
Ronald Reagan called USSR “evil empire”  
Believe USA could win the Cold War by being more aggressive  
Increased defence spending  
- 13% in 1982 and 8% for the following two years  
- Developed new nuclear weapons, stealth bombers, trident submarines, deployed new ICBMs to Europe  
Strategic Defence Initiative (Star Wars)  
- Launched in 1983 to develop laser based defences to “shoot down” Soviet nukes  
- Undermined the MAD deterrent  
Reagan Doctrine  
- Increased global support for anti-Communist regimes in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Grenada and Afghanistan  
- Restricted US trade with USSR  
Therefore seemed that détente had been a failure and the early 1980s were characterised by increasing tensions between the superpowers  
Brezhnev died in 1982, replaced by Yuri Andropov, then Konstantin Chernenko in 1984  
Both leaders were old who did little to ease tensions  
Relations hit rock bottom in 1983  
USSR shot down a Korean Airliner travelling from USA to Seoul