



A-level  
**History**

7042/2R

Report on the Examination

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## General

In general, there was a good range of responses to the questions examined with some excellent conceptual understanding and analysis across all four questions. Students have further developed their ability to analyse three sources in the time provided by considering both provenance and content, and there were very few issues with time management for this question. In terms of the essay questions, 02 and 03 were the most popular, with 04 being attempted by a small number of students. Misunderstanding of the question and drifting away from the given focus affected some responses. Overall, this was an accessible paper with clear understanding demonstrated from students.

## Question 01

For the compulsory source question, students were required to assess three sources for their individual value in relation to US-Soviet relations from 1972-1979. The three sources were at varying stages of the development of detente – Source A was an optimistic speech from Brezhnev at the early stages of easing tensions, Source B was a source criticising the commitment of the USA to detente under Carter, and Source C was the final blow to detente – Carter's condemnation of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. The higher-level responses to this question evaluated each source separately, considered content, argument and provenance with a clear focus on how US-Soviet relations worsened over time.

In general, there was good analysis from most students regarding each source. There was an understanding from some students that Source A was an overly optimistic speech from Brezhnev to the American people, significant in that he was the first Soviet leader to do so. The higher-level answers linked this source to developments in detente at the time – agreements such as SALT I and the Moscow Summit of 1972. Students identified that potentially this source reflected the optimism of the early stages of detente, and therefore was less valuable to understand the whole period. Many students were able to identify accurate knowledge to assess the value of Source B, suggesting that by 1978 there had been multiple proxy war interventions by both the USA and USSR, damaging the development of detente. Lastly, the higher-level responses for Source C were able to assess the impact of the Soviet Union's intervention into Afghanistan on detente and drew upon the already worsening relations; this condemnation from Carter being the final blow to relations.

Lower-level responses to this question did not have enough specific knowledge about the later stages of detente under Carter to effectively analyse Sources B and C. There was a lack of understanding in terms of Carter's more hardline response to the Soviet Union and how this affected their relationship – which was crucial to analyse the value of B and C in the development of relations. There were also some misunderstandings with provenance, some students tended to mix up the author and recipients of Sources B and C which limited their ability to effectively evaluate the provenance of both sources. Some responses also provided a commentary regarding the content and argument of the sources but did not directly link this to value in relation to the question. Furthermore, there were some issues with students discussing limitations through omission – for example, suggesting that Source A was less valuable due to it not mentioning the invasion of Afghanistan, which had not happened yet and so should not be used to evaluate value.

There were some responses that failed to assess the value of the sources in direct relation to the issue given in the question, and simply evaluated whether they were accurate or not in relation to their own contextual knowledge. Students need to make clear judgements on the value of the sources and focus more on analysing provenance and content; rather than using Paper 1 skills which ask students to assess how convincing extracts are using their own knowledge.

## Question 02

Question 02 required students to assess whether the eventual split of East and West Germany by 1949 was the result of the USA's economic interests, or whether there were other factors at play. This was an extremely popular question with most students choosing to answer it.

There were some very strong responses to this question, where students clearly identified the economic motives of the USA and how this dictated a number of their policies in Germany. For example, students highlighted the introduction of the Deutschmark, the creation of Bizonia and the dependence of West Germany on the USA during the Berlin Blockade. High-level responses were able to track these economic interests back to the differing ideologies presented at Yalta and Potsdam and suggested that it was inevitable the USA would use their zones of Germany to present a clearly beneficial capitalist world. Furthermore, students were able to identify other factors contributing to the split of Germany; including differing ideologies, Stalin's aggression and expansionist policies, and the heightening tensions in the Cold War generally by 1949.

Weaker responses to this question did not focus on the split of Germany – instead focusing on the split of Europe in general by 1949. This meant there were responses that did not focus directly on the question and drifted away from the focus on Germany. These responses used developments such as the Marshall Plan to identify the importance of the USA's economic interests but failed to make any clear link to Germany itself. There were some responses that purely focused on the USA's economic interests and did not provide any balance.

## Question 03

Question 03 required students to assess whether the USA's containment policy in Asia was a success or a failure. This, again, was an extremely popular question, with most students choosing to answer it.

There were some good responses to this question which analysed each area of the USA's containment policy in turn – Vietnam, Korea, Japan, China – and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of their intentions in each area. The higher-level responses were able to analyse how developments in each country had a knock-on effect in others; for example the loss of China in 1949 affecting Truman's policies in Korea; or the exclusion of South Korea from the Defensive Perimeter Strategy leading to the North Korean invasion. Better responses did not just provide a narrative of events but linked to the USA's specific containment policies and the lasting impact of those. Students were strongest on developments in China, Japan and Korea.

There were some responses that provided a narrative of events in Asia without linking to the specific focus of the question. Some responses also focused on domestic events in the USA such as McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare, which was difficult to effectively link to the evaluation of the USA's containment policy. Some of the weaker responses struggled to effectively evaluate containment policy in Vietnam and therefore strayed away from the question.

#### **Question 04**

Question 04 required students to discuss the impact of the Prague Spring and the crisis in Czechoslovakia on the Soviet Union's control over the Eastern bloc. This is part of the specification point on 'Pressures on the USSR' and focuses on the international reaction to the crisis, along with the lasting impact on the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. This question was completed by a minority of students.

Many of those students who chose to answer this question had good, in-depth knowledge of the crisis in Czechoslovakia and the impact on the Soviet Union's power and control over the Eastern bloc. The higher-level responses were able to identify that whilst the crisis did indeed threaten the stability of the Soviet Union, its swift and harsh response was effective in dampening any opposition to the communist system. Furthermore, good responses were able to put the crisis into wider context and suggest that it increased tensions between the USSR and other superpowers, limiting their power and linking back to whether the crisis weakened the Soviet Union.

Lower-level responses failed to grasp the full demands of the question and provided a narrative of events in Czechoslovakia. Some responses discussed events in 1989 as a direct result of this crisis, which was difficult to relate to the specific question. Some responses also focused on whether the crisis was a success or a failure which wasn't specifically related to the question.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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