



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Level In History (WHI04)

Paper 1D The Cold War and Hot War
In Asia, 1945–90

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Publications Code: WHI04_1D_2306_ER

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Introduction

General Comments

With four consecutive series having been sat it is now possible to make some general comments on series-on-series developments. The 2023 series is the first series where there is an acknowledgement of a return to 2019 examination conditions but there is awareness that many candidates are still being prepared in challenging circumstances.

Selection and deployment of knowledge - As previously noted, candidates, in general, produce interesting responses that it is a pleasure to read and reward. The candidates were usually very well prepared in relation to knowledge of the specification and centres are to be commended for this. Candidates have good, detailed knowledge of the specification content and this is a facet that often stands out. Many responses were well-informed and well-written. Continuing from the January series, it was particularly noticeable in the WHI04 1D papers, that centres and candidates appear to have taken heed of the June 2022 Examiner Report with regard to the need for more discrimination in the selection and deployment of knowledge. In Section A, there was less use of 'stand alone' information and more contextual knowledge deployed to discuss the views in the Extracts. In Section B, there was clear indication of more focused and '*precisely selected*' (L5-BP2) knowledge.

Also, it is clear that the progression seen in January 2023 with regard to the use of the Extracts in responses is continuing. There is clear evidence in many WHI04 1D papers that the Extracts are now being dealt with as viewpoints to be discussed, with contextual knowledge used to further this discussion. For Q1, candidates do still often feel the need to develop a 'third' aspect of debate beyond the discussion being 'set up' by the Extracts. This is rarely necessary or relevant (although it may be pertinent) and often leads to responses that end up ignoring the Extracts or using them very thinly. The Extracts create the debate for discussion and own knowledge is best used validating the evidence in the Extracts and showing understanding of the basis on which the Interpretation has been founded by the author(s). Almost no candidates now write responses solely from their own knowledge and centres now understand more fully the AO3 to AO1 balance of rewardable content in Section A. It has been a real pleasure to see the progress made in the approach to Section A questions.

Conceptual understanding and application of skills - As stated in the June 2022 Examiner Report, despite good knowledge, candidates continue not always to be able to access high Level 3 marks and above due to a limited understanding of the conceptual focus of questions and the application of analytical skills.

In Section A, some candidates are still not using the Extracts as the basis of their response in Section A. These candidates no longer ignore the Extracts but use them as evidence for a traditional 'essay' response rather than building the argument around the Extracts. Many candidates are still not reaching a judgement on the given view to access the higher Levels. WHI04 1D candidates are now almost universally discussing the Extracts (AO3) but now need to develop further by seeing the Extracts as the viewpoints of historians or writers of history. More candidates were achieving high Level 4 and Level 5 marks. In Section B, lower-Level responses often lack focus on the wording of the question and/or the second-order concept being targeted. Awareness of the second-order concept(s) being targeted (cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference, significance) allows candidates to use criteria with discrimination and to come to judgements that are evaluated, e.g. the primacy of the given factor in relation to other factors, the extent to which there has been change.

There were fewer candidates who organised their responses, particularly for Section A, in the format of the indicative content in the mark scheme, which was a clear improvement from the previous June and January series. The organisation of the indicative content is not intended to be a scaffold for the organisation of responses. The indicative content is organised into distinct sections to aid the examiner in identifying the points made and the relevant contextual knowledge that might be used. Selecting key points of view without explanation and contextual knowledge deployed in a 'stand alone' manner are indicative of the lower Level descriptors and it is unlikely that such responses would be rewarded beyond Level 3. The higher-Level descriptors indicate a need for an integrated response.

In June 2022, it was noted that many introductions written for both Section A and B were written in a formulaic way both in terms of knowledge about the topic and in terms of references to criteria and the defining of terms. There was much less evidence of this in June 2023, with candidates being more direct in responding to the question asked and not wasting time by writing contextual knowledge that was not really relevant to the questions. There was also a decrease in candidates telling the examiner that the criteria being used and applied by them were 'valid'.

As in previous reports, it is worth noting that the responses are marked using a 'best-fit' process. Each bullet point strand within the generic mark scheme is considered to create an overall sense of Level and a mark applied within the Level. If a response has qualities which exemplify a variety of Levels or a strand is missing then this will be reflected by applying a 'best-fit' Level and mark. For responses which do not address an aspect of a particular strand, for example reaching a judgement in bullet point 3 for Q1, this will be reflected in the mark rewarded.

Very few candidates failed to attempt both Sections, and most were able to produce two balanced responses, so enabling them to show their ability across AO1 and AO3 skills.

General candidate performance on each Section and specific performance on individual questions for Paper 1D are considered below.

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. Some candidates are really evaluating the Extracts with regard to the convincing nature of the views, and this makes for some very interesting and thought-provoking 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 interpretation in Paper 4. One way to do this is to always refer to sources as Sources and interpretations as Extracts or referring to authors of the Extracts.

Q1. 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 how far they agreed with the view that the decision for North Korea to invade South Korea in June 1950 was instigated by Stalin. The author of Extract 1, P Lowe, put forward the view that Stalin, somewhat uncharacteristically, changed from a cautious to a riskier policy towards South Korea in 1950 and gave the go ahead for the invasion of North Korea. The authors of Extract 2, S N Goncharov et al, suggested that it was not 'pressure from Stalin alone' but that it was rather the responsibility of all three Communist leaders involved and that the decision 'came in bits and pieces'.

It was clear that most candidates had been well prepared for the Key Topic controversy and there was some excellent knowledge of the role of the different Communist leaders, and, indeed, of the USA and South Korea in what was a complex situation. Lower-level responses also often answered the question as a general question about factors leading to the invasion instead of reading the question carefully and understanding that the focus of the question was on the extent of Stalin's role.

For Extract 1, most candidates were able to discuss Stalin's change of policy from one of caution, the impact of the US indication that South Korea was no longer as strategically important to US foreign policy and the role of Korea in Stalin's wider foreign policy aims. There was some excellent integrated contextual knowledge of Acheson's January 1950 'Asian Perimeter' speech. For Extract 2, there was clear evaluation of the alternative view that no one leader or country was ultimately responsible but that the decision came from a rather muddled and confused situation. Here, there was some excellent contextual

knowledge deployed of the visit of Kim Il Sung to the USSR and his meeting with Mao. Most candidates did engage with both Extracts but some seemed to suggest that the decision to invade South Korea came directly from the USA. There might be a valid argument to suggest that the decision came in response to US or South Korean actions and policy but this would need to be explained. Some candidates were able to select material from both Extract 1 and 2 to suggest that Stalin was in fact responsible, as the go ahead was ultimately given by him, or that Kim Il Sung's persistency was the main instigator of the invasion.

Section B

Question 3 was more popular than Question 2.

Q2. Candidates were required to determine the significance of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in the collapse of French power in South East Asia in the years 1945-54. Here, candidates should explore the difference that the Battle of Dien Bien Phu made. There was some excellent knowledge of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu itself and of the collapse of French power but some responses did just describe the Battle and role of General Giap rather than determine the difference the Battle made to the situation. Some candidates determined significance through a discussion of whether it was or it was not while others looked at the Battle's relative significance in relation to other significant factors.

The best responses in Level 4 and Level 5 explored the role of Dien Bien Phu in indicating the strength and resolution of the Viet Minh, its wider significance for French power across the region and its impact on international attitudes. At this Level also, there was some good understanding of the longer-term influences on the French ranging back to the Second World War and French colonial policy post-1945. There were a significant number of responses at Level 3, and some at Level 2, which displayed good knowledge of events but tended just to explain what happened or describe events. There were few answers that did not attempt to cover the whole time period specified.

Q3. Candidates were required to reach a judgement on the statement that the military failure of the USA in Vietnam was more a consequence of US weaknesses than it was of NLF-Vietcong strengths. Most candidates were aware that they should have been explaining and exploring the relationship between the two factors given and weighing up whether US weaknesses were more important than NLF-Vietcong strengths. Very few candidates diverged from the focus into a discussion of other factors as well and this was good to see. Candidates had strong knowledge of US weaknesses, such as US military tactics, US recruitment strategy, the failure to win South Vietnamese 'hearts and minds' and the growing domestic opposition to the war. NLF-Vietcong strengths mentioned included the commitment of its fighters, the Ho Chi Minh trail and guerilla warfare tactics. Most responses showed secure chronology but sometimes responses did not make it clear exactly when events they were referring to took place, particularly references to the Tet Offensive. Some candidates confused policies under Johnson and Nixon.

The best responses at Level 4 and Level 5 explored the relationship between the two factors by directly comparing themes e.g. US versus NLF-Vietcong ability to fight in the terrain of South Vietnam, the commitment of the soldiers and the ability to win popular support in South Vietnam. Some argued that it was really a complex interaction of the two that resulted in US military failure. Better responses also focused on the military failure of the USA. At Level 3 candidates tended to explain rather than evaluate the relationship between the two. Low Level 3 and Level 2 responses tended to describe US and NLF-Vietcong actions in the war.

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)

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

