

How far do Sources A–F support the assertion that Reagan was responsible for a return to confrontation in Cold War Politics?

Intro: Sources B and E support the assertion that Reagan was responsible for a return to confrontation in cold war politics. However sources A, C, F and D challenge the assertion and argue that the soviet military expansion was the reason for the return to confrontation.

As a set, Sources B and E support the assertion that Reagan was responsible for a return to confrontation in cold war politics. This can be seen from Source B that states “Running counter to the objectives of detente, it is aimed at direct confrontation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. This aggressive policy has increased the nuclear war threat” and “US leaders are resorting to a variety of tricks to justify their obsession with the arms race and military superiority” and “The US military budget for 1984-1988 will reach the astronomical level of some US\$1.8 trillion - all under the contrived pretext of the so-called Soviet military threat” This suggests that the US government’s agenda to show off their military might, necessitating a defensive response from the soviets that soured US-Soviet relations that caused the return to confrontation. This same argument can be seen in source E where it states that “It is often stated that this confronted the USSR with the prospect of a strategic competition in a new area, concentrating on the technologies in which the US had the advantage.” and “ However they admit the programme caused serious concerns to the soviet leadership, who believed that the US may have gained a significant strategic advantage” This suggests that the beginnings of the advancements of the USA’s military capabilities to show off their military strength necessitated a USSR military response to their developments of the USA’s Strategic Defence Initiative, causing a worsening of US-Soviet relations. Hence, as a set, sources BE support the assertion that Reagan was responsible for the return to confrontation.

However, when the support set is contradicted by objective and reliable Source D that is a statistical source, the support set of sources are seemingly unreliable. This can be seen from source D that shows the USA’s non-strategic stock pile decreased from 15000 to less than 10000 in the late 1970s showing that the US was resorting to more peaceful measures during the detente. In contrast to this the USSR’s non-strategic nuclear stockpiles continued to sky rocket

during the late 1970s showing that the USSR did not abide by the principles of detente. This shows that the USSR actively contradicting the principles of detente and build up of the military threatened US security interests. This necessitated a response from the US therefore causing a worsening of relations and a return to confrontation. As a result, Source D contradicts the support set by arguing that the Soviet Union was responsible for the return to confrontation, proving the support set to be unreliable.

Nevertheless, upon corroboration with contextual knowledge, the reliability of the support set is proven. Despite the contraction of source D to the support set, the statistics in source D merely account for the build up of military warheads. This leaves out data on total military expenditure such as the USA's 1983 Strategic defence initiative or the resources allocated to their anti-communist insurgencies around the world. According to contextual knowledge, Reagan's hardline policies were seen from the USA's military build up in the 1980s and efforts increasing military expenditure by 13% within 2 weeks in office and reducing the soviet sphere of influence from around the world that threatened the security of the soviet union. By pre-emptively increasing the military capabilities of the US, it instigated a response from the Soviet Union that kickstarted the return to confrontation in cold war politics. This is seen from the 1983 strategic defence initiative or star wars program where inter-galactic defence systems were visualised by the US government to shoot down long range missiles from space corroborating with the content in source B and E. Moreover the US also built up to 2 trillion dollars worth of conventional and nuclear forces that set the US on a confrontational policy that exacerbated bipolarity between the US and Soviets. Reagan also sponsored anti-communist rebellions around the world to roll back communism. Such rebellions included the contras in Nicaragua, Afghanistan (Muhajeedeen), Angola and Cambodia that were successful in eliminating communist threats and installing dictatorships that removed or minimised communist influence in the developing world. These actions were perceived by the Soviets as Reagan's acts of aggression and capitalist expansion that threatened the security of the communist bloc, restarting the arms race and tensions between the capitalist and communist bloc. Therefore, the contextual knowledge corroborates with the support set and further proves its reliability.

Moreover, upon evaluation of the provenances of the support set, they are proven to be reliable and useful. This can be seen from source B that is an extract from a soviet army pamphlet in 1983, the Soviet army pamphlet has a motive to boost the morale of the Soviet army personnel in fighting the Afghanistan war. This was due to the fact that the Afghanistan war was a bleeding wound to the Soviet economy and Soviet soldiers who had seen their comrades die in action. Therefore leading to much discontent amongst the military personnel . Therefore the source overplays the aggressive threat posed by the US to the Soviet Union's national security to reinvigorate the purpose of why the Soviet army was stuck fighting in Afghanistan, reinforcing the Soviet government's motive and compromising the reliability of Source B. In addition to this,, source E is from a Russian nuclear forces project working paper in 2013 22 years after the detente.This gives the authors of the source access to soviet archives that allow further cross referencing of Soviet and US military capabilities. In addition to this, it is a Russian nuclear forces project working paper that shows that thorough research has been done over the issue of the military capabilities of the Soviet Union in comparison with the USA. As a result of the technical expertise involved in the creation of Source E, the source is therefore reliable. Despite the reliability of Source B being questioned,Source B is proven to be reliable when read together with Source E that is from 2013 30 years from 1983 and after the end of the cold war, proving that the claims that Reagan's policies were responsible for the return to confrontation. Therefore proving the reliability of the support set.

Therefore the support set is reliable because despite the support set being contradicted by source D that seemingly undermines the reliability of the support set. The support set is proven to be reliable when cross referenced to contextual knowledge and provenance analysis. Overall the support set is proven to be reliable.

As a set, sources A, C and F challenge the assertion that Reagan was responsible for the end of the detente and return to confrontation. Instead, the challenge set argues that the Soviets were responsible for the return to detente due to their aggressive expansionist tendencies that threatened the security of the USA. These actions exacerbated the bipolarity between the US and USSR, ending the detente between the two nations. This can be seen from Source A that states "For twenty years the Soviet Union has been accumulating enormous military might", "There is

Afghanistan. And in Poland, the Soviets denied the will of the people and demonstrated to the world how their military power could be used to intimidate.” and “It would reward the Soviets for their massive military build-up while preventing us from modernizing our ageing and increasingly vulnerable forces. “ This suggests that the expansion of the soviet influence across the world and increasing military build up threatened the USA’s strategic and security interests. Moreover, with the US in a vulnerable state due to its ageing forces, the soviet expansion justified a need for the return to confrontation to deter further Soviet aggression. This argument is shared with source C that states “ Deeper trends were brought into focus by what seemed like dramatic proof of soviet strategic mastery, the invasion of afghanistan” and “Enabled arms control with the US to be negotiated was stopped in its tracks as the Us senate refused to ratify SALT II a treaty for nuclear arms reduction because of Soviet actions”. This suggests that Soviet expansion into the middle east threatened the USA regional influence and safety of the allies forcing the US to return to confrontation as a form of deterrence through rearmament. Lastly, source F states that “Restraining the hegemonic threat posed by an aggressive, ideological soviet union led to Reagan’s tough policy” and When the Polish military, fearing Soviet intervention, imposed martial law in 1981, no US invasion was threatened and no US soldiers marched.” this suggests that the increasing Soviet influence across the globe in Poland and Afghanistan was the trigger that marked a return to confrontation as a result of the threat caused to the USA’s safety. Therefore, as a set, sources A, C and F challenge the assertion that Reagan was responsible for a return to confrontation to cold war politics, arguing that the Soviet Union was the one who was responsible.

Upon evaluation of the provenances of the support set, the sources in the challenge set are proven to be seemingly unreliable and limited in use. This can be seen from Source A where it is an extract from a broadcast to the American public by President Reagan in March 1983 to convince the American public to support the beginnings of US rearmament efforts that would be done using the tax payers money. Therefore in order to better convince the audience, the source overplays the threat that the currently expanding soviet sphere of influence and what the threat poses to the US while undermining the USA’s military capabilities as a result of their elderly veterans. Therefore enhancing the public's desire for the rearmament of the US, undermining the reliability of the challenge set. Source C is a book on the cold war by a british historian

published in 1993 after the end of the cold war who comes from a post-revisionist school of thought that has had access to various soviet archives and done ample research on the specific subject of the return to confrontation therefore proving the reliability of source C. Lastly, source F is from an american conservative pressure group in 2015 24 years after the end of the cold war. Source F was created to honour Reagan's legacy who was a conservative politician. The source overplays Reagan's efforts at deterring the Soviet Union from threatening the security of the USA by honouring his legacy and Reagan's involvement in taking a hardliner stance against the Soviets. Moreover the source also overplays the threat that the soviets posed to the US to further enhance the significance of Reagan's involvement therefore undermining the reliability of Source F. Overall the challenge set is unreliable as it comes from solely a western perspective that defends Reagan's legacy, pinning the blame on the Soviets for their aggression and threats to the USA's security that caused the return to confrontation in cold war politics.

Nevertheless, when cross referenced to contextual knowledge, the challenge set is proven to be reliable. This can be seen from contextual knowledge that shows that Soviet expansionism in the middle east and southeast asia was seen as a grave threat to the security of the US. This was also due to the growing power of communism in the eastern bloc with China as a regional communist power in asia. The support given to the communist regime in Afghanistan and 1981's Operation RYaN as a result of the misinterpretation of NATO's 1983 Able Archer program that nearly prompted a retaliatory strike. Moreover, the deployment of the SS-20 intermediate range nuclear missiles were also proof of the increasing rearmament efforts made by the Soviet Union that instigated the retaliatory US missiles to be installed in response to the Soviet Union. The Soviet expansionist tendencies in Poland and Afghanistan in 1979 going against the principles of the agreed upon detente further threatening the interests of the US. This was because the expansion of soviet influence in the middle east directly threatened USA's regional influence in the middle east as well as economic interests regarding oil supplies due to the rising prices of Oil during the 1979 oil crisis. In Poland, Soviet harsh military crackdowns on the solidarity movements in Poland also necessitated a response from the US because of the potential expansionist threat that the Soviets posed to the western capitalist spheres of influence in western Europe. Therefore these threats to the USA's sphere of influence necessitated an immediate military response to preserve the USA's global influence. This further supports the content in sources A C and F as

it proves that the American efforts at rearmament were a direct response to the expanding soviet sphere of influence in the form of the SDI in 1983 and advancements in military technologies and weapons that marked the return to confrontation. Therefore proving the reliability of the challenge set of sources

Moreover when the challenge set is cross referenced to objective and reliable Source D that is a statistical source, the challenge set of sources are proven to be reliable. As source D argues that the soviet union was more likely to be responsible for the return to confrontation. This can be seen from source D that shows the USSR continuously increased their non-strategic nuclear stock piles greatly surpassing that of the USA's own in the late 1970s. Reaching heights of 30000 non-strategic nuclear warheads by the 1980s. This shows that the USSR actively contradicting the principles of detente by consistently increasing the build up of nuclear stockpiles threatened US security interests. This necessitated a response from the US therefore causing a worsening of relations and a return to confrontation. As a result, Source D corroborates with the challenge set and proves that the Soviet Union was responsible for the return to confrontation. Overall proving the reliability of the challenge set.

In conclusion, both the support set and challenge set are equally reliable. Therefore there is no preference for a particular set. The support set is reliable because despite the support set being contradicted by source D that seemingly undermines the reliability of the support set. The support set is proven to be reliable when cross referenced to contextual knowledge and provenance analysis. Overall the support set is proven to be reliable. The challenge set is reliable because although the reliability of the challenge set is proven to be unreliable upon provenance analysis, when corroborated with contextual knowledge and cross referenced to source D the reliability of the set is proven. Therefore the modified hypothesis should be that both Reagan and the Soviet Union are to blame for the return to confrontation as Reagan's hardline attitude and soviet expansionist tendencies were responsible for the increasing distrust and bipolarity between the two actors, thus, putting an end to detente and a return to confrontation.