



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**History 2041**

**Unit HIS3N**

***Report on the Examination***

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# *Unit HIS3N*

## **Unit 3N: Aspects of International Relations, 1945–2004**

### **General Comments**

Overall the performance of candidates was good. The most popular questions were Question 1 and Question 3, although a large number of candidates attempted Question 2. Candidates clearly have both the confidence and the ability to address both depth and breadth questions. It was apparent that the great majority of candidates were well prepared in terms of the range and depth of their knowledge and understanding. There were only a minute number of rubric infringements or candidates who failed to answer two questions. However, one issue was particularly clear and it emerged mainly in answers to Question 1. The mark scheme does have a focus on an awareness of historical interpretations. Some candidates took this to mean they had to recite descriptions of Cold War historiography. By adopting this approach, such candidates generally failed to develop any significant evidence of their own analytical understanding. Candidates should use the historiography as a tool for their own analyses and synoptic linkage of ideas, rather than as a source of convenient descriptive detail. There is no need to recite the names of particular historians as evidence of an awareness of historical interpretations. Reference to historians may be relevant but they should not drive an answer.

It was also evident from many answers that the quality of essay writing skills and techniques was sound. Although there were still a number of answers which compartmentalised detail and thereby failed to develop links as the foundation of an analysis, many other candidates avoided this approach and successfully established synoptic connections. Such answers clearly displayed candidate understanding and the historical skills focused on in the mark scheme in order to reach the higher levels of reward.

### **Question 1**

**01** This was a very popular question and one which generated a wide range of responses. A very small minority focused on a narrower period, generally directed to the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. There were some detailed analyses of these conferences and such answers usually concluded that the Grand Alliance was defunct by August 1945. Examiners viewed this approach as perfectly valid and rewarded answers in line with the generic descriptors in the mark scheme. The great majority of candidates approached the question in terms of the reasons why the Cold War developed during the years 1945 to 1949. Very many answers displayed detailed subject knowledge and relatively few simply recited narratives of the causes of the Cold War. However, there were a number of candidates who did produce narratives of the historiography. Examiners saw examples of descriptions of the orthodox, revisionist and occasionally, the post-revisionist historiography. Occasionally these descriptions dominated the answers and generally resulted in a low level reward. The best answers were those that sustained an analysis based on well selected supporting detail whilst remaining focused on the specifics of the question. There were many examples of well crafted and skilful analyses that led to sound judgements on the reasons for the collapse of the Grand Alliance.

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**Question 2**

- 02** Very few candidates referred to the United Nations prior to 1991 during the Cold War era. Of those who did, many used their knowledge and understanding to good effect in terms of this specific question. Some candidates used their knowledge of the crises that the UN was involved with after 1991 in a purely descriptive way. Extensive detail was often developed about individual incidents and presented as a descriptive narrative. Inevitably this approach often prevented an analytical route for the answer. The best answers were those that focused firmly and directly on the premise in the question. Many candidates were able to use their knowledge and understanding to establish balanced and analytical commentaries on the successes and failures of UN interventions. These were invariably founded on well selected detail rather than descriptive narratives. Some particularly sound answers were able to explore the roles of the superpowers, especially the USA, factors in the effectiveness of the United Nations. In addition to this the emergence of international terrorism was often examined in terms of its impact on the United Nations and the position adopted by the USA towards global peacekeeping organisations. Whilst this question generated descriptive responses it also gave many candidates the opportunity to display rather sophisticated understanding of the role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War world.

**Question 3**

- 03** Just as Question 1 focused on the origins of the Cold War, this question focused on its longevity. Although there was once more some evidence of dependency on historiography it was less common than in answers to Question 1. Many candidates were able to establish a range of factors which prolonged the Cold War in addition to the reference to ideology present in the question. Many explored the role of individuals, the nuclear arms race and the global economic strategic priorities of the superpowers and their allies. Often awareness of interpretations was made evident without direct descriptive reference to the historiography. Some very good answers went on to analyse points when some moves towards a reduction in Cold War tensions was attempted and why these failed. Good candidates had a sound understanding of détente, for example, and were able to explain that détente was not an attempt to bring the Cold war to an end. From the USA's perspective it was viewed as a form of management of the USSR when military containment had failed through the Vietnam experience. Many answers suggested that the USA was the prime mover in prolonging the Cold War through its global economic objectives. However, despite the quality of analysis apparent in many answers, some response drifted in explaining why the Cold War ended. This often led to some irrelevancy as the answer moved away from the focus of this specific question. Overall it was clear that the majority of candidates were able to explore breadth issues successfully and show that they could develop selected detail with some confidence and ability.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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