

History

Answers and commentaries A-level (7042)

20 Democracy and Nazism: Germany, 1918 — 1945

Marked answers from students for questions from the June 2022 exams. Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

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Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the student.

This resource is to be used alongside the A-level History Component 20 Democracy and Nazism: Germany, 1918–1945 June 2022 Question paper and inserts.

Question 1

With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying developments after the abdication of the Kaiser in 1918.

[30 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25-30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19-24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13-18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7-12**

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L1: The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1-6**

Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

Source A is valuable as it gives insight into how the army sought to serve its position, values and independence following the abdication of the Kaiser, on the 9 Nov 1918.

The source is composed of General Groener a senior figure in the Reichswehr at the time of the abdication. This is valuable given that Groener was at the centre of events following the Kaisers departure, signing the Ebert– Groener Pact on the 10 Nov, hence he gives valuable insight into the actions of the army on this time. Groener recalls a telephone conversation with Ebert from the 10 November. This too is valuable as it conveys how the Reichswehr immediately sought to safeguard its privileges following abdication, substantiated by the Ebert-Groener Pact. This prevented the democratisation of the army in return for its support of the Republic, showing how, already at this early date, the army was attempting to bolster its position. However, the fact that this conversation took place so soon after abdication could limit the voice as the historian does not receive insight into the army's further attempts to protect itself, such as its quashing of left-wing insurgencies such as the Spartacist Uprising in Jan 1919. The fact that the source is taken from Groeners recollection of a phone conversation could ostensibly limit the sources value given that he is remembering an informal exchange with no official basis. However the informal nature of the conversation is in fact valuable as it shows the covert deals that took place after the Kaiser's abdication with both army and government attempting to advance their own interests.

Regarding Content, the main notion of the source is that Groener successfully initiated an 'alliance' with Evert after Kaiser's abdication, seeking to 'fight against Bolshevism' and pressure the 'Strongest elements of old Russia'. This is thoroughly valuable as the army sought to cooperate with the government soon after the abdication, acknowledging that the revolution would necessitate a degree of compromise in order to maintain the army's aristocratic nature, as shown by the Ebert-Groener Pact (10 Nov), hence rendering the source valuable as the historian understands the motives and decisions of the army after the 9 November. Moreover, Groener remarks that a key aim of this 'alliance' was to 'make the revolutionary movement harmless'. This is valuable as the Pact put the army in a strong position to stymie revolutionary elements, quashing a Spartacist rising and the Berlin Sailors Revolt in Dec 1918, further conveying that the army sought to protect its own interests, including quashing the radical left, after the abdication.

In conclusion, Source A is largely valuable as it conveys the covert dealings of the army with the govt after the 9 Nov and how Groener aimed to protect the Reichswehr interest, although this is somewhat limited by the fact that it is a recollection of a conversation which took place so soon after the abdication.

Source B is articulated by Karl Liebknecht, a key figure in the far left Spartacist League and a future leader of the KPD, this is valuable as he epitomises the concerns of the far left following the Kaisers abdication, stemming from his fear of the influence of the aristocratic army and right wing, hence giving insight into how political fascism developed after the 9 November.

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Taken from a speech on the 10 Nov, the source is also valuable as it conveys that the fears of the far left were prominent after the Kaiser's abdication, portraying how the political hostility was formed from an early date. The fact that Liebknecht is speaking to the SPD and USPD could limit the source's value. These two parties, though on the left, were more moderate than the Spartacists, hence Liebknecht may potentially overstate the threat from the right in order to convince the SPD/USPD that the revolution must be extended. This is shown by his polemic take, such as when he proclaims: 'Enemies surround us!' hence conveying a degree of exaggeration.

Regarding the sources context, Liebknecht's primary idea is that the threat from the aristocracy and army, innately at odds with the army, was already a major concern following the Kaiser's abdication, asserting 'The counter-revolution is already on the march'. This is valuable as the army were undoubtedly a major threat to the Republic, given that 21% the Reichswehr originated from the aristocracy while generals such as Van Seeckt claimed to serve a 'timeless Reich' rather than elected officials hence showing how the army was already seeking to undermine the government after 9 November. Liebknecht further asserts the danger of high ranking, likely anti-democratic, officers being 'elected chairmen of soldiers' councils'. Although he may overestimate the extent to which anti-democrats had control of these councils, given that they were largely empowered by working-class soldiers, shown by the groups set up in Kiel on the 6 Nov, this is largely valuable as it shows how privileged position of the army in institutions, including in the Republic, was a threat. For example, the Ebert-Groener Pact (10 Nov) blocked the democratisation of the army, placing it in a good position to undermine the government, as depicted by its reluctance to squash the Kapp Putsch in March 1920.

Overall, Source B is largely valuable as it conveys the fears of the far left in relation to the threat from the right in the aftermath of the Kaiser's abdication, though Liebknecht may somewhat over state this due to his audience being the SPD and USPD who he wants to persuade.

Source C is articulated by Noske, the SPD Defence Minister. This is valuable as, after the Kaiser's abdication, he was at the centre of developments, lending credibility to his views. Moreover, this is from a speech on the 7 Jan 1919. This is valuable as it gives insight into how the govt dealt with the Spartacist uprising, a key development which erupted on the 5 Jan. However, this is limited in value as the insurgency would only be quashed on the 13 Jan, hence caution must be taken in relation to Noske's remarks as the insurrection was not yet finished, meaning the historians cannot fully gauge the significance of this development. The fact that Noske is speaking to the lower strata of society in a buoyant tone ('Worker, Soldier Citizen!') striving to persuade them to support the Republic is also valuable, since it exhibits how the govt realised support from the workers, was tenuous, exemplified by the Berlin Sailors Revolt in 23-24 Dec, hence exploring why Noske appealed to them. However, given that he is trying to cajole them into backing the govt, this may limit value as he could overstate the strength of the government and Republic.

In terms of content, Noske seeks to convey government strength in response to far left threats, declaring the 'govt has the power to carry out your demands to end the bloodshed'.

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Ostensibly, this limits value as the govt was often weak in the face of such threats, as shown by the fact that the Freikorps, a pure military group, were required to aid the quelling at the Spartacist rising. However, this is also valuable as it conveys that one of the key developments after the abdication was the Republic trying to ensure the support of the working class. For instance, on 22 Nov 1918, the govt declares to the workers that it would only govern in their name, and thus this speech can be seen as an extension of this. Noske also advances that in relation to these threats 'no unnecessary blood will be spilled.' Although this further shows his attempts to persuade the working, this is less valuable as many left wing revolts would be violently quashed, such as the Red Ruhr in March 1920 where 1000 workers died, implying that unnecessary blood was spilled as these insurgencies could have been prevented if the Republic better catered towards the workers,

In conclusion, source us only partially valuable. Although it exemplifies the Republic's yearning to ensure working class support after the Kaiser's abdication, it overstated the strength of the govt in order to achieve this while it does not provide a full picture of the Spartacist uprising, a key development.

This is a Level 5 response

The key strength of this response is in its understanding of the historical context of the sources and how that relates to their content and provenance. The response adopts the approach of assessing the provenance and tone in one paragraph, before moving on to look at the content and argument. Sometimes, this approach can be rather formulaic, however, in each paragraph here there is consistent focus on the question, effective balance, and very good links to the historical context. Overall judgement on each source is slightly limited in scope but sufficiently substantiated by the preceding discussion.

Response B

Source A is a secondary source which details General Groener's dealing with Ebert, concerning what would become known as the 1918 Ebert-Groener pact. Ebert recounts the agreement as a success, as support for the government was traded for assurances that the army would be supported in return. Groener takes on a tone of satisfaction with their developments as he talks about preserving the 'strongest elements of old Prussia despite the revolution'. He seeks to 'make the revolutionary movement harmless'. This provides insight into the reaction of the of the right wing and the army to the abdication of the Kaisers and the revolutionary movement. It tells us that those in power intended to undermine the reduction by leaving institution such as the army (and the 'old guard') unchecked. This leads to the idea of the 1918 revolution being a 'limited revolution'. This was seen as a severe betrayal by the left wing organisation and worker's councils which had driven the revolution; this led to clear division between both the left and right political wings; and within the left itself (namely the UPD turning against the SPD and naming them traitors for Ebert's actions). The very fact that Ebert had to seek alliance with the army to ensure his government stability highlights the severe political instability and polarisation that followed the abdication of the Kaiser. As the source's provenance originates from one of the pacts members – its unlikely that Groener would portray the pact in a negative light – and this is true as he only seeks to highlight the positives. However, this doesn't necessarily limit its value as it still provides insight into the views of the right wing and the army concerning the events and more can be inferred from the events described. The source is also valuable as it was published in 1957 – after the events of 1918. This means it has been written with knowledge of the events that came to pass after the abdication of the Kaiser – rather than only during the same year. In conclusion, I believe source A is fairly valuable as it aligns well with historical context and helps explain the underlying political instability that clung to Weimar democracy after the Kaiser abdicated.

Source B is a primary source in which Karl Liebknecht takes on a critical tone concerning the developments following the abdication of the Kaiser. As a primary source from a prominent communist leader – source B provides valuable insight into the attitudes of the political left wing and helps explain the political instability that followed these developments. The source is slightly limited as its written in 1918, and the tone does not have the context of the events that took place in the following years, but is still valuable in explaining the immediate reactions to the revolution and abdication of the Kaiser which drove following events. Liebknecht takes on a negative tone concerning these developments -naming the 'counter-revolution'. This is a clear reference to the efforts of those in power to limit the revolution as is evident in the actions of Ebert – who allied himself with the army in the Ebert-Groener pact (which took place on the same day) and the right wing who actively opposed democracy. Liebknecht refers to various groups which can be known as the 'old guard' as evidence. This old guard was indeed left untouched by the revolution and detained their power – serving as proof of a 'limited revolution' that did not align with the demands of the left wing who had driven the revolution. In conclusion, I believe source B is fairly valuable as it provides invaluable insights into the reaction of the left wing (specifically communists) and help explain the political instability and 'limited revolution' that followed the abdication of the Kaisers – all whilst aligning accurately with historical context.

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Source C concerns Noske's speech about the Spartacist risings in Berlin that took place in 1919. Outraged by the betrayal of the Ebert-Groener pact and the 'untouched old guard' which led to a 'limited revolution', the Spartacists marched on Berlin in an attempt at revolution. Noske portrays the attacks in a negative light and takes on a collaborative tone as he calls for people to unite against the Spartacist threat to democracy. As the SPD minister of defence, Noske proceeded to use the Freikorps to crush the Spartacist movement - a move which exacerbated leftist divisions and communist hatred for the SPD. The need to rely on the Freikorps also highlighted the unreliability of the army when it came to defending democracy - something that goes directly against what Noske implies when he references the government's leadership of republic soldiers. This misalignment with historical context is to be expected given Noske's position as an SPD Minister of defence. This position and the provenance of the source being a public address both imply that the source would undoubtedly seek to portray the Spartacists negatively whilst strengthening the position of the SPD government. It is undeniable that the source's speaker is biased but this doesn't necessarily limit its value. In actuality - it helps explain the position of the new Weimar government following the events of 1918 and provides insight into the various reactions of the two political extremes. In conclusion, I believe source C is valuable as it provides unique insight into how members representing the Weimar government attempted to tackle the political instability that came as a result of the abdication of the Kaiser and the 1918 revolution.

This is a Level 3 response

This is a good example of an imbalanced response. The assessment of Source C is quite a bit better than that of Source B, with Source A falling in between. Overall, the response does show an understanding of all three sources in relation to content and provenance. However, this is better on Source C, where contextual knowledge has greater depth and is applied effectively to assessing both the argument and provenance. On Source A, contextual knowledge is deployed in a more descriptive manner and links to the question are rather implicit. On Source B, contextual knowledge is thin.

Question 2

'In the years 1924 to 1928, Germany's international position was greatly strengthened.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21-25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16-20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11-15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6-10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1-5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

Overall, the view that Germany's international position was greatly strengthened 1914-28 is largely valid. Although the Treaty of Versailles, a constant bane on Germany's global standing, was not fully revised, Stresemann, the foreign minister in this period, predominantly elicited an improvement of Germany's international position in this time, from an economic, diplomatic and military view and in this he was 'astonishingly successful' (Kolb). Therefore, since there was a clear advancement in Germany's international position, it is largely valid to state that it was greatly strengthened in this period.

In terms of Germany's position in the global economy and in regards to the reparations lifted upon the country by the Allies in the treaty of Versailles, the view that the nation's international position was strengthened between 1924-28 is largely valid. This is most clearly exemplified by the Dawes Plan in Aug 1924, elicited by Stresemann. Predominantly successful in improving Germany's international economic position, the plan was the first time the Allies had addressed Germany's crippling reparation problem, which had led to hyperinflation in 1923. Although the reparations figure remained at £6.6 bn, leading Stresemann to dub the arrangement an 'economic armistice' and potentially implying that Germany's international position was not greatly strengthened, payments up until 1929 were reduced while Stresemann garnered an 800m mark loan from the USA to reinvigorate the economy and reintegrate Germany in global trade. This had largely positive implications for Germany's international economic position, given that the country received two times more capital from abroad than it paid in reparations, hence showing the view to be largely valid as this aid provided to the German economy by the Dawes Plan allowed the country to play a more fruitful role in global economic relations, due to this influx of foreign investment. Moreover, Germany's economic international position was also strengthened by increased trade with the USSR, this portraying the view as largely valid. For instance, the treaty of Berlin (1926), which renewed economic relations between the two countries, saw trade rise to 433m RM by 1927. Therefore, although the issue of reparations was not completely quashed, it remains compelling to assert that the view that Germany's international position was greatly strengthened between 1924-28 is largely valid as Stresemann's foreign policy manoeuvres enacted an influx of foreign investment and an improvement in Germany's position in world trade.

In a diplomatic sense, the view that Germany's international position 1924-28 was greatly strengthened remains largely valid, given that Germany was able to quash its pariah status that it had endured since WWI by cultivating relations with the major powers. This is most notably exhibited by the Locarno Pact (1925), where significant European countries met at Stresemann's invitation. This agreement was crucial in soothing Allied fears over Germany's continued threat since WWI, with Stresemann, as part of his pragmatic conformity with the TOV to make its revision more likely (the policy of fulfilment), accepting the Western border set out in the TOV, while also entering into a mutual guarantee agreement with Britain, France, Belgium and Italy in order to appease the Allies. Though this did not result in complete repudiation of the TOV, it is largely valid to suggest that this strengthened Germany's

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international position as it was able to regain the trust of the Allies. This is exemplified by Locarno catalysing the departure of Allied Forces from Zone 1 and the departure of the Inter-Allied Control Commission in 1926, clearly conveying that Germany was no longer a pariah, hence greatly advancing its international position. Therefore, Locarno led to Germany being accepted into the League of Nations in Sept 1926, further testament to the country's improved diplomatic position as it was now treated like an equal partner. Therefore, although the ToV was not completely revised in a diplomatic sense in this period, conveyed by its Western border being cemented, the view that Germany's international position 1924-28 was greatly strengthened remains largely valid as this policy of fulfilment was necessary to regain the trust of the Allies and allow Germany to act as an equal player in foreign affairs again.

Military, it is also largely valid to suggest that Germany's international position was greatly strengthened 1924-28. Although the punitive military restrictions of the TOV remained, enforced by the IMCC until 1926, Stresemann was adept at circumventing these regulations through cultivating relations with other countries. For instance, he made covert arrangements with Spain and Sweden to develop submarines, tanks and artillery in these areas, clearly breaching the TOV and hence greatly ameliorating Germany's international position as its military force was bolstered. This notion can be further substantiated given that Stresemann also elicited arrangements with the USSR to improve Germany's military position, renewing the Treaty of Rapallo (1922) with the Treaty of Berlin (1926), enabling Germany to train pilots and develop weapons in the Soviet Union. Therefore, given that Germany's international position was strengthened through relations with other countries to enable improved military capacity, it is largely valid to state that its international position had been bolstered 1924-28, though it would be an exaggeration to opine that it was 'greatly strengthened' as TOV restrictions remained.

In conclusion, it is largely valid to view that Germany's international position had been strengthened 1924-28, thanks to improvements in an economic, diplomatic and military sense in relation to global affairs, with the validity of this view being slightly limited given that several constraints from the TOV remained, though this should not significantly detract from Stresemann's successful efforts to re-cement Germany in the international stage.

This is a Level 5 response

The response demonstrates a very good understanding of the question from the beginning. It is very well-organised, adopting a fully analytical approach by focusing on the key aspects of the economy, diplomacy and military. In doing so, the response demonstrates very good understanding of key features and concepts, which is supported by well-selected and precise contextual evidence. The response has an element of balance running through each paragraph in relation to the ongoing limitations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. This could be better supported with evidence, but overall there is sufficient substantiation of judgement for Level 5.

Response B

By 1928 Germany's international position had greatly improved due to the new agreements she had formed and the increasing recovery of the economy. The strength of Germany's international position went from being globally isolated to then booming with new relationships with Europe and the USA.

Germany's international position was mainly strengthened due to agreements made with other countries. The Locarno pact was signed in 1925 under foreign Secretary Gustav Stresemann. The treaty of Rapallo helped Germany strengthen relations with Britain, France and Belgium. This pact required that Germany would respect the terms laid out in the Treaty of Versailles regarding the western borders and keeping the Rhineland demilitarized. In return it was agreed that France and Belgium would do the same thing regarding Germany's border. The agreement was not to be mistaken as an alliance but a 'mutual protection agreement' where if any side were to disobey then the other two countries could fight back together, Germany also was able to secure a friend in the East. The Treaty of Rapallo was signed by Walter Rathenau in 1922 right before he was assassinated. This was strengthened by Stresemann who thought the USSR was an important country to be backing Germany. The Treaty of Berlin highlighted that what was said about trade and relations would remain the same with the added clause that if the USSR was to engage in any war then Germany would remain neutral unless the USSR was the aggressor. These agreements made Germany strong on both sides with France, Belgium and Russia now on their side.

However Germany's international position was undercut by the signing of these treaties with the USSR. France and Belgium saw this as a conflict with their own treaty and whilst they did not cause any particularly large issues, it was acknowledged that further adjustments were to be made for France and Belgium to be satisfied. Initially, Germany had been left out of the League of Nations which was truly a sign of weak international position. It was only in 1926 when they had been accepted, showing that relations had maybe started to repair but were still wounded. Furthermore, Germany was in a large amount of debt that had accumulated as a result of the war and the consequent reparations of 100 billion marks that Germany had to pay in punishment. When it became evident that Germany would not be able to pay back these reparations, France, as the country hit hardest by the first world war was mad and as a result troops moved into the Ruhr in 1923 to try and put pressure on Germany to pay back all the money that they owed. The Ruhr was responsible for over 80% of Germany's coal production. This put an even bigger hit on the German economy and subsequently the money became harder to pay back.

However, Germany's international position was slightly more nuanced. Although France was still insistent on the reparations to come quicker, the USA saw an opportunity to aid Germany and as such boost the German international position. American banker Charles Dawes had set up a plan to help make the reparations that Germany had to pay slightly more manageable. He changed the terms of the deal so that in the first year Germany only had to pay 1 billion marks and in every year that followed 2.5 billion marks. Along with this, the USA ordered for troops to be removed from the Ruhr by 1926 to allow for economic resurgence. This allowed Germany to pay back their money quicker as they could make more money from the Ruhr. Lastly the USA gave Germany a loan that had to be paid back within the years of

their contract. The loan was for 800 million marks which allowed Germany to invest it in ways that would increase their cashflow immediately. This helped Germany mend their relationship with the France and establish that the USA was on their side,

Overall, Germany's international position strengthened dramatically during this time with the agreements that had been arranged and the economic help that was provided partly to be an olive branch.

This is a Level 3 response

This response shows an understanding of the question from the start, however, the explanation of the Locarno Treaty drifts into description. It is more precise on relations with the USSR and the paragraph finishes with a point focused on the question. However, the attempt at balance in the following paragraph is unconvincing and the section on the Ruhr lacks precise relevance to the question dates. The Dawes Plan paragraph is clearly relevant but is too narrative in style. Throughout, there is comment in relation to the question but this tends to be one sentence assertions, eg in conclusion.

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