



A-Level History

7042/1L The quest for political stability: Germany,
1871 - 1991

Report on the examination

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General Observations

The paper proved accessible to most students and generally discriminated well, allowing a full range of marks to be awarded. Time management was not an obvious issue, and most students were able to complete all three questions.

For the compulsory Section A 01 extract question there was evidence of some careful reading and breakdowns of the extracts in relation to the question focus. As always, some students were more confident than others in assembling their answers particularly when it came to identifying specific arguments and using appropriate own knowledge to evaluate how convincing they were. For the Section B essays most adopted a focused and balanced approach and the very best showed judgement and upheld an argument, linking well to the question throughout, whilst providing some conceptual awareness. There were some whose knowledge of material or understanding of developments were inadequate for the tasks set. Others, meanwhile, had some good knowledge but were let down by poor technique. It is largely to help such students that the following comments are offered.

It always needs to be remembered that Component 1 is a breadth study and that students must be able to deploy second-order concepts such as continuity and change in their analysis of a time-period which can cover up to 20 years or more. As such, knowledge needs to be deployed carefully in terms of enough to provide some support to arguments identified in 01, or made in essays, and not become so precise and detailed that development gets bogged down, time is wasted and responses fail to be either appropriately completed, or to cover the breadth indicated in the question.

Question 01

There were some very good answers to the extract question this year. Most students understand that they must treat each extract as a separate response, although there were some unnecessary developments of comparing all 3 extracts in a final paragraph at the end and deciding which was overall most convincing. This is not a requirement of the question, and such development was not considered in the final mark.

The key aim of the extract question is to identify arguments made within each extract in relation to the key focus of the 01 question and evaluate how convincing they are. The focus this year was German political parties in the years 1871 - 1890. Ideally students should identify an overall main argument for each extract, in relation to the focus. Understanding this argument is more convincing to the examiner if the student can express this in a holistic way. This is not about using specific words, or a sentence in the extract, but using their own words to express what the historian seems to be saying once the extract has been completely read. After that there will generally be other specific arguments made in the extract that reinforce the overall main argument. Students should try to identify at least one of these. There should be an attempt to challenge an argument at some stage. The main argument is always a strong one to develop. However, there should only be one challenge made per extract; some students waste time by challenging too many arguments. There should be a judgement at the end reinforcing the students overall thinking about the extract in terms of

convincing or not. This should be a brief paragraph only, using ideas like the main argument being too narrow or one-sided by indicating what it does not consider. Too many students waste time here by writing far too much or simply summarising what they have already written.

It needs to be remembered that in some cases an overall argument may not be that obvious with an extract, and that there may, in fact, have several disparate arguments. In such cases the student simply needs to be able to identify and develop some of these arguments using the techniques indicated.

There are some approaches within this, which students should try to avoid: the comment on the overall argument should reflect the application of the focus of the question to the extract, not simply be a paraphrase of the extract itself. The presentation of the analysis suggesting ways in which main or sub-arguments within the extract are convincing, or otherwise, should avoid identifying only 'part' of an argument and then fact-checking against own knowledge. The key aim is to indicate the 'whole' argument, be it the main, or a sub-argument, within the extract, then evaluate within the context of own knowledge. Finally, evaluation of arguments needs to be developed in a way that any own knowledge used should be sufficient to explain why they are convincing or not, and not become a long commentary, bordering on an essay style approach.

Extract A: The overall main argument here was that Bismarck's persecution of the socialists caused the SPD to become more united, organised and radical.

Extract B: The overall main argument here was that the influence of the liberal parties in this period was limited and this accelerated after 1879.

Extract C: The overall main argument here was that parties in the Reichstag did not use their constitutional powers effectively.

Too many students in all 3 extracts developed the main arguments/ sub-arguments from the lens of Bismarck, rather than the political parties themselves so that it was more about whether Bismarck was successful or not with his actions, rather than what was happening with the parties themselves. This was very frustrating as the support used in evaluations was generally the right material but because many students focused it on Bismarck, rather than political parties, they did not achieve as high a mark as they could have.

Students **must** develop their responses based on the **focus** indicated in the question.

Question 02

The most popular question for the essays and as it was based on the Nazi period, this was not surprising. The key focus was how important violence was for the Nazis rise, and maintenance, of power 1923 - 1945. Most students were able to indicate the role of violence at some point, particularly in the rise to power. Many then balanced this with other factors based on ideas like propaganda or economic developments. Breadth was an issue with this question, particularly for the later 1930's and the Second World War. Any development involving the Second World War invariably focused more on the Holocaust and drifted from the focus of violence for maintenance of power. Many responses based much of their development on the immediate rise and consolidation of power. Balance was a key discriminator for doing well with this question and this was generally achieved by most students. Another key consideration for all essays is for students to remember they are being asked to make an argument about what they think in relation to the question focus. As such, good essays, with strong overall judgements, were rewarded higher than those responses more inclined to 'sit on the fence'.

Question 03

A reasonably popular question for the essays. The key focus was that actions of the government from 1949 were mostly responsible for the growth in the economy in the years 1945 - 1965. Many students were very knowledgeable about economic developments in the period 1945 – 1965. Balance and breadth were not an issue generally. Students that did particularly well were those who were able to explain how developments contributed to economic growth, rather than just listing various policies. This was a key discriminator for the question, along with the ability to bring in some conceptual thinking. For example, the idea that the foundations for economic growth were laid in the period 1945 – 1949 and favourable conditions from 1945 allowed the government to do well.

Question 04

Another reasonably popular question for the essays. The key focus was based round whether extra-parliamentary opposition was a more significant challenge to West German governments than opposition from within. The key discriminator for this question was balance and significance. Ideally students had to balance both extra-parliamentary opposition and its impact, then opposition from within and its impact, then decide on an overall significance and why. Many students simply listed evidence of extra-parliamentary opposition, then balanced that with some inter-parliamentary opposition, before making an overall judgement. The essay did lend to quite a number of students overdeveloping support for extra-parliamentary opposition which they knew well (the RAF being a classic example), and not really understanding, or developing enough inter-parliamentary opposition, and not able to explain thinking in terms of significance. The key to a good essay is using specific support to help explain thinking and avoiding long developments that become descriptive and not moving the response forward.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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