



A-Level

History

7042/2R The Cold War, c1945-1991

Report on the examination

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General

Overall, a good range of responses to the questions examined were seen. There was clear evidence of excellent conceptual understanding and analysis across all 4 questions, and there were less students encountering issues with time management. For the compulsory source question, students were able to effectively analyse the three sources in the time provided and often supported this analysis with precise contextual knowledge. There were, however, some issues with students utilising knowledge outside of the time period for this topic and not effectively using their contextual knowledge to evaluate value. For the essay questions, 02 and 04 were most popular, with only a small minority of students completing 03. There were some issues with knowledge not relevant to the time period in question 02. Overall, this was a very accessible paper on topics central to the specification.

Question 01

For the compulsory source question, students were asked to assess three sources for their individual value concerning relations between the USA and the USSR in 1945/6. As this is a depth paper, the three sources were taken from different stages in the breakdown of the Grand Alliance and had accessible provenance to analyse. Source A was an extremely positive speech given by President Roosevelt shortly after the Yalta Conference. Source B was a report from Clark Clifford, one of Truman's senior advisors detailing the USA's perception of Soviet imperialism. Source C was a telegram from the Soviet Ambassador Novikov, focusing on the Soviet view of the USA's seeming quest for world domination. The strongest responses to this question assessed each source separately, intertwining comments on content and provenance with their own contextual knowledge and reaching a substantiated judgement on the value of all three sources.

In general, the sources were very accessible and gave students a lot to discuss in terms of content and provenance. There was a clear understanding that Source A was taken from directly after the Yalta Conference and therefore was an overstatement of optimism from the President, who wanted to portray a positive outlook on the future of US-Soviet relations. There was some good use of specific knowledge to support this, focused on the agreements made at Yalta such as the UN and the Declaration of Liberated Europe being created. For Source B, many students were able to focus on the shift in attitude from Roosevelt to Truman and how, by this point in 1946, the Soviet Union had already started to renege on their agreements made at Yalta. Students were also able to link the failures of Potsdam to the source, and analyse why Clark Clifford may have wanted to express this advice to Truman. For Source C, students were able to deduce that Novikov was intending to warn the USSR of the USA's actions from his role as an ambassador in the USA. There was some good contextual knowledge used to support this analysis, including the steps Stalin had taken to dominate Eastern Europe and the USA's aims for domination at Yalta and Potsdam.

There were some more generalised comments regarding the Source A being written by a President, which deduced that it must be trustworthy, coming from a senior politician. Similarly

for Source B, there were again some more generalised comments regarding Clifford being a senior politician and therefore being a trustworthy source. To move responses from level 3 to 4, students need to consider the deeper meaning of the provenance and how this may affect its value – for example, considering the image Roosevelt wanted to portray and why he may have only wanted to express the positive developments at Yalta. Less successful answers tend to deal with provenance in a very generalised way such as asserting that a source being a public speech must therefore make it biased, claiming that propaganda is intrinsically not valuable, and senior officials writing sources can always be trusted.

There was also heavy use of contextual knowledge beyond 1946 – indeed, the indicative mark-scheme content does credit mention of Sources B and C perhaps being a prelude to the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan - but many responses simply used their contextual knowledge from 1945-1949 to assert that either the USA or USSR were being imperialistic. Knowledge should only be used if it is specifically linked to the source. In order to develop this evaluation, students need to be very careful to precisely link their contextual knowledge to specific points of the sources – e.g. in 1946 alone, communist-led governments had won ‘free elections’ in Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, and Stalin was well on his way to breaking the Yalta/Potsdam agreements.

There was also some confusion with the provenance of Source C, with a minority of students suggesting that, because Novikov was the Soviet Ambassador in the USA, he was supportive of the USA’s policies and not the USSR’s.

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

Question 02

Question 02 required students to consider whether there was a thaw in relations in the period 1955-1961. This is a prominent part of the specification and an accessible topic.

The stronger responses to this question used the term ‘significance’ to drive their analysis – considering whether there was just surface-level improvement in tensions, or whether the deep-rooted causes of tension were addressed. There was some good discussion of various developments throughout this period; including the Austrian State Treaty, visits to the USA by Khrushchev, the Camp David talks and the Geneva Summit. Good responses discussed how these developments, whilst not producing huge amounts of change in policy, demonstrated that the USA and USSR were more willing to work together. Students then discussed other fundamental issues that prevented a thaw in relations – such as the Berlin Crisis, early events in Cuba, the uprisings in Poland and Hungary and also the U2 incident. Higher-level answers intertwined these developments and tended to argue that there were only surface-level improvements – in reality, the USA and USSR were still disagreeing on key issues such as Germany.

In some responses to this question, there was a misunderstanding of the term 'thaw'; interpreting it as an increase in tensions, not a decrease. This limited some responses as it meant the argument was unconvincing and, whilst not necessarily discounting the whole response, meant there was some confused sections. Furthermore, there were a number of students utilising knowledge outside the time period which limited the marks awarded. This included discussion of the loss of China, the Korean War and McCarthyism, which were well outside the given time period of 1955-1961. Students must ensure they read the question carefully and stick to knowledge within the time period to create a strong and relevant judgement.

Question 03

Question 03 required students to assess whether Cuban intervention in Angola and Ethiopia was responsible for the deterioration of relations in this period. This was not a very popular question, with a minority of students choosing to answer it.

Those that chose this question generally had provided good responses to it. There were some students who were able to link the Cuban intervention in both Angola and Ethiopia to the deterioration in relations by suggesting that the support provided by the USSR and USA to opposing sides was incompatible with detente. There was some clear analysis on the impact of this intervention, suggesting that even though the conflicts in Angola and Ethiopia were clearly proxies, they hampered the USA and USSR from continuing to ease relations and working together towards the ending of many Cold War issues. Stronger answers then looked for other reasons why relations deteriorated in this period, such as the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the relationship between Carter and Brezhnev and the limitations of summit diplomacy. More analytical responses discussed how the interventions in Angola and Ethiopia were simply part of a larger picture of deteriorating relations, cemented by the invasion of Afghanistan.

There were some responses that simply provided narrative of the events in Angola and Ethiopia without linking to the precise question, which limited their response. There were also some responses that interpreted the question to assess whether there was a deterioration of relations or not; prompting them to discuss reasons for improving relations which was not the precise focus of the question.

Question 04

This question required students to discuss whether Gorbachev was responsible for ending the Cold War and was very popular.

Strong answers to this question discussed a myriad of reasons why Gorbachev himself led to the ending of the Cold War, including his policies of perestroika and glasnost, and ending the Brezhnev Doctrine. More analytical responses considered not only Gorbachev's policies but his leadership and other actions that may have contributed to the ending of Cold War tensions. Students then also considered other reasons for the ending of the Cold War such as personalities in the USA, summit diplomacy and increasing nationalism in the satellite states. There was some excellent knowledge on this period of the Cold War and some strong, analytical arguments focusing on Gorbachev having the right conditions to end the Cold War.

Some responses did go too far back in the time period and credited events in the 1970s for the end of the Cold War, which wasn't fully linked to the question. There were also some responses that solely focused on Gorbachev and found it difficult to balance the response.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.