

End of the Cold War

Introduction

- Through the 1950s and 1960s, the Cold War was characterised by a series of crises and confrontations.
 - In that time, the United States and the USSR never quite took that fatal step of fighting a direct war with each other.
 - However, both sides - and indeed the rest of the world - lived in constant fear of this possibility, especially one that involved nuclear weapons
- As a result, by the late 1960s, the two sides were exploring ways to reduce tensions through **Detente**
 - They tried to improve relations and even cooperate in areas such as arms reduction and trade
 - This process became known as detente, a French word that means "easing of tensions"
 - The key mover of detente was US President Richard Nixon
- Although relations improved during the detente period, it did not last because of:
 - Too many areas of disagreement between the United States and the USSR
 - Too much pressure exerted on both countries
- Internal political rivalries in the United States led several presidents, especially Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, to adopt tougher approaches towards the USSR.

Rise and Fall of the Detente

- In the late 1960s and early 1970s, US President Richard Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev seemed willing to consider the possibility of having a less hostile relationship.
- Both men were concerned about the risk of a direct conflict and the financial cost of their rivalry.
 - They wanted to invest more in their own economies and the welfare of their people.
 - It was this combination of risk and cost which drove detente.
- Detente was presented by both sides in a positive thing and as an act of goodwill
 - However, some historians view detente motivated more by the superpowers' desire to achieve their aims in less costly and risky ways.

Reasons for Detente

Leaders' considerations motivating detente

1. Mutual fear of triggering a nuclear war
 - Nixon and Brezhnev were concerned that another crisis like the Cuban Missile Crisis could trigger a nuclear war.
2. Soviet fear of being isolated

- Sino-Soviet relations declined throughout the 1960s, while Sino-American relations improved.
 - Brezhnev was worried that the USSR might become isolated unless he also improved relations with the United States.
- 3. US desire to withdraw from the Vietnam War
 - Nixon was looking for ways to extract the United States from the Vietnam War.
 - The United States was struggling with the considerable cost of the Vietnam War and rising oil prices
- 4. Soviet desire to reduce military spending.
 - Amid its economic problems, the USSR was finding it difficult to accord its vast military spending in both its domestic and external commitments.
 - Example: Remaining competitive in the Nuclear Arms Race.

Examples of Detente in Action

Summit Meetings

- They began visiting each other's countries and meeting to discuss important issues such as nuclear weapons, conflicts around the world, trade and technology
- The meetings were known as **summit meetings**, as they involved the leaders of the countries.
- Examples:
 - **Feb 1972**
 - Nixon became the first US President to visit China since it turned communist in 1949.
 - A continuation of the progress made in 1971, when the US table tennis team became the first group of Americans allowed to enter China since the communist takeover in 1949 (as part of **Ping Pong Democracy**)
 - **May 1972**
 - Nixon visited Brezhnev in Moscow to sign a document called the Basic Principles.
 - The superpowers agreed to prevent dangerous exacerbation in their relations by doing their utmost to avoid military confrontations, to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war, and to exercise restraint in mutual relations.
 - Both leaders also signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty I (SALT I), limiting each side's production of nuclear weapons.
 - **June 1973**
 - Brezhnev visited the United States to sign the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, in which both sides agreed to do all they could to avoid a nuclear war.
 - **June 1974**
 - Nixon went to Moscow again to discuss ways to strengthen collaboration in many areas, especially in the economic aspects, as well as for further disarmament and a possible SALT II

Ping Pong Diplomacy

- Ping-pong diplomacy refers to the use of table tennis (ping-pong), a sport that China is good in, to improve relations between the United States and China.
- On 6 April 1971, the United States and Chinese table tennis teams played against

each other at the world championships in Japan.

- As the Chinese were interested in building better relations with the United States, they invited the US team to visit China.
- On 10 April 1971, the US team became the first Americans to visit China since the Communist Revolution in 1949.
 - This was widely perceived as an important step in reducing tensions. It paved the way for Nixon's visit to China in February 1972 and the eventual establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China in 1979.

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)

- SALT refers to the high-level bilateral conferences and treaties involving the United States and the USSR in the 1970s.
 - The main concern of these conferences was the limitation of arms in a bid to reduce tensions and the prospects of a military conflict.
- The first round of SALT began in Helsinki, Finland, on 17 November 1969.
 - Considered to be the crowning achievement of the strategy of détente embarked upon by Nixon and Brezhnev, SALT I saw the United States and the USSR agree to the limiting of the number of nuclear missiles in their arsenal. SALT II began in 1974.
- It was a complicated and time-consuming process.
- In 1979, the SALT II agreement was signed (for long-range nuclear attacks) in the 1970s finally announced.
 - By that time, superpower relations had taken a downturn and the US Congress refused to formally recognise SALT II.
- **Main Terms of SALT I**
 - Limits on the number of nuclear missiles and bombs held by each side
 - Limits on the development of anti-ballistic missile defences, which could shoot down incoming missiles
 - Each side was allowed to use spy satellites to verify that the other side had honoured the limitations imposed
 - Further talks to be held to create a SALT II agreement
- **Main terms of SALT II**
 - Further limits on the number of bombers and missiles each side held
 - Ban on the development and testing of new types of intercontinental ballistic missiles
 - Restrictions on the deployment of missiles (e.g. the number of places they could be launched from)
- **Helsinki Accords, 1975**
 - US, USSR and 30 other countries signed an agreement in August 1975 where they promised to:
 - Resolve international disputes by diplomacy
 - Protect human rights e.g. freedom of speech, freedom from unfair arrest