
AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/2K
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/2K

International Relations and Global Conflict, c1890–1941

Component 2K: Great Power rivalries and entry into war, c1890–1917

General Comments

It was pleasing to see that the main concepts addressed in the paper (nationalism, militarism and the causes of war) were well responded to by the vast majority of students, with depth appreciated by many. Although 03 proved slightly more popular in Section B, there was a range of very good and weaker answers to both essay questions and there was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers. The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in responses across the paper, though Question 01 has been addressed in more detail so as to offer further guidance as to what helps produce a good answer in this new style of question; many students seemed unsure as to what was expected in order to access the full range of marks in the source based task.

Section A

Question 1

There were some particular issues with this question in terms of the skills deployed and a range of differing methods used across the responses offered. Some students had been well versed in addressing provenance and tone, for instance seeing that Source A was able to provide an outside view of the annexation, whilst Francis Joseph (Source B) was unlikely to offer a balanced account. However, many failed to back up the contents of the sources with contextual understanding in order to fully address value. On the other hand, some students offered a wealth of contextual detail surrounding the Young Turk Revolution and previous mandate of Austria-Hungary in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but then did not go on to explore the provenance of the source and how this would affect value. Complete absence of one of these factors would see a response limited to Level 2 and almost a third of students did not move beyond a mark of 10.

A large number of students attempted to offer contextual knowledge through large descriptions of what was missing from the source; this is not a valid approach as students must deal with what is discussed rather than what is omitted. In fact many students actually listed information as 'not included' that was referred to in the sources, such as the previous Ottoman rule and the role of Count Aehrenthal, missing an opportunity to contextualise the content on offer; stronger answers were able to weave such context into the detail from the sources and then use this to reflect on overall value.

In terms of provenance, a number of students misunderstood the significance of the origins of Source A, insisting that anything produced by the Americans must be against Austria-Hungary and was thus using an accusatory tone to show how Austria-Hungary was in the wrong. Strong answers recognised the value of a non-European view of events, especially given America's isolationist role pre-First World War, and the academic nature of the work (with an informative tone), therefore offering a range of factors in explaining the annexation. Some students fixated on Source A as 'secondary' when for the purposes of the paper it is 'contemporary to the period' and jumped to the conclusion that Source B must therefore be far more valuable as it came from the exact time of the annexation. For Source B, most understood that Francis Joseph's proclamation

would only provide the point of view of Austria-Hungary and would be setting out to celebrate the annexation, perhaps therefore detracting from the source's value. Value could be seen in that as Emperor, Francis Joseph was well aware of the circumstances surrounding the annexation, but that the overly positive tone and specific audience meant that the source served only to convince Bosnia-Herzegovina (and foreign observers) that the annexation was a good thing, therefore the source was not wholly trustworthy. Developed answers highlighted that the promises made were unlikely to be upheld given the nature of government in Austria-Hungary, and the source served to try and sway Bosnia-Herzegovina away from the influence of nationalists who desired a united Slavic state.

In some ways, the weakest factor of the responses offered was the comparison of the value of the sources. Most offered fairly simplistic conclusions comparing basic elements, for instance stating that Source B was more valuable given that it was from 1908. More sophisticated comparisons drew links between the two sources, for instance the desire of Austria-Hungary to 'no longer leave their status ill-defined' in the context of Ottoman upheaval and rising Balkan nationalism had led to Francis Joseph making the proclamation attempting to show that life under his Empire was a better option; thus Source A was more valuable in explaining why the circumstances of Source B had occurred. It was this type of well thought-out comparison which would see answers achieving Level 5.

Overall, a mid-Level 4 response would be expected to offer connections between provenance/tone and value, which is contextualised in terms of the question asked, with a significant comparison between the two sources. Unfortunately most 01 responses were limited to the top of Level 3 for being unable to successfully address at least one of these required factors.

Section B

Question 02

Vastly different levels of detail were offered in terms of militarism in responses to this question; most were aware of the issues surrounding the Anglo-German naval race and growth of the German military, but some answers lacked specific examples of this or were unable to offer anything else on militarism; answers which were unable to provide much detail on militarism (at least one decent paragraph) were capped at low Level 3 for a lack of focus on the specific question. Better responses were able to draw on wider examples, such as the growth of military spending across the powers and the creation of military plans beyond Germany.

Most responses were able to offer better detail in the counter-argument, citing issues in relations regarding imperialism, the web of alliances and worries about the growth of Germany, with some good references to specific examples such as the first Moroccan Crisis and the formation of the Triple Entente; those responses able to address a range of factors, along with sufficient coverage of militarism, could access Level 4 and above. The strongest responses were able to tie militarism directly to other factors in order to form a judgement, for instance suggesting that the Fashoda incident actually demonstrated how militarism served to ease tensions with the British and French turning to diplomacy rather than escalating the event into a wider conflict, with many arguing that it would ultimately be fears of Germany and the tangle of alliances that caused later conflict.

Question 03

As with 02, there were varying levels of coverage on the focus of the question. Many students were aware of the Treaty of London and how the Schlieffen Plan led to the German invasion of Belgium, but fewer were aware of how this had brought Britain into war, for instance the British press using German atrocities in Belgium to change the opinions of those originally against joining a wider

European conflict; limited remarks about the role of the invasion limited answers to the top of Level 2. Stronger answers pointed out how until the invasion Britain had refrained from joining the conflict despite her alliances, and how Germans had drawn the conclusion that Britain were unlikely to join the war over a simple ‘scrap of paper’.

Many were well aware of the counter-arguments here, recognising that Britain had a seemingly moral obligation to enter the conflict on the side of her allies, especially after a turbulent relationship with Germany. Insightful answers noted how some in Britain were concerned about not being involved in the war, as if France and Russia were defeated Britain’s empire would be at risk, or indeed if France and Russia were victorious then Britain may be excluded from the spoils of war; balanced responses with specific detail were awarded Level 4 and above. The strongest responses recognised how many in Britain were pro-war before the invasion, but worries about German expansion and ‘loose’ alliances were not enough to justify British entry, especially when the Balkans were far removed from general British interests, and that the invasion of Belgium offered the British government an opportunity to join the war on the basis of upholding the Treaty of London; those able to offer a sustained judgement alongside their balanced and supported argument were awarded Level 5.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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