

CNN COLD WAR
EPISODE 16
DETENTE (1969-1975)

1. In the course of the interview, Kissinger is asked about “where the word détente came from.” How does he answer?

2. According to Kissinger, how did the policy of détente and the SALT treaty change the way in which “all of the media and the people who thought of themselves as intellectuals” and “some liberals” criticized Nixon?

3. Kissinger notes that there was a “true substantial difference” between “us” (the Nixon administration) and “many of our critics.” Describe what Kissinger saw as this “difference.”

4. Kissinger notes that he believed that “a long period of peace” benefited the U.S. more than the Soviet Union. Why did he believe this?

5. What argument does he say critics of the Nixon administration used against this idea?

6. In your view, was Kissinger and Nixon’s view correct? Explain your answer.

7. What two reasons does Kissinger give for relying on “back-channel” negotiations during the Nixon years?

8. In your view, do back-channel negotiations make for effective foreign policy, or can they be problematic? Explain your answer.

9. What does Kissinger note as the significance of the SALT I treaty?

10. What does Kissinger say about the role of human rights in negotiations and détente?

11. In your view, was the U.S. policy of détente designed to ease tensions between the U.S. and USSR or was it an attempt to undermine the Soviet Union by political rather than military means? Explain your view.

9. Kissinger also reflects on the end of the war in Vietnam, noting that he had “great sympathy” for South Vietnamese President Thieu. For what reason(s) did Kissinger have this “sympathy”?

10. What does Kissinger claim essentially “killed” aid plans for South Vietnam after the U.S. withdrawal?

11. Describe the impact the lack of U.S. aid had on the ability of the South Vietnamese to fight effectively.

12. In your opinion, did détente ultimately cause the U.S. to “abandon” South Vietnam or were other factors more important? Explain your view.



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