

**Cold War, 1945-1979**

During the course of the Cold War, tensions rose and fell many times. One period of relaxation developed in the early 1970s and became known as "Détente," a French word meaning "release of tensions." It was hoped that the new relationship would herald a permanent improvement in relations between the U.S. and Soviet Union, but differences in outlook led to an increasing number of conflicts. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 effectively closed that chapter of the Cold War. The activities of President Ronald Reagan returned tensions to a fever pitch.

1. Explain the main idea of Richard Nixon’s policy of détente. Give example from the reading to back up your answer.

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**Soviet relations with the People's Republic of China**

Détente could probably not have taken place, and certainly wouldn't have assumed the form that it did, without the rift that developed between the world's two primary communist regimes, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite the fear many Americans had about monolithic communism, the two supposed allies had never been especially close. Joseph Stalin had not backed Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong) against the nationalists during World War II, and his insistence that China pay cash for weapons during the Korean War was a source of grievance.

Over time, the Soviets decided that Mao was unreliable and that China was a potential rival. When they withdrew their support of China's nuclear weapons program, the Chinese proceeded on their own, exploding their first atomic bomb in 1964 and a hydrogen bomb in 1967. By the late 1960s, a million Soviet troops faced a million Chinese troops across the Ussuri River, the easternmost part of the border between those countries.

2. Explain the meaning of the following quote from the text: “Despite the fear many Americans had about monolithic communism” Use the reading as a reference to back up your answer.

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President Richard M. Nixon concluded, despite the origins of his political career in virulent anti-communist activities, that the tension between the Soviet Union and China held promise for the United States. His national security advisor, Henry Kissinger secretly visited Beijing in July 1971 and met Mao and Zhou Enlai. Such ongoing issues as Vietnam and Taiwan were discussed. To advance the process, the Chinese invited Nixon to visit, which he did in February 1972, publicly shaking hands with Mao, and being toasted by Zhou in the Great Hall of the People. Although the trip did not result in many practical steps, it did show that China and the United States had common interests.

3. Many people at the time said “only Nixon could go to China”. Why do you think his early career as part of McCarthy’s committee affected his ability to go to China?

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The prospect of improved relations between its two most formidable enemies caused concern in the Kremlin. A summit between Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev was scheduled, and results from SALT I were finally reached. On May 22, Nixon and Brezhnev signed agreements in Moscow that curbed the arms race for the first time. Four days later, the two men signed the Basic Principles of Relations between the United States and the U.S.S.R. The agreement called for peaceful co-existence, the avoidance of military confrontations, and no claims of spheres of influence.

4. How did Nixon’s visit to China effect the U.S. relationship with the USSR?

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SALT I (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) froze the number of strategic ballistic missile launchers at existing levels, and provided for the addition of new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) launchers only after the same number of older intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and SLBM launchers had been dismantled.

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### **Brief post-World War I background**

Following the war, in 1922, the lands south of present-day Turkey were given over to the French and British to administer as a temporary colonial "mandate." The area was divided between four areas, three of which remain today — Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. The area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River was generally referred to as the "British Mandate of Palestine," or simply "Palestine." Its ethnic blend of Arabs, Jews, and Christians were collectively called "Palestinians."

It is important to note the ethnic/religious populations at the time: Muslims numbered nearly 600,000, Jews about 85,000, and Christians just over 70,000. Persecutions of Jews in other parts of the world, however, fueled a Zionist movement\* to gather scattered Jews into a new homeland in Palestine. That brought predictably hostile reactions from local Arabs. Riots and attacks on new Jewish settlers sprang up in isolated areas on a regular basis, and during the "Great Uprising" from 1936 to 1939, British targets were fair game, as well.

Then in 1939, the British published its White Paper, which put a stranglehold on Jewish immigration. That brought predictably hostile reactions from local Jews.

Those skirmishes also led to the formation of *Haganah*, a Jewish underground militia. The fighting also confirmed the idea that reconciliation would be impossible, and that the idea of "partition" should be explored.

With the approach of World War II in Europe, the curtailment of Jewish immigration dissolved into the realm of theory.

By 1947, U.S. President Harry S. Truman had the Palestinian Partition Resolution ramrodded through the UN General Assembly. That brought predictably hostile actions from local Arabs *and* Jews — at least *some* segments of the Jewish community.

A pattern of utter frustration festered, in that any decision that was taken made one faction happy, the other, angry.

Bombings, raids, and sniping intensified. Casualties in the hundreds were now in the thousands. Arabs began to target roads and transportation arteries between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, attacking Jewish civilian bus convoys. Haganah forces attacked Arab villages. A death on one side had to be met with revenge and deal death to the other.

### **The Arab-Israeli War**

The Israelis called it their "War of Independence," the Arabs, "the Catastrophe."

Israel had made its stand and declared itself an independent state on May 14, 1948. It was quickly recognized diplomatically by the United States, the Soviet Union, and others. By early 1949, Israel had signed peace treaties with all of its common-border neighbors.

With that broad historical brush stroke as a context, an Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been an on-again, off-again since the Six-Day War in 1967, when issues centering on the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem arose.

### **The Six-Day War**

The most significant of the Arab-Israeli conflicts was the Six-Day War in June 1967. In one fell swoop, the Israelis captured all of what was considered to be traditional or historic Palestine, including the Golan Heights from Syria in the north, the Sinai and Gaza Strip from Egypt in the south, the West Bank and all of Jerusalem from Jordan in the east. But there also was the issue of one million Palestinian Arabs who lived in the captured territory, and many Palestinian refugees who ended up in squalid camps in other countries.

Among the repercussions of the war was the crystallization of the Palestine Liberation Organization, created in 1964 and led by Yasser Arafat. That group would prove to be a major thorn in Israel's side.

The next military engagement was a "Mexican Standoff" known as the "War of Attrition" along the Suez Canal, during which the Israelis occupied the east bank. The tenor of that conflict consisted of trading an Israeli soldier's death for that of an Egyptian soldier. That fighting lasted about 18 months, from February 1969 to August 1970.

Then it was on to the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel on one of the most holy of Jewish holy days. Four days later, Israel mounted an all-out counterattack to repel the insurgents.