

A-level
HISTORY
7042/2R

Component 2R The Cold War, c1945–1991

Mark scheme

June 2023

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright information

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Copyright © 2023 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity, you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level, you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

0	1	With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the Cuban Missile Crisis.
----------	----------	--

[30 marks]

Target: AO2

Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.

Source A: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- this is a statement made by the US Ambassador to the United Nations in front of the Security Council and is therefore of significant value to explain the USA's opinion on Soviet actions in Cuba; as Stevenson's role is to represent the USA in any foreign policy matters
- Stevenson's tone is quite threatening and defensive of Kennedy's decision to impose a naval quarantine in Cuba, as he suggests this was the only option available to the President considering the sheer aggression of the USSR. Therefore, the source has value in showing why the crisis escalated as the USA was feeling threatened by Soviet actions
- Stevenson's intentions by presenting this statement to the UN Security Council are to gain support for US retaliation in Cuba, possibly limiting value as the threat may be exaggerated
- the emphasis of the source is on Soviet aggression and the use of Cuba as an offensive military base, to demonstrate why aggressive US retaliatory actions are more than justified.

Content and argument

- Stevenson is suggesting that the Soviet placement of missiles on Cuba is one of the greatest threats facing America and the United Nations since the end of the Second World War. Due to Cuba's proximity to America, the potential target range of long-range missiles stationed on Cuba would reach Canada, hence Kennedy's grave concern about Soviet actions
- the source also argues that the US response of a naval quarantine was simply retaliation for the USSR using Cuba as a base for offensive weapons. Kennedy was actually keen on a 'no-warning attack' but was advised into a naval quarantine to buy time and try to resolve the situation diplomatically
- Stevenson argues that Cuba has given the Soviet Union an opening into America's 'backyard' and therefore threatens the stability of this entire area, which is valuable as the USA was determined to protect its financial and military interests in Cuba, meaning they would stop at nothing to ensure the USSR did not have influence there
- the source argues that the Soviet Union's involvement with Cuba is their latest step in achieving world domination of the communist system. Indeed, Cuba was geo-strategically and politically important for Khrushchev – and Operation Anadyr gave him the opportunity to support them militarily, financially and politically.

Source B: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:**Provenance, tone and emphasis**

- this is a confidential message written by Fidel Castro, communist leader of Cuba, to Khrushchev, with the purpose of sharing his thoughts on the developing situation in Cuba and their response to US aggression. Therefore, the source has value in showing how Castro himself encouraged the escalation of the crisis
- the message is written on 26 October 1962, therefore at the height of the crisis with Castro aiming to encourage Khrushchev into an aggressive response
- Castro's tone is critical of US policy and focuses on how the USSR's harsh response would be completely justified, suggesting the crisis escalated due to fear and encouragement from Cuba
- the emphasis is on portraying the USA as the ones denying a diplomatic response and continuing air-strikes and quarantines with no efforts to resolve the situation – so that if the USSR responds harshly, there will be no backlash.

Content and argument

- Castro emphasises the urgency of action being taken by Cuba and the Soviet Union against the USA, as he states that their aggression is imminent within the next 72 hours. Despite Kennedy agreeing with Khrushchev's proposal to remove the missiles in exchange for a non-invasion agreement, Castro himself escalated the situation by ordering Cuban aircraft to begin firing on reconnaissance planes
- Castro also argues that the Soviet Union should not allow the USA to make the first nuclear strike and it should be for them to assert their superiority and close the widening missile gap. This is valuable to demonstrate escalation of the crisis because it shows that Castro stood in the way of a peaceful resolution in favour of demonstrating nuclear superiority
- he suggests that there is now no other choice than to respond with a forceful nuclear strike – at this stage in the crisis, Khrushchev disregarded Castro's letter and instead appealed to Kennedy to compromise with him and de-escalate the conflict to avoid nuclear fallout
- the source suggests that the USA is disregarding any opportunity to resolve the situation and is simply going ahead with naval blockades and airborne attacks. This is valuable because Kennedy did continue to keep his options open and was not against using force to ensure the removal of missiles; however, less valuable because Kennedy did work with Khrushchev and came to a compromise of removing missiles from Turkey alongside Cuba.

Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:**Provenance, tone and emphasis**

- this is a private letter written by President Kennedy to Khrushchev some time after the crisis has concluded and therefore is valuable in showing why Kennedy reacted the way he did and the thought processes he experienced when dealing with the crisis
- Kennedy's tone is very reflective after the crisis has concluded but is mainly critical of the Soviet Union's dishonesty and makes very clear that they were in the wrong by assuring the USA nothing untoward was happening in Cuba. Therefore, the source is valuable in showing why the crisis escalated so quickly and so dangerously
- this being a private letter makes the source valuable as it demonstrates Kennedy's thoughts towards the situation and how he intends to move forward. However, he would not want to show any further signs of weakness to Khrushchev
- Kennedy emphasises the unjustified actions of the USSR and aims to remind Khrushchev of the severity of the situation, making the source perhaps less valuable as Kennedy is disregarding the actions taken by the USA which may have escalated the situation even further.

Content and argument

- Kennedy suggests that the impact of the Cuban Missile Crisis has been immense and has damaged the relationship between the USA and the USSR. This is valuable because it was a clear defeat of the strength of the USSR and demonstrates how the USA used its military might to pressure the USSR into removing their missiles – showing the long-term impact of the crisis on the USSR's reputation
- he also argues that the Soviet Union's actions in Cuba threatened world peace and the status quo, suggesting it was an immensely aggressive and unwarranted action. This makes the source less valuable as the USA prompted the crisis by undertaking the Bay of Pigs invasion to destabilise Castro's regime and also military manoeuvres like Operation Quick-Kick, Operation Mongoose and OPLAN attacks
- Kennedy focuses on the fact that the USSR repeatedly assured the USA they were not using Cuba to arm themselves; and disregards the fact that the USA had stationed their own Jupiter missiles in Turkey which was equally dangerous to the Soviet Union and therefore may have threatened them too
- Kennedy argues that the two powers desperately need to rectify their relationship, otherwise the world will move into a state of severe danger. This is valuable in showing the impact of the crisis on the state of the Cold War; however, may be less valuable as Kennedy is focusing on Soviet responsibility and disregarding the role the USA played in escalating the crisis.

Section B

0 2 'The conflict in Korea weakened the USA's international position after 1953.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that the conflict in Korea weakened the USA's international position after 1953 might include:

- despite successful containment of communism in Korea, the USA had failed to 'rollback' communism from North Korea. This meant that their foreign policy had a renewed focus on containing communism in Asia and would lead to their involvement in defending South Vietnam from North Vietnam in subsequent years. This would have an extreme negative impact on the USA's international position
- the conflict in Korea poisoned Sino-American relations due to the significant damage inflicted on US troops by the Chinese invasion of the Yalu River; and it would be a further 20 years before their relationship began to improve. The US actively isolated China from the UN and experienced a further weakening of their position in Asia due to their lack of alliance with communist China
- the Sino-Soviet alliance was strengthened in May 1953 with visits from Khrushchev to China, economic aid and technological expertise helping to strengthen China's national security. This was a direct impact of the damaged Sino-American relationship and weakened the USA's influence even further in Asia
- the conflict in Korea lessened the USA's European priorities and shifted their focus more towards a globalist policy in Asia. This meant that issues such as Germany were left unresolved, they were able to start rearmament and further threaten the USA's hold on Western Europe against Stalin
- the impact of the conflict in Korea on public opinion in the USA was significant, and meant that many Americans began to question the USA's involvement in far-flung wars across the continents, lessening the USA's international credibility and creating a belief that America was stretched too thinly.

Arguments challenging the view that the conflict in Korea weakened the USA's international position after 1953 might include:

- the involvement of the UN under the auspices of the USA meant that US policy in Asia was endorsed by the Security Council, and gave credibility to the idea that the USA was acting as 'world policeman' and had the ability to intervene in conflicts on a larger scale. This would give them credibility when required in future conflicts such as Vietnam
- the USA was able to guarantee the long-term security of Taiwan after the war and increase efforts to ensure it remained under nationalist control, not communist, thereby demonstrating that US strategic interests elsewhere in the region had been strengthened along with their own position
- in response to improving Sino-Soviet relations and the failure of roll-back in Korea, SEATO was formed in 1954 as a defensive alliance, allowing the USA to strengthen its influence in the region and provide collective defense to key states
- the long-term security of both North and South Korea was protected and the status quo remained – the armistice included a guarantee that no further warfare would take place in Korea. Therefore, the USA's foreign policy of containment in Asia had been successful and meant that they held some influence in Asia for the foreseeable future.

Students may come to the conclusion that in the short term, the conflict in Korea presented serious questions about the USA's international position and their credibility to intervene in proxy conflicts and act as a 'world policeman', due to their inability to effectively rollback communism in Korea. However, students may also conclude that in the long term post-1953, Korea demonstrated that the USA was able to double up their efforts to contain communism in Asia after their failures in Korea by providing collective security in the form of SEATO and intervening in future conflicts such as Vietnam. Therefore, in the long-term, the USA's international position was actually strengthened.

0 3 'The USA's failure to secure victory in Vietnam by 1968 was due to mistakes in its military strategy and tactics.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that the USA's failure to secure victory in Vietnam by 1968 was due to mistakes in its military strategy and tactics might include:

- the commencement of Operation Rolling Thunder in 1965 demonstrated that the USA only appeared to have superior military strength capable of overcoming the Vietcong. Despite dropping more bombs in this period than were used in the Second World War, they struggled to destroy North Vietnamese supplies due to support from China and the USSR. Therefore, military mistakes prolonged the war even further
- the use of search and destroy tactics was a key military strategy until 1968 and aimed to try and disable the Vietcong. This was ineffective due to inability to identify the enemy clearly and targeting civilians instead. Tactics such as these only prolonged the conflict because the USA lost crucial support from Vietnamese civilians due to indiscriminate violence
- Johnson continued to increase the amount of ground troops into Vietnam, reaching around 536 000 by 1968 – this had only been around 184 000 in 1965. The Americanisation of the war meant that the Vietcong only strengthened their resolve to continue fighting and therefore a decisive victory could not be reached quickly
- the USA's focus on a military response rather than diplomacy was to their disadvantage – despite numerous military engagements at Ia Drang, Danang and most importantly the Tet Offensive, the war continued to drag on in a state of stalemate and ensured the strategy of military containment was failing
- there was also a complete lack of support from the south Vietnamese due to the use of chemicals such as Agent Orange, Agent Blue and napalm. These initially had the purpose of defoliating Vietnamese jungle and overwhelming the Vietcong, but instead deprived civilians of crops, caused horrific injuries and deformities and alienated Vietnamese civilians.

Arguments challenging the view that the USA's failure to secure victory in Vietnam by 1968 was due to mistakes in its military strategy and tactics might include:

- a complete lack of domestic support meant that the USA struggled to maintain the morale needed for victory. The influence of the media with TV and press coverage of civilian atrocities and high-profile campaigners such as Martin Luther King reinforced the idea that the war in Vietnam was unnecessary and inconsistent with Johnson's policies of a 'Great Society'
- the North Vietnamese had many advantages in being able to effectively utilise guerrilla tactics with their knowledge of the local landscape. This meant that despite their weaknesses in conventional warfare, the Vietcong was able to undermine the morale of US forces by using booby traps, complex tunnel systems and significant violence against civilians
- the US struggled to compete with support for the Vietcong amongst peasants – the Vietcong was able to infiltrate the disaffected and anti-American peasantry in the South by mostly showing respect and support, but also threatening violence if necessary. This meant that the US struggled to achieve a victory because of lack of support in the South
- the involvement of the USSR and China meant that the war continued with no victory, because even when the USA was able to use search and destroy to disrupt supply lines, North Vietnam's allies were able to provide military aid, missiles, artillery systems and weapons.

Students could come to the conclusion that it was indeed primarily due to mistakes made in US military strategy and tactics that prevented them from securing a decisive victory – the use of search and destroy, chemical weapons and Operation Rolling Thunder – simply highlighted their weaknesses and inability to gain peasant support. However, students may also consider the importance of domestic and

foreign support for the USA and how this put them at a significant disadvantage when compared with the Vietcong who had extensive local knowledge and support from the USSR and China.

0	4	How significant was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the deterioration of relations between the USA and the USSR in the years 1979 to 1985?
----------	----------	--

[25 marks]*Target: AO1*

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was significant in the deterioration of relations between the USA and the USSR in the years 1979 to 1985 might include:

- despite being in the midst of arms control talks and progress with Détente, President Carter immediately condemned the Soviet invasion and referred to it as a ‘flagrant breach of international protocol and a significant threat to international peace’, demonstrating the severity of the invasion and how the USA felt it was a betrayal of their newly developed trust. The invasion was viewed as Soviet expansionism and required condemnation and containment
- furthermore, any upcoming progress to be made on arms control agreements such as SALT II was postponed after Carter ordered the US Senate to delay its ratification indefinitely. This suggests that any progress that had been made in arms control was being abandoned due to perceived Soviet aggression in Afghanistan, therefore damaging their relationship
- the Carter Doctrine imposed restrictions on the Soviet Union which clearly suggested the period of Détente was coming to an end; including sanctions on the sale of grain, high technology and strategic items to the Soviet Union, and also US financial aid to neighbouring states to ensure their security. This was reflective of Marshall Aid in the early Cold War and therefore shows significant damage to relations
- Carter took further actions such as increasing the defence budget for 1981, encouraging NATO and Western states to suspend the development of East-West Détente and essentially linking the future of Détente to the Soviet Union’s decision to retain troops in Afghanistan. The USA even boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics in protest at the invasion of Afghanistan, demonstrating the final blow for Détente and a decline in the US-Soviet relationship.

Arguments challenging the view that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was significant in the deterioration of relations between the USA and the USSR in the years 1979 to 1985 might include:

- the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not the only reason for the damage inflicted on the US-Soviet relationship in this period; the arrival of Reagan as President brought renewed suspicion and issues with US-Soviet relations. In the early days of his presidency he suggested that it was time to go back to the earlier attitude of stopping at nothing to remove the Soviet Union’s hold over Eastern Europe. He was very clear in his attitude that any trust towards the Soviet Union developed under Détente was misplaced and would be taken advantage of
- despite the previous decade being dominated by arms control talks and significant progress in nuclear arms reduction, the stalling of the START talks until 1982 and their eventual failure demonstrated that the USA and USSR were no longer in a position to negotiate; and it was down to the Soviet Union abandoning the talks
- there was a renewal of tension when KAL 007 was shot down by the Soviet Union and demonstrated an increasing division between the two superpowers. In the aftermath of this incident, the Soviet Union took the view that the USA had completely abandoned Détente and the USA started to pursue military defence in a similar way to the early Cold War
- Reagan’s focus on the Strategic Defence Initiative meant that US-Soviet relations were in danger anyway – attempting to create an anti-nuclear defence system aimed at destroying missiles in space before they reached their target seemed to the USSR to be a direct attack on their nuclear arsenal. In response, the USSR continued to heavily fund their nuclear arms programmes despite it never being a true possibility.

Students may conclude that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was very significant in damaging relations between the USA and USSR during this period due to the international outrage it caused and the extremely harsh US response from Carter. However, students may also argue that there were other significant reasons for the damage inflicted on the US-Soviet relationship which were more in-line with the early development of the Cold War such as stalling of nuclear talks and increasing suspicion – therefore the invasion of Afghanistan may have simply been a trigger or a turning point.