



# **Examiners' Report** **June 2023**

**GCE History 9HI0 1E**

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## Introduction

Once again it was pleasing to see candidates being able to engage effectively across the ability range in this, the third year of the Advanced Level paper 1E, Russia, 1917-91: from Lenin to Yeltsin. Candidates were generally well prepared, and centres are to be commended for the wealth of knowledge that candidates deploy in their answers to breadth questions. Many of the responses were interesting and enjoyable to read.

The paper is divided into three sections. Both Sections A and B comprise a choice of essays – from two in each – that assess understanding of the period in breadth (AO1) by targeting the second order concepts of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance. Section C contains a compulsory question which is based on two given extracts. It assesses analysis and evaluation of historical interpretations in context (AO3).

The majority of candidates organise their time effectively, there were very few examples at all of candidates not answering questions in all three sections. There were, however, a large number of candidates whose handwriting was illegible. Although it is acknowledged that many candidates will not have practised writing in long-hand as much as in the past, candidates need to be aware that legible handwriting is important in communicating their arguments; examiners can only reward marks for the material that they can read.

It is noticeable that candidates who plan their responses often produce more focused answers. Planning allows candidates to determine their line of reasoning and to formulate an argument and counterargument from which to establish extent and relative significance in coming to a judgement. Planning is particularly useful for determining the views outlined by the authors in the Section C Interpretations. It also ensures that candidates focus on key words in the question and, in particular for breadth essays, establish the time period under discussion. Awareness of the key dates, along with a solid understanding of the chronology of the leadership periods, allows candidates to determine the situation at the beginning and the end and to determine the extent of change over the period covered by the questions. A significant number of candidates for this series did not focus on the specific question asked in Section A and Section B, meaning that responses at BP1 and BP3 were often rewarded at Level 3 in terms of 'best fit'. Many candidates wrote about the time periods before and after the dates used in the question with little relevance. To reach Level 4 and 5, it is important that candidates focus on the specific questions asked if they are to meet the requirements for analysis and exploration, deploying both sufficient relevant knowledge and valid criteria and organising a logical coherent argument.

Candidates tend to approach the responses to Sections A and B either by using a chronological approach or a more thematic approach. Both approaches are valid, but both can lead to candidates not covering sufficient chronological range to fulfil the knowledge requirements at the higher Levels (see paragraph below). The chronological approach, particularly with questions across the whole period, often 'run out of steam' before the end and the thematic approach can fail to include exemplification from throughout the time period specified. However, well planned thematic or factor driven response often provide better opportunities for analysis and exploration of the key issues. These responses are also able to establish the situation at the beginning of the time period of the question and at the end (using turning points within the time period where appropriate) and so are able to make reasoned and substantiated judgements in relation to the second order concept being tested.

Sections A and B deal with breadth questions of varying periods of time ranging from several decades to the whole time period of the specification. Candidates are reminded that this has important implications for the higher Levels in bullet point 2 of the mark scheme. To access bullet point 2 at Level 4 candidates are expected to meet most of the demands of the question and at Level 5 candidates are expected to have responded 'fully' to the demands of the question. Therefore, it is important that the majority of the time period be covered by candidates if they are to be able to access all Levels.

With regards to the appropriate level and quality of knowledge, candidates and centres should recognise the expectation of Advanced Level. In short, it is a combination of the knowledge a candidate is able to bring to the essay, married with their ability to effectively marshal this material towards the analytical demands of the question. It is fair to say that on Paper 1, where candidates study a range of themes across a broad chronological period, the expectations regarding depth of knowledge will not necessarily be as great as in the more in-depth periods studied. As well as offering more depth of knowledge, candidates who have engaged in wider reading tend to be more successful as they are able to select and deploy the most appropriate examples to support analysis and evaluation.

In Section C, the strongest answers demonstrate a clear focus on the need to engage with the different arguments given within the two extracts recognising that these are historical interpretations. These responses provide a comparative analysis of the merits of the different interpretations offered in relation to the view presented in the question. High-scoring responses explore the validity of the arguments offered by the two historians in light of the evidence, both from within the extracts, and the candidates' own contextual knowledge. Weaker responses often attempt to evaluate the extracts in relation to the quantity of factual evidence provided or present a generalised discussion of the view with little reference to the extracts themselves. The question requires a judgement as to 'how convincing' the candidate finds the stated view, but many responses provide a very limited conclusion or merely sum up the views in the two extracts with reference to 'reconciling' the extracts. It was pleasing to see this summer that most candidates are now discussing the extracts. Only a small minority continue to write an answer to the question using the extracts as evidence for their own knowledge rather than the other way around.

There were far fewer centres that prepared candidates by providing a lengthy generalised introduction to the debate regarding the different explanations for the downfall of the Soviet Union for them to memorise and write before moving on to discuss the extracts. Where, candidates did this, the introductions rarely focused on the specific view stated in the question meaning that candidates wasted time writing lengthy introductions with limited rewardable material. Candidates who focus on the relationship between the view stated in the question and the interpretations provided in the extracts from the beginning of the response were often able to produce stronger responses.

Again, it was pleasing to note that there was much less evidence of candidates replicating the words and phrases of the mark scheme in their response and, in some cases, using the mark scheme as a scaffold in which to insert analysis and contextual knowledge. As a result, examiners saw more well organised arguments that related to the actual question rather than writing to a pre-determined formula. The mark scheme is designed to be applied by examiners and the Level descriptors are the qualities of the written response that the examiner is looking for when rewarding the response.

Overall, candidates had good knowledge and understanding of the ongoing development of Russia/the USSR over seventy years of history and had an awareness not only of the approaches of different leaders but the variability of approaches within their periods of government. There is a growing confidence with dealing with the extracts and there were some very interesting essays written in all three Sections.

**Please note:** that it is recommended that centres look at a selection of Principal Examiner Reports from across the different options within 9HI01 and previous series to get an overall sense of examiner feedback, centre approaches and candidate achievement.

Centres may wish to refer to the *Getting Started* guide that is to be found on the Pearson Edexcel GCE History website. Further resources that may be of use are the *Applying Criteria* and *Developing Student's Understanding of Historical Interpretations* documents to be found on the Pearson Edexcel History GCE website. The *Applying Criteria* document gives guidance with regard to the application of criteria for the different AOs tested at A level.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

## Question 1

Candidates were required to determine whether Stalin's industrial and agricultural policies were the reason for his power in the USSR in the years 1928-53. This was the more popular of the two questions in Section A.

Candidates generally had impressive knowledge on the Five-Year Plans and collectivisation, but many candidates were less confident in linking the economic plans to Stalin's ability to establish control and power. Most of these responses saw control as implicit – if the plans succeed, Stalin has control, and if they fail, he has less control. Some focused on whether the agricultural policies were successful, which was not the focus of the question. The best responses were able to show understanding that the economic plans were not purely about economic outcome, but also a means of controlling and directing an entire population, so that even economic failures such as unrealistic targets were still a means of control. Candidates generally had a better grasp of other factors – most mentioned terror, propaganda, cult of the personality, Stalin's political power within the Communist Party in the early period etc. but candidates often did not establish clear criteria for saying why a factor (usually terror) was more important as a method of control than the alternatives. Some excellent answers did link Stalin's agricultural and industrial policies with Stalin's use of terror. It is important for candidates to cover the whole of the time period if possible, and it was somewhat disappointing that coverage of the Second World War period was often minimal and the post-War period rare.

Candidates generally found it easier to identify how Stalin's position was strengthened by the industrial, rather than agricultural, policies, referring to the impact of rearmament on Russia's military survival; fewer were able to demonstrate the political benefits of removing the kulaks, or at least stigmatising them as a class who were seen to be holding the Soviet Union back. The strongest candidates were able to show how power depended on Stalin's position inside the Communist Party hierarchy, and how aspects of the policies helped him win ideological battles over those who were wanting to continue the approach of the 1920s.

During the years 1928-53, Stalin established a highly authoritarian and centralised power base which solidified his position as ~~the~~ leader of the USSR. He accomplished this primarily through the use of agricultural and industrial policies, widespread campaigns of terror, party purges and a consciously created cult of personality. The idea that the primary reason for his power is agricultural and industrial policies is only somewhat plausible, as other factors plus the weaknesses of his economic policies weaken this argument.

Firstly, it is accurate to say that Stalin's agricultural and industrial policies helped solidify his power.

Stalin's aim in 1928 was to prove himself a worthy successor to Lenin, which he did firstly by ending the NEP, establishing his ideological dominance over the party. Secondly, Soviet agriculture and industry was extremely ~~backward~~ <sup>underdeveloped</sup>, due to

years ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> war and a lack of an industrial revolution. Stalin actually predicted that the USSR was 100 years behind the economic capabilities of capitalist nations. However, by 1945 the USSR had fully industrialised ~~and~~, had a 0% unemployment-

(Section A continued) more rate, defeated fascism and became the fastest growing economy in the world, undoubtably securing Stalin's personal prestige and power. This was achieved primarily through Stalin's focus on heavy industry in the 5 year plans, which saw factories be rebuilt and the establishment of the command economy; whereby the state sets targets for factory planners and sets targets.

The production of steel, oil and coal all increased in turn. This increase in heavy goods meant that Soviet infrastructure could be updated and improved, such as the building of the Moscow-Volga Canal in the mid 1930s. Whole industrial sites were built, such as Magnitost. Article 118 of the Soviet Constitution of 1934 ~~ensured~~<sup>ensured</sup> employment as a right, meaning unemployment was very low as jobs were provided by the state. This meant the USSR's full productive capacity was being used to industrialise Russia. Undoubtedly, this had a very positive influence on Stalin's power. Ideologically, Stalin's industrial policies proved to both the USSR and the world ~~that~~<sup>that</sup> the principles of Marxism-Leninism worked and could build economies and states. It also improved Stalin's personal prestige as it showed his capabilities in economic planning and as a leader. Images of industry appeared

(Section A continued) regularly in Soviet propaganda. However, Stalin's economic policies did cause some divisions within the party. In a party congress in 1934, Kirov raised concerns on behalf of the party to Stalin about how high targets were unrealistic, and how factories were struggling to meet output needs. Therefore, it is clear that whilst showcasing the beneficial aspects of Stalin's rule, it caused divisions within the party. Nonetheless, overall Stalin's industrial policies were successful in showcasing Stalin as a worthy successor of Lenin and proving the ideology of Marxism.

Secondly, it is somewhat accurate to say that agricultural policies helped ~~with~~ to consolidate Stalin's power. Policies such as collectivisation which began in 1929 were ideologically in line with Marxism and so had the support of the party, however the difficulties caused by these policies may outweigh this. The process of dekulakisation involved the mass killing of the kulak' class - privileged farm owners. Stalin sent over a million kulaks to the Gulags in Siberia and executed ones. Whilst this helped remove bourgeois elements from Communist society, it removed a skilled

(Section A continued) Workers who had no agricultural knowledge. Kulaks also destroyed their farms and tools and cattle to combat dekulakisation, resulting in ruined farms and the number of livestock decreasing and not improving until 1953. Furthermore, grain requisitioning was extremely unpopular with peasants, which was significant as they made up 80% of the population, undermining Stalin's power base. Collectivisation also caused famines, particularly the Holodomor in Ukraine which is estimated to have killed 3-6 million Ukrainians. Ukrainian politicians sent letters to Stalin asking for help, ~~to no response~~ <sup>only to result</sup> in an increase in the quotas set for grain requisitioning. <sup>All of this</sup> These agricultural policies meant that although ideologically, capitalist classes were eliminated, the disastrous consequences of forced collectivisation weakened Stalin's power as he did not look like a competent leader. However, it could be said that collectivisation policies were good for Stalin as they showed an excess of the party's power over the peasants and the republics like Ukraine, however it would be more accurate to say that industrial policies were more significant in improving Stalin's power.

(Section A continued) Thirdly, it could be said that more significant <sup>aspects of Stalin's</sup> ~~policy~~ ~~Stalin's~~ rule, such as the expanded use of terror, was more significant in exerting his power. Stalin expanded upon the use of terror against the general population by Lenin through the establishment of the NKVD. Whilst Lenin used the Cheka during the Red Terror to execute 200,000 people, Stalin greatly expanded on this, appointing Magada as head of the NKVD who oversaw the beginning of the Great Terror, the most brutal terror campaigns ever launched in the USSR. The Great Terror killed 10 million people, roughly 10% of the adult population. The most violent period was overseen by Yezhov, with the period being named 'Yezhovschina' or 'Yezhov's terror'. Thousands were executed or sent to forced labour camps known as Gulags. Undoubtedly, this strengthened Stalin's power as it ~~strengthened~~ <sup>created</sup> a culture of fear amongst the general public. Stalin even encouraged youth groups, known as Komsomols, to spy on their parents and teachers, further amplifying the fear existing amongst the Soviet people. However, it could be argued that more significant than the use of widespread terror was the use of terror inwardly, against party members, which consolidated

(Section A continued) his power. Stalin launched the 'Great Purge' in 1932 until 1935, a non-violent series of purges which purged 22% of the party. Whilst this was non-violent, it ~~set a~~ <sup>created</sup> nervousness amongst the party. Show trials began occurring in 1937, with the trial and execution of Zinoviev & Kamenev - two of Stalin's biggest rivals. Further mass executions such as the Bukharin-Rykov trial emphasised how directed at the party. Beria's appointment to the NKVD accelerated the ~~to~~ <sup>assassination</sup> of Torgsky in 1937, eliminating all of Stalin's key rivals. Furthermore, Stalin pushed to rearm the army, executing 8 officers associated with his policy, culminating in 371,000 soldiers. This meant that the purges directed inwardly at the party were more significant than those at the public as it meant Stalin remained completely unopposed in government, with a totally consolidated power base. Party members would be forced to speak out against him, establishing the power of Stalin over the party, not vice versa.

Finally, it could be said that Stalin's personal image was more significant in establishing political power. Stalin's cult of personality established him as the

(Section A continued) The 'vozhd' (simply meaning leader) title is significant as 'vozhd' holds no legal significance such as the former minister or president, meaning Stalin could essentially act how he wished. During the war, Stalin's cult of personality was enhanced with his title of 'gromokhuzhnik', which stressed Stalin as a capable military leader. Stalin was always seen wearing military tops or an all-white suit, and was depicted in socialist realism art style paintings, which stressed the magnificence and power of the USSR and Stalin. This cult of personality meant that Stalin was ~~seen~~ essentially seen as a god-like figure who inspired awe and respect, securing his power. That being said, other factors such as terror and economic policy may be more significant as they underlie the actual structure of Stalin's power through terror and repression.

In conclusion, Stalin maintained and enhanced his power through a number of mechanisms, such as economic policy, terror and a cult of personality. Whilst agriculture and industry played a highly important role in solidifying

(Section A continued) Stalin's political capabilities and ideology of dominance, it was his control of the people and party that terror campaigns were ordered upon to enjoy such continued and authoritarian power in the years 1928-53.



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Examiner Comments

Both of these responses are Level 5 answers. Both clearly analyse industrial and agricultural policy in relation to power. The first answer has more detail about policies while the second uses criteria relating to hard and soft power and attempts to deploy this throughout the response.



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Examiner Tip

Always make sure that arguments are focused on the given factor and that other factors are evaluated in relation to that factor. Many Q1 responses either only briefly discussed industrial and agricultural policies or described the policies before moving on to analyse the use of terror or the impact of the cult of the personality.

After a 4 year power struggle in which Stalin gained power of the party between 1924 and 1928, Stalin began to impress his will and ideologies upon the people of the Soviet Union. Stalin's main aim was one of rapid industrialisation in order to catch up to the West. However, in order to accomplish this Stalin needed to have as much power as possible. Stalin achieved such power through a number of ways; his industrial and agricultural policies, his use of terror and the victory of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War.

One of the primary reasons for Stalin's power in the years 1928 to 1953 were his industrial and agricultural policies. In 1928, Stalin started the first of five Five-Year plans. This plan set out aims to achieve rapid industrialisation in a much shorter timespan than the Western nations had in order to catch up to them. In order to achieve this industrialisation, many factories and factory towns needed to be built including Magnitogorsk which rose from a population of 25 in 1928 to one of roughly 250,000 by 1932. The rapid industrialisation seen under the Five-Year Plans can be a primary

(Section A continued) reason for Stalin's power due to the fact that it gave Stalin a large source of hard power. His agricultural policies also helped to ~~enhance~~ reinforce his power with collectivisation sending peasants to collectives to increase grain production in the which meant that the USSR was better prepared for a war. This therefore further strengthened Stalin's power as he had the tools necessary for his country to defend itself. However, these industrial and agricultural policies did not give him ~~power~~ significant power in regards to control of the people. This is due to the fact that many peasants left collectives to ~~see~~ escape the horrible conditions and famine. Also, industrial policy was so biased on industry that housing became a problem and people elsewhere were not as supporting of Stalin, lessening his power over them. Overall, Stalin's industrial and agricultural policies were a large reason for his hard power at the time but failed to build up significant soft power. ~~Therefore~~ This therefore means that they didn't use not the primary reason for Stalin's power.

~~Also~~ The use of terror by Stalin can be viewed as the primary reason for Stalin's power between 1928 and 1953. During this time period, Stalin ~~utilised~~ utilised terror ~~exponentially~~ exponentially in order to achieve maximum power. In 1934, Stalin had Kirov assassinated following his

(Section A continued) rivals success at the 1934 party Congress. Following this, Stalin began to ramp up the use of terror to begin the peak years of the Great Terror (1930-38). This allowed Stalin to remove anyone who opposed him by either sending them to the Gulag or by having them executed. This is most represented best to best by the show trials with the trial of the Sixteen (1936) ~~removing~~ executing Kamenev and Zinoviev, the trial of the 17 Seventeen (1937) executing 17 of Trotsky's followers and the trial of the Twenty-one (1938) which executed Bukharin and Rykov. These trials as well as the Great Terror as a whole removed a large portion of his opposition which turned out to be roughly one tenth of the population at the time (10 million out of 100 million). However, despite the large amounts of control his terror gave him over the people of the USSR, it failed to fully gain their overwhelming support. This therefore limits the use of terror in Stalin achieving his power. Overall, the use of terror is a primary reason for Stalin's ~~success~~ power in the USSR between 1928 and 1953 due to the fact that it meant that Stalin's power was uncontested. Also, terror ~~also~~ gave Stalin the ability to intimidate the general population therefore meaning that he would be able to control them even if they didn't necessarily support him.

One of the secondary reasons for Stalin's power between 1928 and 1953 was the victory of the USSR in World War Two. This victory in 1945 gave Stalin the look of a war hero and therefore gained him a large amount of support in the later years of his leadership. This accompanied by his cult of personality gave him a large amount of public support and worship thereby increasing his power. However, the power this gained Stalin was much more short-term as it only influenced the later years of his rule. Furthermore, a large reason for success in the war was because of the industrial and agricultural progress made under the first three to Five-Year Plans. This ~~therefore~~ ~~shows~~ which prepared the USSR sufficiently for war. Overall, the victory achieved by the USSR heralded Stalin as a figure of legendary status in the USSR but failed to influence his entire ~~tenure~~ tenure as leader. It also was largely down to other factors ~~that~~ which further decrease its relevance to his power. However, it did gain Stalin and the USSR hard power in the form of international prestige between 1945 and 1953.

In conclusion, the use of terror by Stalin <sup>was</sup> the primary reason for his power in the USSR between 1928 and 1953. Terror not only intimidated the people into

(Section A continued) Supporting Stalin but also gained him ~~his power~~ ~~un~~ unrestricted power in the USSR due to the removal of his opposition. The ~~power~~ power Stalin achieved using terror was mainly hard but also soft and was achieved long-term meaning that it was sustainable for his entire time as leader of the USSR. Despite the successes of industrial and agricultural policy regarding production and electricity the ~~hard~~ <sup>hard</sup> power they gained Stalin, they ~~so~~ did not give Stalin unrestricted power and created many social issues. Finally, the power over the people due to the support received from victory in the Second World War simply wasn't ~~enough~~ sufficient compared to that of terror due to the fact that it was only short-term and diminished in the last 2-3 years of Stalin's rule.



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Examiner Comments

This is a good example to follow.



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Examiner Tip

There is no need to explicitly state the criteria being used to come to an overall judgement, however, conclusions can be used to clarify the criteria being used. In the conclusion here, the response is referring to hard and soft power to determine the importance of factors in Stalin's establishment of power.

## Question 2

Candidates were required to judge the accuracy of the statement that Khrushchev's attempts to reform Soviet government were largely successful.

Candidate responses were often variable in quality and often dependent on the extent to which the focus was on Soviet government rather than other aspects of Khrushchev's leadership. Where candidates understood the focus and were able to talk about relevant issues to the reform of government, like de-Stalinisation, democratisation of reform, etc. they were generally strong answers. Several pointed out that the success of Khrushchev's reforms lay in the fact that he was easily removed from power and thus his reforms were meaningful. However, many were unsure of what reform of government involved and does not involve, so many answers discussed the economy or social reform without making a valid link to the issue in the question. This was often the distinguishing feature between stronger and weaker responses.

After Stalin's death in 1953, a substantial power vacuum was left in the government of the USSR, one which was immediately filled by a short-lived collective leadership from which Khrushchev eventually emerged as the new Party leader. His aims to reform the government included to decentralise the Party, de-Stalinisation, or reducing the bureaucratic and nomenklatura aspects of the party apparatus, as well as the end of terror as ingrained within the Party's methods of control. While many of his policies managed to enact change in the way he intended, the question of whether he succeeded in changing the Soviet government must be evaluated through the difference between short and long term change, the popularity of his policies with the rest of the Party, and the extent to which the changes made brought about unintended consequences. This criteria reveals that Khrushchev was largely successful in ending terror and de-Stalinisation, but only managed to de-centralise and rearrange Party structure in the short run.

One of Khrushchev's first and most successful attempts to reform Soviet government was through the process of de-Stalinisation. In the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev delivered his famous "Secret Speech", condemning Stalin for his creation of a personal dictatorship and cult of personality, as well as revealing the extent of violence and injustices he had carried out during his time in power. Despite the initial resistance from the old guard, it can be said that Khrushchev was mostly successful in de-Stalinising

(Section A continued) the Party, as he increased the frequency of Politburo meetings, which had fallen to as little as 9 times a year under Stalin, and made nearly no attempt to establish a cult of personality for himself, with the slight exception being perhaps his attempts to present himself as a 'statesman of the world' well-versed in culture and arts. Perhaps the biggest testament to his success in destroying the power of the leader under Stalin can be seen in the creation of the Anti-Party group which challenged his leadership and nearly succeeded in making him step down, failing to do so not because of his power over them, but merely because the Central Committee entrusted those who wished for Khrushchev's resignation. Even though his ability to criticise Stalin was somewhat limited due to some aspects being linked to the communist system itself (and could therefore undermine the power of the Party itself), and the remaining supporters of Stalin, Khrushchev essentially managed to bring an end to the authoritarian power of the leader forged by Stalin.

Closely linked to de-Stalinisation is Khrushchev's aim to get rid of the use of mass terror in the Party and outside of it. He managed to do this by bringing the secret police into so-called "Soviet legality", creating the KGB under the model of a military branch which ~~is~~ is not independent from the government and answers to the Party as a whole, not merely the leader himself. Khrushchev also eliminated the use of terror as a method of ~~operating~~ handling political rivals, with the assassination of Beria that took place in the early stages of his leadership ultimately

(Section A continued) proving to be the last notable instance of terror being used ~~then~~ as a political tool within the Party, a feat exemplified by Khrushchev's own stepping down from power being non-violent in nature. As for outside the Party, gulag population was drastically reduced, ~~then~~ going from 2.4 million to around 1.5 by 1956. Many of those released had been political prisoners, who were pardoned by the government after investigations into their cases. One thing that is worth noting, however, is that the use of terror was not completely eradicated, since article 70 of the new constitution allowed for any "anti-soviet" behaviour to be punished, an ambiguous term that allowed for some violence to officially continue, as well as for the use of repressive psychiatry to deal with dissidents. Nonetheless, Khrushchev largely succeeded in his objective of bringing terror to an end, causing a drastic change from Stalinist times of show trials and mass purges.

Another essential aim Khrushchev had in reforming the Party was to de-centralise and minimise excessive bureaucracy and nomenklatura. While Stalin had heavily relied on the rubber-stamping tightly centralised system that allowed him to maintain power through patronage, Khrushchev hoped to make the system more inclusive and enforce the original model of democratic centralism. He managed to increase party membership from 6.9 million to 11 million, and established fixed terms for positions that led to 2/3 of the ~~then~~ Politburo being replaced as well as 44% of the Central Committee. While these measures initially achieved his goals, it cannot be truly said that they were successful in reforming the government, as fixed tenures were eliminated as soon as Brezhnev came into power, making Khrushchev's

(Section A continued) intended change unsuccessful in the long run. A similar case can be made for de-centralisation as a whole, since Khrushchev's various reforms such as the bifurcation of the Party into industry and agriculture, the creation of 105 *sovmarkhozy*, and the de-centralisation of economic planning as a whole were incompatible with the planned economy of the USSR, and created chaos and poor distribution of resources. Thus, these reforms to the government were shortly thereafter reversed as well, making his feat unsuccessful ultimately.

It can be argued that Khrushchev attempted to do too much too fast, with his intended reforms to the government being hastily implemented and oftentimes counter-productive. However, he largely succeeded in the crucial facet of de-Stalinising and restricting the use of terror, reforms which were mostly maintained post his time. Nonetheless, his reforms of the party apparatus can be seen to have ~~often~~ mostly failed in changing government structure in a permanent way, as their unpopularity and inefficiency turned them into short-lived endeavours.



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Examiner Comments

This is a Level 5 response that provides a sustained analysis and exploration of Khrushchev's attempts to reform government. The focus is on government rather than leadership or policies and it is discursive in exploring the extent of success. This is clearly shown in the conclusion.



Strong conclusions are often clearly evaluative in relation to the overall judgement and indicate how the judgement has been reached in relation to the criteria for judgement used.

### Question 3

Candidates were required to judge the accuracy of the statement that Soviet policy on religion under Lenin and Stalin was markedly different from Soviet policy on religion under Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

Candidates generally had a solid knowledge of the religious policies; particularly so with Lenin, but most had a good knowledge of relevant actions under the other three leaders. Weaker responses often had very good knowledge but used this descriptively, whereas better answers were distinguished by the ability to use knowledge to compare the two pairs of leaders consistently. Most did this by a thematic approach of areas of similarity or difference and there were some very well-organised and convincing arguments indeed.

Many candidates were well prepared to discuss comparisons between Lenin-Khrushchev and Stalin-Brezhnev. However, some candidates got entangled in making needless comparisons between Lenin and Stalin, but the question required a comparison of the Lenin/Stalin period with that of the Khrushchev/Brezhnev period.

Weaker responses were more likely to work chronologically. This usually started with a very long description of Lenin's policies, followed by what Stalin did, and then moved into a comparison with Khrushchev and Brezhnev in the second half (or last third) of the answer. As a result, whilst there was good knowledge (BP2) it was the focus on similarity and difference that was missing. Some students also compared Lenin to Stalin and Khrushchev to Brezhnev making the answer quite complicated to structure. This did result in some excellent answers but often these responses spent so long comparing in great detail Lenin and Stalin that Khrushchev and Brezhnev were often only briefly covered.

Most candidates identified a mixture of similar and different aspects drawing attention to the common antipathy of all the leaders to organised religion on ideological grounds, but differences in terms of pragmatism according to the wider context, particularly that of the Second World War for Stalin and the Cold War for Brezhnev. Many answers did not restrict their range to Orthodox Christianity but included Islam as well. Some also managed to comment on the policy towards Judaism but it would have been good to have seen more.

The Soviet policy on religion under Lenin and Stalin can be argued as markedly different from the one under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, which is supported especially by a contrast in the extent of terror employed but also the reasonings behind said policies, such as war propaganda or the spreading of a certain ideology like atheism, although a general intolerance prevailed among all leaders.

On the one hand across all 4 leaders there was a general opposition to religion, reflected in their respective policies.

Lenin, following Marxist ideas which dubbed religion as 'opium of the masses' was naturally against it. Stalin furthered this, though he would later come to an agreement with the church for his own gains <sup>when he reopened city churches</sup>. However Khrushchev would reestablish anti religious policies which went as far as closing the sites that Stalin had reopened especially due to the more science oriented ideology that was becoming more prevalent as a

(Section B continued) result of the space race in the 60s. Brezhnev was the only leader who could have been considered as markedly different in this regard as there was no real active prosecution from him, unless you'd be considered a dissident. For this reason the only markedly difference really is under Brezhnev, and there was otherwise a general sense of continuity.

What was markedly different about religious policy with regards to both pairs of leaders was the extent of violence opposing it. Lenin's policies were arguably the most brutal with priests being turned into ice statues or even crucified. Even an archbishop, Vladimir, was shot outside of Kiev. To Lenin, any links with tsarists (who the church had allied with) were seen as threats. Stalin followed a similar methodology with violence employed against the muslim Sufi groups in Islamic regions around 1936. Both leaders displayed a lot of violence with regard to religious individuals whereas for Khrushchev and Brezhnev this was next to none. Under Khrushchev,

(Section B continued) at most the KGB would prevent religious individuals at times from entering holy grounds but there wasn't a level of violence like the previous leaders. Similarly Brezhnev's government barely oppressed religious individuals, aside from attempting to discourage them and convince a conversion to atheism. Ergo, there was a markedly different response to the presence of religious individuals between Lenin and Stalin and Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

What showed a general level of similarity in religious policy were the compromises made (albeit the respective reasonings varied). Lenin actually tolerated waqfs for funding Islamic schools in muslim regions; even if he abolished religious education and stripped land from the church, social policies had a higher priority to him, and the lack of terrorist links to Islam made them even less of a threat to him. Similarly, Stalin struck an agreement with the ~~Catholic~~<sup>Catholic</sup> Church during the Second World War as a way to raise patriotism and morale. However this was

(Section B continued) arguably for personal gain as the church in return even legitimized him as a leader. Khrushchev here is arguably an outlier as even Brezhnev had agreements with Muslims. While Khrushchev was mocking nuns and Islamic women with propaganda like *Bezbozhnik*, Brezhnev went as far as to establish an Islam committee in government. However, this can be argued not as a tolerant policy but a diplomatic decision, as this was to strengthen anti-American cold war relations, so similarity to Stalin can be drawn.

To conclude, there is both a level of similarity and difference with religious policies under Lenin and Stalin versus Khrushchev and Brezhnev. What marks the real markedly stark difference is the change in the oppression of religious individuals, which shifted to a more propaganda oriented approach under Khrushchev. Though besides that, there was a general trend of similarity in a general dislike towards religious individuals and truthfully each leader

(Section B continued) had his own reasons for the way in which the Soviet state would treat some groups more fondly than others. Therefore, while not fully different, the change in extent of violence involved can be used as the defining factor to mark that indeed there was a marked difference between the respective pairs of leaders. While not fully accurate, the statement of a marked difference still holds some level of accuracy.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is a Level 5 response. There is a sustained discussion of the similarities and difference between Lenin and Stalin and Khrushchev and Brezhnev using themes. There is not always a lot of detailed knowledge, but sufficient supporting evidence is well selected to meet the demands of the question. The conclusion focuses on the extent to which policies were markedly different.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Stronger responses often select specific knowledge to support an argument rather than deploying detailed explanation.

## Question 4

Candidates were required to determine the extent to which the attempts of the Soviet regime to promote a stable society in the years 1953-85 were successful.

As with Q2, success in responding to the question depended on candidate's understanding of the focus of the question; here the concept of a 'stable society' in the years 1953-85. This is found in the specification under Key Topic 4: Social Developments, 1917-85: BP1.

Some candidates structured excellent responses that covered many of the points in the mark scheme, including references to the impact of policies on housing, healthcare, employment, social welfare and social problems. Most concluded that a stable society was achieved due to successes in policies like improved housing and social welfare, despite an increase in social problems and a lack of quality in social provision. Many candidates included education policy, this was rewardable at higher Levels but as long as this was clearly linked to the concept of a 'stable society' and not just described or explained with implicit linkage (indicators of Level 2 and Level 3). There were a significant number of responses that did not really attempt to evaluate the extent of success and so, although they provided good knowledge of attempts, were not able to access the higher levels for BP1 and BP3. Those that did pointed to the weakness of attempts during the period, e.g. the failure of attempts to lessen the impact of high levels of alcohol consumption, and using the incidences of unrest across the time period.

Many responses lacked confidence in engaging with the concept of stable society. These varied from those who had some relevant features but who also covered areas such as whether economic policies met their targets (without linking to social stability) to those that focused on foreign policy and international relations, with little clear relevance to the question. Some responses focused on the Communist Party, using examples which would have been more relevant for Q2 in terms of government.

A stable society <sup>in the Soviet regime</sup> can <sup>be defined</sup> as an environment <sup>whereby</sup> the majority of people are relatively content with their livelihoods, and have received enough support from the state to sustain themselves. This can be explored under the Soviet regime through three main criteria: employment, housing and social benefits. Despite the numerous complaints between the years 1953-85, it can overall be argued that the Soviet regime were able to promote a stable society.

This can be explored first of all through the <sup>methods</sup> ~~used~~ used to help employment in the Soviet Union. Under Khrushchev, a minimum wage was introduced in 1956, followed by a shorter working week in 1957. Thereafter, Brezhnev was able to double the real wages of employees ~~by~~ between 1967-77, alongside ensuring that people had guaranteed employment according to the Soviet Constitution <sup>with</sup> 1977. ~~With~~ <sup>With</sup> regard to Andropov and Chernenko, they did ensure job security, however it did not necessarily equate to job satisfaction, due to the high rates of absenteeism and alcoholism.

(Section B continued) which had increased by 600% between the years 1940-80. Therefore, Andropov ~~father~~ recognised the need for reform, and so utilised the secret police and organised committees to tackle these issues. Consequently, it can be argued that the Soviet regime were able to successfully promote a Soviet society as it had provided mass employment to the Soviet population, of which was a major contrast to the <sup>47</sup>employment rates under Lenin and Stalin.

A further reason why the Soviet regime was successful in promoting a stable society was due to the social benefits offered <sup>between</sup> the years 1953-85. Polyclinics were established ~~as a~~ <sup>to imitate</sup> general practitioners, in the sense that they were available to all people if they had any <sup>concerns</sup> worries about their health. Moreover, sanitorias were created as a care home to cater towards any medical problems experienced by the elderly. Also, the Soviet regime had decided to put <sup>more</sup> ~~up~~ spending on welfare programmes, such as pension to ensure that the ageing population had the sufficient funds to live a not comfortable life. Consequently, it can be argued that the Soviet regime promoted a stable society due to the <sup>willingness</sup> ~~opportunity~~ in creating supportive programmes to the Soviet population, in order to avoid any discontent or a feeling that there was a disconnect due

(Section B continued) to the lack of support provided the state.

In addition, it can be accurate to argue that the Soviet regime promoted a stable society due to the development of housing. Under Khrushchev, he had decided to increase the amount of land suitable for housing <sup>towards</sup> from 178 ~~square metres~~ <sup>21 million ~~metres~~ squared metres</sup> ~~in 1951~~ by 1961, which had contracted from the 178 million squared metres in 1951. To tackle the increasing population, houses had to be built swiftly; whilst some may argue that they may have been drab and ~~constructed~~ in poor quality, it is important to recognise the improvement from Lenin's <sup>inability</sup> ~~inability~~ to provide enough housing via his method of seizing houses from the bourgeoisie and Stalin's neglect of rural areas. Instead, between 1953 - 85, <sup>there were generally enough</sup> ~~enough~~ houses to cater towards the Soviet population. Therefore, it can be argued that the Soviet regime were able to successfully ~~organise~~ promote a stable society, due to the availability of houses for the Soviet people.

In conclusion, it can be accurate to argue that the Soviet regime were able to promote a stable society between the years 1953 - 85. Through their decisive action to deal with employment, social

(Section B continued) benefits and housing, the Soviet population were content enough, to not have shown a mass anger towards the regime; Under the Soviet regime, minimal uprisings occurred and even when they did, they <sup>were not generally</sup> ~~did not~~ generally supported by the Soviet population, thus showing the stable society with which the Soviet regime were able to promote.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is a mid-Level 4 response. Here there is explanation and some exploration of attempts to promote a stable society with the argument being that attempts were successful. The extent of success is really only opened up for debate in the conclusion, with mention of some discontent in the form of uprisings. The response would have been stronger if this line of reasoning had been developed more fully with supporting evidence in the main body of the answer.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

To establish extent, it is always useful to explore different sides of an argument to be able to show that one view is stronger than another.

## Question 5

The view under discussion was that the USSR collapsed in 1991 because of the 'rise of the national question' (Extract 1, line 2). Extract 1 focused on Gorbachev's failure to deal with the growing nationalist feeling within the Soviet Union and the impact of the growth of nationalism and the collapse of communism within the Eastern bloc. Extract 2, while acknowledging the growth of nationalism, focused on Gorbachev's wider failures and miscalculations.

Most candidates were clearly able to determine the viewpoints presented by the authors of the extracts and there was no evidence that there were issues of accessibility for candidates. Lower-Level responses tended to pick out details and exemplify them with knowledge. Some candidates went beyond exemplifying to make judgements about how convincing the view was by using their own contextual knowledge to verify the detail while others used their contextual knowledge to explain the views found in the extracts. Some responses made very strong analyses and evaluations of the arguments with relevant comparisons.

Many candidates do not see the extracts as interpretations but as pieces of information that they can use to exemplify a general argument being made rather than as viewpoints to be discussed. Therefore, many responses used the approach of 'Interpretation 1 says X. This is convincing because.... Interpretation 2 says Y. This is convincing because... ' without judging and evaluating them as contrasting Interpretations. These responses often also just summarised each Interpretation in the conclusion without coming to an overall judgement or made an asserted judgement. Introducing other arguments to those of the two extracts does need to be relevant. There were a few excellent responses that used other arguments, often centred around the legacy of previous Soviet leaders, to either build on or critique the viewpoints. Some candidates used the role of Yeltsin as another factor but failed to appreciate the link between Yeltsin and the growth of nationalist feelings.

A few responses treated the extracts as contemporary sources and evaluated them as they would in an AO2 assessment rather than an AO3 assessment. This is not what is required for an Interpretations question. Also, a few attempted a historiographical approach with reference to intentionalist and structuralist historians but again, although this might be relevant, it is not a requirement of the specification to study the historiography of the topic.

Most candidates had a strong sense of the importance of nationalism in the fall of the USSR. The best answers saw this as being stimulated by many other factors such as Gorbachev, economics or glasnost. In discussing the Interpretations, some were able to point out how the instability in the Warsaw pact countries led to instability in the nationalities and republics of the Soviet Union. However, there was a significant amount of confusion between the Eastern European satellite states and the Soviet republics, which did lead to some insecurity when developing the point in Extract 1 about the impact of abandoning the Brezhnev Doctrine. It is absolutely vital to this Key Topic that candidates are aware of the political geography of the Soviet Union, including the Soviet Republics, and the relationship and nature of its satellite states. Other candidates looked at economic instability and how the prolonged nature of this led to instability. Candidates seemed to understand the issues around glasnost and the inability of Soviet leaders to understand that it could be used retrospectively, e.g. the Katyn massacre or the Ukrainian famine.

- 5 In the light of differing interpretations, how convincing do you find the view that the USSR collapsed in 1991 because of the 'rise of the national question' [Extract 1, line 2]? 9:45

To explain your answer, analyse and evaluate the material in both extracts, using your own knowledge of the issues.

(20)

There is a great historical debate over the cause of the collapse of the USSR. In Extract 1, historian Marples claims it was Gorbachev's failure to reach quickly enough dealings with nationalism (failure to suppress it) that led to the fall of the Soviet Union. Whilst in extract 2 Keep agrees that the rise of nationalism was important but claims that it was overall Gorbachev's mistakes that undid the entire political system of the USSR that was the main cause of collapse of the USSR. Keep's argument is more accurate. I align more with Keep's argument because nationalism was made inevitable by Gorbachev's political reforms. I disagree with Marples point that Gorbachev failed to address the nationalist unrest and prefer Keep's argument that it was Gorbachev's failures in his reforms that led to the USSR's collapse.

Both Extract 1 and 2 discuss the idea of nationalism as a cause of the collapse of the USSR. Marples argues that "Gorbachev's most important failure was not to reconcile the results of glasnost with the rise of the national question" and claims "his hesitation" ensured that the initiatives of the Baltic leaders ... spread to the other republics". This idea that once the national unrest came about

specifically in the Baltic States, that Gorbachev could have acted quicker to quench the unrest. This contrasts Keep's view that the "seriousness of nationalist tensions within the Soviet Union... could not be easily resolved by the rational, common sense methods he applied". Keep notes that Gorbachev tried to quench the unrest but states that rather than it being too late, that it was never going to work in the first place. Within the Baltic States, there were arise in nationalist unrest. For example in Aug 1989 a peaceful protest emerged with 2 million people holding hands. This demonstration was called the 'Baltic Way'. In addition Lithuania was the first republic to declare independence. Gorbachev in March 1990 (post-election). Here Gorbachev reacted miserably and tried two methods, peaceful by giving them economic sanctions. This didn't work. Therefore Gorbachev tried in Jan 1991 to invade Lithuania and take over their media. This resulted in 14 people dying and Yelcin to react by making his own Russian army. This disproves Marples that Gorbachev "could have negotiated the departure of the three Baltic States" because he did try. He also tried using force which caused more nationalist problems. These show that once nationalist tensions started, it was inevitable that the USSR would fall. Keep also more considers this idea more as he notes the nationalist tensions "could not be easily resolved". Therefore I find Keep's idea on nationalism to be more convincing than Marples.

Both historians also discuss the Gorbachev's political reforms as a potential cause of the fall of the USSR. Marples connects the idea that of political reform and the rise of nationalism in Gorbachev's lecture to "not to reconcile the results of glasnost with the rise of the national question". Keep agrees with this idea and claims all of Gorbachev's mistakes "are" rooted in a failure to appreciate the true nature of the Soviet political system". What Keep does not Marples fails to include is to encompass all of Gorbachev's mistakes including economic failures Gorbachev's political reforms like Glasnost (openness) came at the same time as economic restructuring (perestroika). This mistake meant that when economic failings occurred, the people had an unstable political party and the freedom to blame them. Gorbachev's political policies also included the liberalisation of media which meant the nationalists had a voice to and a platform to speak their opinion. In addition, the democratisation policies e.g., multi-candidate elections had the aim to remove moderates out of party which it <sup>it</sup> succeeded in doing. However it also had the consequence of allowing the rise of nationalists in the party. For example "Democracy 90" won 80% of the votes in Leningrad in the 1989 elections and Yelstin (a Russian nationalist) won 85% of the votes in Russia. In the 1990 republic elections, Latvia Lithuania had a majority of non-communist and this led to the Gorbachev's unsuccessful attempts and quenching national interest. These prove that national interest was made possible by political reform.

Therefore I agree with the points made by both Marples and Keep. However, political reform didn't cause the discontent by nationalists and but only provided them with a voice of which one can use to. It led to a rise of national unrest. It by the p made nationalism inevitable but didn't make it a possibility in the first place. Marples neglects the to focus on the cause of the national unrest that led to the fall of the Soviet Union. However Keep does.

In Extract 2, Keep notes of the cause economic reform led to the cause of the fall of the USSR. He notes of Gorbachev's "spending spree of 1985-86, which undermined the country's financial stability". You can see ~~not~~ this in Gorbachev's attempts to make a market reform. In 1988, he allowed people to to make their own businesses and co-operatives. This meant that the prices rose for goods which the people disliked. Therefore the government continued to subsidise the prices, meaning they had to spend more money to reduce the prices for the people and not gain the benefit of it. In 1989 In the late 80s, oil revenues decreased by 9% which was a huge loss for the export income. In addition, Gorbachev continued on how the alcohol consumption and ~~and~~ reduced production by 50%. This caused a loss of \$67 billion roubles and led to an increase in samogon alcohol (illegal produced). The debt of the USSR increased to \$27 billion in 1987. ~~double~~ This shows the huge economic mistakes that Gorbachev made. All this led

to a severe decline in the goods for the people. This led to discontent for the republics because it led to the republics' conformity was linked to the government provision of goods. As the economy decreased so did the goods for the republics. This occurred at a similar time to Gorbachev's political reforms which also had to drag the leaders of the republics to Russians. This meant the republics correlated a failing economy to Russia and the government and drove them to nationalism. Therefore Keep's argument is more convincing as it details all of Gorbachev's key mistakes. Gorbachev's political reforms and economic reforms made nationalism inevitable, an idea that aligns far more with Keep.

In ~~short~~ conclusion, I align <sup>and</sup> more with Keep's (exh 2) argument more convincingly in relation to nationalism as a cause of the collapse of the USSR. This is because it shows how Gorbachev's mistakes made all led to the fall. Nationalism was only a part of the and ~~was~~ <sup>would</sup> "not be easily resolved". Marples places too much focus on nationalism, thinking there was a possibility that reform could have saved them. This is simply not true because the political reforms and economic reforms of Gorbachev, which Keep discusses, undermined any possibility of the Soviet Union from not collapsing. Once those reforms were in place, nationalism was inevitable and the collapse was too.



This is a Level 5 response. The two extracts are the focus of the discussion throughout. The extracts are interpreted with confidence, the issues raised are analysed and there is a clear demonstration of the arguments offered in relation to the question by both authors. Contextual knowledge is used to validate or challenge the discussion of the evidence and differing arguments. There is sustained evaluative argument and substantiated judgements are given on the views in both extracts.



Always focus on the evidence and arguments presented in the extracts to form the basis of the discussion of whether the viewpoint is convincing. Show understanding that you are evaluating the different viewpoints presented in the extracts by the authors.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice.

### Section A/B responses

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher Levels:

Candidates paying close attention to the date ranges in the question.

- Sufficient consideration being given to the issue focused upon in the question.
- Candidates explaining their judgement fully with a focus on relative significance.
- Focusing carefully on the second-order concept(s) targeted in the question.
- An appropriate level of knowledge, in terms of depth of detail and supported analysis – for example, a realistic amount to enable a balanced and rounded answer on breadth questions.
- Evidence of planning.

Common issues which hindered performance:

- Paying little heed to the precise demands of the question, for example, writing about the topic without focusing on the question, or attempting to give an answer to a different question than the one that has been asked.
- Answering a question without giving sufficient consideration to the given issue in the question. For example, looking at other causes, consequences, with only limited reference to the issue/factor/key feature given in the question.
- Failure to consider the date range as specified in the question.
- Assertion of change, causation etc while using the formulaic repetition of the words of the question.
- A judgement not being reached or explained.
- A lack of sufficient supporting detail.

### Section C responses

Features commonly found in responses which were successful within the higher Levels:

- Candidates paying close attention to the precise demands of the question
- Thorough use of the extracts – though this need not mean using every point they raise.
- A confident attempt to use the two extracts together, such as consideration of their differences, attempts to compare their arguments, or evaluate their relative merits.
- Careful use of own knowledge – clearly selected to relate to the issues raised within the sources and confidently used to examine the arguments made.
- Careful reading of the extracts.

- Attempts to see beyond the obvious differences between sources, such as, consideration of the extent to which they disagreed, or where appropriate an attempt to reconcile their arguments.
- Confident handling of the extracts allied to a sharp focus on the arguments given, recognising the distinct skills demanded by A03.
- Evidence of planning using the extracts as the basis of the answer.

Common issues which hindered performance:

- Limited or uneven use of the extracts, for example, extensive use of one extract, with limited consideration of the other.
- Limited comparison or consideration of the differences between the given interpretations.
- Using the extracts merely as sources of evidentiary support.
- The use of pre-prepared material covering the more general controversy as outlined in the specification.
- Discussing the issues in the extracts without acknowledging that they are matters of interpretation being presented by historians.
- Evaluating the extracts using AO2 skills of source analysis.

## **Grade boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

