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Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HISTORY **9489/32**

Paper 3 Interpretations Question **May/June 2024**

1 hour 15 minutes

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You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **one** question from **one** section only.
  - Section A: The origins of the First World War
  - Section B: The Holocaust
  - Section C: The origins and development of the Cold War
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 40.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [ ].

This document has **4** pages.

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Answer **one** question from **one** section only.

Section A: Topic 1

The origins of the First World War

1 Read the extract and then answer the question.

Poincaré's diplomacy was far more passive than has often been claimed. Although he was undoubtedly suspicious of Germany, he did not act aggressively towards it. He merely sought to consolidate France's position in Europe and to prepare for any possibility. In no way was Poincaré's foreign policy intended to provoke war; indeed, it was more restrained than those of Germany, Austria-Hungary or Russia. For Poincaré, peace was best safeguarded by the balance of power achieved by rigid separation of the two alliance systems. France, more than any other European nation, understood the necessity for strong alliances. Ever since 1871 it had attempted to break out of its diplomatic isolation. The process had been a long and painful one, which had only really been completed in 1907 with the formation of the Triple Entente, the benefits of which, principally international security, were only just being felt. The balance of power after 1907 was arguably of even greater importance to France than to Britain. However, Britain had a more flexible approach to it. Britain was opposed to any weakening of the alliance system but was willing to negotiate agreements with the Triple Alliance bloc. Despite considerable opposition from French diplomats, Poincaré ruled out any such move, though his attitude softened in 1913 and 1914, notably towards Germany. Overall, however, his insistence on applying the notion of the strict separation of the two alliances inevitably built into it the inflexibility which was its greatest weakness in times of crisis. In this manner, Poincaré's foreign policy seriously contributed to further separating the two blocs. Thus, whereas in 1907 Triple Alliance and Triple Entente had stood side by side, in 1914 they stood face to face.

But a balance of power is by definition fragile. It is, therefore, natural that politicians should prepare for the balance being upset. They do so by attempting to gain a margin of superiority over their rivals which they perceive as a guarantee of safety but which their opponents see as a threat. By 1914 it appeared to most French politicians and soldiers that France had finally gained this superiority. This appeared to be confirmed by a War Ministry report of September 1912 which predicted victory for the Triple Entente in any conflict against the Triple Alliance. It was, therefore, in France's national interest to maintain that margin of superiority not for any warlike reasons, but as a guarantee of safety.

France's decision to support Russia in the July Crisis was not taken because of their alliance, but because its margin of safety was at risk. To have stopped Russia from entering the war would have allowed Austria-Hungary to regain some prestige, while seriously reducing that of Russia. This would have altered the balance between Triple Entente and Triple Alliance to the disadvantage of the former. The alternative of allowing Russia to fight alone would have condemned it to certain defeat, thus even more seriously endangering France's international security. Even if the final decision had not been made for France by Germany declaring war on it, France would still have felt compelled to fight alongside Russia. Like Britain, France entered the war for negative reasons. Britain's decision to go to war was not primarily to uphold the 1839 guarantee of Belgian neutrality, but because it feared the consequences of German domination of the continent. France did not decide to go to war because of the Franco-Russian alliance, but did so because it was unwilling to live again in the shadow of a mighty Germany.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the origins of the First World War to explain your answer. [40]

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Section B: Topic 2

The Holocaust

2 Read the extract and then answer the question.

The killing of the Jews began in the east and there, principally, it stayed – a fact which fundamentally shaped both the events of the 'Final Solution' and the ways in which it was perceived by contemporaries.

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More important than such accurate guessing is the fact that people immediately grasped that a central decision had been made to deport the Jews; this was not a local action, like so many bans on using swimming pools or park benches.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the Holocaust to explain your answer. [40]

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Section C: Topic 3

The origins and development of the Cold War

3 Read the extract and then answer the question.

If Roosevelt had survived, he would have had to reconcile his vague promises to Stalin of a Soviet sphere with his assurances to the American people that the Allies were making an open, democratic world. Even a master politician like Roosevelt might have struggled. How much more difficult, then, was it for Harry Truman as he became President? Truman did not even understand that he faced a dilemma. He did not know that Roosevelt had all but conceded to the Soviets their sphere in Eastern Europe. In his profound ignorance of the status of Roosevelt's diplomacy, Truman naturally turned to State Department advisers. He did not realise that Roosevelt had largely ignored them, relying instead on his military advisers. The State Department grabbed its chance to explain to Truman that Roosevelt had trusted the Russians too much. Ambassador Harriman told Truman that Soviet conduct in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe posed a threat to American interests. He told Truman about the Soviet takeover in Eastern Europe, warning that Soviet hostility towards capitalist nations would tempt it to expand into other neighbouring areas. Harriman urged Truman to be firm and use Russia's desperate need for reconstruction funds as economic pressure. Truman accepted this advice with remarkable speed. When Truman first met Molotov, he told him in blunt terms that Soviet-American relations would no longer only benefit the Soviet Union. Molotov complained that he had never been talked to like that in his life. 'Carry out your agreements and you won't get talked to like that,' snapped Truman.

Truman loved to project this image – a quick, decisive man of plain common sense. But he seems to have used this air of decisiveness to cover deep uncertainty. He often made snap decisions without much information and then had to go back on them with considerable embarrassment. When the war in Europe ended, he signed an order ending lend-lease aid to the Soviet Union. This was in accordance with the lend-lease law, and many Congress members had made it clear that they wanted the programme ended immediately after German surrender. But the abruptness of the decision, turning ships around in mid-ocean, was an unnecessary insult towards an ally the Americans hoped would join the war against Japan. Stalin could not help but see Truman's lecture to Molotov and the sudden termination of lend-lease as an indication of a changed American policy. The Soviet dictator complained bitterly and Truman feebly apologised that he had not actually read the lend-lease directive he had signed. He ordered the ships to turn round again and return to the Soviet Union.

Truman was puzzled by Stalin. His uncertainty mirrored the confusion most Americans felt about Soviet intentions. Was Stalin a communist revolutionary bent on world conquest, or was he seeking more traditional Russian national interests such as security from attack through Eastern Europe? Truman failed to take into account that Stalin might be ruthless and cautious at the same time. He directed his ruthlessness almost entirely toward the most strategically vital areas in Eastern Europe, a sphere he may well have believed Roosevelt had conceded to him. Truman and his advisers naturally worried that this tyranny indicated Stalin's intentions for other areas. Yet Stalin did allow a degree of self-determination in less strategic countries such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia so long as communists loyal to the Soviet Union controlled key posts within those governments. Later he would be even more tolerant towards Finland and Austria, insisting only that their foreign policies be neutral rather than hostile to the Soviets.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the Cold War to explain your answer. [40]

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