

# A-level **History**

7042/2K International Relations and Global Conflict, c1890-1941  
Report on the Examination

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## Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a judgment regarding the value of each source in relation to the question of international stability. Although some answers did, there is no requirement to provide comparative judgement. Overall, there are still a number of issues with responses to this question and this was evidenced by the fact that no student achieved higher Level 4 or above as every response had at least one significant flaw. Most responses fell around the low Level 3 / high Level 2 mark as students were unable to cover all three elements to some degree of success.

In terms of provenance, a wide number of responses showed a mechanistic approach in which they felt the need to discuss all elements of origin regardless of whether or not this had an impact on value; for instance, many simply stated that the date Source A was written makes it valuable as it was written in 1935. Good responses were able to recognise the importance of the authors, how this impacted on content and thus overall value; Source A as a Soviet newspaper was likely to overemphasize a Nazi threat due to ideological differences, Source B as a conservative newspaper held the same anti-war opinion prevalent in Britain at the time and Source C would be vehemently anti-Communist coming directly from Hitler, likely leading to some element of exaggeration. Weaker responses offered generic statements regarding provenance, making points that were simply not reflected in the source content, such as suggesting that because Source B came from a magazine, it was only written for entertainment purposes, therefore could not possibly reflect government policy. Most responses were able to accurately identify the tone of each source, though few linked this directly to value. The best answers spotted the cautious nature of Source B, which reflected the early tendency towards appeasement and that Source A held some optimism that it was not too late to prevent future problems given the circumstances of 1935. Worryingly, there were still a significant number of students who simply stated the provenance of each source, or made no reference to provenance whatsoever.

On the whole, students responded better to the content of each source and many could contextualise this content to offer judgements on value. The vast majority saw that Source A was concerned about the threat of rearming Germany and felt that a common response was needed to put a stop to this threat. This was a valuable view given that Germany had removed itself from the League of Nations and the World Disarmament Conference, though the better answers rightly questioned the value of such a view given that Hitler's initial policies were non-violent (Saar Plebiscite) or had failed (1934 Anschluss). The best answers also suggested that the idea of a mutual response to the Nazis was unlikely given the recent failures of the League of Nations and that the West was unwilling to work with the Communist USSR.

Weaker answers struggled to offer relevant context given chronological issues, for instance stating that the Soviet's concerns came in the aftermath of the remilitarisation of the Rhineland. In terms of Source B, a large number of responses struggled to grasp the main argument being made, with some suggesting that it was advocating war or that the British were very afraid of Hitler.

Contextually, most answers incorrectly stated that Chamberlain was Prime Minister and that this source reflected his appeasement policy directly. Many also tried to discredit the source by stating that it was completely wrong to suggest that war wasn't a concern given that war broke out in 1939, thus failing to consider the situation in 1935. In terms of strengths, many students picked up the links between the arms race discussed and that which pre-dated World War One, with stronger

responses recognising the issues posed by rearmament at a time of economic woe. For Source C, many only skimmed the surface of the content, choosing rather to focus on the provenance of the source and often missing the point that Hitler was emphasizing the threat posed by Communism, be that imagined or real; though some successfully explained how the fact that the Four Year Plan existed demonstrated a threat to international stability, as reflected in plans for Lebensraum and eastwards expansion.

In a similar vein to Source B, a large number of students tried to suggest that the source was not valuable as the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact proves that Hitler was not so anti-Communist after all, showing a misunderstanding of relations during this time. Stronger responses recognised the value of the Fascist alliance referenced in the source and linked this to the Spanish Civil War and the Anti-Comintern Pact. A number of students also suggested that the source lacked value in suggesting that others were not standing against Communism, highlighting how the West continually shunned the Soviets and actually sought to appease both Mussolini (in Abyssinia) and Hitler (in the Rhineland) as a bulwark against the spread of communism.

Overall, the strongest answers were best able to provide successfully supported judgements by offering a paragraph exploring the various reasons why a source was valuable and then a paragraph exploring the reasons why the source was not valuable, selecting the relevant areas of provenance, tone and content as necessary, and offering a short overall judgement for each. This approach gave a more effective result than those which followed a step-by-step approach to provenance, tone, content and context; this mechanistic type response often failed to grasp the overarching issues within the sources and could not provide sound judgements as they often stated information about the sources, rather than using it to address value. A significant minority of answers took a strange comparative approach to judgement, attempting to suggest which element of the source was more valuable, e.g. the provenance was more valuable than the content. This type of judgement was often unconvincing and, in the main, offered limited links to whether or not the source was valuable in explaining international stability, which was the judgement required here. Although not as prevalent as last year, there were still answers which failed to address value at all. Such a response cannot move out of Level 2, and worryingly a large number had very limited links to value, which would result in a low Level 3 mark.

## Question 2

This question was attempted the least of the three essays, with varying levels of success. It was pleasing to see that almost every response was able to recognise who were the autocratic nations and those who were the Liberal Democracies, though a number of students missed easy opportunities for balance by omitting the Ottoman Empire altogether. The vast majority understood what would constitute strength c1900, discussing factors such as colonies, economies, alliances and military positions; the strongest answers took a thematic approach along these lines, offering a great range of specific detail on economic growth, the Scramble for Africa and early Naval Laws to support arguments. The best answers offered a sound judgement that whilst Germany was potentially the strongest nation at this time, this did not make up for the weakness of the other autocracies, therefore a combined Britain and France was stronger. In term of overall approach, the better answers (Level 4 and above) achieved successful analysis through direct comparisons; for instance, comparing Germany and Britain's military/economic position, or exploring the juxtaposition of strength and weakness, e.g. the size of the Russian army compared to training and equipment. Weaker responses offered a disjointed country by country approach which gave no real analysis in terms of who was strongest, thus struggling to move beyond Level 3. The weakest

answers failed to stay in the confines of c1900, moving into describing factors like the Balkan Wars and even World War One, or suggesting that the autocracies were stronger thanks to the Dreikaiserbund, which collapsed in 1887.

### Question 3

This question was attempted by slightly more students than Question 2 and, similarly, almost all were aware of the circumstances surrounding the Bosnian crisis and what Pan-Slavism was. Most students knew that Austria-Hungary was afraid of the threat of Pan-Slavism to the empire, the links to Serbia through the coup of 1903 and wider fears of a Yugoslavia, alongside Russia as the 'Protector of the Slavs'. However, weaker responses were unable to link these factors directly to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and therefore struggled to achieve the quality of analysis needed for Level 4. The strongest answers were able to deploy the fact that as Russia engaged in the Buchlau negotiations and backed down during the crisis, this demonstrated an abandoning of Pan-Slavism, thus lessening its significance. Many answers offered the situation with the Ottoman Empire and Young Turk Revolution as balance, with the best judgements suggesting that whilst Pan-Slavism was a long term cause of the crisis itself, the weakening Ottomans and agreement with Russia provided the opportunity for annexation specifically in October 1908. The weakest responses showed a weaker grasp of the events of the time, with misunderstanding regarding nationalities, placing Pan-Slavism with the Turks, and some confusion over the situation regarding the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, with a number of students trying to use this as balance by stating that the invasion of this region caused the crisis.

### Question 4

Although this question was attempted by the most students, on the whole it was dealt with less successfully. A large number of responses tended to start with a long, descriptive explanation of why the US ended up absent from the League of Nations, which was of little relevance, though most were aware of the main issues caused by this absence, with many successfully addressing the League's lack of clout without the US; the concept of the 'lame duck', weak sanctions and the irony of the lack of the nation behind its creation. The strongest answers highlighted how the US actually undermined the League through its unilateral actions, for instance in the Washington Naval Conference. A number of responses offered some balance through exploration of the self-interests of Britain and France, the perception of the League as a 'victors club' and more fundamental issues such as a lack of an armed force and slow processes. However, there was more often than not a lack of significant balance as many simply deployed every general international issue of the 1920s as a problem for the League of Nations (reparations, Locarno, Kellogg-Briand etc...), or failed to remain in the confines of the 1920s, only being able to offer the events of Manchuria and Abyssinia as evidence; as such many answers remained in upper Level 2 or low Level 3 for poor balance and/or limited relevant evidence. Many answers also simply became long descriptions of issues rather than an assessment of their causes; for instance, describing the events in Corfu in great detail and stating this was an issue, rather than exploring the fact that it was Mussolini's exploitation of the League and France's failure to act following their invasion of the Ruhr that caused problems for the League of Nations.

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

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