Détente between the **US and China** began in **1969**, but the turning point was the change in US policy towards China and the UN. A US table-tennis team was invited to China in 1971, hence the nickname ‘ping-pong diplomacy’.

This culminated in **Nixon’s visit to Beijing** in **1972**, where he released a joint statement with Mao establishing a new relationship between the two powers. The **Shanghai Communiqué of 28 February 1972** acknowledged disagreements over Korea, Vietnam and Taiwan, committed the US and China to a relationship of peaceful coexistence with mutual respect, and pledged formal diplomatic links by 1976 (but they were only established under Carter in **1979**).

**Nixon and Kissinger** wanted to move away from a bipolar world of superpower confrontation into a multipolar world in which different powers dealt with each other through negotiation, known as **triangular diplomacy**.

When Nixon resigned, **Ford** continued triangular diplomacy, as an independent China was better for the US than a China that was a Soviet satellite.

In the space of a few years, trade grew between the US and China from **$5 million to $500 million**. US-Sino Détente was a warning to the USSR to stop attempting to establish ‘hegemony’ in the Asian Pacific region.

The **US** wanted:

- An escape from the **Vietnam quagmire**;
- Pressure on the Soviets to be more cooperative towards détente;
- **Constructive policies** that would obtain public support;
- To keep tabs on a potential nuclear threat (China had ICBM capability);
- Better relations to scale back commitments in Asia.

**China** wanted:

- To confirm the USSR as its main rival;
- Concessions on key **foreign policy issues** (such as UN membership, Taiwan, US withdrawal from Vietnam and Indochina);
- Limitations on the resurgent power of **Japan**;
- A temporary détente to play off enemies and defeat the main enemy;
- An improved **Third World standing**.
Formal diplomatic relations between the two Germanys were difficult to establish, partly down to the hostility of Walter Ulbricht, the East German leader. However, another factor was the legal status of Berlin, settled by the Quadripartite Pact of September 1971, which re-affirmed the existing rights of each power in Berlin and declared that transit between West Berlin and West Germany would be unimpeded.

Finally, in December 1972 the ‘Basic Treaty’ was signed between the two Germanys which provided for cultural and commercial exchanges, along with establishment of diplomatic relations. In 1973, both Germanys were admitted into the UN as separate members.

Ostpolitik normalised diplomatic relations with the East, but West Germany had to formally accept the partition of Germany into two separate countries (a Soviet diplomatic victory).

The US was publicly supportive of Ostpolitik but ‘without enthusiasm’ because of the fear that the US would be isolated and a divide would be caused in the Western alliance. Ostpolitik led to the Helsinki Accords of 1975.

Economic discontent was growing in the civilian populations of the satellites, such as the Prague Spring of 1968 and the overthrow of Gomulka in Poland. Brezhnev declared in 1968 that military force would be used to ensure that communism would be maintained where it was already established. This was the Brezhnev Doctrine.

The Soviets were eager for a summit between Nixon and Brezhnev in Moscow; as Brezhnev put it, Nixon went ‘to Peking for banquets but to Moscow to do business’.

Negotiations on arms limitation started in November 1969. Talks were held privately in order for both superpowers to share sensitive information.

At the Moscow Summit of May 1972, Nixon and Brezhnev signed two agreements collectively known as SALT I (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty). Nixon labelled these limits on nuclear weapons the ‘first step towards arms control in the thermonuclear age’.

‘Strategic’ weapons with long range capability to strike an enemy’s territory were particularly important. The USSR’s SS-9 had a 25 megaton warhead; it was 5 times more powerful than the US Titan missile. This reflected Soviet determination to close the ‘nuclear gap’.