



# **Examiners' Report**

## **Principal Examiner Feedback**

**June 2017**

**Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Level in History (WHI04) Paper 1B**

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## Unit4: International Study with Historical Interpretations

### WHI04 1B: The World in Crisis, 1879-1945

#### Introduction

June 1706 was the first time that WHI04 was taken by candidates entered for the IAL History qualification, and was the first time that candidates encountered AO3-focused questions relating to Historical Interpretations. It was pleasing to see that most candidates were well prepared in terms of knowledge and that many responses were both well-informed and well-written. However, the approach of some responses to both Section A and Section B limited the ability of candidates to be rewarded at the higher Levels of the mark scheme.

The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory question relating to the historical issue outlined in Key Topic 1 – Historical Interpretations. The question requires candidates to make a judgement on a stated viewpoint, through the analysis of two extracts from historical works which address the historical issue and their own knowledge of the historical issues. The question assesses AO3 skills - candidate ability to analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted - in combination with AO1 skills – candidate ability to demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts.

Section B also targets AO1 skills. Section B provides a choice of essays relating to Key Topics 2-4. Questions set may address more than one topic or relate to a single topic. The essays assess knowledge and understanding of the period in depth – questions may relate to a single event or a longer period – by targeting five possible second order concepts – cause, consequence, change/continuity, similarity/difference and significance. Questions may combine second order concepts, for example, consequence and change. Candidates answer one question from a choice of three. The most common weakness in Section B essays was the lack of a sharp focus on the precise terms of the question and/or the second order concept that was being targeted.

Candidates are, in general, clearly aware of both the structure and the timing of the examination paper; there was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions from Sections A and B.

Candidate performance on each section and individual questions for Paper 2E is considered in the next section. Please note that it is recommended that centres look at a selection of Principal Examiner Reports from across the different routes of the paper to get an overall sense of examiner feedback, centre approaches and candidate achievement. It is also useful to take note of the indicative content in the mark schemes.

Centres may also wish to refer to the *Getting Started* guide that is to be found on the IAL History Pearson Edexcel website.

## Section A

Unit 4 is the first time that candidates have encountered the AO3 skills requirement and most were aware of the need to address the viewpoint given in the question by analysing the interpretations presented in the extracts and drawing on their own knowledge. The viewpoint stated in the question will be represented clearly within one extract with counter-evidence being presented in the other. However, both extracts may include material which can be both compared as well as contrasted. Higher Level responses came to a judgement about how far they agreed with the viewpoint by analysing both extracts and integrating their own knowledge into the overall discussion. These responses often addressed the extracts from the beginning using them to discuss differing arguments in relation to the viewpoint and deploying own knowledge to expand the discussion and where appropriate indicate other areas of debate not covered. Higher Level responses also met the descriptor requirement to reach a judgement based on the views given in both extracts and did not just refer to the general lines of debate within the overall Key Topic area.

The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the three bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note their progression:

- interpretation and analysis of extracts
- deployment of knowledge of issues related to the debate
- evaluation of and judgement about the interpretations

Some approaches by candidates matched the descriptors in the lower Levels of the mark scheme. Candidates who wrote a Section B AO1 style answer without any explicit reference to the sources found it difficult to achieve a mark beyond low-Level 2 as all the bullet point descriptors require some engagement with the extracts. Also candidates who wrote responses almost entirely based on comprehension and understanding of the extracts rather than discussing the views presented in the extracts were unlikely to achieve beyond Level 2. Some responses wrote very briefly about each extract and then wrote extensively on aspects not included in the extracts. Again these responses were not using the extracts to develop the debate and so could at best reach low Level 3. A few candidates seemed to have a prepared response to a generalised debate with regard to the Key Topic which ignored the viewpoint given in the question altogether and so were not able to focus on the question set.

Some candidates viewed this as an AO2 source analysis and evaluated the extracts with regard to aspects of provenance which is not an appropriate approach. There may be some occasions when the title of the book from which the extract is taken furthers the discussion of the viewpoint but it is not intended that the candidates use the information provided to help forward the debate and no instruction is given with regard to this (unlike the AO2 requirements). Candidates should be encouraged to refer to the extracts and to discuss the interpretations to be found within the extracts. Here it is worth noting the guidance given in the *Getting Started* document. *Students are not expected to be familiar with the writing of the selected historians but they should be familiar*

*with the issues that make the question controversial. Reference to the works of name historians, other than the material in the extracts provided is not expected but students may consider historians' viewpoints in framing their arguments.*

Also many candidates appeared to create their discussion by reference to only the first few lines of each extract and so lost an opportunity to develop key points made later in the extracts. Candidates have sufficient time to consider the extracts carefully and to draw out a variety of different key points in order to compare and contrast the interpretations presented.

### **Question 1**

Candidates were well-prepared for a question of the role of the alliance system in the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914. Most candidates did refer to both extracts but there were some who answered the question with little specific reference to the extracts or concentrated on the extract which reflected the viewpoint stated in the question. Many responses were able to contrast the view point given in Extract 1 that the European alliances drew countries into the war ('converting a local conflict into a general war') with the view point in Extract 2 that, despite the existence of the alliances, war was not inevitable. Some candidates were able to draw out the suggestion in Extract 1 that the role of the alliance system was exaggerated further by the connection to the arms race as well while others developed the point made in Extract 2 that the alliances were more fluid than at first appeared.

This is a Level 3 response. It analyses the extracts with some support from own knowledge. Extract 1 is more clearly addressed than Extract 2.

The alliance system that began in the 1870s was an important factor for the outbreak of the war. However, throughout the decades before the war, the alliances fluctuated greatly. ~~by comparison, the rivalries between Great Powers~~ The alliances only played a supportive role in triggering deep-rooted rivalries and expansionism, which were the major causes of the war.

The first extract emphasizes the effect the alliance system had ~~on~~ on ~~eventually~~ the rapid escalation of war. According to the extract, the alliance system was originally for securing peace, which corresponds to Bismarck's intention of securing ~~the~~ a place in the diplomatic theatre for the new German nation. The alliances originated from defensive pacts targeted against certain Powers, and was defensive in nature. However, Extract 1 claims that ~~any~~ the ~~sudden~~ sudden actions of any Power could have triggered a chain effect that led to global war. In effect, Germany and Austria had triggered

the war by the Serbian ultimatum, because the other Powers could not and were not expected to back down. Since the Powers were ~~defeated~~ divided into two blocs, and the Powers were war-enthusiastic ('ready for war'), any crisis could immediately escalate into a global war.

~~Another~~ Extract 1 <sup>mentions</sup> ~~another~~ <sup>major</sup> factor at play: ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> readiness of Great Powers for war. The alliance system contributes significantly to this: in 1914 Austria-Hungary ~~is~~ was well in decline and her military and industrial capabilities were far from competitive. Without ~~the~~ German backing that culminated in a 'blank cheque' from Wilhelm II, Austria would well have avoided war ~~and~~ with Great Powers, and would not have been able to make such an aggressive move as the ultimatum to Serbia. Similarly, Serbia, a minor state, would not have rejected the ultimatum were it not for Russian support. The alliance system was ~~important~~ <sup>important</sup> in driving war enthusiasm. ~~However,~~

However, the major factor for war readiness was the rivalry between nations which embodied in arms race and expansionist sentiment. Extract 1 ~~is~~ <sup>implies</sup> arms race as a factor: 'the peace of Europe was maintained by alliances and armaments.' ~~Whereas~~ Whereas Britain was largely neutral before the 20th century,





the naval arms race, adding to other events, ~~had~~ antagonised Britain against Germany.

Extract 1 mentions, 'Austria-Hungary insisted on a military solution to the Serbian problem.' Thus the expansionist attitudes of the Powers were also important.

After the accession of Wilhelm II, the German society became increasingly keen on ~~expansion~~ colonialism and eastward expansionism, putting Germany immediately at odds with Britain, France and Russia. Thus these attitudes were ~~more~~ far more significant than the Russo-German alliance, which Germany essentially did not depend on.

~~To find, both extracts, implicitly, that the Central Powers mischiefs, as the ultimate cause of~~

~~Find~~ Extract 2 ~~states~~ justifies the subsidiary role of the alliances. From 1870s to 1914, alliances fluctuated greatly, and even by 1914 they were not set in stone. Italy betrayed the Central Powers and joined the Allies in 1915 in secret, but even Britain and France were not committed to the alliances. Both Powers opposed expansionism of Russia, as they had in the 19th century. They were even willing to support Germany ~~against~~ in various circumstances.

The alliance system was essentially fluid. In the 1870s Germany had even allied Russia. ~~The~~

alliances ultimately ~~existed only to support the conflict of~~  
~~interests~~ existed only to support the conflict of  
interests between the Powers. Britain in the 1900s  
had few in common with Russia and France; they were  
all colonial rivals with conflicting interests. Britain  
ultimately sided with the Allied Powers because of a  
\* Germany that threatened her ~~interest~~ position by  
the Moroccan ~~crisis~~ <sup>in 1905</sup> and the ~~naval~~ naval arms  
race. Austria-Hungary competed with Russia for  
influence in the Balkans, thus needed a strong ally.  
Alliances were merely supportive in the ~~agendas~~ of  
conflicting agendas of Great Powers.

Even though Extract 1 identifies the alliance  
system as the main factor for the outbreak of  
the war, it implies the other factors which were  
behind the alliances. Namely, the Great Powers competed  
for influence and were war-enthusiastic. ~~had the~~  
~~alliances~~ Extract 2 further demonstrates the  
superficial <sup>and fragile</sup> nature of ~~alliances~~ alliances. Therefore,  
the alliance system was only a short term trigger  
for the rapid escalation in August 1914. The alliances  
were ultimately embodiments of diplomatic rivalries  
and expansionism, which were the central causes of the  
outbreak of the war.

This is a high Level 4 response. Here both Extracts are analysed with own knowledge being used to evaluate and justify the interpretations being identified. The answer begins by addressing the

Extract which supports the view point in the question. The responses begin to weigh up the stated view but the overall judgement is not wholly substantiated in the main body of the response.

Extract 1 argues that ~~it was~~ the outbreak of war was the result of the alliance system. It identifies several key factors to argue this. The alliances, it argues converted 'a local conflict into a general war'. ~~This is true, since the~~ There is evidence to support this viewpoint since what started as a peripheral squabble in the Balkans drew in Russia, Germany, France and Britain, because the alliance system meant each had interests at stake if one of their allies went to war. It is argued that Germany and Austria wished to 'upset the status quo' and this can be supported by the fact that, by the spring of 1914, German military leaders had come to the conclusion that they were encircled by a ring of hostile countries, which were all bound in an anti-Germany alliance. They had also decided that this left Germany with the only option of breaking out of encirclement - in short upsetting the status quo of alliances which threatened Germany.

Another argument to prove the importance of the alliances in leading to war was the reasons that Russia would 'not' tolerate Serbia's 'military conquest'. This was because, following the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, the only ally available to Russia in the Balkans was Serbia. To lose Serbia, would be to lose an ally, and since this would upset the alliance system, the only alternative was war.

The historian also argues in Extract 2 that the alliances impacted the

arms race, as each country stockpiled armaments and weapons. This arms race was directly linked to the alliance system, where each country adopted specific military plans based on those alliances, and as a result, directed army expansion. This, as has been argued by historians, turned the different alliance systems into groups of blocs of rival countries, 'unwilling to allow' their rivals a head start by 'mobilising first'. This ~~is also backed up~~ view can be backed up by the reference to Germany's reaction when Russia started mobilisation - Germany began mobilising herself, and demanded that Russia ~~is~~ cease mobilisation in the summer of 1914.

The alliances also determined the 'balance of power in Europe', by grouping the various powers in different ways, and it was this 'balance of power' that led to war, according to Extract 2, so indirectly, it was the alliance system. This can again be supported by analysing Britain's reasons for going to war. Britain did so, in fear that a German victory would lead her to dominate Europe, so threatening the balance of power, and, ~~as a consequence,~~

However, an alternative view is presented by Extract 2, and illustrates the other side of this controversy, that in fact, the alliances did not lead to an outbreak of war because the alliance system was 'precarious'. It argues that the countries were not committed to each other enough to risk war if their allies decided to go to war. Italy is cited as an example in that it made 'exaggerated promises' of support to Germany but also conducted negotiations with France and Britain. This viewpoint can be supported by the fact that, though part of the Triple Alliance, when war broke out in 1914, Italy refused to side with Germany, and in fact, in 1915, entered the war on the side of the Allies, Britain and France.



Another argument <sup>to support this</sup> is that France and Britain were not ~~as committed to~~ solidly allied to ~~France~~ Russia, a fact hinted at in ~~Source~~ Extract 1, where it is acknowledged that Britain and France were not committed to the status quo. This can be backed up by Britain's reluctance to fight initially in the war. In fact Germany did not think Britain would fight, and it only did when the whole question of Belgium's coast arose. They would probably not have gone to war for ~~the sake of~~ Russia otherwise, despite Russia's involvement. Further France never had a very good relationship with Russia - 'the alliance was increasingly unpopular' to quote Taylor, - a fact that is unsurprising given France's Republicanism and Tsarist Russia's autocratic regime.

One more fact to support the argument that both Britain and France were taking sides with Germany, is that fact that Britain had always been ideologically ~~is~~ closer to Germany than Russia, and there had been several <sup>the 'great question' of</sup> quarrels over Turkey between Russia and Britain, dating from the Crimean war. Even in the Balkans war of 1912, Russia had had little support from Britain, who, like Germany, wanted Turkey to have some power.

However, the viewpoint that Germany knew that the 'ring of alliances' around them was not solid, cannot be supported by the Schlieffen Plan. This presupposed that Russia and France would work together in the event of a war. Also, Germany's actions in June 1914 where, simply because Russia had started mobilisation, she demanded that France hand over border fortresses as a sign of goodwill, suggests that in fact, Germany did fear the alliance.

Thus, I do not agree with the view that the outbreak of ~~war~~ <sup>war</sup> was caused by the alliance system, since, despite possible problems between

The allies in the Triple Entente, and despite the defensive nature of these agreements between them, when it came to 'the final test', it was the system of alliances that transformed the Balkans crisis into a world war.

This is not to say that it was deliberate or 'inevitable'. However In fact, in many ways the war was the culmination of many <sup>unforeseen</sup> factors. Nevertheless, what the argument for the importance of the alliance system acknowledges, is the fact that the alliances provided an excuse for all the major powers to become involved. As Schmitt points out, all the governments were 'ready' for war and so, despite minor spats between the various allies, they generally used the alliance system by supporting them, in order to secure their own national interests, and go to war. The alliance system also turned the countries into 'rivals', which led to increased hostility, and finally, the alliances prepared the public in all the concerned countries for the possibility of war, as they were used to hostile rival nations being viewed as threats.

## Section B

Most candidates were clearly aware of the requirements for the essay skills assessed in Section B. Most candidates showed progression from the AS units and were well-prepared to write, or to attempt, an analytical rather than a descriptive response. There was little evidence to suggest that the range and depth of essays were affected by the time taken to consider the two extracts in Section A. Many candidates were able to access Levels 3, 4 and 5 but weaker responses either did not provide enough factual support for a depth study essay or deal well with the conceptual focus of the question. Centres are reminded that any of the second order concepts listed in the introduction can be addressed in the essay section and candidates need to be aware that not all questions will refer to causation and that not all responses require a main factor/other factors response. Indeed, a persistent number of candidates attempt to respond to all questions by addressing the relative significance of generic causal factors whether appropriate or not.

The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-pointed strands which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note their progression:



- analysis and exploration of key features and characteristics of the period in relation to the second-order conceptual demands of the question
- selection and deployment of knowledge
- substantiated evaluation and judgement
- organisation and communication of argument

At Level 4 and above there is a requirement for the exploration of key issues by an analysis of the relationships between key features of the period and many good responses remained in Level 3 because these relationships were stated rather than explained or because key features were addressed separately e.g. stating that each key feature in turn was the main reason rather than developing a logical argument. It is also important to note that the reference to valid criteria in the third bullet point is not a reference to the different factors/key issues/key features being discussed but to the measurement criteria being used to reach an overall judgement. This is the extent to which students are able to explain and justify their decision to ascribe greater significance to one cause than another, or to judge a development as significant or an action as ineffective etc.

### **Question 2**

This was the more popular of the two questions. Some candidates interpreted this question as a multi-causal question with regard to 'the' period of peace rather than the Versailles Settlement producing 'a' period of peace. These responses were not invalid but often found it difficult to determine 'other causes' preventing a coherent argument from being established. However, most candidates considered the extent to which the Versailles Settlement did or did not produce a period of peace in the years 1923-33. Most responses showed good knowledge of the period from 1923-33 and a sound understanding of the consequences of the Settlement. Many candidates were aware that the Settlement did not only refer to Germany and were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the wider world repercussions. There were some interesting answers that were able to take in the failure of the Disarmament Conference in 1933 and the rise of the dictatorships. A few responses tended towards a narrative description of international relations in the 1920s.

### **Question 3**

There were some interesting responses to this question with some agreeing with the statement – citing British perseverance, American and British bombing, D-Day and American aid to the Russians – and others suggesting that the Russian contribution on the Eastern Front was more significant – scale of the Russian contribution, the perseverance of the Russians, the impact on German army etc. The best answers were able to determine significance by measuring the impact of the contributions to the defeat of Germany discussing aspects such as scale and longevity. A few candidates wrote a narrative description and some displayed a lack of awareness of the chronology of events.

### **Paper Summary**

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

#### **Section A**

- Candidates should use the time available to read and consider both extracts carefully before planning their answer
- Candidates should read the question carefully and make sure that they address the view specifically stated in the question

- Candidates should aim to interpret both extracts by analysing the issues raised and showing an understanding of the arguments presented by both authors
- Candidates should aim to integrate own knowledge with the key points raised in the extracts.

#### Section B

- Spending a few minutes planning helps to ensure the second order concept is correctly identified
- Candidates must provide more precise contextual knowledge as evidence. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Candidates should avoid a narrative-descriptive approach; this undermines the analysis that is required for the higher levels
- Candidates need to be aware of key dates as identified in the specification so that they can address the questions with chronological precision
- Candidates should try to explore the links between issues in order to make the structure of the response flow more logically and to enable the integration of analysis.

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