Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HISTORY **9489/33**

Paper 3 Interpretations Question **May/June 2025**

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.

Balkan problems could not always be effectively managed by the Great Powers. The situation there was too complex to be completely contained within the Great Powers system. Essentially there were three dimensions to the Balkan problem. First was the question of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman power was in decline, and control of its south-eastern European possessions weakened. The resulting power vacuum attracted the attention of the other Great Powers, leading to the second problem. In particular, Austria and Russia sought to realise imperialistic goals at the expense of the fading Ottoman Empire. The Austrians had vague ambitions of extending their rule into the western part of the Balkan peninsula. The Russians had a more specific agenda. They posed as the champions of the followers of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the region. They also sought to control the strategic straits region between the Black Sea and the Aegean. A third issue complicating the situation in the Balkans was the strong nationalist inclinations of the mainly Orthodox peoples living there. None of the Balkan states that emerged during the nineteenth century was satisfied with its geopolitical situation. All sought expansion at the expense of their neighbours.

The Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 resulted in huge military casualties. The Bulgarians lost around 65 000 men, the Greeks 9 500, the Montenegrins 3 000, and the Serbs at least 35 000. The Ottomans lost as many as 125 000. In addition, tens of thousands of civilians died from diseases and other causes. Deliberate atrocities occurred in every area of fighting. In military terms, the Balkan Wars were the forerunner of the First World War, and initiated a period of conflict that would last until 1921. One important consequence of the Balkan Wars was the alienation of Bulgaria from Russia. Blaming Russia for its catastrophic defeat in the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria turned to the Triple Alliance, hoping for revenge. This left Serbia as Russia's only ally in the Balkans. When Austrian action threatened Serbia in July 1914, the Russians had to act to protect Serbia, or else lose the Balkans completely.

The issue that eventually ignited a European war occurred in Bosnia. Just as the Great Powers could not control their supposed Balkan client states, the Balkan states could not control the strong nationalist ambitions of the groups within their own countries. The assassins of Franz Ferdinand had been assisted by the Black Hand, a Serbian nationalist society operating outside the control of the Serbian government. When, on 23 July 1914, the Austrians delivered an ultimatum to Serbia, the Serbs called on Russia for support. On 28 July the Austrians declared war on Serbia. At this point, the solidarity of the Great Powers on Balkan issues collapsed. Attempts by the British to arrange a Great Powers conference proved hopeless. The Germans intended to uphold the Triple Alliance, and the French adhered to the Triple Entente. Failure to do so in both cases could have resulted in the loss of an alliance partner and collapse of the alliance itself.

Conflict in twentieth-century Europe began with the nationalist urges of the peoples of south-eastern Europe. The Great Powers system, which had managed to limit nineteenth-century European wars in terms of duration and location, was unable to restrain the nationalist passions erupting in south-eastern Europe. The Balkan Wars of 1912–13 initiated a war that would sweep most of the continent. In a larger sense, the conflict that began in 1912 would endure in some form or other throughout the twentieth century. The cause of these problems would be the same: uncontrolled, unpredictable nationalism.

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]

Section B: Topic 2

The Holocaust

2 Read the extract and then answer the question.

There is general agreement that there was never an official order to begin 'the Final Solution'. Similarly, before 1940 there was no long-range goal that went beyond a compulsory exodus of the Jewish part of the population, something that became less and less attainable as a result of the progress of the Reich to the east. An important sudden change was apparent in the first steps taken by *Einsatzgruppen* A to D in the late summer of 1941 in territory previously occupied by the Soviets. Actions were taken to wipe out the Jewish populace, including women and children. This ties together with Himmler's visit to the Eastern Front, along with the euphoric confidence in victory he then communicated, which allowed him to expand more than twentyfold the personnel available to implement extermination measures. But there was not yet a general aim for genocide. The point of radical change to an all-European 'Final Solution' was set from early 1942 by '*Aktion Reinhardt*', the step-by-step liquidation of the Jews in the General Government area. This came after the various plans for reservations were shattered by the unexpected course of the war.

The latest research exposes an interaction between local and central functionaries, which finally led to a consensus of all participants that the Jews found in German control should be liquidated. The issue was settled not just by ideology, but also by local initiatives and psychological pressures. Thus, the promise of the Soviet Union to transfer hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans into the Warthegau and other districts gave the decisive impulse for the deportation of the Jewish population and the erection of ghettos in the General Government. Studying the complexity of these preliminaries gives cause for the historian of the Holocaust to show greater reserve in issuing sweeping generalisations. There is broadened research in the east European field in recent years, which shows that not only the SS and the more immediate terror instruments of the regime were involved in genocide through the politics of murder, but also the Army, the Foreign Office, significant portions of the internal and general administration, the police offices and the German railway system. Today it is generally accepted that the murder programme could not have been accomplished without the active support of sections of the bureaucratic elite.

The ground for a systematic Holocaust was certainly prepared by a general anti-Semitic climate engineered by Goebbels' propaganda. Beyond that there were the strong anti-Semitic currents among members of the people of the east, especially the Ukrainians and Lithuanians. Similarly, there can be no doubt that the anti-Semitism of the German upper class, opposed to assimilation, which was widespread in the military and bureaucracy of Imperial Germany, helped to ensure that the general population followed without resistance Hitler's linking of Judaism with Bolshevism, and his call for a decisive race war against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the actual shove towards the Holocaust came from fanatical anti-Semites who numbered no more than twenty percent of the party, but found in Hitler and Himmler, and especially among the Nazi functionaries, their prominent supporters. Constantly encouraged by Hitler and driven by the hope of approval by the dictator, this minority of fanatical racists provided the true dynamic initiative that brought to the regime ever new impulses in what has been called a 'cumulative radicalisation'. Consequently, things came to a critical point at which, as Broszat has it, 'The propaganda had to be taken at its word.'

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]

Section C: Topic 3

The origins and development of the Cold War

3 Read the extract and then answer the question.

Truman's decision to take command and alter the course of American foreign policy, like the origins of the Cold War itself, is more easily described than explained. Within the space of four months, a determination to minimise Soviet-American differences and hide them from the eyes of American people had changed into a policy of public confrontation. The assumptions upon which American policy towards the Soviets had been based were reversed. That change at the top matches changes within the policymaking structure as a whole. One of those changes was the formation of a consensus within the State Department regarding the question of what to do about the Russian 'problem'. That internal policy debate had been going on for some time, but, in the winter of 1945–46 it suddenly ended with remarkable decisiveness. The event commonly pointed to as marking the end of that discussion is the arrival on 22 February of telegram number 511 from the American diplomat in Moscow, George Kennan. Kennan's famous long telegram stated the case so neatly, so concisely, that the department's Cold War consensus was formed. He did not create that consensus. He made it visible and unified behind a single, usable interpretation of why the Russians acted the way they did and what to do about it.

Kennan's politically and psychologically satisfying diagnosis of 'a mental disturbance which infects and determines the behaviour of the entire Soviet ruling caste' had the virtue of freeing the American leadership from any responsibility for failing to get along with the Russians. For Truman in early 1946 such justification was a vital consideration. Although criticism from the Republicans to get tougher with the Russians had steadily increased and spread to the centre of the political spectrum, the liberal left wing of the Democratic party was not to be dismissed nor unnecessarily alienated. In addition to its domestic political utility, Kennan's prescription for curing Soviet paranoid aggression was a perfect solution to Truman's problem. He did not want to continue down a one-way street of cowardly appeasement. But, at the same time, he was not ready to enter upon the path of those who anticipated or even welcomed war with the Soviet Union. Kennan's alternative route to both peace and freedom – the containment of Soviet expansion by the early and resolute application of counter force – was the middle course between feeble surrender and preventive war. Although not yet so named, containment seemed a moderate, realistic solution to the Russian problem.

Kennan's ideas on the threatening nature of Soviet intentions and how to meet and defeat them almost at once became the accepted truth amongst State Department personnel responsible for advising other elements of the policymaking structure, including the President. The State Department was not the President's only source of foreign policy advice, but by early 1946 it was an increasingly important one, as Truman turned away from the course set by Secretary of State Byrnes. Included within the doctrine of containment were the tactical and strategic concepts of the State Department's Cold War consensus. Stated simply, that consensus accepted the tactic of publicly 'getting tough' with the Russians. Strategically, it recognised that the United States and the Soviet Union represented two totally incompatible and hostile centres of power, that continuation of the wartime alliance no longer took precedence over disputes between the two nations, and finally that this antagonistic relationship between the Soviet Union and the West could and should be made the public basis for American foreign policy.

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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