

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y223/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper Y223/01 series overview

Y223 is one of twenty four Units for the revised A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests an extended period of History of about one hundred years through a short answer essay and a traditional essay. The paper contains two questions, each having two parts, a short answer essay and a traditional essay and candidates have to answer both parts of one question.

To do well on the short essay question (a), candidates need to consider the significance or importance both issues, factors, individuals or events mentioned in relation to the question. Having analysed or explained both they must reach a supported judgement as to which is the most important or significant.

To do well on the traditional essay candidates need to address the issue in the question, using detailed supporting knowledge. In order to reach the higher level, candidates will need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement, at least in the conclusion.

<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gave equal consideration to the two issues in the short answer essay. • Reached a developed and supported judgement as to which issue was more significant or important. • Linked their knowledge of the issues to the focus of the question. • In answering the essay question candidates discussed at least two issues in depth. • The supporting detail was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic. • Reach a supported judgement about the issue in the question. • Make a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered only one of the issues or discussed one in a superficial way. • Produced a judgement that was not supported and was therefore assertion or a judgement that did not follow logically from the response. • Were unable to use their knowledge to address the issue in the question. • Showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay. • Were unable to support their answer with relevant or accurate material. • Did not focus on the precise wording of the question. • Made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

Question 1 (a)

- 1 (a) Which of the following was a greater reason for growing tensions over Germany 1955–1961?
- (i) The rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and its inclusion in NATO (1955)
 - (ii) The building of the Berlin Wall (1961)

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

This was a popular question and elicited a wide range of responses. Of the two factors, the Berlin Wall was handled more effectively by most candidates.

When assessing the rearmament of the FRG most candidates generally limited the discussion to NATO membership and only a small minority dealt with the issues around the rearmament of the FRG. Stronger responses tended to argue that NATO membership created more tension with the USSR in particular whereas the building of the Wall lessened tensions by stabilising East Germany. Surprisingly few candidates were able to discuss the standoff at Checkpoint Charlie in October 1961 as an example of growing tensions. When it was discussed, as in this example, the results tended to be good.

Weaker answers often drifted into descriptive writing particularly on how unfair and disruptive the Berlin Wall was for Berlin's citizens. There was also some confusion between the Berlin blockade and the Wall and quite a few candidates credited Stalin with reacting to NATO and the Wall despite his death in 1953.

Exemplar 1

However unlike the inclusion of West Germany in NATO such acts lead to little consequences that could have triggered rising tensions, rather i but rather improved relations in some respects. For example Berlin as a whole became more stable and the US became uninvolved in regards to matters concerning East Berlin which largely appeased the USSR. However there were still some issues which did create tensions such as stand offs at Checkpoint Charlie where the two sides meet & the death of 236 who attempted to cross the

border which directly opposed the US's policy of human rights. However actions following the war constructions were insignificant compared to impacts that the FRG's incursion in ~~Nato~~ such as the formation of the Warsaw Pact which led to a drastic decline in tensions.

Question 1 (b)

(b)* 'In the years 1941–1945 the USSR failed to achieve its aims in its dealings with the USA and Great Britain.' How far do you agree? [20]

This question again saw a wide range of responses although a common theme saw many candidates drift into descriptive writing of the wartime conferences. Better answers were able to outline Soviet aims in the introduction and then argue as to whether they achieved success in these before providing a judgement on this. This approach can be seen in the example chosen with clear criteria set out in the introduction.

Stronger responses dealt with the whole period from 1941, and fruitfully made reference to the USSR's desperation to have a Second Front to relieve pressure on the Red army. The delay in opening this front indicated a failure in Soviet aims. Good answers also noted that as the war progressed Soviet aims changed and focused on Stalin's buffer zone which many responses successfully argued was a success.

Weaker responses found it difficult to gauge Soviet failure. In terms of judgements, candidates sometimes went for the rather simplistic line of 'there were some successes, so they didn't fail', missing the crucial evaluative element of "How far" in the question stem. There was surprisingly little discussion of the atomic bomb or the establishment of the United Nations.

Exemplar 2

Expansion was a term used to define the growing presence of the USSR in mostly eastern Europe via introduction of communist ~~party~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~east~~ parties and gaining of

of territory. Such aims were successful as by 1942 the USSR had occupied 5 eastern European countries including Romania & Lithuania. This shows success of dealing with the UK & US as such territorial expansion was left unchallenged, showing how aims of a communist revolution were left unprevented by the West as Stalin desired.

Additionally governments in exile from the likes of Poland were refused re-entry to the government, with communist figures employed to higher positions for example Minister of Interior, which was pivotal in inswinging communist power in the likes of Poland. This again shows success in achieving aims of expansion as the UK & US allowed such actions to go unquestioned further encouraging Stalin to gain territorial advance into Eastern Europe.

Question 2 (a)

- 2 (a) Which of the following was a greater cause of tension between the USSR and the West in the years 1941–1945?
- (i) Strategic and personal differences in the Grand Alliance
 - (ii) Differences in political ideology

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

This was the slightly less popular of the two questions. However by those candidates who chose this question, part A was seen to be accessible across the mark range. Both factors were generally quite well understood. Where there was any confusion this related to an understanding of “strategic” as relating to WW2 with some candidates wanting to discuss events beyond the scope of the question.

Weaker responses tended to give a description of both without reaching a judgement on the greater cause of tension. In these answers wartime tension was often limited to discussion of the Potsdam conference and the clash between Truman and Stalin and only the higher level responses were able to deal with the whole period from 1941. There was also a tendency for weaker responses to drift into a long description of the differences between Capitalism and communism

Stronger answers tended to argue that the wartime alliance was a marriage of convenience and the underlying tension of ideology was always present. Once Germany was on the verge of defeat these tensions quickly re-emerged, particularly over how democratic the liberated Eastern European states would be. This can be seen in the approach of the candidate in this chosen example.

Exemplar 3

On the other hand differences in political ideology do carry some weight. This is because ideological differences laid the ground work for the cold war, like it was the strategic / personal differences in the Grand Alliance which brought these ~~issues~~ differences to the surface. Therefore, political ideology is less important in creating tension. This is because ideological differences pre date this period as they have existed for many years and the powers managed to co operate them. The USSR was a communist country meaning that it didn't believe in democracy unlike the capitalist west, and instead believed in dictatorship and had a fascist leader, Stalin, in power. Ideological differences did cause tension but these only arose in 1945 after the war had ended, as in 1941-1944 differences were put aside in order to concentrate on defeating the axis.

power. In 1945 at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences it became clear that Stalin had ambitions for Eastern Europe in order to spread Communism. Stalin had agreed at Yalta that he would only have peaceful ambitions and would hold free elections in Poland. By the time of the Potsdam conference it was clear that Stalin had not kept to his promises as now 10 million troops were positioned in Eastern Europe to help enforce the Communist ideology. ~~This did~~ This did indeed reassure as Churchill became increasingly more suspicious of Stalin and his political intentions for Eastern Europe.

Question 2 (b)

(b)* 'There was limited change in the Cold War in Europe in the years 1946–1955.' How far do you agree? [20]

A majority of answers simply dismissed the premise of limited change and gave a list of reasons why there was a lot of change in the Cold War during this period. These one sided answers were therefore unable to give a judgement and limited themselves to low Level 4 or below. Many responses struggled with the concept of 'change'. A lot of weaker responses drifted into descriptive writing of events during the period, particularly the Berlin blockade. There was also quite a lot of irrelevant discussion of events either outside Europe (Korean War) or beyond the time period (Berlin Wall) and in some case both (Cuban Missile Crisis).

Stronger responses did address the idea of continuity either through underlying ideologies or the fact that decisions taken at Yalta and Potsdam were generally adhered to and the division of Germany was already in place by 1946. They were then able to compare this with the changes that did take place – the arms race, the Berlin blockade, Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe etc. and reach a judgement. A good example of a candidate discussing the fact that there was limited change can be seen in this example.

Exemplar 4

Firstly, one could agree that there was limited change in the

Cold War during this period as Stalin remained in power for the majority of this period up to his death in 1953. Due to this from 1946 - 1953 the USSR was committed to a hardline Stalinist regime of attempting to expand communism throughout Eastern Europe. Stalin was loyal to expanding communism throughout the Eastern Bloc to create a buffer zone as protection and eventually a Soviet sphere of influence. It was not until Stalin's death in 1953 that the Cold War changed slightly as the people of Eastern Europe had seen oppressed in Stalin's era. In 1953, following Stalin's death, saw the East German and Polish uprisings which were attempts to limit the influence of Communist rule. For example in East Germany there were riots and mass demonstrations to campaign against working pay, freedom and the re-establishment of the social democratic party which would limit Communist control. Therefore, due to the important role of Stalin as leader of the USSR he had managed to consolidate his power and influence preventing uprisings in the Eastern Bloc which would threaten Soviet control.

Furthermore, it can be argued that there was limited change in the Cold War in this period due to the lack of Western intervention in events in Eastern Europe which would increase hostility. For example Stalin had successfully managed to complete a Communist takeover of Eastern Europe where the Communist parties were in power in most countries such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria by 1948. It was agreed at the Yalta Conference that Stalin was allowed to create a Soviet sphere of influence as security security as Russia had now been invaded twice in the world war and faced extreme casualties. Due to this, the West ~~accepted~~ accepted the USSR and peacefully allowed Stalin to exert great control.

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