

Relations between the two blocs

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/relations_between_the_two_blocs-en-4012af68-a3a4-4665-9a07-d215b8e7ed80.html

Last updated: 08/07/2016



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In the 1970s, the Vietnam War ended with the withdrawal of US troops and the fall of South Vietnam. This failure led to a moral crisis in the United States, despite the country's healthy economy. The USSR and the people's democracies of Eastern Europe did not witness the growth of their economies and the countries experienced a psychological crisis linked to the protests of Russian scholars and writers. In Europe, all eyes now turned to Ostpolitik: the Federal Republic of Germany was developing closer relations with the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the USSR.

Nevertheless, Europe remained the focus of the East-West confrontation. It sought to avoid armed conflict by promoting détente between the two military blocs, thereby contributing to the maintenance of world peace, and it raised hopes of a reunification of the continent at the Helsinki Summit in 1975.

At the end of the 1970s, however, Soviet policy in Africa and the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan marked renewed tensions.