The Cold War: Détente


[This is nothing more than an outline of the main text of this very helpful textbook on the Cold War. Any contributions that are mine are placed in brackets []. Everything else is either paraphrased or is a direct quote. There is a considerable amount of other material there which makes this a very good text for IB teachers and Topic Five]

I. Détente
   A. Refers to attempts to reduce tensions and establish more stable relationships
      1. US-USSR
      2. US-PRC
      3. Western Europe-USSR
   B. 1968-1980

II. Reasons for Rapprochement
   A. USSR
      1. USSR reached nuclear parity with the US
      2. Economy was stagnating
         a. USSR needed to shift some resources away from military production to consumer goods
         b. USSR also needed to import Western technology
      3. Sino-Soviet split
   B. US
      1. Nixon needed an exit strategy from Vietnam
      2. Henry Kissinger wanted to pursue a more realistic foreign policy: Realpolitik
         a. Hoped that USSR and PRC would pressure North Vietnam to end the war.
   C. East-West Relations in Europe
      1. Prague Spring (1968) indicated instability in Eastern Europe
      2. Paris student riots of 1968 showed instability in Western Europe
      3. German Chancellor Willi Brandt wished to improve links with his Ostpolitik

III. Successes
   A. Arms agreements
      1. SALT I (Strategic Arms Limitations Talks)
         a. ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty
            (1) ABMs allowed only at two sites and limited to 100
         b. Interim Treaty
            (1) Limited numbers on ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) and SLBMs (Sea-launched Ballistic Missiles)
c. Basic Principles Agreement
   (1) Rules for conduct of nuclear war and development of weapons
d. Criticisms
   (1) Did not mention MIRVs (Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles)

2. SALT II
   a. Limited nuclear delivery vehicles (ICBMs, SLBMs, bombers)
   b. Ban on testing of new types of ICBMs
   c. SALT II was never ratified by the Senate

3. Agreements between the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD), the German Democratic Republic (DDR) and the Soviet Union
   a. The Moscow Treaty 1970
      (1) Recognized post-war borders of the BRD, and the DDR
   b. The Final Quadripartite Protocol 1972
      (1) Recognizes status quo of West Berlin
   c. The Basic Treaty 1972
      (1) Recognized the existence of two Germanies

4. Agreements between the US and the PRC
   a. The US recognizes the PRC and that the PRC should take China’s seat on the UN Security Council
   b. Trade and travel restrictions between the two countries were eased
   c. Sporting events between the two nations (esp. Ping Pong Diplomacy)
   d. Nixon visited China

5. The Helsinki Agreements 1975
   a. Basket I: The security basket
      (1) Europe’s borders were inviolable
   b. Basket II: the cooperation basket
      (1) made economic, cultural and scientific collaboration
   c. Basket III: The Human Rights basket
      (1) All signatories agree to respect human rights and individual freedoms such as freedom of thought, freedom of conscience or religion, freedom of travel

IV. Détente comes under pressure
   A. Many in the US came to believe that the SALT agreements favored the Soviets
   B. The US believed that the USSR knew in advance of the Yom Kippur War, which would have been a violation of Basic Principles Agreement. This undermined the degree of trust between leaders
   C. Soviet and Cuban aid to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MLPA, which was crucial to MLPA’s victory
   D. Soviet and Cuban aid to Ethiopia against Somalia
      1. The US was concerned that the USSR was attempting to control the Horn of Africa
      2. In point of fact, “it was more a case of randomly assisting Marxist rebels
throughout the world. As [Anatoly] Dobrynin notes, this policy was a kind of ‘ideological bondage’ which did not in fact benefit the Soviet Union in the long term”

E. Disillusionment with the USSR’s attitudes towards human rights
   1. Jimmy Carter tried to link human rights issues such as allowing Jews to emigrate to economic agreements

V. The collapse of Détente
   A. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan caused a collapse of Détente
      1. Jimmy Carter
         a. Refused to approve SALT II
         b. Blocked all electronic exports to USSR
         c. Refused to participate in the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games
         d. Issued the Carter Doctrine
            (1) US intervention should the USSR threatened the Persian Gulf

VI. Historiography of Détente
   A. Right wing historians such as Richard Pipes regard Détente as nothing more than a Soviet trick, and therefore regard it as a failure
   B. Historians such as John Lewis Gaddis, on the other hand, sees Détente as generally successful.
      1. The purpose was to “change a dangerous situation into a predictable system.” (158)
      2. Détente was not intended to end the arms race or reform the Soviet Union

VII. The Second Cold War
   A. The Reagan Administration regarded Détente as a failure
      1. Military spending was sharply increased (roughly 30% over the years)
      2. New weapons such as the Stealth bomber and Trident submarines were developed
      3. The Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars) was announced in 1983
      4. The Reagan Doctrine was announced
         a. The US would assist anti-communist insurgencies as well as anti-communist governments
            (1) The Contras in Nicaragua
            (2) The right-wing government in El Salvador
            (3) Invasion of Grenada to overthrow a Marxist government
      5. Described the Soviet Union as the “Evil Empire”