

Which side was more responsible for Détente?

From the mid-1960s onwards relations between the USA and the USSR are said to have ‘thawed’, this means that relations were now not so ‘cold’ or tense.

The table below explains reasons why a policy of Détente emerged in the 1970s.

Reasons for Détente

<p>Brezhnev maintained Khrushchev’s approach to foreign policy, favouring peaceful co-existence.</p>	<p>Economic and social issues in the USA meant that they wanted to concentrate on improving trade relations rather than spending on defence and arms.</p>	<p>The USSR’s relationship with China was deteriorating due to ideological differences. They were concerned about the development of an alliance between China and the USA.</p>
<p>The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT 1) agreed to slow down the nuclear arms race.</p>	<p>The Prague Spring showed the instability of control over Eastern Europe. Soviet control needed strengthening.</p>	<p>The concept of ‘mutually assured destruction’ (M.A.D) and the fear of the devastating consequences of a nuclear war following the Cuban Missile Crisis.</p>
<p>Friendly relations with the USA would enable the USSR to legitimise or justify their control over Eastern Europe and gain the acceptance of the USA.</p>	<p>Industry in the USSR was beginning to fall behind and become outdated; they needed access to new technology to improve their industry and economy.</p>	<p>The USSR had managed to match the nuclear weapon power of the USA; as such they felt more equal and able to negotiate agreements which limited nuclear weapons.</p>
<p>Western Europe was gaining more independence from the influence of the USA, for example France left NATO. Détente provided a way for the USA to remain influential in Europe without using military intervention.</p>	<p>Nixon was a practical politician; he thought he could make bigger gains from negotiation rather than military action.</p>	<p>The end of the Vietnam war made the USA see the limits to their powers across the world, recognising that military intervention was not always the wisest decision.</p>
<p>Living standards in the USSR had not improved as had been promised. By continuing the arms race the USSR’s industry was not able to change to produce consumer goods.</p>	<p>Domestic issues in the USSR meant that they wanted to concentrate on raising living standards and improve economic growth.</p>	<p>In August 1975 there was a conference in Helsinki. The powers recognised borders set out after WWII and agreed to respect human rights.</p>

Which side was more responsible for Détente?

Ostpolitik ('East policy') was established by West Germany. This tried to open up relations and establish links across the East-West divide, particularly in Germany but also between other Eastern and Western countries.

There were protests from many people leading to a range of anti-nuclear movements in the West who protested over the morality of nuclear weapons, the damage they caused to the environment and the huge cost.

It was recognised that there was more to gain from some cooperation between East and West. The tactics of the Cold War changed.



Task 1:

Read the table carefully and colour code to show which factors and events were led by the USA and which by the USSR. Some factors were mutual (motivated by both sides) so these could be shaded half and half.



Task 2:

Cut out the cards from the table and complete the spectrum diagram to show which actions/events were motivated by fear and which were motivated by a sense of international cooperation. Some issues might occupy the middle ground.

Task 3:

Answer the following the questions:

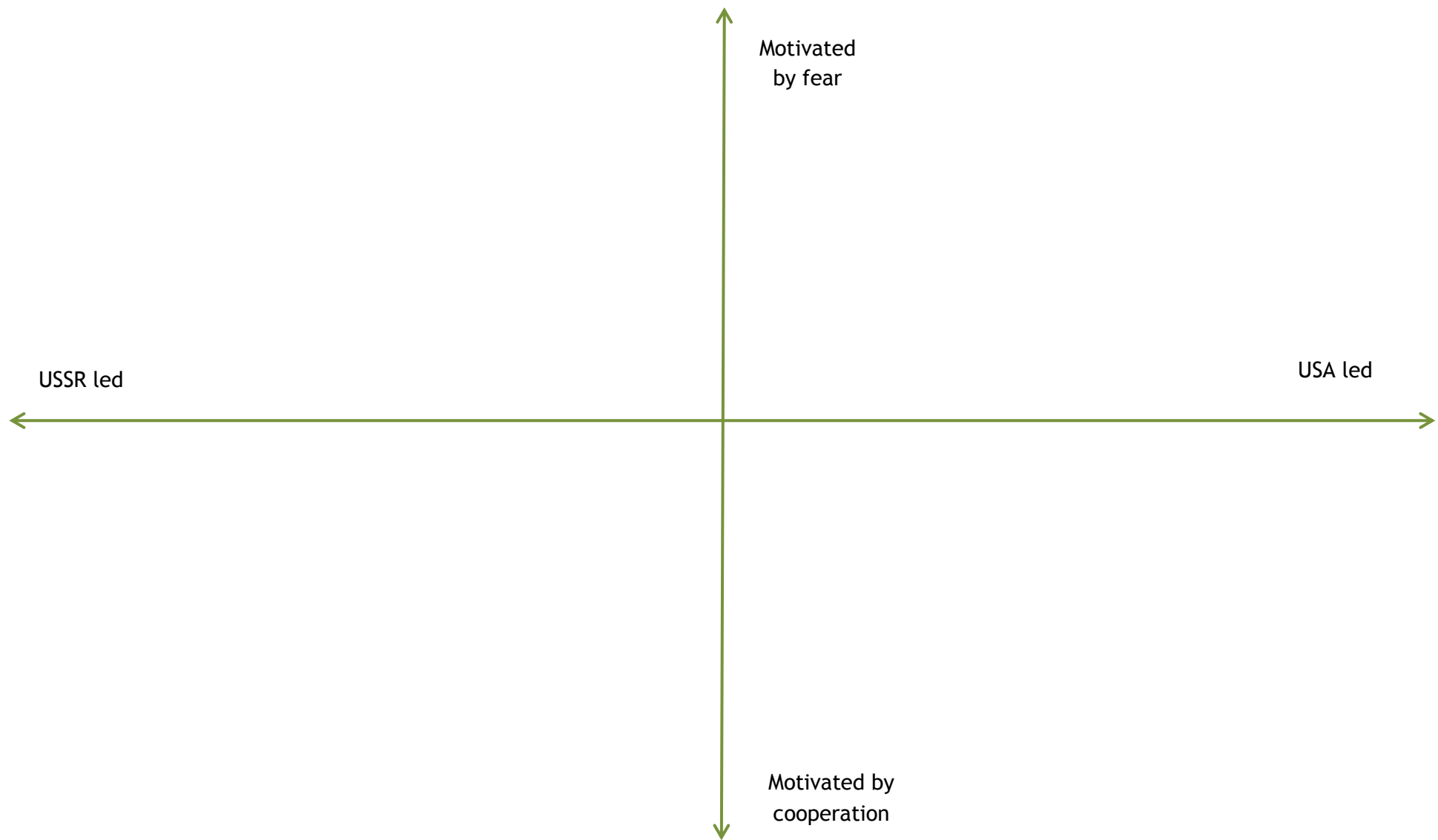
1. Who was more responsible for Détente, the USA or the USSR?
2. Which country had the most to gain from Détente?
3. Do you agree with the view that relations 'thawed' significantly during this time period?
4. '*Détente was motivated more by fear than cooperation.*' How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer.

Extension task

5. Identify the underlying factors that caused Détente.

E.g. military reasons, economic reasons, role of individuals etc.

Motivation spectrum for Détente



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Teaching notes

The shading task (task 1) should have the following results.

Brezhnev maintained Khrushchev's approach to foreign policy, favouring peaceful co-existence.	Economic and social issues in the USA meant that they wanted to concentrate on improving trade relations rather than spending on defence and arms.	The USSR's relationship with China was deteriorating due to ideological differences. They were concerned about the development of an alliance between China and the USA.
The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT 1) agreed to slow down the nuclear arms race.	The Prague Spring showed the instability of control over Eastern Europe. Soviet control needed strengthening.	The concept of 'mutually assured destruction' (M.A.D) and the fear of the devastating consequences of a nuclear war following the Cuban Missile Crisis.
Friendly relations with the USA would enable the USSR to legitimise or justify their control over Eastern Europe and gain the acceptance of the USA.	Industry in the USSR was beginning to fall behind and become outdated; they needed access to new technology to improve their industry and economy.	The USSR had managed to match the nuclear weapon power of the USA; as such they felt more equal and able to negotiate agreements which limited nuclear weapons.
Western Europe was gaining more independence from the influence of the USA, for example France left NATO. Détente provided a way for the USA to remain influential in Europe without using military intervention.	Nixon was a practical politician; he thought he could make bigger gains from negotiation rather than military action.	The end of the Vietnam war made the USA see the limits to their powers across the world, recognising that military intervention was not always the wisest decision.
Living standards in the USSR had not improved as had been promised. By continuing the arms race the USSR's industry was not able to change to produce consumer goods.	Domestic issues in the USSR meant that they wanted to concentrate on raising living standards and improve economic growth.	In August 1975 there was a conference in Helsinki. The powers recognised borders set out after WWII and agreed to respect human rights.
Ostpolitik or 'East policy' was established by West Germany. This tried to open up relations and establish links across the East-West divide, particularly in Germany but also between other Eastern and Western countries.	There were protests from many people leading to a range of anti-nuclear movements in the West who protested over the morality of nuclear weapons, the damage they caused to the environment and the huge cost.	It was recognised that there was more to gain from some cooperation between East and West. The tactics of the Cold War changed.

The spectrum diagram could be completed on A3 paper with cards cut out and pasted on. Alternatively, students could write on points for from the cards and annotate the diagram by hand. This works well with pairs/small groups of students.

The card sort could be adapted so that students sort the reasons into categories of underlying factors (i.e. the extension task - e.g. military reasons, economic reasons, role of individuals etc.