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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2R The Cold War c1945-1991  
Report on the Examination

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## General

In general, it was clear to see that the vast majority of students for this component had revised thoroughly. The level of contextual own knowledge was excellent across all four questions and there were very few issues apparent with time management, meaning that most students attempted all three required answers in good detail. Poor communication skills and legibility only affected a small number of responses. It was pleasing to see that many students were able to evaluate the different aspects of the compulsory question such as content, provenance and value of the sources. Of the essay questions, 02 and 04 were the most popular and many students were able to offer a high level of specific detail along with analysis and sustained judgements.

## Question 01

For the compulsory source question, students were required to assess the value of three separate sources in relation to the developing relationship between the USA and South Vietnam in a focused time-frame of 1960-62. The best responses to this question evaluated each source separately, considering content, argument and provenance with relevant and focused contextual own knowledge that was directly relevant to the relationship between the USA and South Vietnam.

The three sources focused on varying aspects of the relationship between the USA and South Vietnam in the years 1960-62. Some students did lack some specific contextual knowledge particularly for the early relationship between the two nations. However, in general there was an excellent understanding of the issues faced by the USA when supporting Diem as South Vietnamese leader, failures of US policy including the Strategic Hamlet Program, and increasing doubts about the US involvement in defending South Vietnam from the communist North. There was a particularly good understanding of Kennedy's changing attitudes towards Vietnam and how these sources reflected this. The weaker responses did tend to utilise contextual knowledge that was perhaps not well-chosen and did not directly link to the value of the source – particularly when using knowledge about Vietnam from much later in the period, e.g. 1968 onwards.

There were some very strong answers evaluating Sources A and B as sources of changing US policy towards Vietnam, and their perception of Diem's leadership in Vietnam. Some excellent comments on provenance suggested that perhaps both Eisenhower and Kennedy were attempting to justify their actions in South Vietnam to a very anxious public audience, and therefore neglected to recognise Diem's nepotistic and corrupt regime. Weaker answers merely suggested with no development that a direct note between Eisenhower and Diem suggests a strong relationship in Source A; and that in Source B the fact that this was an interview with journalists makes it unreliable. The provenance of Source C had perhaps the least developed comment, as many students under-estimated Galbraith's advice to Kennedy about reducing US involvement and what this may entail. The stronger answers here linked this to their own knowledge about Kennedy feeling doubtful about straying away from counter-insurgency strategies.

There were a number of responses that failed to assess the value of the sources in direct relation to the issue in the question – merely making comments on whether the information provided was accurate or not, which is possibly a skill taken from Paper 1. It is crucial that students make clear judgements on the value of the sources rather than simply describing source content/provenance and using some own knowledge to 'fact-check' the sources.

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**Question 02**

This question asked students to evaluate the main reasons for American involvement in Europe in the years 1945 to 1949. This was a very popular question and had varying levels of analysis but certainly allowed students to identify a range of factors relevant to the question. The strongest responses were able to focus on two aspects of American economic interests – the Marshall Plan and involvement in Germany including the introduction of the Deutschmark. There were also other comments made on the Truman Doctrine and involvement in Greece referencing economic interests. Most students were able to identify that the economic conditions of the Marshall Plan allowed America to develop its trading partners and was referred to as ‘dollar imperialism’ by the USSR. Similarly, students argued that the introduction of the Deutschmark demonstrated a desire for economic imperialism in Germany. Some responses simply described the Marshall Plan and made only generalised links to economic interests.

There were two other main issues identified as reasons for American involvement in Europe; containment of communism, and the desire to establish itself as a superpower. Some very strong responses were able to either suggest that containment was the underlying reason for all policies in Europe, or equally that all US policies had a hint of economic benefit for the USA. When students discussed containment they were able to make reference to Stalin’s expansion into Eastern Europe as a trigger for American involvement, but were less confident when discussing American imperialism. There were many responses that produced a sustained judgement throughout.

**Question 03**

This question asked students to evaluate the reasons for worsening relations between the USSR and China in the years 1963 to 1972. This question was the least popular by far, with only a minority of students attempting it. However, it was actually the question that provided most analytical comment and precise detail that was used to weigh up the different reasons for worsening relations between the USSR and China. Given the focus of the question, it was expected that students evaluated the importance of ideological differences between the two nations – the higher level responses were able to assess changing ideologies in both nations and how this impacted on their relationship, e.g. Mao accusing Khrushchev of revisionism and Chinese efforts to return to traditional communism with the Cultural Revolution.

There were many responses that also focused on territorial reasons for the split, referencing very precise border disputes and disagreements over territory which impacted on the relationship. Furthermore, some students commented on the improving Sino-American relations as a reason for worsening relations; however there were some issues with students commenting beyond 1972 and referring to developments between the USA and China which hadn’t happened yet. The link with Sino-American relations tended to be weaker and did not allow students to fully develop their analysis. A lot of students tended to not make the link between improving Sino-American relations and worsening Sino-Soviet relations. There were a good number of responses that managed to suggest that ideological differences were the underlying cause for worsening relations, and that the border disputes and other disagreements were merely a by-product of this.

**Question 04**

This question required students to discuss the extent to which superpower relations saw a significant reduction in tension in the years 1972 to 1979. This was a very popular question, however was the least well-answered of all three. There appeared to be an overwhelming amount of precise detail on various aspects of superpower relations in this period – including but not limited to the SALT agreements, summit diplomacy, the Helsinki Accords, Ostpolitik, involvement in Africa and in some cases Afghanistan. The level of detail in this question was generally excellent.

However, a lot of responses were very narrative and made very limited reference to the impact of all of these developments and how they influenced superpower relations. In some responses, there was a tendency to just list the terms of various nuclear agreements and make none or limited comment on why or how these actually affected superpower relations. There were also some responses that lacked range of detail and only focused on the nuclear agreements aspect of détente, and did not consider further issues such as involvement in Africa, although discussing this was not a pre-requisite for gaining a higher level mark.

Many students did seem to struggle in maintaining a sustained judgement throughout their answers and took each development individually rather than considering superpower relations as a whole. However, the stronger responses clearly focused on the word 'significant' and were able to formulate an analytical judgement concerning the reduction of tensions. Some student responses also mentioned the Moscow Test Ban Treaty (1963), the Moscow-Washington hot-line (1963) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968) which were not credited as relevant information as they were out of the time-frame of the question.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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