

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y223/01 Summer 2025 series

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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. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. 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.

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Paper Y223 series overview

Y223 is one of twenty-four units in Paper 2 for the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests a coherent period of non-British History through a short answer essay question and a traditional essay question. The paper contains two questions, each having two parts, a short answer essay and a traditional essay. Candidates have to answer both parts of one question.

To do well on the short answer essay question, candidates need to consider the significance or importance of 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. To reach the higher levels candidates need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement, at least in the conclusion.

On this paper Question 2 proved to be the more popular option for candidates.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- 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 - comparatively evaluated their chosen factors in the essays - gave supporting detail which was both accurate and relevant to the question set, not just the topic - reached a supported judgement about the issue in the question - made a series of interim judgements about the issues discussed in relation to the question.	- 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.

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Question 1 (a) (i) and (ii)

1

(a) Which of the following was the more important reason for the reunification of Germany?

(i) Developments in the DDR (East Germany) since 1984

(ii) Developments in the USSR since 1984

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

[10]

This was the less popular choice for candidates on this paper, although it still elicited a range of responses. Many candidates were more secure in dealing with developments in the USSR, with good analysis seen of Gorbachev's 'new thinking' as well as the economic weaknesses facing the Soviet Union in this period. The most successful responses were then able to direct this knowledge to the situation in its satellite states. Developments in the DDR were less well-known. Most candidates were able to discuss the fall of the Berlin Wall, but fewer were able to discuss the emigration of East Germans to Hungary once its borders opened, or the collapse of Honecker's regime and the leadership of Kohl.

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* Assess the impact of the 'new Cold War' during the period 1979 to 1985.

[20]

This question was successfully completed by those candidates who focused on the impact of the new Cold War rather than provide a general overview of events across the period. Successful responses examined the changing relations between the West and the USSR focusing on the importance of Reagan's hardline approach to communism, the impact of involvement in Afghanistan, the boycotts of the Olympic Games in Moscow and Los Angeles and the SDI programme. In contrast candidates found it fruitful to look at the economic impacts of the arms race as well as Gorbachev's reforms and their impact on Soviet foreign policy.

Question 2 (a) (i) and (ii)

2

(a) Which of the following had the greater impact on the Cold War during the period from 1956 to 1984?

(i) Ostpolitik

(ii) The Brezhnev Doctrine

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

[10]

This was the more popular choice for candidates on this paper and was generally well-answered. Less successful responses had an uneven grasp of both Ostpolitik and the Brezhnev Doctrine and wrote generally about relations across the period. More successful responses wrote in detail about Brandt's attempts to repair the relationship between East and West Germany and they were able to discuss a range of treaties showing these improvements including the Basic Treaty. In dealing with the Brezhnev Doctrine, many candidates saw this as less significant in terms of impact on the Cold War but were able to point to Soviet intervention in both Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan as proof of its impact. Some pointed to intervention in Hungary although did not point out that this would have been a retrospective application of its principles.

Exemplar 1

2)	a)	When assessing whether Ostpolitik or the Brezhnev Doctrine had a greater impact on the cold war 1956-84 we must analyse the impacts of both all throughout the time period as Ostpolitik didn't truly start until the election of Willy Brandt in 1969 and at this point it certainly was did have the greater impact than the Brezhnev Doctrine however the Soviet invasion at the end of the period the Brezhnev Doctrine led to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which undoubtedly had the greatest impact so as a result of the the Brezhnev Doctrine so I would consider this as having the greater impact 56-84 overall.
		With regards to Ostpolitik there was undoubtedly a large impact on the cold war from 1969 with the & rise of Willy Brandt; Ostpolitik was most impactful as it led to improved relations between East and West Germany, Brandt introduced reforms to the foreign policy of the FRG which somewhat reduced the close ties it had to the West at creating and paved for improved relations with the DDR these reforms were undoubtedly impactful as they led to the signing of the Basic Treaty in 1972 which normalised relations with East Germany

		and even led to the formal acknowledgement
		of East German sovereignty in 1973 along
		with an Eastern recognition of the West
		Germany. Ostpolitik had major short term
		impacts on the cold war ⁵⁶⁻⁸⁴ as it severely
		Germany was the geopolitical epicentre of
		the cold war in Europe and therefore
		the improved relations between East and West
		Germany meant that tensions were
		significantly reduced in Europe and , this
		also had a longer lasting impacts as
		it catalysed détente arguably having
		major contributions to other events which
		reduced tensions making the Helsinki Accords
		1975 possible to as the precedent in
		Europe was already less tense. As the
		time period progressed the impacts of
		Ostpolitik, although certainly apparent, became
		less impactful than the Brezhnev Doctrine
		with global détente coming to an end
		in the late 1970's so the impacts of
		Ostpolitik couldn't have been that influential
		on the cold war altogether as a new
		cold war was brewing with East-West
		Soviet and American relations worsening. Altogether
		Ostpolitik was undeniably impactful, more so
		in the short term from 1969 to the
		mid 1970's where they contributed to
		détente and in the long term Ostpolitik

had less of an impact ~~with~~ with the cold war heating up again from 1979 although geopolitical benefits in Europe remained throughout the period until the re-unification of Germany in 1999.

On the other hand, ~~also~~ the Brezhnev Doctrine's ~~importance was largely reduced~~ impact was rather reduced at the start of the period before it became greatly impactful from 1979. In ~~the~~ 1968 the Brezhnev Doctrine was put to use ~~to~~ with the crushing of the Czechoslovakian uprising, the doctrine ~~stated~~ stated the the USA would invade satellite nation or other ~~area~~ territories if required to protect soviet interests, Brezhnev invaded with 20 Warsaw Pact divisions and to captured leaders like ~~Dubček~~ Dubček making them abandon their liberal reforms. The Brezhnev Doctrine did have some impact here as soviet influence in Eastern Europe was reinforced however these impacts were largely limited as global détente continued ~~at~~ regardless of the invasion therefore the doctrine clearly didn't influence the cold war as much as geopolitical in the late 1960's / 70's. The ~~real~~ most significant impact of the Brezhnev

		Doctrine is seen to by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, this reignited the Cold war and allowed the USA to justify harsher policy with the Soviets. This was undeniably impactful as it was the end of global détente and led to an the Reagan increasing the acceleration of the Arms race which had long-lasting impacts until the apparently contributing to the fall of the USSR in 1991, all of which can be largely significantly attributed to the impacts of the Brezhnev doctrine in 1979. Conclusively, Ostpolitik was more impactful than the Brezhnev Doctrine at the start of the period 1956-84 with its benefits in Europe and its contribution to European and Global détente whilst the Brezhnev doctrine, although having less impact in the the 1960s/70s should be considered more impactful overall as a result of its contribution to starting the new Cold war in 1979 with the invasion of Afghanistan which was was extremely impactful as it shifted global precedent and had repercussions all the way until the end of the period in 1984 and until the closure of the Cold war altogether.
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This is an example of a Level 6 answer, as both factors are fully analysed and evaluated and a substantiated judgement is reached.

Question 2 (b)*

(b)* 'The main reason for the collapse of the Grand Alliance in 1945 were the departures of Roosevelt and Churchill.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

This was generally well-answered by the majority of candidates who could draw upon a range of material to discuss the reasons for the collapse of the Grand Alliance. Less successful responses pointed to events that occurred after 1945 and were therefore addressing material from outside the scope of the question. Stronger responses examined the delays to the opening of a second front, long term ideological hostility, changes to wartime leadership, in particular the more hardline approach from Truman, the removal of a common enemy in Hitler as well as tensions caused by the use of the atomic bomb in Japan and Soviet actions in Poland. A balanced and analytical approach to some of these issues proved to be a fruitful approach for candidates.

Exemplar 2

2	b	
		In Evaluation of the view that the main reason for the collapse of the Grand Alliance in 1945 were the departures of Churchill and Churchill, it is first important to define what a "main reason" is. If an aspect is the "main reason", it must be the factor that had the most significant impact on causing the resulting collapse of the Grand Alliance. Whilst the departures of Churchill and Churchill were an important reason, most compellingly supported by the fact that Harry S. Truman was the replacement, their departures can ultimately not be considered as the main reason. The ideas of wartime disagreements and Stalin's nature were arguably more important, with the nature of Stalin evidently being the "main reason" for the collapse of the Grand Alliance.
		The departure of Churchill and Churchill were not an isolated or significant reason for the collapse of the Grand Alliance. Churchill had previously taken a softer line towards Stalin, trusting his goodwill. As such, his replacement with Harry S. Truman evidences a dramatic shift in ideological thinking. Truman's "get tough" containment policy was evident in his rhetoric towards Communism, describing it as a 'Russian pervert godless system' and his claims to the Russian Foreign Minister that negotiations would 'no longer be a one way street'. Such ideology was fuelled by Kennan and Dulles' messaging, and manifested firstly in the form of the USA attempting to exert dominance of the USSR. For example, loud voices were heard on the 11th May and the testing of the atomic bomb on the eve of the Potsdam conference. Truman also sought further concessions from Stalin, such as the agreement for 'free and unfettered' elections in Poland. The departure of Churchill also contributed to tensions and the eventual breakdown of the Grand Alliance, given that both Churchill and Stalin

got on best on a personal level. For example, they shared drinks over the breakfast experience in 1941 kitchen and Churchill was also able to persuade General Sikorski of the London plan to engage in a military alliance with the USSR in the In August 1941 with the reasoning that Nazism was the greater evil. His replacement with Attlee, reflected an absence of an influential diplomatic figure that had previously been helping in holding relations together. This consequently shows how both Churchill and Roosevelt's respective departures lead to a rise in tensions in the grand alliance which ultimately catalysed its downfall. However, it can be argued that their departures were potentially less significant, considering the view that they were not the "main reason" for the grand alliance's breakdown. Churchill's successor, Truman, was still able to come to agreements with Stalin at the Potsdam Conference in May of 1945. For example, they agreed to allow for Germany into four zones after the war and also agreed for the destruction of a Nazi education which evidences collaboration. In further considering this notion is the fact that Attlee followed a similar policy to Churchill, and thus his departure was not hugely significant. Whilst Churchill got on on a personal level with Stalin, he still described Communism as "evil barbarism", ignoring how Churchill's departure may not have been wholly responsible for the breakdown of the alliance. Overall, therefore, this evidences how whilst a significant factor in the breakdown of the alliance, the departures of Churchill and Roosevelt cannot be considered the 'main reason' for the collapse of the alliance.

Lifetime tensions overall is a dividing force between the grand alliance between 1941 and 1945 and ultimately played a considerable role in the breakdown of the alliance in 1945. This is most pertinently evidenced through the issue of the Second Joint. Following Operation Barbarossa,

Stalin was joining 150 divisions and 4 million men, with the
 Germans seeing the advantages of Moscow in November 1942 - this
 immense need for a second front was not met initially by
 the other members of the alliance, which caused significant tensions due
 to Churchill's limited promise to attack via the "soft underbelly" of
 Europe. This resulted in significant tensions in the grand alliance, which
 continued to risk collapse in 1945 as Stalin felt as if the allies
 may come to a separate agreement with Germany or the Red Army's
 influence would be weakened. Wartime tensions also arose over the
 liberation of Europe in the East, with the Soviet spheres of influence
 established. For example, the Treaty of Friendship signed with Czechoslovakia
 in December 1943 banned the opposition party (Czechs) and established
 the communist party as primary influence despite only having 10% in the
 1935 elections. This wartime development evidently led to tensions, as both
 the UK and USA strongly opposed Soviet expansionism in Eastern
 Europe. However, wartime co-operation suggests that this perhaps was
 not the main "iron reason" for the divide. For example, at Tehran
 November 1943, the allies agreed on a D-day invasion which took
 place in June 1944 with 156,000 men. Stalin noted the outcome
 as a "great success", which reflects how wartime issues only caused
 tensions which contributed to the collapse of the alliance to a limited
 extent. Therefore, in hindsight, wartime tensions cannot be considered
 the main reason for the collapse of the alliance although they
 were arguably more significant than the departures of Roosevelt and
 Churchill.

Stalin's nature was a vicious dividing factor that was the
 ultimately the biggest factor in the collapse of the grand alliance,
 far more significant than the departures of Churchill and Roosevelt. His
~~personality~~ pathological viciousness, seen through the Polish tragedy, evidenced
 a deep split in the alliance with both the USA and the UK
 opposing his actions. This was initially evident in the Katyn Massacre,
 which was uncovered in April 1943 by German radio and showed
 how Stalin was responsible for the massacre of 20k soldiers in
 a Soviet controlled zone between 1938 and 1941. This is further
 by Stalin's actions in the Leningrad uprising or on the 4th August,
 for which he halted ~~red~~ red army advances, preventing all help from
 supplying and disarming Polish troops attempting to break through. This
 ultimately allowed the retreating Nazis to systematically crush Warsaw,
 which demonstrates Stalin's willingness to allow failure. The allies took
 significant opposition to such actions which played a significant role
 in exacerbating the growing ideological divide between the alliance
 and thus contributing to its collapse. Stalin's kidnapping of 16 British
 pilots of March 1945 further demonstrates his ability to renounce on
 previous agreements given days and at Yalta in February 1945 with
 further substantiating the notion that his name was the most important
 reason for the collapse of the grand alliance. ~~However, it is not~~
 from the fact that the departure of Churchill and Roosevelt was significant,
 given that Churchill and Roosevelt ~~had~~ ability to manage and approve
 Stalin was the most important reason in preventing the collapse of the
 alliance up to 1945, is true testament to the reason the Stalin's
 nature was the ~~main~~ "main reason for the collapse in the
 grand alliance". However, there are some aspects of Stalin's nature that
 may reflect the revisionist interpretation of the cold war, as that Stalin
 was merely looking for super powers been considered 3 times in the last

So great. His action in the dissolving COMINTERN in 1943 reflects his willingness to cooperate with the alliance, alongside his eagerness as Yalta for a London-London pact (allition in Yalta). His the fact he also got on relatively well leaders like Churchill leads high to the view that his nature may not have been as significant. However, the overwhelming more powerful argument suggests that Stalin's pathological, expansionist and misusing nature was indeed the 'main reason' for the collapse of the grand alliance, given that it differed so significantly from the other powers in the alliance. This therefore reflects how the main reason cannot be considered to be the departure of Roosevelt and Churchill, as Stalin's nature and actions were far more significant.

Overall, in judgement, it is imperative to look back on the aforementioned definition of 'main reason' in regards to the view that the departures of Roosevelt and Churchill deserve such a description in the breakdown of the grand alliance. Whilst their departures and subsequent replacements undoubtedly played a significant role in the alliance's breakdown, describing them as the 'main reason' would ultimately be an overstatement. Given the fact that the primary reason their departures caused tensions and the collapse of the alliance was that their successors were less well placed to deal with Stalin, this reflects how Stalin's vicious nature must be regarded as the main reason for the collapse of the alliance, underscoring this argument is the post-revisionist interpretation. In that the ideological differences were so fundamentally opposing (capitalism and communism) that the leaders (Churchill and Roosevelt) were ultimately ineffective as the ideological differences

		between the parties diverged so significantly that the alliance was
		bound to fail. Ultimately, it's contradictory the reason that the
		disputes of Roosevelt and Churchill were not the "main reason"
		for tension, in line with the definition of what a main reason
		can be viewed as.

Exemplar 2 gave a balanced and analytical approach to some of the issues; judgements are also made and so the candidate was awarded a mark in Level 6.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be reminded to take notice of the dates in the question and make sure that material is tailored to the specifics of the question. In this question material from post-1945 would not be seen as relevant to the reasons for the collapse in 1945.

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