

# Part Three:

## The end of the Cold War

### 1970–91

#### STRETCHIT!



From the 1950s until mid 1970s, the United States fought a costly, and unsuccessful, war in Vietnam to try to protect capitalist South Vietnam from a communist takeover.

## Attempts to reduce tension between East and West

### Détente in the 1970s

Throughout the 1970s the USA and Soviet Union tried to reduce Cold War tensions. This became known as détente – a French word meaning ‘release from tension’.

#### Reasons for détente

- Both sides were shocked at how close they had come to nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis. This showed the dangers of not cooperating.
- The Soviet Union was spending huge amounts on defence – around 20 per cent of its budget. This money was desperately needed to improve living conditions at home.
- The United States was experiencing very little economic growth and wanted to spend less on expensive nuclear weapons.
- The United States was bogged down fighting the communists in the Vietnam War. To negotiate an end to this war, it needed the help of the Soviet Union.
- The Soviet Union had begun to argue with communist China. This meant that it wanted friendlier relations with the USA.

#### DO IT!

- 1 Why did both the USA and the Soviet Union want to pursue détente? Make a note of two reasons.
- 2 Bullet point three things agreed under SALT 1.

### SALT 1

The first Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) began in November 1969. After difficult and complex negotiations, in May 1972 President Nixon and **General Secretary** Brezhnev agreed three separate deals.

**The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty:** Both sides were limited to two ABM sites, armed with 100 missile interceptors each. The idea was to ensure that each superpower remained vulnerable to the other’s nuclear weapons, therefore deterring either side from launching an attack.

**The Interim Treaty:** A five-year freeze on the number of:

- ICMB **launchers**
- **SLBM** launchers
- submarines capable of carrying nuclear missiles.

**The Basic Principles Agreement:**

Each side pledged to avoid confrontations that could lead to nuclear war.