

GCSE History: The Cold War

Topic 3: Détente and end of the Cold War



Summary

Although the invasion of Czechoslovakia had strained USA-USSR relations, the 1970s was a decade of clear détente; both sides made several important agreements such as USA pulling out of the Vietnam War in 1973, and the Helsinki Agreement 1975 which guaranteed human rights and the borders of all countries in Europe.

Détente ended in 1979 when Brezhnev made the decision to invade Afghanistan to support the communist government against Islamic extremists. The US public reacted by voting for Ronald Reagan who followed a hardline stance against the USSR, calling it an 'evil empire' and increasing US military spending.

By the mid-1980s, the USSR had massive debts from the Afghan War. The final leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, promised massive reforms to communism. His changes of 'perestroika' and 'glasnost' allowed capitalism and democracy to gain popularity. Without meaning to, he began the fall of communism across all of East Europe. In 1989, Gorbachev and Bush declared that "the Cold War is over" at the Malta Summit. Millions of Germans protested the Berlin Wall and it was brought down after nearly 30 years. Within just 2 years, West and East Germany reunified, revolutions across East Europe ended communist rule, and the USSR broke up into 15 different countries (such as Russia, Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan).

Other Resources

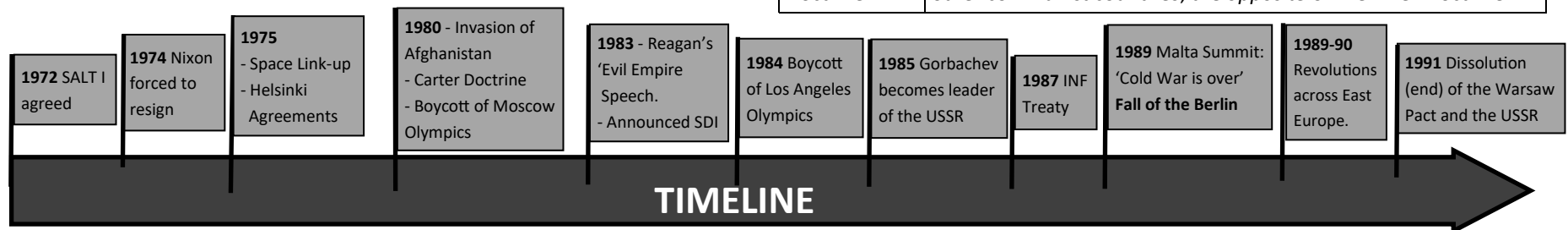
GCSEPod: <https://members.gcsepod.com/shared/podcasts/title/10648/65381>

BBC Bitesize: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zwp86fr/revision/1>

St Ivo lessons: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShMSWhJnR0&list=PLUXryp00aNNWSxVc1yG3-zvga_WulUtF&index=1

Key Vocabulary

Détente	'Relaxing of tensions'. Particularly from 1970-79, both the USA and USSR were willing to work with each other.
Afghan Revolution	In 1978, Soviet-backed Afghan communists took over the country, but struggled to get enough support amongst Afghans.
Mujahideen	The Islamic extremists who were fighting in the Afghan Civil War against communism. They were given funds/supplies by the USA.
guerrilla warfare	A form of warfare where small group of rebels use ambushes and hit-and-run tactics to fight a larger army. The Mujahideen used this against the USSR, and the Vietcong used it against the USA.
boycott	The refusal to pay for/attend something. The USA boycotted the Moscow Olympics; the USSR boycotted Los Angeles 4 years later.
ratify	A treaty/agreement does not become law until it is ratified.
Carter Doctrine	In response to the invasion of Afghanistan, Carter promised to protect 'American interests' in the Middle East (oil).
MAD	' M utually A ssured D estruction' was the doctrine that neither side would use nuclear weapons as both would be destroyed.
NUTS	' N uclear U tutilisation T arget S election' was the belief that USA could destroy all Soviet missiles, so the USSR could not use MAD.
SDI	Nicknamed 'Star Wars', this was Reagan's hi-tech space system to destroy Soviet missiles. <i>The USSR did not know it was impossible.</i>
perestroika	'Restructuring'. Gorbachev allowed some capitalist ideas to work in the Soviet economy.
glasnost	'Openness'. Gorbachev wanted to open links to the West, as well as allowing much more free speech and press within the USSR.
Sinatra Doctrine	Gorbachev made it clear that the USSR would not intervene in other communist countries; the <i>opposite</i> of Brezhnev Doctrine.



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Key Figures	
Leonid Brezhnev	Brezhnev was leader of the USSR for 18 years, far longer than Khrushchev. He oversaw the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the entire period of Détente in the 1970s, and launched the invasion of Afghanistan.
Richard Nixon	As US President, Nixon began the period of détente between East and West. He got on personally with Brezhnev, and signed several agreements. He was forced to resign for spying on his political opponents. His Vice-President Gerald Ford took over, following the same policies such as the Helsinki Agreements.
Jimmy Carter	Carter became president during the height of Détente, and tried to create further agreements such as SALT II. However, the USSR invasion of Afghanistan ruined relations, and SALT II was never ratified.
Ronald Reagan	Reagan won the 1980 election promising a tough approach against the USSR. He massively increased the arms race and tensions until Gorbachev became leader. His 'new thinking' gained Reagan's approval
Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko	Andropov and then Chernenko led the USSR after Brezhnev's death, but they both died from ill health within 3 years! (1982-85). Tensions were raised during their leadership, as they were both highly critical of the USA and Reagan called the USSR an 'evil empire', but no key events occurred.
Mikhail Gorbachev	The final leader of the USSR. His 'new thinking' for the USSR brought in several reforms to try and improve communism, but by the 1980s it was far too unpopular, and the USSR collapsed entirely in 1991.
George HW Bush	The US President during the end of the Cold War. He had been Reagan's Vice President, and continued the same positive relationship with Gorbachev. (His son, George Bush, was also President in the 2000s.)

Key Agreements, 1970-91

SALT I Treaty	1972. Both sides limited anti-missile technology (ABMs), reducing arms race and tensions
Space Link-up	1975. USA and USSR astronauts met in space, symbolising an end to the space race.
Helsinki Agreements	1975. The USA, USSR and 33 other countries made 3 'baskets' (groups) of agreements. They all agreed to respect Europe's current borders, respect human rights, and co-operate on trade/science.
INF Treaty	1987. Banned all mid-range missiles (IRBMs), a type that was considered <i>too</i> threatening for MAD.
CFE Treaty	1990. Limited 'conventional' forces in Europe e.g. the East and West allowed 'only' 20,000 tanks each!
START	1991. Reduced the amount of nuclear weapons by 80%. Signed using metal from scrapped missiles.

Challenge

Is it accurate to call it the 'Soviet invasion of Afghanistan', but not the 'US invasion of Vietnam'?

Did Reagan or Gorbachev do more to end the Cold War?

Communism is both an economic and political system. Which was more important for its fall in Europe?

Consider current US-Russian relations. Could the 'end of the Cold War' be called just a Second Détente?



SCAN ME



Richard Nixon
1969-74

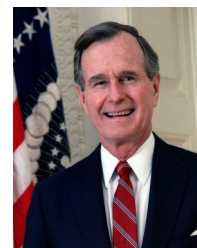
(Gerald Ford)
1974-77



Jimmy Carter
1977-81



Ronald Reagan
1981-89



George HW Bush
1989-93



Leonid Brezhnev
1964-82

(Yuri Andropov)
1982-84

(Konstantin Chernenko)
1984-85



Mikhail Gorbachev
1985-91