

## Detente

**Détente** meaning "relaxation" is the easing of strained relations, especially in a political situation, through verbal communication. The term in diplomacy originates around 1912 when France and Germany tried, without success, to reduce tensions.

Most often the term is used for a phase of the Cold War. It was the policy of relaxing tensions between Moscow and the West, as promoted by Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger and Leonid Brezhnev, 1969 – 1974. With the United States showing weakness at the top that forced Richard Nixon out of office, Brezhnev used the opportunity to expand Soviet influence. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 decisively ended any talk of détente

The most obvious manifestation of détente was the series of summits held between the leaders of the two superpowers and the treaties that resulted from these meetings. In the early 1960s, before détente, the Partial Test Ban Treaty had been signed on 5 August 1963. Later in the decade, the Outer Space Treaty, in January 1967, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, July 1968, were two of the first building blocks of détente. These early treaties were signed all over the globe.

The most important treaties were not developed until the Nixon Administration came into office in 1969. The Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact sent an offer to the West, urging them to hold a summit on "security and cooperation in Europe". The West agreed and talks began towards actual limits in the nuclear capabilities of the two superpowers. This ultimately led to the signing of the SALT I treaty in 1972. This treaty limited each power's nuclear arsenals, though it was quickly rendered out-of-date as a result of the development of MIRVs. In the same year that SALT I was signed, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty were also concluded. Talks on SALT II also began in 1972. Brezhnev however at the start of the period in his speeches to the Politburo, was intent on using the period of relaxed tensions to prepare for Soviet expansion in the 1980s. In 1975, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe met and produced the Helsinki Accords, a wide-ranging series of agreements on economic, political, and human rights issues. The CSCE was initiated by the USSR, involving 35 states throughout Europe.

Détente (a French word meaning release from tension) is the name given to a period of improved relations between the United States and the Soviet Union that began

tentatively in 1971 and took decisive form when President Richard M. Nixon visited the secretary-general of the Soviet Communist party, Leonid I. Brezhnev, in Moscow, May 1972. Both countries stood to gain if trade could be increased and the danger of nuclear warfare reduced. In addition, Nixon—a candidate for reelection—was under fire at home from those demanding social change, racial equality, and an end to the Vietnam War. The trip to Russia, like his historic trip to China a few months earlier, permitted him to keep public attention focused on his foreign policy achievements rather than his domestic problems. Nixon's trip to China had also heightened the Soviets' interest in détente; given the growing antagonism between Russia and China, Brezhnev had no wish to see his most potent rivals close ranks against him. In the context of the Cold War, U.S. presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford called détente a “thawing out” of U.S.-Soviet nuclear diplomacy essential to avoiding a nuclear confrontation.

### **The Treaties of Détente**

The first evidence of détente-era cooperation came in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968, a pact signed by several of the major nuclear and non-nuclear power nations pledging their cooperation in stemming the spread of nuclear technology. While the NPT did not ultimately prevent the proliferation of nuclear arms, it paved the way for the first round of Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT I) from November 1969 to May 1972. The SALT I talks yielded the Antiballistic Missile Treaty along with an interim agreement capping the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) each side could possess.

In 1975, two years of negotiations by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe resulted in the Helsinki Final Act. Signed by 35 nations, the Act addressed a range of global issues with Cold War implications, including new opportunities for trade and cultural exchange, and policies promoting the universal protection of human rights.

Unfortunately, not all, but most good things must end. By the end of the 1970s, the warm glow of U.S.-Soviet détente began to fade away. While diplomats of both nations agreed on a second SALT agreement (SALT II), neither government ratified it. Instead, both nations agreed to continue to adhere to the arms reduction provisions of the old SALT I pact pending future negotiations.

As détente broke down, progress on nuclear arms control stalled completely. As their relationship continued to erode, it became clear that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had overestimated the extent to which détente would contribute to an agreeable and peaceful end of the Cold War. Détente all but ended when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. President Jimmy Carter angered the Soviets by increasing U.S. defense spending and subsidizing the efforts of anti-Soviet Mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Afghanistan invasion also led the United States to boycott the 1980 Olympics held in Moscow. Later the same year, Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States after running on an anti-détente platform. In his first press conference as president, Reagan called détente a “one-way street that the Soviet Union has used to pursue its aims.

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### **Theaters of Cold War**

The term theatre of war is credited to Prussian General Carl Von Clausewitz who wrote in his book “On War” that battle is almost like a play. Soldiers, Artists, politicians, reporters, historians and military strategists have used theatrical and performative language, images and metaphors to evoke the war. In warfare, a theater or theatre is an area in which important military events occur or are progressing. A theater can include the entirety of the airspace, land and sea area that is or that may potentially become involved in war operations. Denotes properly such a portion of the space over which war prevails as has its boundaries protected, and thus possesses a kind of independence. This protection may consist of fortresses, or important natural obstacles presented by the country, or even in its being separated by a considerable distance from the rest of the space embraced in the war. Such a portion is not a mere piece of the whole, but a small whole complete in itself; and consequently it is more or less in such a condition that changes which take place at other points in the seat of war have only an indirect and no direct influence upon it.

To give an adequate idea of this, we may suppose that on this portion an advance is made, whilst in another quarter a retreat is taking place, or that upon the one an army is acting defensively, whilst an offensive is being carried on upon the other. Such a clearly defined idea as this is not capable of universal application; it is here used merely to indicate the line of distinction.

In addition there are theater of operations (TO) as a sub-area within a theater of war. The boundary of a TO is defined by the commander who is orchestrating or providing support for specific combat operations within the TO. Theater of operations is divided into strategic directions or military regions depending on whether it's a war or peacetime. The United States Armed Forces split into Unified Combatant Commands (regions) that are assigned to a particular theater of military operations. A strategic direction is a group of armies also known as a task (field) forces or battlegroups. A strategic command or direction in general essence would combine a number of tactical military formations or operational command. In the modern military, a strategic command is better known as a combat command that may be a combination of groups.

The Cold War was a lengthy struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union that began in the aftermath of the surrender of Hitler's Germany. In 1941, Nazi aggression against the USSR turned the Soviet regime into an ally of the Western democracies. But in the post-war world, increasingly divergent viewpoints created rifts between those who had once been allies.

The United States and the USSR gradually built up their own zones of influence, dividing the world into two opposing camps. The Cold War was therefore not exclusively a struggle between the US and the USSR but a global conflict that affected many countries, particularly the continent of Europe. Indeed, Europe, divided into two blocs, became one of the main theatres of the war. In Western Europe, the European integration process began with the support of the United States, while the countries of Eastern Europe became satellites of the USSR.

From 1947 onwards, the two adversaries, employing all the resources at their disposal for intimidation and subversion, clashed in a lengthy strategic and ideological conflict punctuated by crises of varying intensity. Although the two Great Powers never fought directly, they pushed the world to the brink of nuclear war on several occasions. Nuclear deterrence was the only effective means of preventing a military confrontation. Ironically, this 'balance of terror' nevertheless served as a stimulus for the arms race. Periods of tension alternated between moments of détente or improved relations between the two camps. Political expert Raymond Aron perfectly defined the Cold War system with a phrase that hits the nail on the head: 'impossible peace, improbable war'.

The Cold War finally came to an end in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

### **Soviet Union**

The Soviet and Russian Armed Forces classify a large geographic subdivision – such as continental geographic territories with their bordering maritime areas, islands, adjacent coasts<sup>[5]</sup> and airspace – as a theater. The Russian-language term for a military "theater" is театр военных действий, *teatr voennykh deistvii* (literally: "theater of military operations"), abbreviated ТВД, *TVD*.

The division of large continental and maritime areas assists in determining the limits within which to develop plans for the operations of strategic military groups of forces, allowing military operations of specific significant "strategic directions" known as "fronts", which were originally named in accordance with their theater of operations; for example the Southwestern Front (Russian Empire) (1914–1918), the 1st Ukrainian Front (1943–1945, which fought in Ukraine, Poland, Germany, and Czechoslovakia), and the Northern Front (Soviet Union) (June to August, 1941). In peacetime, lacking the urgencies of a strategic direction, fronts were transformed into military regions (districts) responsible for an assigned section of operations.

### **United States**

The term "theater of operations" was defined in the [American] field manuals as the land and sea areas to be invaded or defended, including areas necessary for administrative activities incident to the military operations (chart 12). In accordance with the experience of World War I, it was usually conceived of as a large land mass over which continuous operations would take place and was divided into two chief areas—the combat zone, or the area of active fighting, and the communications zone, or area required for administration of the theater. As the armies advanced, both these zones and the areas into which they were divided would shift forward to new geographic areas of control.