

Emergence of Detente

Non-Aggression Pact (August 1970) and agreements up to 1972 – paved the way for détente

On 7th December 1970, a treaty was signed with Poland which recognised the post war order-neisser border. These steps towards establishing a ostopolitik and eventual recognition of two germanies in May 1971. In December 1972 two germanies signed an agreement which formally recognised each other. Hallstein doctrine dead.

The hallstein doctrine was dead. Kissinger revealed the USA must develop an American détente with SU in order to prevent a west German driven détente from marginalising US influence in Europe and possibly splitting the western alliance.

Berlin agreement, September 1971

An agreement on Berlin would greatly advance the prospects of american-soviet detente and both sides were keen to reach a consensus on Berlin's future and status within east-west relations. When Brant took over as chancellor, te soviets expressed an interest in holding talks to discuss Berlin. By early 1971 kissinger and president Nixon were keen to use the soviet interest in Berlin as a means of advancing SALT. Honecker's appearance on the diplomatic scene in 1971, replacing the ageing Ulbricht, also facilitated an agreement on Berlin. The quadripartite agreement on Berlin was signed on 3rd september 1971.

The soviets guaranteed Western access and the West German presence in Berlin was reduced, although cultural and economic ties between West Germany and West Berlin were recognised. The west recognised that East Berlin was now an integral part of East Germany and not merely the osviet occupation zone. Equally, it was agreed that West Berlin would remain seperate from West Germany, and Berlin as a whole would retain the four power presence established in 1945. The Berlin agreement effectivley neutralised a continuing source of conflict between East and West and in doing so it opened the way for further progress to be made for ostopolitik. It created a positive climate for wider american-soviet detente.

The Basic Treaty, December 1972

This treaty was another important moment in the development of Ostpolitik and the relations between east and west Germany. The label 'basic treaty' was a contraction of 'treaty concerning the basis of relations between the federal republic of germany and the german democratic republic'. The treaty was an attempt to normalise relations between two germanies.

Both sides faced some serious resistance from hardliners opposed to any sort of thawing in relations, but in the end the treaty was signed on 21 december in east berlin. Embedded in the treaty was the commitment to potential economic relations, the recognition of sovreignty

of the FRG and GDR and their territorial 'inviolability'. Further articles promised to seek peaceful methods of conflict resolution.

The basic treaty was a critical moment in European détente. It not only settled relations, comparatively at least, between East and West Germany, but it also provided the route by which other European nations could establish relations with the GDR. Following the signing certain nations established diplomatic relations with the GDR: Australia (December 1972), UK (February 1973) France (February 1973) Netherlands (February 1973) FRG (February 1974) US (December 1974)

By the end of September 1973, both the FRG and GDR were members of the UN. The groundwork had been laid down for a furthering of European détente.

The Helsinki Accords 1973-5

European détente reached its high point with the convening of a European security conference which led to a fundamental agreement being reached in 1975. The conference took place in Helsinki and was known formally as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Preparatory talks began in Helsinki in November 1972 which laid the groundwork for the official opening of the CSCE in July 1973. A total of 35 states participated and these included the whole of Europe, except Albania, and also the USA and Canada. Each had the power of veto at its disposal. The work of the conference lasted 2 years and reached its finale at a summit-level meeting between 30th July and 1st August 1975. The outcome was known as the Helsinki Accords or more formally, the Final Act. The main parts of the agreement were divided into what became referred to as 'baskets'. Each basket linked to a specific package of agreements:

Basket I: security in Europe

This basket led to a declaration on principles guiding relations between participating states which consisted of 10 principles that were to be applied to inter-state relations:

- respect for sovereignty and equality among those states
- rejection of the threat or use of force
- peaceful settlement of disputes
- recognition of existing frontiers
- territorial integrity to be recognised and acknowledged
- non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states
- respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- equal rights and self-determination of peoples
- cooperation among states
- the fulfilment of international obligations

Further agreement was reached on the obligation to provide advanced notification of large military exercises and other similar plans in order to reinforce mutual confidence

Basket II: cooperation in the field of economics, of science and technology and of the environment

Addressed trade and industrial cooperation, transportation, science and technology, promotion of tourism, the environment and issues concerning migrant labour

Basket III: cooperation in humanitarian and other fields

Focused on cultural and educational exchange and the wider issue of contacts among peoples. It sought to encourage the freer movement of people, information and ideas. The final act was not seen as the last step in European détente. Plans were laid to follow-up meetings and the first was planned to take place in Belgrade in late 1977.

Soviet and American's position

The soviet position

3 main interests in CSCE:

- expand ostopolitik and develop wider acceptance of the status quo in central and eastern europe
- decrease barriers between states in order to increase economic activity and trade
- to further process of east-west detente

soviets less interested in human rights issues. There was a real concern about external interference in the internal affairs of the SU and other communist states in eastern europe. Some initial reluctance to accept the provisions on advanced notice of military exercises. Was the soviet commitment to the wider aim of promoting east-west detente that led them to accept these conditions in the final act.

American position

USA not fully committed to accepting the political status quo in eastern europe which the final act seemed to recognise as a permanent reality. They also feared that as western europe came to feel more secure there was the real possibility that its support for reduced military programmes within NATO member states would be reduced. Despite the reservations the superpowers had over the final act, there was a common recognition that east-west confrontation in europe was relaxing and both sides welcomed this. Some commentators regarded that helsinki accords as the high point in detente. The accords offered a political solution to european security and cooperation.

Salt I (Negotiations began 1969, finalised in May 1972)

The 2 fundamental agreements were the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the Interim Agreement on measures with respect to strategic offensive weapons. The ABM treaty limited both the SU and the USA to constructing 2 fields of anti-ballistic missiles, each with no more than 100 missiles. The ABM treaty did show that both of the superpowers recognised the other's destructive power and therefore each side had an interest in preventing what would be a mutually destructive conflict.

The Interim agreement on offensive weapons established a freeze on strategic missiles. This amounted to:

- 1,054 ICBMs for USA and 1,618 for SU
- 656 SLBMs for USA and 740 for SU
- 450 strategic bombers for USA and 140 for SU

The treaty was to be current for 5 years. This agreement made no provision for limitations on newly developing technology, particularly the multiple independent re-entry vehicles (MIRVS). The agreement only interim and it was at SALT II that these deficiencies would be addressed further. SALT I was an opportunity missed by the superpowers. Despite these limitations SALT I was a significant step towards strategic arms control. Perhaps most importantly the SALT agreement contributed to a relaxation of tension which opened the way for more developed détente agreements between the USA and SU.

Some argue that SALT I acted as a catalyst in the détente process. It was a crucial step towards détente. SALT was more than merely an arms limitation agreement. It was the foundation of political achievement which made détente possible. SALT opened the way for an era for negotiation rather than confrontation. By accepting SALT the USA accepted nuclear parity between itself and the SU. US nuclear dominance had faded and the 2 major nuclear superpowers were of equal status. Both sides had something to gain from détente. In effect a balance of power had been acknowledged and this necessitated the construction of a new-confrontational relationship. That relationship was to be détente.

The Nixon-Brezhnev Moscow Summit, May 1972

Moscow summit also produced agreements to expand American-Soviet cooperation in science and technology as well as in areas such as the environment and health, and in space exploration. Most importantly, the summit also set out the guidelines for American-Soviet relations. The basic principles of relations between the US and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics acted as a code of behaviour in terms of the relations the 2 powers had with each other.

The Basic Principles Agreement:

There were 12 principles agreed but the three most fundamental and significant were:

1) The US and SU 'will proceed from the common determination that in the nuclear age there is no alternative to conducting their mutual relations on the basis of peaceful coexistence' They were also committed to develop 'normal relations based on the principles of sovereignty, equality, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual advantage'

2) determination to avoid situations developing that could damage their commitment to peaceful coexistence. This led to an agreement to avoid military confrontations and prevent the outbreak of nuclear war. Each power rejected the idea that it should be free to gain at the expense of the other. Peaceful relations were to be based on the recognition of the right of each state to protect its security interests based on the rejection of the use of force.

3) an acceptance of social responsibility, to do everything in their power so that conflicts or situations will not arise which would serve to increase international tensions

The problem was that principles had no legal status. America thought the principles were a set of aspirations rather than a solid basis for future detente. The SU considered principles to be of fundamental importance. SALT and basic principles recognised parity between US and SU and foundation of detente as far as SU concerned.

The agreement on the prevention of Nuclear War, 1973

Both sides agreed that the object of their policies was to be the removal of the danger of nuclear war and the use of nuclear weapons. There was a commitment to avoid military confrontations and the threat of force. If a situation arose which could move nations towards nuclear war, then the USA and the SU agreed to enter into urgent consultations to avert such an outcome. This commitment to consult before a crisis developed amounted to a crisis prevention strategy shared by the 2 superpowers. In doing this, the prevention of Nuclear War agreement built on the Basic Principles signed at the Moscow summit. The Americans had been reluctant to agree to the non-use of nuclear weapons for some time prior to the Washington summit. They feared that it would remove a vital deterrent in international conflicts.

Soviets reaction

Many in the SU also had reservations about the prevention of nuclear war agreement and détente as a whole. They feared it might weaken soviet defences and lead to divisions within the soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. There was also the idea that the SU would lose its ability to support developing countries seeking to break-free from western control. Détente was seen as tying the SU down and restricting its freedom to act globally in socialist interests.

American's reaction

The Americans went along with the idea. Like the soviets, the Americans came to see the agreement as a benefit. The soviets saw it as a way to ensure that the USA would be unable to threaten the use of nuclear force in situations around the world. This would, to some extent, restrict their global influence. The USA saw it as a necessary incentive for the soviets to keep them committed to détente.

The Vladivostok Accord, November 1974

At the Vladivostok summit, agreement was reached on a framework for a 10 year plan; this was seen as a preliminary move towards a future SALT II treaty. The soviets had agreed to equal levels of ICBM launchers and SLBM launchers. Despite internal opposition in the USA linked to the high levels of weapons being retained and the apparent gains made by the SU, Congress passed resolutions supporting the Vladivostok SALT accord by February 1975.

However, when the SALT negotiators met in Geneva it became increasingly clear that a smooth transition from Vladivostok to SALT II would not happen. One problem was that the USA argued that the limit on air-to-surface missiles applied only to ballistic missiles while the SU argued that it also included cruise missiles. Other similar issues or clarification also emerged in Geneva. Although there has been some progress, the 2 sides were still far away from a finalised agreement that could be ratified through SALT II. When Kissinger returned from Vladivostok he faced significant opposition from Rumsfeld and General Brown, etc. Brezhnev rejected the new approach and it was clear that a further SALT agreement would not be achieved in 1976, particularly since this was a presidential election year and Ford was the nominated republican candidate.

The Carter Administration 1977-81

In January 1977 Jimmy Carter replaced Ford as US president. The Carter administration began by trying to establish a far more ambitious arms reduction programme for the SALT II agreement than had been laid out in the Vladivostok accord during Ford's brief stay in the White House. By March 1977 Carter was considering substantially reduced levels of ICBMs, new limits on testing and a ban on new types of ICBMs. The details of the new proposals were unveiled to the Soviets on 28th March 1977. They included:

- reducing the strategic systems from the 2,400 level agreed at Vladivostok to between 1,800 and 2,000
- reducing the number of launchers for missiles with MIRVs from 1,320 to 1,100
- reducing modern ICBMs to 150 and the number of launchers for ICBMs with MIRVs to 550
- a ban on the development, testing and deployment of new ICBMs
- a ban on all types of cruise missiles with a range above 2,500 km
- air-launched cruise missiles with a range of 600-2,500 km which would be restricted to heavy bombers

Soviet Reaction

These proposals had a greater impact on the SU than America. Brezhnev regarded the Vladivostok agreement as binding and that Carter was acting in a unilateral and therefore unacceptable manner. The proposals demanded a disproportionate reduction in Soviet forces compared to those of the USA, Brezhnev simply rejected them. It appeared as if the USA was abandoning several years of hard won progress in the SALT process.

Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko summed up the Soviet response when he commented 'one cannot talk about stability when a new leadership arrives and crosses out all that has been achieved before'. He certainly felt that the American proposals undermined the security of the SU and its allies. Towards the end of 1977 the USA had modified the proposals and the key differences between the Vladivostok, and the early Carter, proposals were resolved. It certainly appeared as if SALT II was back on track.

The difficulties facing SALT II agreement and détente generally were added to by Carter's commitment to human rights issues. In July 1977 both Helmut Schmidt, West Germany's Chancellor and the Canadian PM Pierre Trudeau cautioned Carter on the risks imposed on East-West détente by adopting too robust a human rights stance against the SU. Carter failed to appreciate the implications of challenging the internal affairs of the SU.

Carter faced conflicting advice on how America's attitude towards the SU and détente should develop. This tended to make Carter's approach uncertain and sometimes ill-defined. Cyrus Vance, Carter's Secretary of State, supported détente. He saw SALT II as an asset for the USA. At the very least the increased and sustained Soviet-American peaceful coexistence would be prevented from backing extremist Arab regimes in the Middle East. The other influence on Carter's thinking was Zbigniew Brzezinski, America's national security adviser. He had less faith in détente. His approach was aimed at developing America's strategic superiority over the USSR and developing Sino-American relations in order to marginalise the SU. SALT II was important to Brzezinski but it was not the primary route to ensuring American power and the protection of the USA's vital interests.

1978

The USA's relationship with China became an increasing issue in the SALT II process. Carter decided to turn to China in order to retaliate against what he regarded as expansionist Soviet activity in developing countries. China was increasingly receptive

to American moves because it was facing problems with Vietnam and feared a soviet-vietnam alliance in some form. Carter intended the development of a relationship with China and what became known as the 'china card', to counter soviet and Cuban activities in Africa. The aim was to promote the 'normalisation' of Sino-American interests. Astonishingly, Carter failed to realise that this would significantly damage soviet-american relations at a crucial point in the SALT II development process.

1979

Despite the China factor both the SU and America wanted the SALT II agreement to proceed. The treaty was finally announced on 9th May 1979. It was to be signed and finalised at the Vienna summit in June 1979. This signing was the main concrete achievement of the vienna summit but the fact that such a summit could take place at all meant that the soviet and American leadership could talk and communicate directly with each other rather than through intermediaries. However some historians take the view that the summit merely interrupted the decline in detente and the irreversible deterioration in relations between the two superpowers.