

Key Topic 3: The end of the Cold War, 1970–91

1. Attempts to reduce tension between East and West

A number of treaties were signed in this period that reduced tension between the USA and USSR. This period became known as *détente*.

Outer-Space Treaty 1967: Both superpowers said that they wouldn't have nuclear weapons in space.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 1968: Neither country would supply weapons to other countries to aid their development.

SALT 1 (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) 1972: It successfully limited the number of weapons they had. It also imposed limits on the nuclear capability of the USA and USSR and prevented the production of ballistic missiles.

Helsinki Conference 1975:

- Security -> Recognition of Europe's borders - USSR accepted that West Germany existed and that it did not belong to them.

- Cooperation -> There was a need for closer economical, cultural and scientific links between the superpowers. This would lead them to closer political agreement.

- Human Rights -> Each superpower agreed to respect their citizens human rights.

Apollo-Soyuz Mission 1975: A joint mission between the USA and USSR. The US Apollo space craft docked with the Russian Soyuz craft in space.

SALT 2 1977: The aim was to limit each superpower to 2,400 strategic nuclear weapon systems. The treaty was drawn up in 1979, but the USSR then invaded Afghanistan, so the USA refused to ratify the treaty.

2. Flashpoints

- **Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (Dec 1979)** –A Civil War broke out between the Communist and Islamic fighters. The USSR had a fear that, if the civil war was won by the Islamic fighters, Afghanistan would reject Communism and encourage nearby countries to do the same. Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, killed Amin and declared Karmal president. The USA responded by getting the CIA to arm the Mujahedeen to fight against the Soviets. This effectively ended *détente* and worsened relations.

- **Carter Doctrine** – President Carter was appalled by the Soviet aggression in Afghanistan and released a statement saying the USA would not allow the USSR to gain control of the oil-rich Middle East and would take a number of immediate steps to try to remove Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

- **Olympic Boycotts** – The USA boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics in protest to Afghanistan and the 1984 LA Olympics were boycotted by the USSR and communist countries because of the Grenada invasion.

- **Reagan and the 'Second Cold War'** – Reagan was elected President in January 1981 as he had a tough anti-communist stance; referring to the Soviet Union as 'that evil empire'. Reagan increased US defence spending by \$32.6 billion and used threatening language in the START talks.

- **The Strategic Defence Initiative** - Nicknamed 'Star Wars', this was a plan to create a system using satellites and lasers to shoot down any missiles that might be launched by the USSR against the USA. This plan, had it been initiated, would have swung the nuclear balance strongly in the USA's favour.

3. The collapse of Soviet control of Eastern Europe

- **Gorbachev's new thinking 1985** – The new leader of the USSR, Gorbachev, introduced the twin policies of *Perestroika* (economic restructuring) and *Glasnost* (openness & free speech). He also reduced defence spending, stopped the arms race as they could not afford it, withdrew Soviet troops from Afghanistan, reduced Soviet aid worldwide, and sought *détente*. He also loosened his grip on Eastern Europe.

- **The fall of the Berlin Wall** - On 9 November 1989, East Germans were told they could cross the border into West Berlin. In dramatic scenes, the Berlin Wall was torn down by demonstrators. Germany was reunited in 1990. The fall of the Wall was massively symbolic of the end of the Cold War. Many countries in Eastern Europe left Soviet rule.

- **The collapse of the Soviet Union** - In February 1990, 250,000 people demonstrated against the communists in Moscow. In August 1991, hard-line communists led a coup against Gorbachev. They imprisoned him in his own dacha (country home) in the Crimea. Boris Yeltsin wanted to destroy Soviet communism and led a demonstration against the coup. He insisted that reform had to continue in order for Russia to be saved. He formally ended the USSR in December 1991! Later in the same month, Gorbachev resigned as Soviet president (there was no longer a Soviet Union for him to be president for!). The communist red flag that flew over Kremlin was lowered for the last time.

The Cold War was over!



The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union

1970 →	Détente
1972	SALT I
1975	The Helsinki Conference (The 3 baskets)
1979	SALT II
1981-89	Reagan and his policy towards the Cold war
1983 →	Reagan's SDI
1980 and 84	The Olympic Games

Key Words

Détente	The easing of tension.
Treaty	A formal agreement between states.
Boycott	Refuse to cooperate with or participate in (a policy or event).
Doctrine	A stated principle of government policy.
Invasion	An instance of invading a country or region with an armed force.