Global context

The Cold War continued but the way in which the superpowers engaged one another was forever changed by the fear of nuclear war brought on by the Cuban Missile Crisis. Direct confrontation was no longer a realistic option, and thus the spheres of influence became even more important in determining which power was more successful in the Cold War.

By 1964, Khrushchev and Kennedy had been replaced. Leonid Brezhnev kept components of Khrushchev’s peaceful coexistence but ruled the Soviet sphere with an iron fist, eventually going so as far as to prohibit countries from abandoning socialism. Lyndon B Johnson was more interested in domestic policies but he felt bound to maintain anti-communist countries. Unsurprisingly, Mutual Assured Destruction led to a thaw in relations between the USA and the USSR; there were attempts at arms limitation, which peaked with the SALT agreement and Helsinki Accords.

Part of the shift to détente can be attributed to communist China’s re-emergence as a major power. The split between the USSR and PRC led to a warming of relations between the USA and PRC, culminating in diplomatic recognition of communist China and strong trade relations between the two powers. By the middle of the 1970s many conflict areas were heading towards peace, but the longevity of détente and reconciliation was questioned at every turn.

The time period was marked by unilateral actions of the superpowers against those who sought to change the international order, making Alexander Dubček in Czechoslovakia and Salvador Allende in Chile victims of the Cold War. Proxy wars were increasingly the exception, and as in Vietnam and Afghanistan, wars did not start that way, but instead escalated to multipower involvement, although the USA, the Soviet Union and even the People’s Republic of China strove to prevent direct confrontation of their forces.

Timeline

- **Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty**
- Kennedy assassinated
- Lyndon B Johnson becomes President of the USA
- France withdraws its forces from NATO
- **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty**
- Prague Spring
- Brezhnev Doctrine
- Salvador Allende takes office as president of Chile
- **1963**
- **1964**
- **1966**
- **1967**
- **1968**
- **1969**
- **1970**
- **1972**
- Khrushchev ousted
- Leonid Brezhnev in power in the USSR
- People’s Republic of China successfully detonates atom bomb
- Six Day War/Third Arab-Israeli War
- Richard M Nixon becomes President of the USA
- Sino-Soviet border clashes
- Moscow Summit
The Cold War: Superpower Tensions and Rivalries

- Allende overthrown
- Augusto Pinochet takes power in Chile
- October War/Yom Kippur War
- Angolan Civil War begins
- Camp David Accords
- USA boycott of the Moscow Olympics
- Creation of Solidarity in Poland
- Death of Brezhnev
- Nixon resigns
- Gerald R Ford becomes President of the USA
- Portuguese Revolution
- Jimmy Carter becomes President of the USA
- Mozambican Civil War begins
- Charter 77 issued in Czechoslovakia
- Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
- Martial law in Poland
- Cold War alliances

Cold War alliances

NATO countries
Communist (Eastern) Bloc
Non-aligned
NATO allies
Soviet client states
3.1 The invasion of Czechoslovakia

**Conceptual understanding**

**Key question**

→ How did the Soviet Union's actions in Czechoslovakia in 1968 differ from its actions in eastern Europe prior to 1964?

**Key concepts**

→ Change
→ Significance

Czechoslovakia was invaded by troops from all Warsaw Pact countries after attempts at liberalization and democratization occurred in the spring and summer of 1968. As the ideological conflict was firmly in the Soviet sphere, the USA remained on the sidelines, hoping for a Czechoslovak victory but unwilling to act. The result of the invasion was not simply the crushing of another attempt at reform, but the formulation of a new Soviet foreign policy – the Brezhnev Doctrine.

**Changes in superpower leadership**

American and Soviet leadership were completely different by 1964. In November 1963, Kennedy was assassinated and his vice-president Lyndon B. Johnson assumed power; he was then elected in 1964. In addition to being ten years older than Kennedy, he represented a very different American reality: he was from rural Texas, and prior to entering politics had been a school teacher. Although he was more interested in bringing about radical changes to American social structure, he found himself – and his administration – increasingly judged by a foreign policy that endorsed rapprochement but at the same time, escalated proxy wars to new heights through its involvement in Vietnam.

Khrushchev’s fall from power was more predictable. The outcome of the Cuban Missile Crisis and crisis in Berlin were seen as failures, and, perhaps more importantly, his domestic policies had failed to increase the Soviet standard of living and availability of consumer goods, making him especially vulnerable after 1962. Between January and September 1964, Khrushchev was absent from the Kremlin for a total of five months, and in this time a group of Party insiders, led by Leonid Brezhnev (the Secretary of the Central Committee and deputy Party leader), planned to oust him. On his return he went on holiday and in October he was summoned to a special meeting. When attacked by the other members of the Soviet leadership Khrushchev accepted the ouster and retired, citing poor health and age as the reasons.
Leonid Brezhnev was appointed First Secretary and while it was initially stated that this was a stopgap measure, he quickly consolidated power. This regime was interested in stabilizing the Soviet Union, both domestically and internationally. This meant that many of Khrushchev’s policies were reversed, leading people both inside and outside of the USSR to re-evaluate the previous regime. The promise of economic improvements was unfulfilled and discontent once again arose, not just in the USSR but in Eastern Europe, most notably in Czechoslovakia.

The Prague Spring

After 1948 the Czechoslovak government remained steadfastly loyal to Moscow, first under Klement Gottwald and later under Antonín Novotný whose regime was characterized by corruption and stagnation that caused tensions among the members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCS). In an attempt to reduce conflicts within the Party, Novotný was forced to resign and was replaced by Alexander Dubček in January 1968. He was a long-term Slovak communist who appeared to be a typical Party apparatchik but in reality he was a charismatic advocate of political reform. Like the Communist Party reformers in Poland and Hungary in 1956, he sought to change the sociopolitical approach in his country. He was the personification of the concept of “socialism with a human face”, and throughout the spring and summer of 1968 he not only advocated but implemented liberalizing policies in Czechoslovakia.

The shift was announced by Dubček in a speech commemorating the 20th anniversary of the 1948 communist coup. He announced that it was necessary for the CPCS to maintain socialism in Czechoslovakia, while respecting the country’s democratic past, and to align Czechoslovak economic policies with global realities. In April 1968 his intentions were explained through the Action Programme, which stated the CPCS’s determination to achieve socialism according to a distinct Czechoslovak path. To do so, the government needed to allow: the basic freedoms of speech, press and movement – including travel to western countries; formal recognition of the state of Israel; freedom for economic enterprises to make decisions based on consumer demand rather than government targets; and increased rights of autonomy for the politically repressed (and underrepresented) Slovak minority.

Most countries in Eastern Europe were alarmed by these actions as they were dominated by staunch communists who feared any challenge to the status quo, but the Soviets initially watched Czechoslovakia with interest to see how far the reforms would go. When no clear opposition emerged, reformers in the CPCS took things even further, ending all press censorship, planning to open borders with the West and even beginning discussions on a trade agreement with West Germany, all the while insisting that Czechoslovakia was a loyal member of the socialist order and wanted to implement liberalization within the framework of Marxism-Leninism.

Hoping to intimidate Dubček, the Warsaw Pact countries conducted military exercises in Czechoslovakia in late June and, once completed, nearly 75 000 troops remained close to the Czechoslovak border.
Additionally, they held a meeting of the leaders of the USSR, Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary and Poland on 14–15 July and expressed their concerns regarding expanded reforms in Czechoslovakia. In the Warsaw Letter, they affirmed Czechoslovakia’s right to internal self-determination; however, they also argued that challenges to socialism within one country were a threat to the entire socialist movement and should not be tolerated as they could lead to a split in socialist unity, both internally and externally. They called on Dubček’s government to rein in groups that they termed counter-revolutionary or rightist.

At the end of July, Brezhnev and Dubček had the last of six meetings regarding the liberalizing actions in Czechoslovakia. The Soviet intent was to provoke a split within the CPCS, hoping it would lead to the emergence of a pro-Soviet group that could then ask the Warsaw Pact to provide military assistance to maintain order. However, contrary to Kremlin assessments, the split did not occur. Instead, Brezhnev and Dubček continued discussions via phone conversations on the future of the Warsaw Pact. As in Hungary in 1956, the Soviets were afraid that political liberalization and discussions of a multiparty system could lead to Czechoslovakia’s exit from the Warsaw Pact, threatening Soviet security. Brezhnev pressured Dubček to repeal the reforms, but despite promises to do so, Dubček continued with his liberalizing path, convinced that the Soviets would not invade.

Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia

What outsiders did not know was that Kremlin leadership was divided on how to react to the Prague Spring. Some – such as Defence Minister Andrei Grechko – advocated direct Soviet intervention, but others were more measured, arguing that Czechoslovakia could be viewed as an experiment in reform. One of the main considerations was that Czechoslovakia’s policy changes regarding the Slovak minority would lead its own minorities, especially in Ukraine and the Baltic states, to demand similar rights within the USSR.

Ultimately Brezhnev determined the Soviet course based not on strength, but on a sense of political, geographical and social vulnerability. Remembering the international condemnation of Soviet actions in Hungary, he was unwilling to act unilaterally, and as the Warsaw Pact leaders were encouraging action, he enlisted their assistance. In addition to the Soviet troops, Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary and Poland also committed forces.

On the night of 20 August, the world was surprised as tanks entered Czechoslovakia and quickly took control of Prague, ostensibly responding from a request for assistance from Czechoslovak communists. Dubček knew that they could not defeat these forces and ordered the Czechoslovak army to avoid confrontation with the foreign troops. Some members of the civilian population did fight back and in one last act of free speech the radio stations alerted the world to the real position of the population and government, announcing that the “invasion was a violation of socialist principals, international law, and the United Nations Charter”. Dubček and other members of the government were arrested and forced to sign a document agreeing to repeal the 1968 reforms.
Effects of the invasion

The United States condemned the invasion and cancelled a planned summit meeting between US President Johnson and Brezhnev, but took no further action, nor did other NATO members. Brezhnev realized that the USA was too deeply involved in Vietnam to act elsewhere and did not expect further repercussions. In the United Nations Security Council there were attempts to pass a resolution condemning the act but these were futile as they could be vetoed by the Soviet Union.

There was outrage and even protests against the Soviet actions, but most of these came from within the communist world. Not surprisingly, western European communist parties were horrified by this action, but there were also protests against the invasion in China, Romania, Yugoslavia and even a small demonstration in front of Lenin’s tomb in Red Square. Rather than establishing unity, the invasion showed the level of discontent in the Soviet sphere, and even in the USSR itself. The governments that supported the invasion were revealed as stagnant; the revolution had given way to traditional bureaucrats who sought to preserve a status quo that benefited them, rather than the proletariat they claimed to represent.

The Soviets had further troubles; in the invasion, the officers nearly lost control of the Red Army. The political commissars attached to the invading forces had told the soldiers that their presence had been requested by the Czechoslovak people. When they faced resistance from the citizens of Prague, many soldiers recognized that their leaders had lied to them and were hesitant to take action against these people, especially when they did not oppose the Soviets with arms; in fact, famously, some of Prague’s residents decorated the tanks with flowers. Although the Soviets could control the official reports, these soldiers returned to the USSR with their eyewitness accounts of the invasion.
In Czechoslovakia, the Soviets found it difficult to find members of the CPCS willing to take control of the regime and so Dubček remained in power until April 1969. The new government, led by Gustáv Husák, conformed to the Soviet line and remained in power until the collapse of communism in 1989. It was dependent on a continued Soviet military presence to retain its power, and the Red Army remained in Czechoslovakia until 1990. Although costly, Brezhnev was willing to pay for Czechoslovak loyalty.

Husák repealed the liberalizing policies but he also guaranteed employment, health care, pensions and general economic security to the country. His economic policies were sufficient to prevent a general revolt, although there were dissidents who spoke out against government repression, notably in 1977.

**Brezhnev Doctrine**

The international significance of the Prague Spring and the resultant Soviet invasion was the articulation of the Brezhnev Doctrine in November 1968 – interestingly, at a meeting of Polish workers. In his speech, Brezhnev made clear that the Soviet Union was determined to keep in place communist regimes that existed and would not allow them to be overthrown internally or externally. This had the unintended consequence of cementing the Sino-Soviet split; in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese feared that this could be used against them, and so further distanced themselves from the USSR. The US government initially halted disarmament talks, however, it later chose to interpret the Brezhnev Doctrine as defensive in nature and determined that it demonstrated that the USA could reduce its forces in Europe. This view was later reversed in 1979 when it was used to justify an invasion of Afghanistan.

**Source skills**

**In their own words: excerpt from the Brezhnev Doctrine**

... each Communist Party is responsible not only to its people, but also to all the socialist countries, to the entire communist movement. Whoever forgets this, in stressing only the independence of the Communist Party, becomes one-sided. He deviates from his international duty...

The sovereignty of each socialist country cannot be opposed to the interests of the world of socialism, of the world revolutionary movement. Lenin demanded that all communists fight against small nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation, consider the whole and the general, subordinate the particular to the general interest.

Speech by First Secretary of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev, 13 November 1968

**Question**

What is the meaning conveyed in this extract?

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**Research and thinking skills**

After the Sino-Soviet schism, communist parties throughout the world sought to emphasize their neutrality in the rift. Additionally, the Cuban Missile Crisis worried leaders that they could be a victim of a nuclear attack due to Soviet foreign policy. Albania, led by Enver Hoxha, had split with Khrushchev over de-Stalinization by 1961. It remained part of the Warsaw Pact but grew closer to communist China throughout the 1960s. Romania was resentful that the Soviet Union found Romanian natural resources beneficial but did not assist with its industrialization as it had for other countries.

Using the internet, research either Albania or Romania, and explain why they did not participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In a one-page paper, provide a clear, direct response to the question. Then, in bullet form, present the main arguments and support for those arguments.
3.2 Arms race and détente

Conceptual understanding

Key questions

→ Why did the superpowers engage in détente after the Cuban Missile Crisis?
→ How did superpower détente lead to peace overtures in Germany and the Middle East?
→ Were the heads of the US and Soviet governments the drivers of détente?

Key concepts

→ Change
→ Consequence

Origins of détente

Détente is the name given to the process of easing tensions between the superpowers, especially with regard to nuclear weapons. It is often viewed as a brief, shining moment in which Soviet Chairman Leonid Brezhnev and US President Richard Nixon managed to come to agreements regarding nuclear weapons and the status quo of Europe. In fact, the move towards reconciliation began much earlier under Khrushchev and Eisenhower. The concept of Mutual Assured Destruction convinced the leaders of the two superpowers to have periodic meetings called summits to discuss global issues of mutual concern. The first of these was held in Geneva in 1955 and also included the British and French Prime Ministers. Most of the meetings thereafter did not include other countries unless their presence was seen as necessary to the peace process or, in the case of Paris in 1960, when one of their countries was chosen as the site for the summit.

The nuclear arms race hit its height just as the Cuban Missile Crisis showed the world that the superpowers were unwilling to use nuclear armaments against one another for fear of massive retaliation. In theory, and in military strategies planned by generals and admirals, nuclear weapons were seen as an instrument to be used in war. But in 1945 US President Truman decided that the use of nuclear weapons should be a political decision, not a military one. His very public conflict with General Douglas MacArthur over consideration of the use of nuclear weapons against China during the Korean War sprang from precisely this change; never before had political leaders made what could be seen as military decisions. It was up to the politicians to make decisions such as war and peace, and then it was up to the military leaders to decide how to implement the decisions made.
The USA had a very brief period of atomic monopoly that ended in 1949 with Soviet development of nuclear technology and the successful detonation of its own bomb in August of that year. Stalin agreed with Truman’s assessment of nuclear weapons usage and the Soviets adopted a similar policy regarding decision-making. This made communication between Soviet and American leaders an important component in preventing superpower escalation of global warfare.

Truman was followed by Eisenhower, a military man who in some respects reversed Truman’s ideas. He saw nuclear weapons as an instrument of policy and war, and encouraged his Joint Chiefs of Staff to integrate their use into military strategy. Unlike Truman, Eisenhower’s Joint Chiefs planned extensively for total war, including the use of nuclear weapons. One reason was cost: conventional military action required a much larger army and that was expensive. Instead, Eisenhower put money into developing American covert operations, air force and technology through a national security policy termed the ‘New Look’. Khrushchev faced a similar dilemma: when he consolidated power the Soviet Union had existed for nearly 30 years but lagged significantly behind the USA and the West in quality of life. Khrushchev was looking for ways to decrease military spending.

His answer was peaceful coexistence, in which the USA and Soviet systems might compete in the international market or for influence over other countries but they would avoid war as it would mean the destruction of both countries. While not entirely trusting Khrushchev, Eisenhower, and later Kennedy, accepted it and met with Khrushchev to try to keep the international system stable and avoid nuclear warfare. In the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the superpowers signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963. According to its terms, the USA and the USSR agreed to cease underwater, space and atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons (leaving underground detonations as the option for testing). However, the USA and the USSR were not the only nuclear powers: Britain developed its own weapons in 1952, followed by France in 1960. The situation became far more volatile in 1964 when the People’s Republic of China also detonated its first nuclear weapons. The superpowers recognized the need to make further agreements.

**Nuclear agreements and the Helsinki Accords**

The proliferation of weapons, therefore, was not simply the superpowers’ stockpiles of weapons but also the expansion of the number of countries that counted as nuclear powers. This proliferation led to necessary negotiations about the spread – and limitations – of these weapons. The USA and the USSR found themselves on the same side in this particular endeavour: neither sought to spread the number of countries that had nuclear weapons; both wanted to keep the technology up to the discretion of the main powers that could be trusted to be rational actors. Even in the midst of conflicts in Vietnam, Congo and Latin America, the USA, Britain and the USSR brokered and signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in July 1968 in which they agreed to keep nuclear technology among those who had it; they would not share it.
By this time Leonid Brezhnev had established his regime in the USSR and although he was a hardliner with regard to those in his sphere of influence, he was also a realist, and in 1967 had accepted Johnson’s invitation to begin bilateral talks regarding arms limitations. The talks were hindered somewhat by the invasion of Czechoslovakia and US domestic politics but eventually evolved into the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT). Formal negotiations began in 1969 after Richard Nixon took office as US President.

Given the economic stagnation that the USSR faced, limiting the development and production of weapons was desirable. Additionally, this served to show the USA that while they would maintain extant socialist regimes in Czechoslovakia, North Vietnam and elsewhere, they wanted direct peace with the USA and avoidance of nuclear war. The desire for agreement with the USA may also have been the result of border clashes with China on the Ussuri River in 1969.

SALT I, as it was later called, was implemented in 1972. According to the terms of the treaties signed, the USA and the USSR agreed to freeze the number of ballistic (flying) missile launchers and would only allow the use of new submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) as older intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and SLBMs were removed. They also signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which limited the number of ABM systems that would defend areas from nuclear attack.

This was followed by SALT II, brokered through a series of talks between 1972 and 1979. The main difference was that SALT II involved negotiations to reduce the number of nuclear warheads possessed by each side to 2,250 and banned new weapons programmes from coming into existence. The treaty was never ratified by the US Senate, arguably due to Soviet actions in Cuba and in Afghanistan, but both sides honoured the terms of the agreement until 1986 when US President Reagan accused the Soviets of violating the pact and withdrew from the agreement. In 1983 he announced the decision of his administration to pursue the Strategic Defensive Initiative (SDI) or ‘Star Wars’ programme, the aim of which was to put a shield over the USA against nuclear attack.

At the same time, the USA was engaged in another set of talks, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START. Initiated in Geneva in 1982, these sought to put into place yet another set of limits. The limit would be placed not on weapons but on the number of warheads, which were capped at 5000 plus 2500 on intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Since both sides had been placing more than one warhead on each ICBM, it was also proposed to limit the number of ICBMs to 850. This proposal was weighted heavily in favour of the USA as it appeared to be an attempt at parity when really the USA had tremendous superiority, especially with ICBMs, and thus the Soviets would be left at a disadvantage. As the talks dragged through the 1980s both sides continued to develop and produce more nuclear weapons, rather than fewer. In the end, the treaty signed in 1991 allowed for both sides to possess over 10 000 warheads while limiting the number of fighter planes, attack helicopters, tanks and artillery pieces. Its
implementation, however, was hindered by the collapse of the Soviet Union six months later. After this, the USA had to sign separate treaties with Russia and other former Soviet states that possessed nuclear weapons. The USA signed treaties with Russia (which remains a nuclear power) as well as with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, all of whom voluntarily dismantled their nuclear weapons and sent them to Russia for disposal.

The nuclear arms agreements were the highest profile areas of détente, but there were other treaties that signaled a willingness to change entrenched Cold War policies on both sides. The most wide-ranging aspect of détente was finalized in Helsinki in 1975 with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The Final Act contained three categories or “baskets”: security in Europe in which post-war frontiers were accepted; cooperation in science, technology and environmental concerns; and human rights. The latter was the most contentious and held up the negotiations; the Soviet Union applied heavy exit taxes on emigrants. The official reason given was that those leaving the country needed to repay the government for education and social services, but these taxes were mainly aimed at Jewish citizens seeking to emigrate to Israel or the USA and reflected Soviet anti-Semitism. To force the Soviets into compliance, some US politicians suggested a retaliatory measure: the Trade Reform Act would have a proviso that denied credit to any “non-market economy” that imposed an exit tax or restricted the right to emigrate. US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger opposed this proposal; he felt that the guarantees of trade should be used to encourage Soviet shifts in policy, and that the Soviet Jews and dissidents would be better served by low-profile enticements and diplomacy. By making Soviet emigration a high-profile policy, the Soviets were unlikely to make changes. Kissinger’s position was unpopular in the USA, and the Jackson-Vanik amendment (named for its sponsors) easily passed both houses of Congress in 1975; the Soviets withdrew from the trade agreement entirely.

What the USA did not understand was that the Soviets were more concerned with the effect of diplomacy on internal affairs. Brezhnev wanted to consolidate power in the Soviet sphere of influence (hence the Brezhnev Doctrine) and inside the USSR, where dissent was growing. Although some in the Kremlin argued for reforms, Brezhnev felt it was too risky. He saw détente and the Helsinki Final Act as a means of confirming the legitimacy of the Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe. He was willing to concede a continued role of the USA in Europe, via NATO, only if it meant that the USA and NATO would accept the post-war European frontiers. To gain this he made a number of concessions that included commitment to conformity to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the principles of the UN Charter. As analysts later noted, the Soviet Union could choose to implement these terms as it saw fit, and under Brezhnev that meant few changes to the status quo in the USSR but this did not stem dissent – if anything, it mobilized the common people against their governments, leading to further repression.
The superpower agreements had consequences in two areas that had been volatile since the end of the Second World War. In Germany, both sides saw a need to change their policies if they wanted a change in Germany’s status. In the Middle East, Egypt and Israel tentatively approached the USA with ideas for negotiated settlement of their longstanding conflicts.

**Germany and Ostpolitik**

In September 1969, after SALT began, Willy Brandt – formerly the mayor of West Berlin – was elected Chancellor of West Germany. He differed from his predecessors in that he felt the key for German reunification was rapprochement with the communists. Rather than continue a hostile relationship, he felt that West Germany should recognize the East German state and ease tensions with the USSR. French President Charles de Gaulle also supported these ideas; he felt that agreements with the Soviets would loosen their control over Eastern Europe and had been the initial proponent of détente.

France’s position helped West Germany in another way: in 1966, France withdrew from the NATO command structure, feeling that the US role was too dominant and wanted to pursue a more independent policy. While the French were still committed to the defensive component of NATO, all non-French forces departed and removed French forces from NATO command. The only French forces deployed to NATO were those in Germany. De Gaulle developed his own stockpile of nuclear weapons as a further means of protection. The USA was unwilling to alienate another NATO member, and so, fearful that West Germany might leave NATO, it acquiesced to Brandt’s plans.

In 1970, West Germany signed a treaty with the USSR recognizing the borders of Germany including the Oder–Neisse line that delineated the border of Poland and East Germany. There were also treaties of friendship signed between West Germany and Poland; East Germany and West Germany; and West Germany and the USSR.

Berlin was still technically occupied so a quadripartite agreement was needed. In 1971 an agreement was signed in which Berlin would be represented by West Germany in international matters but would not become part of West Germany. Lastly with regard to Germany, 1972 saw the normalization of relations between the two German states including the establishment of permanent missions and the admission of both states in the United Nations. It was hoped that Ostpolitik would eventually lead to reunification.

**The Middle East and détente**

Arab hostility to the state of Israel continued into the 1960s and was bolstered by Soviet arms shipments to Egypt and Syria. Seeing Israel as a capitalist and imperialistic interloper in the region, the Soviet Union often spoke out in support of Arab views. Nonetheless, the Israelis remained too potent a military force and its neighbours could not defeat it. With assistance from the USA and reparations from Germany, Israel also had a more developed economy.
US policy supported Israel's right to exist, and generally Americans felt that it was US assistance that would result in peace in the region. However, this ignored the Soviet role. As the main supplier of Arab armaments, Soviet military support was necessary for Arab moves that were subsequently blocked by the USA. That meant that Soviet disengagement – rather than US engagement – was the key to beginning the peace process.

The first to recognize this was Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Wanting to engage the West, and surprised by the Moscow summit of 1972, he dismissed all Soviet military advisors and technicians from the country and began secret negotiations with the US government. Then, in October 1973, Syria and Egypt attacked Israel. To the USA’s surprise, the Soviets were not involved in the decision-making but to ensure the Soviets would stay out of the conflict the US sent its navy to the Mediterranean and issued a no-tolerance policy regarding the involvement of outside powers. Although this caused tension between the superpowers the USSR was unwilling to support its allies directly, and did not challenge the US ultimatum. Without further military assistance, Syria withdrew and while the Arab powers performed better than they had previously, the Israeli army still improved its position. After three UN Security Council resolutions, the final one held and the war ended.

To prevent escalation, Brezhnev and Nixon communicated daily. The ongoing negotiations over Berlin also helped the situation. While trying to come to an agreement in one hotspot the superpowers did not want to fuel another conflict. Sadat decided that alliance with the USSR had not helped the Arab cause and made further overtures towards the USA. This change in policy – and orientation – led to a series of agreements in 1974 and 1975, and ultimately culminated in the 1979 Peace Agreement between Egypt and Israel. In a less direct manner détente led to this outcome.

Conclusions

In 1975, the superpowers appeared to be on the road to agreement. Due to domestic consideration and a fear of Mutual Assured Destruction, Brezhnev and Nixon had brokered a series of agreements that promoted peace. In the US State Department, officials recognized that pursuing a foreign policy that linked all conflict areas would stabilize all foreign pressure points. Between 1969 and 1975, the USA signed SALT I, withdrew from Vietnam and began the peace process in the Middle East. The Soviets also benefited from these agreements. Still trying to reduce costs, they felt that the agreements regarding Berlin would allow them to reduce their subsidies to the Warsaw Pact countries and SALT I would save them from an expensive arms and technology race. However, the successes of détente existed only as long as the leaders were domestically strong, a circumstance that faltered in 1975. Nixon resigned and was replaced by Gerald Ford who was vulnerable simply by association with the corrupt Nixon administration. In the 1976 presidential elections he lost to Jimmy Carter whose policies were tempered by domestic problems. Brezhnev remained in power but was increasingly ill, thus the military made many of the foreign policy decisions after 1975. The arms talks continued into the late 1970s and early 1980s but there was only one summit in that time, in 1979 when Brezhnev and Carter signed SALT II.
Communication skills

One of the main reasons for the disarmament talks was the fear of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). MAD was the military strategy that saw the development of nuclear weapons as giving all nuclear powers the capability to destroy their opponents. Once there were enough weapons on both sides, it was reasoned, there was enough firepower to destroy the world.

In 1967, US Secretary of Defense MacNamara wrote:

It is important to understand that assured destruction is the very essence of the whole deterrence concept. We must possess an actual assured-destruction capability, and that capability also must be credible. The point is that a potential aggressor must believe that our assured-destruction capability is in fact actual, and that our will to use it in retaliation to an attack is in fact unwavering. The conclusion, then, is clear: if the United States is to deter a nuclear attack in itself or its allies were, it must possess an actual and a credible assured-destruction capability.

Mutual Deterrence Speech, 18 September 1967

The concept of MAD remains a theory as it has not been tested. There were two “tests” of the atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the effects of nuclear waste on humans have been seen in accidents such as the Chernobyl disaster. But, there has never been an attempt to prove the hypothesis underlying MAD for obvious reasons.

- How do we know that MAD is a valid theory?
- Does the validity of a theory really matter if people believe in it?
- Was MAD the main reason for détente in the 1960s and 1970s?
- Does MAD complement, complicate or contradict the Cold War policies of the USA and the USSR?
- What policies did other nuclear countries have regarding MAD?
- How did non-nuclear countries react?
3.3 Sino–US agreements

**Conceptual understanding**

**Key question**

→ Why were the USA and communist China interested in normalizing relations?

**Key concepts**

→ Change
→ Significance

**From suspicion to interest, 1949 to 1969**

Much is usually made of US determination to support the Nationalist Republic of China located in Taiwan, and its unwillingness to recognize the People's Republic of China. However, Mao was equally hostile to the USA because he was determined to reassure Stalin that China was firmly in the communist camp. With Stalin’s death, Mao tried to open relations with the USA as he was hoping to gain technology, but due to the Korean War the US rebuffed Chinese attempts, most famously in 1954 when US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles refused to shake Zhou Enlai’s hand at the signing of the Geneva Accords. The official animosity continued into the 1960s when Mao proclaimed the USA to be China’s number one enemy and accused Khrushchev of being soft on capitalism because of his summit meetings with the USA. In 1961, the Sino-Soviet split left China with few allies and only one friendly neighbour: Pakistan (which included present-day Bangladesh until 1971) was willing ally due to its conflict with India.

With no official relations, the governments of the USA and China communicated through their ambassadors in Poland. When the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was launched Beijing recalled all of its diplomats, further isolating China and preventing most communication with the outside world. Both the USA and China were supporting regimes in Vietnam, making them adversaries in a lengthy and costly war, with no means of engaging one another.

Aside from Vietnam, the main Chinese foreign policies concerned its relations with the Soviet Union. Although Mao initially welcomed Khrushchev’s ouster he came to fear Brezhnev. The two countries shared a 7000-kilometre border and between 1964 and 1969 there were over 4000 incidents in which Chinese and Soviet troops exchanged fire. The Brezhnev Doctrine further alarmed the Chinese who saw it as a means through which the Soviets could rationalize taking action in Chinese territory. While a number of countries thought Mao was paranoid, Soviet documents hinted at air strikes and regime change unless Mao became more aligned with Soviet policies. This became apparent in 1969 when a war scare erupted.
Sino-Soviet border clashes of 1969

Mao was preparing for the ninth Chinese Communist Party Congress that was scheduled for 1 April and wanted leverage so he launched a plan that was supposed to create a small controlled clash. For this, he chose the location of Zhenbao (Damansky), a small uninhabited island located in the middle of the Ussuri River, which was claimed by both countries. On 2 March the Chinese ambushed Soviet troops, killing 54 and wounding another 95. Rather than retreat, the Soviets sent in reinforcements, including tanks, and the battle continued throughout March, ultimately leading to Chinese withdrawal.

The situation was so tense that the Party Congress met in secret, afraid of revealing to the Soviets its location, and Party leaders retreated to nuclear shelters. Although things died down in Zhenbao, border clashes continued and the Soviets attacked China at its border with Kazakhstan in August. The Red Army did not remain on the border as they usually did, but instead went into the Chinese province of Xinjiang, finding Chinese defences virtually useless against Soviet technology. The situation intensified and the Soviet Union questioned the USA about its reaction to a possible attack on Chinese nuclear facilities.
Unfortunately for Brezhnev, Nixon took office in January 1969 and signalled a desire to change the US position regarding communist China. In the summer of 1969 National Security Advisor Kissinger was dispatched to meet with Ayub Khan from Pakistan and Ceaușescu from Romania to express interest in normalizing relations. Symbolically, Nixon allowed Americans to travel to China and allowed the export of grain as well. This was intended to send a message to the Soviets that the USA would not be neutral if the Soviets attacked China.

Mao and Nixon’s interests converged in 1969. Both wanted to check Soviet expansion and were troubled by the Brezhnev Doctrine and Soviet nuclear strength; both were concerned about the lengthy war in Vietnam; and both wanted to restore order in their respective countries. They viewed the Soviets as acting from a position of strength, given actions in Czechoslovakia and threats of war against China, but in reality these were an expression of Soviet weakness. The USSR wanted to quell conflict in its sphere as it feared losing its advantage.

In Poland, talks between the US and Chinese resumed, although it was tenuous. On an official level, Mao still criticized American actions, especially those in Vietnam, but he was privately excited by the turn of events. There was a brief break in secret talks in May 1970 as the Chinese condemned American bombing campaigns in Cambodia, but otherwise things moved forward.


As often happens, the trigger for political change was not a particular diplomatic or military action. That trigger came through a sporting event. In April 1971 at the world championship table tennis tournament in Japan, a young American ping-pong (table tennis) player boarded the bus transporting the Chinese national team and was engaged in conversation by a Chinese player. Much to the surprise of American officials, the US team subsequently received an invitation to play in
Beijing, and was granted visas to travel to China. The trip was a public relations success; after over 20 years of suspicion and hostility – and anger over the treatment of US prisoners of war in the Korean War – the American public was transfixed by this visit.

Shortly thereafter, a series of articles appeared in *The New York Times* that presented to the US public the scale of the Vietnam War and length of involvement that went well beyond what they believed. Later known as the *Pentagon Papers*, the Department of Defense reports explained in detail US actions from 1945 to 1967. Nixon needed a public relations success to counter what was quickly becoming a disaster, so accelerating the pace of diplomatic relations also became a way of producing a success for his administration.

This led to Kissinger’s secret trip to China in July 1971. Kissinger travelled to Pakistan, and, claiming a stomach ache, disappeared from public view. Only a handful of Americans knew that there was a Chinese delegation waiting for him that transported him to China, where he met with Zhou. According to Chinese records, Kissinger offered a number of enticements to the Chinese government without reciprocity: acceptance in the United Nations and full diplomatic recognition by 1975 if Nixon were re-elected in 1972. They also discussed full withdrawal from Indo-China, and Kissinger informed China of Soviet troop deployments on its borders. Nixon announced that he would be going to China and in October Kissinger made an official, known visit to China to prepare. His visit coincided with a vote in the United Nations on 25 October, in which the People’s Republic of China displaced the Republic of China, giving Beijing a permanent seat on the Security Council and the accompanying veto power.

President Nixon subsequently travelled to China in February 1972 and had his fateful meeting with Mao followed by a week in which Nixon, his wife Pat, and an entourage that included members of the US press toured the country. The USA and China issued a joint statement, the Shanghai Communiqué, in which both countries pledged to do their best to normalize relations, expanding “people to people relations” and trade opportunities. The USA stated its acceptance of a one-China policy, marking a complete change in US policy that was opposed by the State Department. After this, the USA established the Liaison Office which gave the two countries an official means of negotiation.

In 1972 relations were promising. In a sign of friendship, China sent two pandas to the USA; the US responded by sending musk oxen. There were further proposals that included the idea of a potential alliance to prevent Moscow from considering a nuclear option, but by 1974 further discussions were stalled, not by ideology or disagreements but due to internal problems in both countries. Nixon resigned after a bungled burglary at the Watergate Hotel was revealed to be the action of those in his employ, and Mao died, leaving a power struggle in his wake.

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^This policy, which most Chinese both in Taiwan and the PRC subscribe to, states that there is one China and Taiwan is part of China.
Effects of Sino-US normalization on the Cold War

China continued to provide aid to revolutionary governments despite economic hardship. Between 1971 and 1975 Chinese foreign aid constituted a far higher percentage of government expenses than Soviet and American expenditures. At the same time China also embarked on expensive public works projects. The costs of these were borne by the Chinese people who saw their standard of living fall yet again. Opening China did little for the Chinese people leading them to question the credibility of China and Mao’s revolutionary charges.

Mao needed the USA to consider him as an ally and he exploited US fears of nuclear warfare initiated by the Soviet Union in an attempt to gain improved weapons. The Chinese air force was antiquated and China lacked the new technology for improved fighter planes.

Prior to the agreements, there were diverse opinions among the US government’s foreign policy experts on the result of normalization. Soviet specialists argued that rapprochement would lead to tension with the Soviet Union and would jeopardize détente, whereas other members felt that it would pacify the USSR and prevent it from taking aggressive actions as it had in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in some senses, both were correct. Future Soviet actions assisted revolutionary groups, but until 1979 it did not intervene to maintain a socialist government elsewhere. Brezhnev was sufficiently alarmed by Sino-American rapprochement that SALT I was signed in May 1972 and shortly thereafter he participated in the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, leading to the Helsinki Accords.

However, the agreement further alienated the Soviets from the Chinese. Although there was no official break, in 1979 the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance lapsed, and neither side approached the other to re-establish such an alliance. The Soviets assisted the Indians in 1962, and in turn the Chinese assisted the Islamists in Afghanistan against the Soviets. They also supplied the Contras in Nicaragua against the Soviet-backed Sandinistas, showing that national interest trumped ideology.

Nixon made agreements with the Chinese because he had been known as an anti-communist in the 1950s, not in spite of it. A liberal Democrat making a similar attempt might have been accused of being soft on communism, but the conservative Nixon would never face such charges. It was the public relations success he hoped for, but Vietnam – even with the withdrawal of US troops – and Watergate were impossible to overcome. He would leave his vice president, Gerald Ford, to justify his foreign policy actions. However, up to the end of his life, Nixon saw rapprochement with China as his most significant achievement – even more than ending the war in Vietnam.

It was left to Deng Xiaoping and Jimmy Carter to continue negotiations and in 1978 economic relations resumed and negotiations ended. On 1 January 1979 the USA officially recognized the PRC as the legitimate government of China with full diplomatic relations. This left the one-time US ally Taiwan in diplomatic limbo, unrecognized due to the one-China policy.

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Class discussion

1 In his book Diplomacy, Henry Kissinger asserts that, “All great departures in American foreign policy have resulted from strong presidents interacting with America’s other institutions”.

To what extent do you think this assessment is accurate regarding US relations with China in 1971 and 1972? Using at least one specific example, defend your perspective.

2 “Only Nixon could go to China.” Vulcan proverb, quoted in Star Trek VI (1991)

Explain the meaning of this quotation.

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3 Currently there are 23 countries that recognize nationalist China, less than in the past. The issue of recognition is usually based on where countries receive assistance and in recent years the PRC has outbid the nationalists. The US passed the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979 allowing them to engage the nationalists without formally recognizing the government.
3.4 The election, presidency and overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile

Conceptual understanding

Key question
→ How important were US economic interests in the continued attempts to oust Allende?

Key concept
→ Perspective

Latin America once again came to the forefront of US foreign relations when Nixon had to contend with a democratically elected Marxist president in Chile. With the election of Salvador Allende in 1970, it became clear that the US objective was to keep him from taking office; or, in the worst case scenario, to remove him from power as quickly as possible.

The Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei won the 1964 election with the call for “Revolution in Liberty”. He represented the left wing of the party and advocated economic reforms, the cornerstone of which was the “Chileanization” of the copper industry in which the government would take majority ownership in foreign-owned companies. During his tenure in office, Frei achieved 51% ownership in Kennecott and 25% in Anaconda. He also advocated agrarian reform, hoping to redistribute land to 100 000 peasants but the process was slower than he expected, and by 1970 only 28 000 peasants received the land. Frei’s social programmes involved improved standards of living and access to housing and education.

Although Frei’s programmes had put Chile on the road to economic and social structural change, many on the left felt that he did not bring the promised revolution and that his reforms were too modest; not surprisingly, the right felt he had gone too far and that Chile was heading towards socialism. In 1970 presidential elections were once again scheduled and three main candidates emerged, each representing one of these political viewpoints: the conservative National Party was represented by Jorge Alessandri, the Christian Democrats by Radomiro Tomic and the Marxist coalition Unidad Popular (UP) by Salvador Allende. In 1964 Frei won with 56% of the vote; in 1970 the votes were split fairly evenly across the three candidates but Allende achieved plurality with 36% of the votes (as opposed to 38% he received in his loss in 1964).

Some Americans were alarmed by the result – if a relatively moderate Christian Democrat had put Chile on the road to nationalization, there was concern over what a Marxist coalition would do. US companies had over $1 billion invested in Chile. International Telephone and Telegraph, Ford and the copper conglomerates Anaconda and Kennecott all feared that an Allende presidency would mean a complete nationalization of their companies and the collapse of revenue streams.
There were also security concerns. The USA had intelligence stations in Chile that monitored Soviet submarine fleets and there was fear of a domino effect in South America. In particular, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger felt that Chile posed a more serious threat than Cuba as the Marxists in place had been democratically elected in free and fair elections, and ratified by the Chilean Congress. The Rockefeller report of August 1969 addressed Latin America and assessed that there was potential for political upheaval and a strong Marxist presence in the region; it therefore made sense to collaborate with military rulers to prevent the spread of communism in the region.

Since Allende won through a plurality rather than a majority, the Chilean Congress had to approve the election. The US government made extensive use of the CIA in an attempt to prevent this from happening: it tried to convince members of Congress to elect Alessandri instead (who received 35% of the votes) or recall Frei and hold new elections. It also tried to convince members of the military to hold a coup and install a temporary government. Nixon famously instructed the CIA to make the Chilean economy “scream” to “prevent Allende from coming to power or to unseat him”. In one US-supported initiative, the army commander-in-chief René Schneider Chereau was kidnapped and killed. This had the opposite effect and Congress resoundingly approved Allende’s government.

As expected, Allende implemented a number of drastic economic and social changes on taking office in 1971, most notably nationalizing foreign firms (including the copper mines), banks and large estates, all of which were approved unanimously by Congress. He also used a traditional populist measure of freezing prices and raising wages, making consumer goods affordable to far more Chileans.

While these were popular with the masses, the results were mixed at best. Rather than allow government redistribution of land, peasants were seizing land at will and lacked the means to farm efficiently, leading to a fall in domestic food production. A number of industries were turned over to the workers, also leading to a fall in production. Soon consumer goods were also in short supply and inflation reached 500%.

Unidad Popular tried to maintain positive relations with the USA, while also engaging with other socialist countries and expanding its diplomatic relations with Albania, China, Cuba, North Korea, North Vietnam and the Soviet Union. This proved unacceptable to the USA, which continued to use both covert operations and economic pressure to try to oust Allende.

From 1970 to 1973, an estimated $10 million was spent in trying to bring about his downfall. The US also cut off all economic assistance to Chile from the Alliance for Progress programme (approximately $70 million); blocked Chile from receiving loans from the World Bank, Ex-Im Bank and Inter-American Development Bank; and discouraged foreign investment in Chile. It also put diplomatic pressure on other Latin American countries to oppose Allende.

For its part, the CIA provided money to opposition political parties and media groups, organized a break-in of the Chilean embassy in Washington DC and helped truck drivers organize a strike in 1973.

**Alliance for Progress**

A ten-year programme initiated by US President John F Kennedy to promote democracy in Latin American through economic cooperation and social welfare programmes. The points of the programme were developed in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in August 1961.
Although these charges were long denied, documents released in 2000 demonstrate not just CIA involvement but Nixon’s knowledge of the actions – and even some directions – in trying to oust Allende.

In reality, the popularity of Allende and his UP had begun to wane. The Chilean military and middle classes strongly opposed his programmes for social reform and were willing to take action themselves. The country was in chaos with costly reforms and a lack of income to pay for ambitious social programmes. The black market thrived as the open economy faltered. In April 1973 the copper workers went on strike, devastating the economy. This was followed by a truck drivers’ strike in July that paralysed the country. Allende tried to stabilize the situation but the UP was outnumbered by the Christian Democrats and the National Party members, who blocked all constructive measures at every opportunity.

The middle class in particular was frightened by what they saw as a shift in its level of control of the country and many actively entreated the military to stage a coup against the government. Initially unwilling to act, the military began to fear that it was witnessing large-scale social breakdown. An increase in paramilitary groups within the country and rumors of plans to arm the workers and even abolish the armed forces led the leaders to conclude that if action was not taken soon enough it could lose control of the country.

The Congress accused Allende of violating the constitution and called on the military to act. In an attempt to quell the discontent, Allende was in the process of organizing a national plebiscite in the hopes of establishing the legitimacy of his government. In August, Carlos Prats, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, resigned and was succeeded by Augusto Pinochet. It was presumed that he was a moderate but in reality this appointment sealed the fate of Allende’s government when he purged the army of all officers sympathetic to Allende.

On 11 September, the navy seized the port of Valparaíso and the air force began to bomb the presidential palace. Rather than flee, Allende chose to defend his government, along with a small group of supporters, but by 4 pm the armed forces that stormed the presidential palace announced that Allende had committed suicide. Another 1200 supporters were also killed in the coup.

In Chile, a military junta was in power and established what it called “national reconstruction” as its primary objective. The Constitution was suspended, Congress was dismissed and all political parties were made illegal. Pinochet declared that the army would remain in power for at least five years. Pinochet put himself firmly in the US sphere of influence, where he remained, except during the Carter administration which linked assistance to human rights records. As Chile failed miserably in this regard it was excluded from US assistance from 1977 to 1981, but once Ronald Reagan was elected president, positive US-Chilean relations once again resumed.
With the benefit of hindsight it seems that Chile was heading towards political change with or without US intervention so the covert operations appear to have been unnecessary. However, it is significant that the USA was willing to go to such lengths to overthrow a democratically elected government. The USA embraced the Pinochet regime; less than a month after the coup the USA approved a $24 million loan for the purchase of US wheat and later provided food and other forms of assistance. The determination to pursue an anti-communist path once again led the USA to back a brutal, authoritarian regime, and this time it was one that overthrew a legitimately elected government.

The Nixon administration was soon embroiled in its own affairs, and while covert actions might have been acceptable overseas they were not only immoral but illegal at home. Nixon resigned, facing impeachment, and leaving the affairs of Latin America to Gerald Ford until the 1976 elections. The USA was successful in preventing the further spread of communism in Latin America, but it was at the expense of a democratic state in the region.

Soviet involvement in the Allende regime was limited. As a Marxist candidate, Allende enjoyed monetary support from the Kremlin that helped him in his 1970 victory, and helped the UP gain Congressional seats in the 1971 elections. During the period that Allende governed, it is estimated that Chile received $100 million in credit from the Soviet Union although this was far less than expected so Allende travelled to Moscow to request an increase – which was denied. There were plans for the USSR to provide weapons to the Chilean army, but the promised arms did not arrive; on hearing rumours of attempts to overthrow the government the Soviets did not deliver them.

The Soviets condemned and criticized the coup but took very few actions against Chile. The most notable was in the FIFA World Cup qualifier, in which Chile faced the USSR. The first match was held on 27 September 1973 in Moscow and resulted in a 0-0 tie. A second match was scheduled to be held in Santiago on 21 November 1973 in the stadium that was being used as a detention camp. The Soviets refused to send their team, stating that they refused to play on a field “stained by blood”. FIFA declared these reports to be erroneous and informed the Soviets that play would be held in the stadium. The Soviets refused, thereby losing the opportunity to advance, but making a moral statement. This was the strongest stance the Soviets took.

The coup was condemned internationally and Chilean exiles had widespread support throughout Europe and the Antipodes, but this had no effect in Chile itself. Pinochet remained dictator until 1990 and commander-in-chief until 1998. He was subsequently arrested in London in 1998 and, although he was released in 2000 due to poor health, he was due to stand trial on more than 300 criminal charges, including numerous human rights violations, when he died in 2006.
Covert operations during the Cold War

Many countries have agencies dedicated to espionage and covert foreign operations, but those of the USSR, UK and the USA were used extensively during the Cold War to try and gain an advantage over their enemies. While many of these organizations shared information, this did not prevent them from spying on one another, even if their countries were political allies. Even those countries that seem unlikely to have intelligence agencies possess them (for example, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service and the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service).

Throughout its history, the Soviet Union had a series of secret police: Cheka, GPU, OGPU and NKVD. However, it was the KGB that captured the international imagination and provoked fear among Soviet citizens and potential adversaries. The Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti or Committee for State Security existed from 1954 to 1991, and was involved in espionage, counter-intelligence, foreign intelligence and combating dissent and anti-Soviet ideas. Perhaps the greatest KGB success was the acquisition of US atomic technology.

MI5 has frequently been mislabelled the British foreign intelligence service but in reality it is the Secret Intelligence Service, or MI6, which handles foreign threats. Its existence was officially denied until 1994, leading James Bond to be erroneously considered part of MI5 by many. It was MI6 that was compromised by Kim Philby, the double agent who provided the Soviets with critical information on double agents, often leading to their demise. He defected to the USSR in 1963.

In the USA, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was created during the Second World War and dissolved by executive order in October 1945 when President Truman initially tried to divide its tasks among several agencies, but he soon realized that the USA needed an intelligence service with the onset of the Cold War. The Central Intelligence Agency was created to engage in American operations outside of US territory to maintain friendly governments and oust those perceived as a threat to US interests. While the CIA had notable successes — assisting the Christian Democrats to win the first election in post-war Italy and the removal of Mossadegh in Iran — they are often best known for their failed attempts to overthrow Fidel Castro.

Covert operations were intended to advance the political agendas of their countries, and prevent the proliferation of their adversaries. They relied on spying, funding foreign political parties and even torture and murder to achieve their objectives.
3.5 Cold War crisis in Asia: Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, 1979

Conceptual understanding

Key questions
→ Why did the USSR view Afghanistan as too important to lose as a client state?
→ Why did the US support rebel groups in Afghanistan?

Key concept
→ Continuity
→ Perspective

In December 1979 the period of détente ended when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to maintain a failing socialist regime. The invasion was justified by the Brezhnev Doctrine, but there were also geopolitical reasons for the invasion. In late 1979 the Soviet Union perceived US foreign policy as weak and ineffective and expected little more than protest from the West. To its surprise, the consequences of the invasion were far-reaching and marked the beginning of what is termed the Second Cold War.

Afghanistan prior to December 1979

In the 1970s the government of Afghanistan was often viewed as a pro-US faux democracy but the situation was more complex. It is true that the government of Mohammad Daoud received assistance from the USA but he tried to pursue a neutral policy. Soviet-Afghan military cooperation began in the Khrushchev era, when the Soviet military trained Afghan officers, making them very sympathetic to the Marxist cause in their own country and this continued in the Brezhnev era.

In international diplomacy Afghanistan was seen as in the Soviet (and previously, Russian) sphere of influence due to shared borders with the USSR, but Soviet direct involvement was limited until 1978.

In April 1978 the Afghan army seized power, executed President Daoud and installed the Marxist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Under the governance of Nur Muhammad Taraki, the country was renamed the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and began to implement reforms consistent with its ideology. In the first year it carried out land reform and promoted gender equality and secular education. It expected to gain popular support, but the new government faced factionalism within its own party ranks along with the problems that all poor, rural countries experienced.

In December 1978 the USSR and Afghanistan signed a bilateral agreement in which the USSR agreed to provide assistance and advisors to modernize the country. It also agreed to assist the government in Kabul if they requested military assistance. Almost from the beginning the PDPA government was dependent upon Soviet assistance for its
maintenance of power, and this in many respects weakened the moral authority of the government, and anti-government attacks, especially by religious groups, increased.

The reforms were resisted in rural areas and thus were sometimes imposed through violence, leading to increased civil strife in Afghanistan. Many religious and village leaders were arrested and imprisoned or executed for dissidence against the state, and this further increased civilian hostility to the state. Members of the traditional Afghan elite and intelligentsia went into exile abroad as the lower classes of Afghan society streamed into Pakistan, filling refugee camps. An estimated 27,000 political prisoners were executed by the government of the PDPA.

Rebel forces called the Mujahideen began to oppose the Marxist PDPA. Although the largest group consisted of pro-religious forces, in reality the Mujahideen was a loosely organized coalition of people who opposed the rigid socialist nature of the regime. A wave of religious fundamentalism was sweeping through Iran and Pakistan as well as Afghanistan. In all three countries the religious bodies began to take a dominant role because the religious leaders (mullahs) had a forum in which they could put forward their ideas and put an organizational structure in place through the mosques and Islamic schools that existed in Afghanistan. The Mujahideen relied on the backing of local warlords who had wielded power in the Afghanistan countryside for years.

The resistance to the PDPA began to target not just Afghan but Soviet leaders as well, and in March 1979 alone approximately 100 Soviet advisors and 5000 Afghans were killed by members of the Afghan army that had mutinied in the city of Herat upon hearing of plans to install women in the government. The Marxists responded by attacking the city and killing approximately 24,000 inhabitants. Rather than suppressing opposition to the regime, this dramatic action had the opposite effect and in an army of 90,000 half either deserted or joined the rebel cause. Further complicating the situation, in September 1979, Taraki was overthrown and executed by his former collaborator Hafizullah Amin in a struggle within the PDPA that was damaging to both sides. Civil war was already taking place, and the country became even less stable.

Amin proved to be both more radical and more unpredictable than Taraki, further alienating the public. Between March and December he made 19 requests to the Soviet Union for aid, most of which were rebuffed. He also approached the USA, leading the Soviets to worry that he might shift his allegiance and remove himself from the Soviet sphere. There was also intelligence that implied that the USA was willing to deploy nuclear missiles to Afghanistan and thus the Soviet leadership began to refer to Amin as unmanageable and unwieldy.

There were three main Soviet concerns regarding an Afghan exit from the Soviet sphere: it would be losing power relative to the USA; the Brezhnev Doctrine would seem like a toothless document and countries in Eastern Europe might also defect; and the growth of religious fundamentalism, if left unchecked, would seep into its own central Asian republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
In the USSR leaders were divided, and the Kremlin initially expressed reluctance to send troops into Afghanistan. Brezhnev and Carter were scheduled to meet in Vienna to finalize SALT II and the general staff opposed intervention as it felt that it would increase opposition to the PDPA government. Nonetheless, Soviet defence minister Ustinov and KGB head Yuri Andropov both pushed for intervention and the government began invasion preparations. They argued that intervention was necessary to protect Soviet security and this could only be done if Amin was overthrown, and the Soviets reinforced and protected Afghan borders. They estimated that the operation would take 3–4 weeks.

The invasion

In December 1979 the USSR invaded Afghanistan, invoking the Brezhnev Doctrine to explain the invasion. On 12 December, the Politburo ratified the decision to invade Afghanistan.

The official rationale was murky: according to one Soviet report, a rival PDPA leader, Babrak Karmal, seized Radio Kabul, announced the overthrow of Amin and asked for Soviet assistance. However, this broadcast took place after 24 December when the Soviets began to move troops into the country. It was also later revealed that while the broadcast came on the Radio Kabul frequency, it originated in the Soviet Union. Another report stated that Amin requested assistance from the USSR but this made even less sense. Either way, the Soviets were attempting to justify an invasion by reporting it as an invitation.

A force of 10 000 paratroopers was dropped into Afghanistan to encircle and take Kabul. Soviet forces killed Amin and replaced him with Karmal. By 27 December there were 70 000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan with no clear idea of how to fight in such a chaotic situation or what their desired outcomes were. The situation for the Soviets was tenuous at best for while the Soviets controlled the cities and the highways, the guerrillas – aided by the USA – controlled the countryside.

By February 1980, 100 000 Soviet troops were in place, their presence required to keep Karmal in power. By 1981 it was clear that Soviet military force would not solve Afghan domestic problems, but the Soviets felt they had to support Karmal and keep a socialist government in Afghanistan.

Results of Soviet intervention

This was the beginning of a ten-year intervention that cost the Soviet Union billions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives. The intervention led to international condemnation, including the US decisions to boycott the 1980 summer Olympics that were being held in Moscow, and limit grain and technology sales to the USSR. The Soviets were stunned by the degree of western opposition. Although they saw themselves as acting within their own sphere of influence, most other countries viewed this as unabashed Soviet aggression and expansionism.

The rebel forces gained the support of the USA, largely because of their anti-socialist stance, and intelligence forces began to assist the rebels; President Carter signed an executive order allowing the CIA to conduct Operation
Cyclone – covert operations that included funding and the supply of anti-aircraft missiles that were powerful enough to shoot down Soviet helicopters. When the USA actually began assisting the rebels is highly debated – the official assistance began in 1980 after the Soviet military presence was clearly established, but there is significant evidence to show that the USA had been assisting the military rebels for a considerable amount of time before this. US involvement had the unintended consequence of funding extremist religious groups that later became Al-Qaeda and the Taliban and declared war not just on Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, but on the USA as well.

By 1982 the Soviet Politburo recognized that they had engaged in a war they could not win but they refused to admit defeat and withdraw forces. Since Afghanistan was in such a state of chaos a diplomatic solution was impossible. Most of the founders and initial leaders of the PDPA had been killed in the power struggles of 1978–1979 and thus Afghan leadership was weak. The Soviets continued to pursue a policy that lacked coherence, searching for a solution and continuing a highly unpopular and costly war but, having invoked the Brezhnev Doctrine, it could not withdraw.

The Andropov/Chernenko period from 1982 to 1985 was marked by a continuation of foreign problems that had begun under Brezhnev. The situation in Afghanistan, which Andropov had instigated by insisting upon a Soviet invasion in 1979, deteriorated and was the main source of discontent with the government at the time. Intervention in Afghanistan was never popular with the Soviet citizenry, and even though the government put tight controls on the media regarding Soviet losses and casualties, as the war continued it resulted in tens of thousands of casualties, many of whom returned home and reported what they saw. The war was a drain on the Soviet labour force and the economy, leading to ever-worsening standards of living. Citizens were emboldened by the devastating consequences, and dissent increased. It was no longer just the intelligentsia, but the general population that spoke out.

With regard to superpower relations, the invasion of Afghanistan was the catalyst that led to what is often called the Second Cold War. Détente was already waning, and while SALT II had been signed, it languished in the US Senate and remained unratified. There were other indirect conflicts in Central America and Asia, but it was Afghanistan that damaged relations so severely that there was not another summit meeting until 1985, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan.
Soviet troops arrive in Kabul, 30 January 1980

**Source skills**

**Historical perspectives**

[The Soviet Union] had unilaterally sent troops into an independent, non-aligned Islamic country, killed its president and installed a puppet regime.


The Soviet leadership completely miscalculated the political and military situation in Afghanistan. They were unable to anticipate the anti-Soviet reaction that was generated in the United States and around the world. They failed to understand their enemy and the power Islamic nationalism had on the will of the Afghan people to endure extreme hardships. They were unable or unwilling to prevent the Mujahadeen from operating from sanctuaries in Pakistan.


**In their own words:**

*There is no active support on the part of the population. It is almost wholly under the influence of Shiite slogans – follow not the infidels but follow us.*

Nur Mohammed Taraki [transcript of Kosigyn-Taraki phone conversation]. 17 or 18 March 1979

*The response of the international community to the Soviet attempt to crush Afghanistan must match the gravity of Soviet action.*


**Question**

Compare and contrast what these sources reveal about Soviet understanding of the internal conditions in Afghanistan in 1979.
Andropov and Chernenko

Brezhnev died in November 1982, leaving behind an aged, stagnant political leadership. The Politburo was laden with his contemporaries and it was generally felt that the status quo would continue with the appointment of a new Soviet leader. People were somewhat surprised when 68-year-old Yuri Andropov, former KGB leader and Central Committee member, became the new head of the USSR.

The end of the Brezhnev years were marked by increasing absences of Brezhnev who was ill and weakened and seemed to rely on his protégé Konstantin Chernenko, and most insiders felt that Chernenko would be the successor to Brezhnev. However, Andropov, perhaps due to his former position as head of the KGB, outmaneuvred Chernenko and took the leadership position in the USSR.

Although those outside the Soviet Union may have expected policies to remain much the same, Andropov did have some ideas for change. He charged many in the Brezhnev camp with corruption and attempted to negate the "stability of cadres" in favour of more accountability, in an attempt to improve productivity. He made public the facts of economic stagnation and proposed a solution: people needed to work harder and increase individual productivity. He tried to put into place policies whereby those "illegally absent" from work would be arrested so that the Soviet citizenry would have a carrot and a stick to work harder. In 1983, he shut down much of the Soviet space programme in an attempt to save money and slow the accelerating foreign debt.

Politically, Andropov tried to remove Brezhnev's followers (and Chernenko's supporters) with a new group of nomenklatura loyal to Andropov and more likely to promote changes needed in the stagnant Soviet system. In particular, he promoted younger Party members to the Politburo, and with the help of the emerging Mikhail Gorbachev he tried to replace the elder Party members at the regional level, too. Gorbachev was strengthened by Andropov's tenure as head of the Soviet state, as he gained a loyal following in spite of Soviet agricultural failures.

Regarding foreign policy, Poland was under martial law and the Soviets unequivocally backed Wojciech Jaruzelski in his suppression of opposition movements within the Warsaw Pact. The already poor relations with the USA worsened in September 1983 when Soviets shot down a Korean Airlines flight that strayed into Soviet airspace and killed all 269 people on board. The Soviets were the first on the crash scene and appropriated the black box, all the while maintaining that they had been provoked by the Korean Airlines plane.

In late 1983, Andropov stopped appearing in public due to poor health. In sources later released, it is clear that Andropov intended Gorbachev to be his successor, although this was thwarted by Chernenko. Upon Andropov's death in 1984, Chernenko succeeded him, although he proved to be a very short-lived head of state. This was the Brezhnev generation's last assertion of its leadership over the state. He was largely a figurehead who was seen as holding the Soviet Union steady in preparation for a transition to a different level of leadership.

There were very few changes in the Chernenko period. Domestic and foreign policies remained the same as the gerontocracy spent its last days in charge of the USSR. An increasingly frail Chernenko relied on his deputy, Gorbachev, to chair meetings and make his ideas known. It was his death in March 1985 that marked the real changes in the Soviet regime and signified the end of the Brezhnev era.
**Summit diplomacy**

A summit is a meeting of heads of state to discuss matters of critical importance to all powers invited. The term was initially used by Winston Churchill in 1950, but some historians include the meetings at Cairo, Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam as summits because the dominant leaders of the Allies met to discuss the post-war world. More often, summit diplomacy is used to describe meetings between American and Soviet leaders during the Cold War.

Of all the Soviet leaders, Khrushchev and Gorbachev were the most enthusiastic regarding détente. Khrushchev held meetings with Eisenhower and Kennedy in the hope of alleviating the nuclear threat of both countries, and is often seen as the greatest proponent of them, to bring about his policy of peaceful coexistence. In his six years as head of the USSR, Gorbachev held 12 summits, half of them with Reagan, and the other half with George HW Bush. Like Khrushchev, he was most interested in arms limitations.

One of the problems of the summit meetings was that the US president could make and sign any agreement he felt was just but, as treaties, the agreements needed to be ratified by Congress, often delaying the implementation of the agreements, and sometimes (as in the case of SALT II) never ratifying them at all.

After the Cold War, summits remained important diplomatic meetings but the topics ranged far and wide — from climate change to economics.

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**Thinking skills**

![The Cold War alliances circa 1980](image)

**Questions**

1. What does this map reveal about Cold War alliances?
2. If countries are not shaded, does that mean they are neutral or non-aligned? Explain and provide at least concrete examples.
3. Why do you think some countries are shaded yellow?
Exam-style questions and further reading

1. Discuss the reasons why some historians argue that the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was a result of the vulnerability rather than the power of the USSR.

2. Evaluate the effect of détente on two countries (excluding the USA and the USSR) from two different regions.

3. Examine the reasons why the People’s Republic of China and the USA began formal talks in 1972.

4. Compare and contrast the roles of two Cold War leaders, each chosen from a different region, in the thaw of the 1960s and early 1970s.

5. To what extent was the renewal of the Cold War after 1979 due to the domestic policies of the superpowers throughout the 1970s?

Further reading


Leader: Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung)
Country: People’s Republic of China
Dates in power: 1949–1976
Main foreign policies related to the Cold War
- Support for revolutionary movements
- Rapprochement with the USA

Participation in Cold War events and outcome
- Korean War
- First and Second Taiwan Strait Crises
- Sino-Soviet Schism
- Vietnam War
- Détente with US

Effect on the development of the Cold War
When he first came to power, Mao deferred to Stalin and participated in Cold War actions such as the Korean War, at the request of the Soviets. However, Mao had an independent streak that became apparent after Stalin died. Mao was highly critical of Khrushchev and his constant criticisms of how the USSR was not sufficiently socialist or revolutionary in its foreign policy had significant consequences on Soviet policies, whether or not it was recognized at the time. After the Sino-Soviet split, Mao embraced a more pragmatic approach and entertained the idea of reaching an agreement with the USA. This triangulated power, and changed a number of dynamics in the Cold War.

Leader: Richard M Nixon
Country: USA
Main foreign policies related to the Cold War
- Nixon doctrine
- Vietnamization
- Détente

Participation in Cold War events and outcome
- Vietnam War
- Covert operations in Chile
- Helsinki Accords
- Opening of US to China

Effect on the development of the Cold War
Nixon won the 1968 election with a promise to get the USA out of Vietnam – cornerstone of his foreign policy. The policy involved a gradual withdrawal of US forces while empowering South Vietnam to take over military operations. This fulfilled the American public’s desires, but South Vietnam was defeated and South-East Asia as Cambodia and Laos also became communist countries. The US attempt to destabilize and overthrow the government of Salvador Allende in Chile was also a blight on his presidency, as while it was successful, the Chileans themselves were poised to oust him. At the same time, he vigorously pursued détente, not just with the USSR but with communist China as well. His effect on the Cold War, therefore, was a mixture of furthering rapprochement and a fuelling of socialist fears of US aggression.
**CASE STUDY 3: VIETNAM AND THE COLD WAR**

**Global context**

The process of decolonization that began after the Second World War widened the Cold War struggle and no countries were immune. Many newly created countries sought refuge from the Cold War through the Non-Aligned Movement, while still others were plunged into civil wars in which factions tried to achieve victory with material assistance from one of the superpowers. After occupation forces left, a civil war began in Vietnam that left the country divided for 20 years. Warfare was perpetuated by direct US involvement that escalated and prolonged the conflict. The Cold War had a direct effect on Vietnam that endured even after the end of the Cold War.

**Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End of Second World War</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Indo-China War begins</td>
<td>1946</td>
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<tr>
<td>Battle of Dien Bien Phu</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva Accords divide Vietnam at 17th parallel</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Indo-China War begins</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assassination of South Vietnam leader Ngo Dinh Diem</td>
<td>1963</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gulf of Tonkin resolution</td>
<td>1964</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tet Offensive</td>
<td>1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of Ho Chi Minh</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal of US military forces</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Socialist Republic of Vietnam</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Vietnamese War</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vietnam and the Cold War

Conceptual understanding
Key questions
→ Why did North Vietnam defeat South Vietnam in 1975?
→ Why did Vietnam become a socialist state?

Key concepts
→ Causation
→ Consequence

Indo-China to the end of the Second World War

France had begun to influence Vietnam even before it began military campaigns to consolidate control over Indo-China. In the 17th century French Catholic missionaries went to the region to try to convert the indigenous population and had marginal success. As a result, some French established themselves, giving the French government a pretext for action in the region. Formal French colonization began in earnest in 1859 with a series of military campaigns that ended with France establishing a protectorate over Indo-China. Although the Vietnamese royal family continued, it was largely in a ceremonial capacity. The French were interested in Indo-China for its strategic location, proximity to China and its rubber production. Indo-China was one of France’s most prized possessions and, as was later seen, France was willing to fight long and hard to retain this possession. Prior to the Second World War, risings against the French were limited and easily suppressed.

The Second World War proved pivotal for the establishment of an independent Vietnam. During the war, Vietnam was taken by the Japanese but its administration was left under the Vichy Regime in France because it was a member of the Axis Powers. However, Vichy’s collapse in March 1945 led to direct Japanese annexation; in the north, a military force called the Viet Minh (League for Independence of Vietnam) led by Ho Chi Minh fought against the Japanese using guerrilla tactics and gained momentum as an anti-foreign force. When Japan surrendered on 14 August 1945 the situation reached a critical juncture. On 2 September 1945 Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the creation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). Ho Chi Minh hoped for US support but found little, given the change in US government. While President Roosevelt had been very sympathetic to its nationalist cause, and General Stillwell (commander of US forces in India, Burma and China) had helped support the Viet Minh, the ascendency of Harry Truman and the onset of the Cold War left the USA with little ability to support a Marxist regime despite its anti-colonial rhetoric.

The French attempted to mollify the North Vietnamese by forming the Indo-Chinese Federation and recognizing North Vietnam as an independent state within the French Union but to no avail. When the French Union did not immediately materialize, the North Vietnamese maintained their independence and the Viet Minh fought against the French in what is referred to as the First Indo-China War.

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The First Indo-China War, 1946–1954

The First Indo-China War began in November 1946 with a French assault on Vietnamese civilians in the port city of Haiphong. Until 1954 the French military battled against Vietnamese forces. The Viet Minh had considerable popular support in the rural, agricultural regions of Vietnam, and the French strongholds were in the urban areas, making for a long bloody struggle.

In the first four years of the war, there was actually very little fighting. The Viet Minh General Võ Nguyên Giáp spent most of this time gaining peasant support and expanding the size of his army. By 1954, Giáp had enlisted 117,000 to fight with him against the 100,000 French and 300,000 Vietnamese who fought against him. Giáp also found that he had a strong support base after 1949, when Chinese communists prevailed in their Civil War. The Chinese communists provided Giáp with military support that included heavy artillery, which he used later to his advantage in the last battle of the First Indo-China War.

Dien Bien Phu was the final and decisive battle in the First Indo-China War. It took place in an improbable mountain area near the border with Laos. The battle began in late 1953; the French occupied Dien Bien Phu to try to interrupt supply routes from Laos into North Vietnam. The Viet Minh responded by blockading all roads in and out of the area, but the French felt confident that they could supply their forces through aerial drops. However, they were surprised by General Giáp, who arrived with 40,000 Viet Minh forces that surrounded the 13,000 French and broke their lines. On 7 May 1954, the base was taken by the Vietnamese and the French surrendered.

Geneva Accords

At this point, the French government decided that the conflict in Indo-China was too costly, and they negotiated a settlement in an international conference in Geneva. Discussions had already begun in Geneva on 26 April and so now the object was to negotiate an end to the war. The result was known as the Geneva Accords—a set of non-binding agreements:

- establishment of a ceasefire line in Vietnam along the 17th parallel
- 300 days for the withdrawal of troops on both sides
- Viet Minh evacuation from Cambodia and Laos
- evacuation of foreign troops—except military advisors
- prohibition of dispersal of foreign arms and munitions to the region
- free elections in Cambodia and Laos in 1955
- elections for all of Vietnam to be held by July 1956
- the implementation of these to be conducted by representatives from Canada, India and Pakistan.

The Geneva Accords effectively accepted the existence of a communist regime in the north and tried to bring about stability in Vietnam through the temporary division of the country. At the signing of the Accords, the Viet Minh controlled nearly three-quarters of Vietnam, so the non-communist countries hoped that this would weaken their support throughout the country. Instead, it seemed to consolidate their control of the north, and gave them a boundary behind which it could retreat.
In 1954, therefore, Vietnam was free of colonial rule, but it was divided into two states: in the north, the Viet Minh under Ho Chi Minh retained control; in the south, a pro-western regime was established with support from the USA. This division was only meant to last until elections could be held throughout the country. However, such elections never occurred and, instead, conflict in Vietnam renewed as the country engaged in a civil war in which US forces were directly involved, and in which the USSR and PRC provided support.

### Communication skills

In attendance at the Geneva Conference (26 April to 21 July 1954) were representatives from:

- Cambodia
- People’s Republic of China
- France
- Laos
- USSR
- Great Britain
- USA
- Viet Minh (North Vietnam)
- State of Vietnam (South Vietnam)

The Accords were agreements among Cambodia, France, Laos, North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese representatives. Why were American, British, Chinese and Soviet representatives present? What did they hope to achieve in the negotiations? Who do you think was the most successful?

### A divided Vietnam

The division of Vietnam reflected the situation in the country during the remainder of Ho Chi Minh’s life. Like the Vietnamese themselves, the country was divided into a northern, largely rural peasantry that supported the Marxist ideas of Ho Chi Minh. In the south, a number of inept and corrupt leaders – beginning with the Emperor Bao Dai and Dinh Diem – ruled. In 1959, Vietnam was plunged into a civil war that determined most of the policies of both Vietnam. Meanwhile, Ho Chi Minh became more of a figurehead and less of an active political figure. His death in 1969 did not mark the end of the war, or of revolutionary struggle in the north.

### North Vietnam

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was recognized by all of the communist states while other countries waited for elections that never came. The North Vietnamese received limited assistance from both the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union, but in the early years, Ho Chi Minh was focusing more on internal affairs in the north than the spread of his revolution to the south.

The main reason for this was that Ho Chi Minh was consolidating communist power. Unlike his counterpart to the south, Ho Chi Minh was incorruptible, but he adhered strictly to his nationalist-Marxist ideas. This meant the elimination of class enemies. In 1955 and 1956, anyone branded a landlord, traitor or French sympathizer could be targeted, and many were killed by the North Vietnamese.
Since they were seen as pro-French, northern Catholics were identified, and so whole villages fled to the south. During these years, 1 million Vietnamese fled to the south, hoping to escape persecution or execution.

In the north, the communists continued to implement policies of land reform, which they had begun during the First Indo-China War. From 1946 onwards, the Viet Minh had launched a programme of agrarian reform centred on distribution of land to the peasants. Much like their Chinese counterparts, the Viet Minh prided themselves on moving into regions, liberating the peasantry and assisting them in their acquisition of land tenure. Landlords lost their economic and social control over the peasantry as the Viet Minh relieved peasants of their annual rents and established communities in which the peasants worked together, without the dominance of the landlords.

He assisted southern communists through founding the National Liberation Front and the Viet Cong, and began the construction of what would become the Ho Chi Minh Trail that went through Laos and Cambodia. He also began to support the communist Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge in Laos and Cambodia respectively.

He was recognized as the father of Vietnamese independence. His death in 1969 did not mean an end to the revolutionary struggle or the drive for Vietnamese independence. Indeed, many of his followers saw it as imperative to complete his mission.

**South Vietnam**

The situation in South Vietnam was more complex as a number of the country’s leaders had different plans and policies for stopping the spread of communism into the south; all of them had regimes that were characterized by corruption, brutality towards perceived enemies of the state and chaos.

The French initially had a plan to restore the Vietnamese Emporer Bao Dai to serve as a puppet leader of what they hoped would be a client state, but this idea had been frustrated – France had withdrawn and Bao Dai proved to be too weak. The USA, with its fears of communist expansion, assumed the position of patron of southern Vietnam. In the waning years of the First Indo-China War, the USA had provided France with $3 billion to fund its war against the Viet Minh. It sought a stronger leader for its Vietnamese client state and found it in Ngo Dinh Diem, a nationalist and Catholic who had patriotic credentials stemming from his open opposition to French rule in the 1930s. Under US direction, Bao Dai recalled Diem in 1954 and made him Prime Minister. In 1955, Diem ousted Bao Dai and recreated the government in the south. In a referendum that was clearly “rigged” the south Vietnamese voted in favour of a Vietnam Republic with Diem as President. His regime became increasingly corrupt and brutal, leading eventually to the renewal of war in Vietnam.

Vietnam was a rural, agrarian society, and so one of the first issues that Diem faced was that of land distribution. A number of radical and moderate groups advocated land distribution so that the Vietnamese peasantry would have sufficient land to farm. When they occupied the south, the Viet Minh had helped the peasants by redistributing roughly 1.5 million acres (600 000 hectares) of land and countless peasants had acquired land tenure.
through Viet Minh occupation, not paying rent from the end of the Second World War. In 1955, Diem reversed this, and required peasants to pay rent again. Further, in 1958 peasants were expected to purchase the land they farmed in six annual installments. This was extremely costly, and it alienated a peasantry who had come to see that land as their own.

Diem’s policies were often a reaction against the communist regime to the north. He was constantly afraid of opposition and, increasingly, assassination, so he launched a widespread campaign against anyone he considered a threat. In 1956, he refused to hold the elections stipulated in the Geneva Accords, arguing that northerners would be compelled to vote communist. He imprisoned opposition leaders and targeted Viet Minh that remained in the south. He also favoured Catholics over the Buddhist majority; roughly 10% of the population was Catholic, and many were northerners who had escaped south as refugees and appreciated Diem’s leadership. But, this favouring of the minority from which he came led to further dissatisfaction with his regime.

This in turn led to opposition within the south itself. Beginning in 1957, South Vietnamese Communists, called the Viet Cong, took advantage of peasant alienation and began to organize resistance groups in the countryside and plot political assassinations against government officials. The number of assassinations grew; in 1959 there were 1200 and in 1961, 4000. Despite these figures and the growth of the Viet Cong and its political arm, the National Liberation Front (founded in 1960 by Ho Chi Minh), Diem maintained control over the cities of South Vietnam and much of the countryside.

To the ire of many South Vietnamese peasants, their villages were forcibly disbanded and the peasants were placed in what were called Strategic Hamlets. While the South Vietnamese government said that these were to protect the peasantry from looting and pillaging by Viet Cong and other bandits, the main objective was to isolate the Viet Cong from the bases and prevent them from gaining any support from the peasants. The hamlets were regularly patrolled by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to prevent Viet Cong infiltration, but this policy was less than successful. It further alienated the peasantry, making them less likely to assist the government in eliminating the Viet Cong.

Even the USA was increasingly alarmed by Diem’s brutality. In particular, his widely publicised suppression of Buddhist monks left many Americans horrified that they were supporting such a leader. Thus, it should come as no surprise that a plan to overthrow Diem by members of the South Vietnamese military received the tacit support of the US government. In November 1963, Diem was assassinated and initially replaced by a military junta that had little popular support. In 1965, General Nguyen Van Thieu became President, providing a veneer of stability, but his regime was just as corrupt, and his officers as inept as those under Diem. His policies were not ideologically based. Instead, they were based on the necessity of fighting the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, and of maintaining his support base through personal favours and connections that perpetuated the corruption of Diem, rather than eradicating it.

On the other side, it was under Thieu that the South Vietnamese government attempted land reform. In 1954, 60% of the peasantry were landless, and 20% owned parcels that were less than 2 acres
Furthermore, the tenant farmers had to pay approximately 74% of their annual crop yield to their landlords. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Viet Minh had gained the support of much of the southern peasantry through rigorous redistribution of land. The Viet Minh had done this by going into villages, imprisoning the landlords and forcing them to cede their lands to the peasants who actually farmed the land. The Viet Cong continued these policies and appealed to the peasantry through distribution of land owned by absentee landlords; this increased their support, which helped the Viet Cong in their guerrilla operation.

Diem had sided with the landlords and attempted to return the land to them. To try and undercut peasant support for the Viet Cong and distance himself from Diem, Thieu introduced the first of his land reforms in 1968. The first programme gave 50,000 families government land and prohibited local officials from returning land to landlords. Even more sweeping was the March 1970 Land-to-the-Tiller Act which ended rent payments for those who farmed the land and granted ownership to those who worked the land. To distribute land fairly, he determined that the maximum amount of land that could be owned was 37 acres. Through this act, 1.5 million acres (600,000 hectares) were distributed to 400,000 landless peasants by 1972, and by 1973 all but 7% of peasant farmers owned their own land.

Despite positive measures of agrarian reform, the poor treatment of the population by the ARVN and the corruption and ineptitude of the leadership continued to alienate much of the population, and the combined forces of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong – who were determined to fight until Vietnam was united and socialist – fought a war of attrition against the USA until American public opinion demanded the withdrawal of US forces and the ARVN collapsed under the combined assault of regular and guerrilla warfare from the north.

**Second Indo-China War 1959–1975**

Even more than the First Indo-China War, this war inflicted tremendous damage on the people of Vietnam. The statistics are horrifying: approximately 1 in 7 or 6.5 million Vietnamese were killed in this conflict; there were countless casualties; and the country was destroyed by the massive bombing campaigns and the use of Agent Orange to exfoliate the jungles and expose guerrillas.

Neither side could take the high ground in the treatment of the population. Both sides used coercion and indoctrination to engage the support of the population. While a few were ideologically bound to supporting one side or another, most people chose sides by necessity. Both sides augmented their armed forces through conscription – and there was no option to remain neutral. Whichever side arrived first in a village took all able men to fight. Not only did the Vietnamese lose lives, but this also limited agricultural production. The women, children and elderly who remained did the best they could with the resources available, but the absence of adult men led to food shortages in many areas.
In South Vietnam, the Viet Cong began guerrilla operations and the assassination of public officials in 1957. It was often assumed that the Viet Cong were simply taking orders from North Vietnam but this was untrue. In fact, the Viet Cong were a largely autonomous group of cells working independently of one another and of North Vietnam, partly in an attempt to keep their cadres from being identified by the South Vietnamese government. One of the main advantages they had was their anonymity and their apparent ability to strike anywhere unexpectedly. While they relied on military assistance from the north, most of their operations were designed by local commanders who knew well the areas where they fought. Throughout the 1960s the Viet Cong became increasingly powerful and their ranks swelled, reaching a high in 1968 just before the Tet Offensive.

Being a traditionally trained army, the ARVN had great difficulties in combating the guerrilla tactics employed by the Viet Cong. Furthermore, they lacked leadership in their military; too many officers held their positions due to family connections and tended to be incompetent or corrupt. They were also infiltrated by Viet Cong who worked as their servants and delivered information to the communists. It was all too easy for the Viet Cong to launch a guerrilla attack, cause destruction and then melt into the jungle where the ARVN could not follow them.

In spring 1959 the Viet Cong felt strong enough to engage openly against their adversaries and began to confront the ARVN in direct combat, rather than keep with their initial methods of ambush and assassination. In Hanoi, the Party leadership met to discuss the formalization of hostilities. The decision to renew war was the result of a meeting of the Central Committee Worker’s Party in July 1959. There it was agreed that to truly establish socialism in the north, unification with the south was necessary.

As the ARVN faltered, the USA sought to fill the gap by providing the South Vietnamese with supplies and, eventually, men. The intensification of US involvement led to further escalation of the war as North Vietnam began to treat it as an anti-imperial war in which their objective – along with unification – was to expel the USA.

To support and perhaps exert some control over the Viet Cong, the North Vietnamese sent a number of their troops south using the Ho Chi Minh Trail to transport them through Laos to avoid the border crossing. This increased the pressure on the ARVN and the government of South Vietnam, which proved to be unstable until the appointment of General Nguyen Van Thieu in 1965. Even so, South Vietnam was in political disarray and the ARVN seemed incapable of stemming the tide of North Vietnam. This meant a further escalation in assistance from the USA, which felt that it was imperative to prevent the spread of communism south. It was not just the USA that believed the idea of the domino theory; Australian and New Zealand sent troops to Vietnam in support of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). They felt threatened by the idea of a communist Vietnam, fearing that they were puppets of the USSR and PRC and determined to expand as far as possible. These were fears of people ignorant of Ho Chi Minh’s plans for nationalism and socialism, who overestimated the role of larger communist powers.

The Tet Offensive is generally remembered as a turning point in US public opinion, but it is also a turning point for the role of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army in the course and outcome of the war. The Tet Offensive is generally remembered as a turning point in US public opinion, but it is also a turning point for the role of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army in the course and outcome of the war. The

Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)
Also called the Manila Pact, this was a collective security agreement signed by Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, United Kingdom and United States to protect Southeast Asia from foreign aggression. It lasted from 1954 to 1977. Interestingly, the Southeast Asian states themselves were not members of the agreement.
Viet Cong, with between 70 000 and 100 000 soldiers in their ranks, decided to conduct a formal attack on the urban areas of South Vietnam. The attack was truly a surprise as this holiday was traditionally a period of ceasefire for the Vietnamese. Thus, the attack of the Viet Cong in January 1968 was a shock for the South Vietnamese and Americans. The Viet Cong had the element of surprise and the determination to fight, but in the end they had to withdraw. The ARVN did not break ranks and held out until they received reinforcement from US troops.

The casualties for the Viet Cong were disastrous. It has been estimated that they suffered between 40 000 and 50 000 deaths in the offensive and they never managed to regain their strength. Instead, their ranks were replaced by the North Vietnamese Army, which began to assert itself in the south. As an autonomous unit, the Viet Cong contributed very little to the fighting after the Tet Offensive, and henceforth most of the fighting was between the ARVN (and the USA) and the North Vietnamese army.

After the Tet Offensive, the USA and ARVN recovered quickly but at home, American confidence was shaken and there was increasing pressure to negotiate for a withdrawal. American diplomats in Moscow were used in secret talks to intimate this US willingness. At the same time, US President Nixon began to phase in US withdrawal, with an announcement that 25 000 soldiers would be coming home in 1969, and plans for a further 150 000 in 1970. This mollified the public at home but contributed to demoralization of those troops still stationed in Vietnam.

In 1968 peace talks began in Paris that lasted until 1973. The main participants in these talks were US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese Le Duc Tho. North Vietnam insisted on complete withdrawal of American forces and the replacement of the South Vietnamese regime with a coalition government. Their position was strengthened by an increasing number of military defeats and the pressure that the US government felt from the public to withdraw from Vietnam. By 1971 the USA had openly considered withdrawal, and the North Vietnamese no longer insisted on a coalition government in the South. These two changes were compromises that allowed the talks to move forward and both sides felt confident that an agreement could be reached.

They did not consider the South Vietnamese, however. When presented with what they saw as a fait accompli, the government in Saigon insisted on making changes to the treaty to show its input in the process. Kissinger’s presentation of these changes incensed the North Vietnamese who thought they had negotiated a settlement. In return, they demanded further changes. The USA responded with an intense bombing campaign that succeeded in bringing the North Vietnamese back to the negotiation table and on 27 January 1973 the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam was signed by representatives of South Vietnamese Communists, North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the USA. The USA agreed to withdraw all its forces in 60 days, and a ceasefire was scheduled to being on 28 January.

By March 1973 all US troops were gone from Vietnam and war among the Vietnamese was renewed. The North Vietnamese already had numerous troops in South Vietnam, and they gained momentum after the withdrawal of American forces and an end to US bombing campaigns. Additionally,
the regime in the South was plagued with inflation, corruption and food shortages, making it even less popular than it had been. The situation was exacerbated by massive desertions from the ARVN.

In March 1975 the North launched their final offensive. Planning for it to last two years, they were as surprised as anyone when it lasted for two months instead. The government in Saigon collapsed and, with it, the army. Thieu resigned from office on 21 April and fled to Taiwan. The North Vietnamese army took city after city, culminating with Saigon on 30 April 1975.

This action is often referred to as the fall of Saigon, but in reality, the North Vietnamese Army marched unopposed into the city. No army remained to fight against them, and the population seemed resigned to their occupation. The USA evacuated, leaving behind hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese civil servants and officers who would face the wrath of the North Vietnamese. However, the war was finally over and Vietnam was unified.

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**Research skills**

The Vietnam War had a number of sides and factions. Using the map, identify the following countries:

1. Socialist Republic of Vietnam
2. Republic of Vietnam
3. Laos
4. Cambodia

Why did the North Vietnamese win the Second Indo-China War?
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

With unification of Vietnam, the north sought to impose communist policies on the entire country. This was done systematically and ruthlessly. This single-party state prohibited opposition parties and groups, imposed rule through censorship and forced collectivization and industrialization on the country. This created very negative consequences for the country as productivity declined and malnutrition resulted. To remedy this, in the 1980s the country introduced market-oriented policies and limited its spread of revolution to its neighbours.

The surrender of South Vietnam to the advancing North Vietnamese armies prevented the destruction of Saigon and led to the consolidation of communist control over the country. In 1976, the country was officially unified and renamed the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The country was a single-party state with the Communist Party the only legal party. The country was governed by executive and legislative branches that were elected by the population, but the Communist Party determined who could run for office, and so, as in many other single-party states, the system appeared to be bottom-up democracy, but in reality it was top-down autocracy.

Unlike other recently unified and independent states, the Vietnamese political leadership had political experience and saw the unification of Vietnam as an extenuation of the governance they had over North Vietnam previously. The Central Committee was composed of colleagues of Ho Chi Minh, increasingly elderly, and most of them officers and active combatants in the war for unification, but still determined to implement communist policies.

The civil servants and military officers from the South Vietnamese regime were quickly identified and arrested by the North Vietnamese. Rather than systematic execution, they were instead sent to rural re-education camps to be indoctrinated.

In a unified Vietnam, 80% of the population lived in the countryside and most were poor peasants. Left to their own devices they would not have supported the northern or southern regimes that had previously existed, but they accepted North Vietnamese control because they had to. Once again, the rural peasantry saw its livelihood threatened as the government insisted on the imposition of socialist economic policies in the countryside.

The economy

The economy was centrally planned and from 1975 to 1985 the government tried to implement collectivization and the development of heavy industry. The peasants that had recently been granted land in redistribution programmes in both the north and the south were now forced onto government-owned collectives. Also, at this time, private businesses were seized by the government and it was illegal to transport food and goods between provinces. The entire economy was directed by the state, which had very little revenue. As a result, Vietnam joined the COMECON, hoping to have a market there and, until Gorbachev came to power, received approximately $3 billion per year in assistance from the USSR.
In 1986, however, Vietnam changed its economic policies dramatically, with the implementation of Doi Moi, or renovation. The economy had stagnated, and there were shortages of food, fuel and consumer goods throughout the country. The people were so poor that malnutrition was rife and threatened the well-being of the population. Furthermore, in the early 1980s there had been hyperinflation that was countered through the imposition of austerity measures. The political leadership was divided: the reform-minded pragmatists advocated a shift towards more capitalistic policies while the ideologues held onto the ideas of a socialist economy, fearing that economic liberalization could lead to the decline of socialism in the country. The pragmatists prevailed and in acknowledgment of the changing economic policies in the PRC and USSR, Doi Moi introduced market-oriented policies, allowing entrepreneurs to develop businesses that created small-scale consumer goods. This was initially successful, but seeing the political problems faced by the USSR after the introduction of glasnost, the government once again clamped down on reform policies. Seeing China’s ability to implement economic reform while maintaining its political control gave them renewed confidence in Doi Moi, and reforms were once again encouraged. Vietnam achieved around 8% annual GDP growth from 1990 to 1997 while foreign investment grew threefold and domestic savings quintupled.

Social policies
Like other single-party states, the will of the state was enforced through a secret police, the Cong An. These security forces were responsible for maintaining order, and any sort of negative speech, art or publication could be a reason for public punishment, including imprisonment. To rid the country of its colonial and capitalist influences, paintings, sculpture and literature created before 1975 were banned. Instead, all had to be government sanctioned with pro-communist, pro-nationalist messages.

To this end, there was censorship of the arts and also the media. Government-sanctioned news agencies produced the news that was delivered in government-owned newspapers, on the radio and eventually television. Due to the country’s proximity to Thailand it was not possible to keep out all foreign news, but it was greatly limited.

Over 90% of the population of Vietnam comes from the same ethnic group, so minority issues are limited mostly to religious minorities, rather than ethnic or racial minorities. Religion was brought under government control; only state-controlled churches were allowed to exist and their activities were closely monitored by the Cong An. The Protestant Montagnard of the central highlands and the Hoa Hao Buddhists of the south have made claims of religious persecution due to religion and have protested the seizure of their land during the war. Generally, however, the homogeneity of the country has meant that persecution was due mostly to class, with landowners and southern elites targeted and sent either to re-education or labour camps.

Like other communist countries, Vietnam has had to contend with the flight of refugees from their country. In the days immediately after the fall of Saigon, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese escaped in any way
possible across the frontiers to bordering countries or through the South China Sea on makeshift rafts and boats. It is estimated that one million Vietnamese fled, ending up in refugee camps in Thailand, Indonesia or Malaysia for as long as five years while they waited for asylum. These boat people have been accepted in Australia, New Zealand and the USA. Also, a number of Vietnamese in the north sought refuge in China and remain there.

**Foreign policies**

During the Cold War, Vietnam was clearly in the communist bloc, and at times served as a bridge between the USSR and PRC, receiving assistance from both during the Vietnam War. However, the Vietnamese had been under Chinese influence for centuries and sought to eliminate that, along with the western, colonial influences of France and the USA. Relations between communist China and Vietnam were strained as both sought to establish their influence in Cambodia, and in 1979 there was a brief conflict between the two countries that led to a three-week invasion of Vietnam by Chinese forces. Although the Chinese withdrew and the matter was reconciled, relations were poor between the two countries.

On the other hand, Vietnam enjoyed the benefits of Soviet patronage. In addition to economic assistance, the USSR provided Vietnam with military assistance in the form of training and materials. This allowed for the build-up of the Vietnamese army, which the USSR encouraged to deter western aggression in the region. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the end of the USSR meant the end of Soviet assistance and markets for Vietnam. This led to a decline in the economy, and the Vietnamese struggled to find other trading partners.

Twenty years after its withdrawal, the USA extended diplomatic recognition to Vietnam, and with it opened up trade relations. The end of the Soviet regime in Russia did not exactly benefit Vietnam but it did give the country new markets where the public had more disposable income and more purchasing power. Additionally, it opened Vietnam to tourism from the West, which benefited the country as well.

US bombing campaigns and North Vietnamese transportation networks had involved Laos and Cambodia in their struggle during the Vietnam War and thus, regionally, Vietnam was isolated during the Cold War. Furthermore, its policy of supporting communist regimes in Indo-China further alienated their neighbours. In Laos, Vietnam assisted the Laotian communists in their attempt to seize power. And, in 1978 Vietnam occupied Cambodia, or Kampuchea. The Khmer Rouge government under Pol Pot had Chinese backing but the Vietnamese supported a pro-Vietnamese regime and thus invaded their neighbour. This led to a ten-year occupation; it was only in 1989 that Vietnam withdrew its forces. Since then, relations with its neighbours have improved as Vietnam has become less aggressive towards its neighbours and more capitalistic in its outlook.
Conclusion
After nearly 60 years of hardship and upheaval, Vietnam finally seems to have a stable government that is accepted in the international community. Like its neighbour to the north, Vietnam has a capitalist economic programme while maintaining its socialist government. There have been changes in governance since the collapse of the USSR, but they have made small inroads. The Communist Party is an institutionalized party, and the means for political success in the country. But, the country has seen limited social and political reforms. Despite the volatility that the country suffered from 1945 to 1975, it is now one of the longest-lasting socialist regimes in the world, politically stable and economically dynamic.

TOK discussion
While the North Vietnamese Army was fighting South Vietnam and the USA, they were taught that the South Vietnamese people were oppressed by South Vietnamese and American elites and had very little control over their own lives. Much to their surprise, when they began the occupation of the south after the fall of Saigon, they saw that the people in the south had far more than they did: their fields were more productive and consumer goods were available.

Imagine for a moment that you are a soldier in the North Vietnamese Army who runs across this contradiction. You are a dedicated socialist and have thought for years to spread communism throughout Vietnam and to liberate the south from its overlords. For a person who believed firmly in the socialist ideals of North Vietnam, how would you rationalize this discrepancy? To what extent would you admit that you might have been misled by your government? Would this change your ideas about your government? What about towards socialism?

Exam-style questions
1. Evaluate the effect of the Cold War on Vietnam from 1945 to 1975.
2. To what extent did the Cold War affect the outcome of the Vietnam War?
Question
Discuss the impact of one country in either Europe or Asia on the emergence of superpower rivalry between 1943 and 1949.

Analysis
Once you have formulated your introduction, in which you presented a thesis and identified the events you would use to make your argument in answer to the question, you can now structure the main body of the essay. When students first start writing essays they tend to either describe situations or tell a story, and the words examiners use for these types of essays are descriptive and narrative, respectively. However, an essay needs to go further than this and to use the events being described to advance an argument.

A body paragraph is, in some respects, a mini-essay in itself that should have an introduction, a body and conclusion. However, it is within the larger context of the entire essay so it also needs to be related back to the whole essay.

Once again, there is a mnemonic that can help you: PEEL.

- **P** = Point – your topic sentence where you present the argument for this paragraph
- **E** = Evidence – the facts you will use to support the argument
- **E** = Explanation – the analysis of the evidence you present
- **L** = Linkage – where you relate this argument back to the larger question.

Read through the following body paragraph:
At Yalta the Big 3 decided they needed to make decisions about Germany as it was definitely going to fall soon. At first they decided to divide Germany into three parts – one each for the UK, USSR and US – but later the UK wanted France to get a share but the Soviets did not want to give up their portion, so Stalin told FDR and Churchill that France could have a part, but it had to come out of the US and UK spheres so the Soviets took one third of Germany and the other two-thirds were divided between France, the UK and the USA. The four were supposed to have joint command of Germany but soon after the German surrender it was obvious that the western powers did not have the same goals as the USSR.

Now answer the following questions in groups of four:
1. Indo-ChineseIs there useful information in this paragraph? If so, what is it?
2. How could the information be more useful? What would you add?
3. Is there an argument here?
4. Is there any analytical content?
5. How does it relate to the question?

As I’m sure that you’ve guessed, this body paragraph is descriptive, with little analytical content and some relation to the question. It is a useful place to start on an essay but it doesn’t help advance an argument because it lacks structure.

Class practice
Below is another example of a body paragraph. While it is not perfect, it does provide all aspects of PEEL.

The UK, USSR and USA worked together towards the defeat of Nazi Germany but as the postwar era began their fundamental differences surfaced with the division of Germany between 1945 and 1948. As decided upon in the postwar agreements they divided Germany into sectors, each to be managed by one of the Allied powers. This was meant to be temporary and in 1947 the western sectors (under US, UK and France) expressed their intentions to begin to merge towards unification. Stalin objected and grew frustrated as the other three continued with their plans to combine their powers. The US and UK first combined their sectors into bizonia, and later France joined and it became trizonia. This angered Stalin who withdrew from the Allied Control Council. This series of actions showed very clearly how Germany impacted the development of a rivalry between the US and USSR.

Find all parts of PEEL in the section above. (Note: in some cases both Evidence and Explanation are in the same paragraph.)

If possible, it is good to structure the body paragraphs in chronological order. That helps both you and the examiner keep the sequence of events in mind. Also, if there is an alternative perspective that you feel should be considered before you reach your conclusion, you can also present that in one of the body paragraphs.

Here is an example of alternative perspective:

On the other hand, Germany also represented a last attempt for the superpowers to work together, in the form of the Nuremberg Trials. Beginning in November 1945, the Allied powers collaborated in the war crimes tribunals. Through their cooperation, many of the surviving leaders were convicted of crimes against humanity, often resulting in executions. This demonstrated that Germany wasn’t always a source of tension between the superpowers and, indeed, was at times a place of agreement between the USSR and USA.