

Detente - Source Analysis

1. Read the sources below:

- (a) Identify what problem is being highlighted by the source with regard to détente.
 - (b) How would each of these issues have undermined détente between the USA and the USSR?
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Source A

Critics of the Helsinki conference found it difficult to reconcile many provisions of the Final Act with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Brezhnev doctrine justifying that invasion and the dismal record on human rights in the Eastern bloc countries. The West seemed to gain nothing more than vague promises of good behaviour from the Soviet Union. When the Eastern bloc governments made no real improvements in their handling of human rights issues, disillusionment with détente set in rapidly in the West.

From John Mason, The Cold War, pg 54

Source B

Between November 1977 and February 1978, Soviet planes and ships transported some fifteen thousand Cuban troops and masses of Soviet arms to Ethiopia, and the Somalis were thrown out of the Ogaden. Washington now charged Moscow with using Cuba as a proxy to expand its power in Africa. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski maintained that the crisis in the Horn of Africa, coming on the heels of the Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola, showed a new assertiveness in the Kremlin.

Cold War by Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing, pg 349

Source C

The Arab defeat in the Yom Kippur War was a reminder to the Soviets that the United States, in spite of détente, still considered itself to be more 'super' than the other superpower in the Third World. While the basic declaration of co-operation that the two powers had signed in May 1972 refuted 'any efforts to obtain unilateral advantage at the expense of the other directly or indirectly'. Yom Kippur had shown that Washington only co-operated with Moscow as far as its own immediate interests went'.

The Global Cold War by Odd Westad, pg 199

Source D

Following the oil price crisis of 1973... Western countries took measures to make their economies more secure. This involved finding new sources of energy and setting up the G7 to work at creating economic stability at the international level. Between 1974 and 1978, the oil price once again stabilized, which laid a foundation for further economic growth... At the same time, however, the economy of the USSR was experiencing a decline.

The Cold War, Rogers and Thomas, pg 178

Source D

Now the Soviet Union has taken a radical and an aggressive new step. It's using its great military power against a relatively defenceless nation. The implications of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War.'

From President Carter's annual State of the Union address to the American people, 23 January 1980.

Source E

In principle... détente represented an acknowledgement that the world had changed radically in the direction of multipolarity... In practice, however, not only did the Soviet Union remain the consuming interest of American foreign policy, but in instance after instance the American leadership demonstrated that its basic perception of the communist threat had changed little.

R Crockatt, The Fifty Years War