Easing Tensions

Foreign policy choices and their consequences in the 1970s

SS24.US2.16 "Describe significant foreign policy events during the presidencies of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter that decreased hostility in the Cold War..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three U.S. actions meant to reduce conflict, circle two limits or costs of those actions, and number one cause-and-effect link in each paragraph.

Diplomacy After Vietnam

(1) In 1969, President Richard Nixon began withdrawing U.S. troops from Vietnam while supporting South Vietnam's forces. He also expanded bombing into Cambodia, a choice that fueled criticism at home. As fighting drained U.S. resources and public trust, Nixon sought less confrontational relations with other communist powers. His 1972 visit to China opened diplomatic contacts. That year, an agreement with the Soviet Union limited nuclear missile launchers. This easing of tensions, called détente, did not end the Vietnam War. The United States withdrew its remaining troops after a 1973 peace agreement.

(2) South Vietnam fell in 1975, during Gerald Ford's presidency, exposing the limits of the 1973 agreement. Ford signed the Helsinki Final Act with the Soviet Union and European states that year. It recognized existing European borders and pledged respect for human rights, giving activists grounds to challenge repression. Criticism of the Vietnam War helped strengthen demands for such attention to human rights. Jimmy Carter made rights a diplomatic priority and signed a Soviet arms agreement, SALT II, in 1979, although the U.S. Senate never ratified it.

(3) Meanwhile, U.S. involvement in the Middle East brought both influence and risks. After the United States supplied Israel during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Arab oil producers imposed an embargo on the United States. Fuel prices rose, straining American households and businesses. Carter then mediated the 1978 Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel, which led to a 1979 peace treaty. The treaty reduced the danger of war between those neighbors, but it did not resolve the Palestinian question. U.S. aid to both countries deepened American commitments in the region.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the costs of the Vietnam War help shape Nixon's approach to China and the Soviet Union?

2. How did Ford's Helsinki agreement address a concern that grew after the Vietnam War?

3. What was one way Carter tried to reduce Cold War hostility, and what limited that effort?

4. How did U.S. involvement in the Middle East affect both the region and Americans at home?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Which did more to reduce conflict: Nixon's détente or Carter's Camp David diplomacy? Make a claim, use one passage detail about each approach, and explain one limit of your choice.

ANSWER KEY

Easing Tensions

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.16

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three U.S. actions meant to reduce conflict, circle two limits or costs of those actions, and number one cause-and-effect link in each paragraph. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the costs of the Vietnam War help shape Nixon's approach to China and the Soviet Union?	**The war drained U.S. resources and public trust, encouraging Nixon to seek less confrontational relations through contacts with China and an arms agreement with the Soviet Union.**
2	How did Ford's Helsinki agreement address a concern that grew after the Vietnam War?	**As criticism of the war strengthened demands to value human rights, the Helsinki agreement pledged respect for those rights and gave activists grounds to challenge repression.**
3	What was one way Carter tried to reduce Cold War hostility, and what limited that effort?	**Carter signed SALT II with the Soviet Union in 1979, but the U.S. Senate never ratified it.**
4	How did U.S. involvement in the Middle East affect both the region and Americans at home?	**Carter's mediation helped bring peace between Egypt and Israel, though it did not settle the Palestinian question. Earlier U.S. support for Israel prompted an Arab oil embargo that raised fuel prices for Americans.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Carter's Camp David diplomacy did more to reduce conflict because it led to a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979. Nixon's détente opened contacts with China and produced an arms agreement with the Soviet Union, but it did not end the Vietnam War. The Egypt-Israel treaty reduced the danger of war between those neighbors. Its reach was limited, however, because it did not resolve the Palestinian question.

Accept either choice in Part 3 if the student supports the comparison with accurate details about both approaches and explains a relevant limit.