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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in  
History(WHI04) Paper 1C

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## Introduction

As with previous series, the candidates for the 2024 series were well-prepared and were able to deploy often extensive knowledge of the period and area of historical interpretation being studied. For detailed feedback on some of the general areas of strength and weakness, it is recommended that centres refer back to the Examiner reports for June 2023 and January 2024. Most of the comments made in these series still apply.

For WHI04 units, the assessment model in Section A asks candidates to evaluate a view in relation to two extracts provided from historians/authors of history and to reach a judgement as to how far they agree with the views presented in the extracts (AO3/AO1). AO3 skills focus on the extract content and the AO1 historical context should be used to validate or challenge the views in the extracts. For Section B, candidates are asked to choose one question from two alternatives and to use their AO1 knowledge and understanding to address the focus of the question in relation to the second-order concept(s) being assessed (causation, consequence, similarity, difference, change, continuity and significance). Both require candidates to write a controlled extended response with an organised argument.

Key areas of note for this series are:

1) There continues to be a clear increase in the number of candidates who understand how to approach the Section A Interpretation question. Almost all candidates now understand the requirement to discuss the extracts in relation to the view. However, there are some candidates who still use the extracts as evidence for a Section B style response and so fail to discuss the merits of the views in the extracts. The relative value of the AOs for this question are 20 marks for AO3 skills and 5 marks for AO1 skills.

2) It is clear that candidates who plan their answers are able to organise their argument and deploy knowledge that is more precisely selected to substantiate their argument. Candidates do not need to write a response for the whole hour available to them. Those that do, often end up producing very long, sometimes contradictory and less coherent answers than those who can select and deploy sufficient knowledge to further their argument and come to an evaluated judgement. There is no need for candidates to write about everything they know about the focus of the question but to select and deploy with precision. Level 5 for both Sections refers to '*sufficient knowledge... precisely selected*' and in Section B to the argument being '*logical and coherent throughout...communicated with clarity and precision*'.

3) As noted in the two previous series, there are fewer candidates who are using the indicative content as model scaffolds for answering questions. There are still some candidates, however, who are defining every word in the question and using phrases in the generic mark scheme rather than developing an argument from the outset. However, formulaic introductions to Section A are now few and far between and some excellent discussion of extracts for their own value is being seen.

4) Some responses still dismiss the given factor and write about all the other possible factors without evaluating them in relation to the given factor. It is often difficult with these responses to tell what the original question was and leads to conclusions that do not determine relative significance or come to a judgement about the actual wording of the question. Along the same lines, other responses identify an alternative given factor as being more important or more significant but do not develop valid criteria to explain why this is the case. These responses again often ignore the specific wording of the question in the conclusion and it is difficult to determine what the original question was.

5) Centres are to be commended for the amount content covered with candidates. Some of the best responses are detailed and interesting in the knowledge deployed. However, the deployment of knowledge often has weaknesses. Many candidates spend a great deal of time explaining the context of the period being assessed rather than directly analysing the key issues and features of the time being assessed. Some context may of course be valuable, but the questions are focused on the content in the specification. Also, there continues to be a significant number of responses that are chronologically and factually confused leading to arguments that lack logic, coherence and precision. Referring to point 2 above, this is often in responses where the candidate is attempting to write about 'everything they know'. This does seem to be particularly the case for many WHI04 1C candidates, who continue to confuse the different eras of the Cold War and particularly the different leaders involved at different times.

**Please note:** that it is recommended that centres look at a selection of Principal Examiner Reports from across the different options within WHI04 1A-1D and previous series to get an overall sense of examiner feedback, centre approaches and candidate achievement. It is also highly recommended that centres read the general Introduction and Section A and B introductions in the Principal Examiner Reports for June 2017. These generic introductions outline the assessment requirements for WHI04 and give an indication of the skills required.

Centres may wish to refer to the *Getting Started* guide that is to be found on the IAL History Pearson Edexcel website. It is also useful to take note of the indicative content in the mark schemes.

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 along with the Principal Examiner Reports for Paper 1 of the Pearson Edexcel History GCE. The *Applying Criteria* document gives guidance with regard to the application of criteria for the different AOs tested at A level. The GCE Paper 1 Reports will be particularly useful for exemplification of AO3 interpretations skills (but please be aware that there are slight differences within the general Level descriptors and that AO1 is assessed for IAL). Exemplification documents are also available on the Pearson Edexcel History IAL website.

## Section A

See above for general comments but it was very pleasing to see some excellent Interpretation responses.

It is worth reminding centres that although candidates are evaluating the extent to which the author's views in the Extracts are convincing, this is not a source evaluation exercise. There is no requirement in the specification for candidates to know any historiography surrounding the debate and candidates are not expected to know about the views of specific historians. In some responses, candidates evaluate the provenance of the Extracts. This is not required and can lead to time wasting in writing about the speculated origins of the books and the author's themselves, for example, making assumptions about nationality and bias. It is very helpful if centres clearly distinguish between AO2 source evaluation in Papers 2 and 3 and the AO3 evaluation of interpretations in Paper 4. One way to do this is to always refer to sources as Sources and interpretations as Extracts or referring to the names of the authors of the Extracts.

Also, candidates do have time to read the Extracts carefully and all the way through. Sometimes candidates only read partial phrases or statements and in doing so infer/suggest views that are actually contradictory to the overall view being presented. As mentioned above, it is not necessary to write for the whole hour available for this Section. Careful reading and planning can lead to a more focused and well organised response.

## Question 1

Question 1 required candidates to analyse and evaluate the two Extracts provided while deploying knowledge related to the issues raised in the Extracts to determine whether the US decision to exploit its economic power primarily explains the post-1945 development of the Cold War. The author of Extract 1, D Yergin, put forward the view that US policymakers post-1945 chose to use US economic power to achieve their political goals of promoting democracy and capitalism, maintaining the balance of power and containing communism. The author suggests that American leaders moved away from the Grand Alliance and looked to challenge the Soviet Union through economic measures such as the Marshall Plan. The author of Extract 2, A Schlesinger, suggested that the development of the Cold War was more ideological and grounded in the attitudes and beliefs of the Soviet Union. The Extract suggests that the mindset of the Soviet leaders saw the US as the symbol of a toxic environment that needed to be overcome so that Marxist ideology could thrive. There were fewer candidates this series developing a third strand of the argument and so were able to focus clearly on the two different points of view being developed in the extracts. However, as in previous series taking time to read Extract 2 might have resulted in a more direct discussion of the points of view put forward by Schlesinger.

Candidates were well prepared for discussion of major themes raised by the Key Topic controversy. There was some excellent knowledge of the political and economic situation in post-war Europe and how this affected US and Soviet policies post-1945. This knowledge was used to validate the context of the Marshall Plan but also to explain the post-war wariness of the Soviet Union. Most candidates were able to explain the historical context of the viewpoints in the interpretations, and some were able to show clear understanding

of the basis of the views being outlined in the Extracts. For Extract 1, responses referred to the changes in US policy under Truman in the years 1946-47, as it became clear that the US was not going to be able to return to isolationism. For Extract 2, responses referred to Stalin's attitude towards the new leaders of the US and Britain from 1945, the expansion of Soviet control over eastern Europe and the extent to which the USSR was impacted by World War Two. Many candidates were able to contrast the viewpoints in the Extracts well in coming to a judgement as to whether it was US decisions or Soviet attitudes that fuelled the development of the Cold War. It is important that candidates read the Extracts carefully, many candidates suggested that, in Extract 2, Schlesinger was stating that the 'US was driven by the logic of the US capitalist system...to oppose, encircle and destroy Soviet Russia' when the point being made was that the Soviet leaders believed this. There is now very little evidence of time wasted by writing long explanations of the developments of the Cold War since 1917 or events after 1953.

## **Section B**

Please note that, as indicated in previous Reports, it is of concern how many WHI04 1C candidates continue to deploy a confused chronology either in regard to specific time periods of the Cold War or to US and Soviet leadership. Clearly, where there this happens once or perhaps twice in a response it is possible to allow that the candidate is writing in stressful conditions but in too many responses, particularly in Section B, this is seen throughout the response. Common examples of this are Kennedy and Khrushchev as leaders in the 1970s, Gorbachev becoming leader of the USSR before 1985 and the period of détente happening in the 1950s.

In section B, Q3 was slightly more popular than Q2.

## **Question 2**

Candidates were required to determine whether the progress in détente between the superpower in the 1970s was mainly due to the impact of the Vietnam conflict. Most candidates had a very good grasp of the knowledge required to answer this question effectively and mainly used developments outlined in the specification, including the Sino-Soviet conflict, problems within the Soviet sphere of Europe and in the Soviet Union itself, war by proxy and the initiatives in arms control. Candidates had a very good understanding of the Vietnam conflict but sometimes far too detailed and contextual for the parameters of this question. There was no need for candidates to outline the development of the Vietnam War from the 1950s (and, indeed, this is not a significant aspect of the specification as a whole) but to determine the impact that the conflict had on events in the 1970s.

The best responses focused on the impact of the Vietnam War on the US and Soviet economies, the confidence of the US on the world stage and its contribution to the development of summit diplomacy and official visits in the 1970s. There was some interesting exploration of the impact of the war on Nixon's foreign policy with China and how this in turn affected Sino-Soviet and Soviet-US relations. Some candidates discussed

the impact of war by proxy on détente suggesting that the increase in war by proxy in the 1970s meant that the US, USSR, and to some extent China, were able to carry out high level Cold War negotiations while effectively still participating in regional 'hot wars'. Centres should note that it is difficult to refer to the Vietnam War as a proxy war for the USA after 1965 (and, indeed, for the Soviet Union in Afghanistan after 1979) so some discrimination does need to be shown. At low-mid Level 4 and Level 3, candidates tended to use the progress in détente as an explanation of the causes of the progress itself rather than explain why it happened while at Level 2 key developments in détente were described. Responses that took the reason for détente back to the Cuban Missile Crisis were clearly very valid but these responses needed to discuss the impact of the Crisis and not describe or explain the reasons for the Crisis itself.

### Question 3

Candidates were required to determine whether Reagan was more influential than Gorbachev in the developments in the 1980s leading to the end of the Cold War. Some candidates also introduced other individuals as being more influential than either Reagan or Gorbachev in the developments but this is not the focus of the question. Where other individuals were relevant was in their role in making the two named men more or less influential; for example, the suggestion that Reagan was ultimately less influential because it was Bush who was in power by the end of the 1980s. This is a question that just asks candidates to determine which of the two individual was more influential. Knowledge of the latter part of the specification is now becoming more secure but there are still candidates who write that Gorbachev was in power from 1980 and that Reagan was President until the very end of the 1980s.

The best responses explored the different ways in which Reagan and Gorbachev contributed to the end of the Cold War and weighed up which was more influential. There was some excellent negotiation through the complexities of Reagan's contribution as both aggressor and negotiator. There is some excellent knowledge of this period of time but many responses remained in Level 2 and 3 because they just explained or described the events leading to the end of the Cold War. Many candidates wrote far too much information about the actual details of Gorbachev's 'new thinking' rather than discussing its impact. There was some excellent knowledge of the participation of the two men in summit meetings and, particularly, the pivotal summit meetings in Geneva (1985) and Reykjavík (1986).

## Paper Summary

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

### Section A (AO3/AO1)

- Candidates should aim to interpret both extracts by analysing the issues raised and showing an understanding of the arguments presented by both authors. It is important to show awareness that it is historian's points of view that are the basis of a discussion; referring to the author by name helps this understanding (where there is more than one author, candidates can write the first name with et al after it.)
- Interpretations do not need to be evaluated in the same way as Sources. It is the views in the Extracts themselves that create the basis of the discussion. All the Extracts are 'secondary sources' and this does not need to be explained.
- Candidates should use their own knowledge of the specification content to validate and discuss the interpretations being presented.
- Candidates should come to an overall judgement with regard to the view stated in the question; it is not sufficient just to summarise the views presented in the extracts.

### Section B (AO1)

- Read the wording of the questions carefully, particularly if the time period of the question is stated; responses that refer to the wrong time period deploy irrelevant and inaccurate knowledge that does not directly address or only implicitly addresses the question.
- Candidates should provide more precise contextual knowledge as supporting evidence. Use knowledge to provide evidence to support a sustained evaluation in relation to the conceptual focus of the question. Secure chronological knowledge enables candidates to produce a logical and coherent answer.
- Introductions do not need to reflect a large amount of contextual detail; use introductions to establish the foundations of the argument you are about to present and to show that you understand the focus of the question.
- Use conclusions to state the judgement reached clearly and to show the relative significance of or the inter-relationship between key issues discussed in the main body of the essay; leave the examiner in no doubt as to what your judgement is and why.

