

## What were the significant developments in US foreign policy, 1973-1989? (LC 2007)

(In this period, the major issue in US foreign policy was its relations with the USSR in the Cold War. Incidents such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962, proved that the Superpowers could either slow down the arms race or risk total destruction. Both the US and the USSR were ready to negotiate by 1973. Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, was particularly anxious to improve US relations as the Russian dispute with China was escalating and the arms race was putting a massive strain on the Soviet economy. Negotiations began in 1972 between President Nixon and Brezhnev. Largely due to the work of Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, a number of agreements were reached. The talks were called the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and their aim was to reduce the arms race. In 1972 Nixon flew to Moscow to sign the SALT I treaty. This was the first peacetime visit to the USSR by an American president. They signed the agreements. The first was the anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty which limited the deployment of ABM systems. The other agreement froze the number of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles each side could have at 1973 levels.) 12

(Despite tensions over the Arab-Israeli War in 1973, common interests between the superpowers meant that the policy of détente continued which was the improving of relations between them.) 3

(In 1974, Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, participated in a new round of negotiations in Vladivostok, known as SALT II. The framework for a second treaty was agreed on. In 1975, another concrete result of détente was signed in Helsinki. Known as the Helsinki Final Act, it was signed by 35 countries. In it the borders of Europe after World War II were recognised and agreement was reached on future European security, economic co-operation and the protection of human rights. An inspiring symbol of the warming of relations between the Superpowers was the launch of the Apollo-Soyuz project in 1975 where American and Soviet astronauts met in space.) 8

(Democrat Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford in the 1976 presidential election. He continued with the policy of détente. His over-riding aim was to maintain world peace by negotiating arms control with the Soviets. Negotiations went at a slow pace due to the worsening of international relations. The SALT II treaty was signed by Carter and Brezhnev and in it the number of nuclear missiles each side could have was limited, not reduced. This marked the end of détente as a number of factors caused relations between the two sides to deteriorate. Carter viewed issues of human rights as vital for the functioning of a civilised society and did not regard this as "idealism" as both Nixon and Ford had done. His pleas on behalf of dissidents and Jews who wished to leave the Soviet Union angered the Russians. Détente was becoming unpopular in the US as many senators felt the SALT II treaty left the US at a military disadvantage to the USSR. Not willing to be seen as weak on communism, Carter increased spending on arms.) 10

(His attention was diverted by the Iran hostage crisis where members of the US embassy staff were held hostage by revolutionaries. The crisis lasted 444 days and overshadowed the remainder of his presidency.) 3

(Also, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan angered the US as they feared it was part of a Soviet attempt to control the oil-rich Persian Gulf. Carter's administration took a number of measures to put pressure on the USSR to leave. They placed trade restrictions on US exports to the USSR, ratification of SALT II was postponed, and the US boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics.) 5 (6?)

(Ronald Reagan became president in 1981 and was a staunch anti-communist. He famously referred to the USSR as an "evil empire" and as a "focus of evil in the modern world". He increased military spending and suspended SALT II ratification. The Reagan administration promised support for anti-communist movements in countries with left-wing regimes. They funded the Contra guerrillas who opposed the Nicaraguan government. They got the Israelis to sell US arms. To the Iranians and used the profits to fund the Contras. This was illegal, and the investigations into the Iran-Contra affair were to dominate the closing years of Reagan's presidency.) 7

(In 1983 he announced the Strategic Defence Initiative which aimed to block Soviet missiles travelling to the US. Privately, the Soviet leader, Yuri Andropov, realised they could never match the financial cost of the programme and became convinced a US attack was imminent.) 3 (4?)

(In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the USSR. Both sides were ready to negotiate arms control again. The result was the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty which was signed in 1987. Soviet SS20 and US Pershing and Cruise missiles were eliminated. This was the first treaty that got rid of nuclear weapons and led to a remarkable improvement in relations between the superpowers.) 5

(To conclude, it is clear that the most important factor in US foreign policy, 1973-1989, was its relations with the USSR. Through this rivalry the threat of total nuclear destruction increased with an arms race and a space race. The policy of détente led to a thaw in the Cold War with the outstanding tensions between the superpowers being settled in 1989 when Gorbachev told the new president, George Bush, at a conference in Malta, "We don't consider you an enemy any more." It was said that the Cold War lasted "from Yalta to Malta") 6

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97