

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE History

Candidate Exemplar Work (June 2009):

- HIS2Q: The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975



The following responses are not 'model' answers, nor are they indicative of specific overall grades, but are intended to illustrate the application of the mark scheme for this unit. These responses should be read in conjunction with the HIS2Q Question Paper, Sources Booklet and Mark Scheme.

Copies of the paper and are available from e-AQA or the AQA History Department.

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AQA GCE History Teacher Resource Bank Commentaries on June 2009 AS answers

General Introduction by the Chief Examiner

The first June examination series for the new AS specification saw some excellent examples of well prepared candidates who were able to demonstrate their breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding by addressing the questions set directly and efficiently. Sadly, it also suggested that, whilst some candidates knew the material quite well, they struggled to apply it successfully to the questions asked. At the lowest end, there were, of course, some candidates whose knowledge let them down, but even these might have been able to achieve more highly had they thought more carefully about each question's demands.

The importance of timing for both Units needs to be stressed. In Unit 1 candidates should allow themselves approximately 12 minutes for the first part question and 25 minutes for the second. In Unit 2, they could spend 15 minutes on the first part question and 30 minutes on the second, but they are likely to need slightly longer for the source question. Good time keeping is essential in any examination. No matter how successful the answer to the first part question, an incomplete second part question will always mean a loss of marks (notes receive limited credit).

These commentaries are intended to help teachers and candidates to understand the demands of each question type and consequently to encourage students to perform at the highest level of which they are capable. Please note that errors relating to Quality of Written Communication (of spelling, syntax, etc.) have been reproduced without correction. Please note that the AQA convention for question numbering will be changing as from the June 2010 examination papers. Examples of the new format for question papers can be found elsewhere in the Teacher Resource Bank.

Unit 1

The first part of each question in Unit 1 (those questions labelled 01, 03 and 05 in the new numbering style from June 2010) asks candidates to 'explain why' an event, issue or development came about. The best candidates answered this question, not only with a selection of reasons (and a minimum of three well-explained reasons was expected for Level 3/4), but also by showing how those reasons linked together. This is essential to meet Level 4 criteria and can be achieved by prioritising, differentiating between the long and short-term factors, or showing how different categories of reasons, such as political, social and religious inter-link. It is not, however, enough to simply assert that the links exist – they also needed explaining.

Candidates who only performed at Level 2 often wrote too descriptively, whilst many achieved a good Level 3 by offering a range of relevant and clearly explained reasons but failing to make any links between them. As the exemplars demonstrate, answers did not need to be long but they had to be effectively focused and directed to achieve good marks.

The second part of each question (those questions labelled 02, 04 and 06 in the new numbering style) asked for a response to a question beginning 'how far, how important or how successful'. Each question stem invited candidates to offer a balanced response and this was the key to an award at high Level 3, 4 or 5. Most answers which achieved only a Level 2 or a low/mid-Level 3 mark contained too much description, were excessively one-sided or lacked depth and precision in their use of examples. Some candidates also failed to address the full question set, often

by ignoring starting or finishing dates. To achieve the higher levels, candidates needed to balance one side against another. For example, a question asking how far 'X' contributed to 'Y' demanded a consideration of the importance of other factors which also contributed to 'Y'. Sometimes questions, particularly 'how important' questions (e.g. how important was 'X' in bringing about 'Y?'), could be balanced by considering the ways in which 'X' was important as opposed to the ways in which it was not, rather than introducing 'other factors'; either approach was equally legitimate. The crucial test of an answer was, therefore, the degree to which the candidate was able to argue the issue and how well that argument was supported by accurate and precise evidence. The best answers at Level 5 managed to sustain a focus and convey convincing individual judgement.

Unit 2

The first part of question 1 (labelled 01 in the new numbering style from June 2010) asks students how far the views in two given sources (A and B) differ, in relation to a given topic. Perhaps the most common error was to waste time writing a paragraph or more about the source content before addressing differences. Levels were awarded according to how well candidates identified and explained differences of **view**. This was not simply an exercise in source comprehension, so such answers received an award of only Level 1/2. Contrasting 'views' required students to go beyond the mere words of the sources or their omissions, and to assess 'how far' the sources differed required some awareness of the degree of **similarity** they contained. To meet the full demands of the question and obtain an award at high level 3/4, candidates also needed to introduce some contextual own knowledge to explain the differences and similarities identified – possibly (but not necessarily) referring to provenance when it helped the explanation, and, more often, explaining references in the sources and drawing on their contextual knowledge to account for differing views.

In the second part of question 1 (labelled 02 in the new numbering) candidates were asked to answer a question beginning 'how far, how important or how successful' with reference to the sources as well as their own knowledge. The best answers to these questions maintained a balanced argument (as explained for Unit 1 above) and the information given in the sources was used in support of that argument. Poorer answers tried to address the sources separately – at the beginning or end of the answer, or sometimes as an asterisked afterthought. Those who omitted them altogether could not obtain more than top Level 2. Whilst the main criteria for the higher levels was the degree of argument, the precision of the evidence and the judgement conveyed, in addition to these, good source use could ensure that students were placed higher in a level than those who used the sources in a perfunctory way. Source use needed to be explicit, and the best candidates appreciated that Source C was provided to give further ideas and/or information that was of direct relevance to this question.

In questions 2 and 3 (03/04 and 05/06 in the new numbering) candidates were asked to respond to an 'explain why' question – on which comments will be found under the Unit 1 commentary above – and a short, provocative quotation about which they were invited to explain why they agreed or disagreed. The demands here were similar to those for the second part of Unit 1 (b) questions. In adopting a view about the quotation, candidates were expected to examine the opposing arguments in order to reach a balanced judgement on the extent of their agreement/disagreement.

Sally Waller Chief Examiner December 2009

GCE History HIS2Q: The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975

Responses to June 2009 Questions

Candidate 1

- 1 (a) Explain how far the views in **Source B** differ from those in **Source A** in relation to the Tet Offensive, 1968. (12 marks)

From looking at Source A, it is understandably for the US during the Tet offensive that started early in 1968, in January. However at the start of the source it explains that the Tet offensive is now seen as a 'communist defeat', which according to the Truman Doctrine was exactly the opposite of what the USA started out to do., contain communism. Source B is slightly different to source A. In this source former President Richard Nixon who took the role of President after President Johnson announced he wouldn't go up for election again explains that the USA could not 'expand our intervention', he seemed to believe the Tet offensive was nothing but a defeat, and only made the war worse, which could arguably be correct. The poll ratings of Johnson decreased a great deal, and after the US embassy in Saigon, the media was against the war, Walter Cronkite a very trustworthy news reporter, was now against the war, and the US public went with him, the majority was now 'doves', pro-war.

Source A is basically holding a reputation for the US army, explaining that they did defeat the Vietcong's guerilla warfare, with 'Superior American Firepower', whereas Source B explains the US were limited now after the Tet offensive. However all these differences aside, Source A and B do have one similarity, in source A it does explain that it 'turned into a major psychological victory for Hanoi', the North Vietnam capital, and in Source B it seconds that motion. Former President Nixon explains about getting the US troops out of the war, after this defeat, which is similar as in source A and in Source B it explains that the US certainly lost the Tet offensive in 1968.

Principal Examiner's Comments

The answer clearly establishes a basic difference between the views in each source. It recognizes that while Source A emphasizes the Tet Offensive was a 'communist defeat', Source B sees it as a defeat for the USA. The answer develops this understanding by focusing on the USA's post-Tet inability to expand its intervention. This difference is further enhanced by the candidate's contextual knowledge of the anti-war media coverage. The answer also notes the different views in terms of the USA's post-Tet military position. A similarity is identified through Source A's acceptance that Tet was a 'psychological victory for Hanoi'. This is explained as both sources making similar references to Tet having a negative outcome for the USA. Overall the answer displays a clear understanding of the differences and similarities and offers more than one difference. These are placed in a framework of relevant knowledge which shows sufficient depth of understanding to enable the answer to enter Level 4 – 10 marks.

Candidate 2

- 1 (a) Explain how far the views in **Source B** differ from those in **Source A** in relation to the Tet Offensive, 1968. (12 marks)

The views in source A suggest that the US superior firepower had led to the communist withdrawal at TET. The source states that TET (an offensive launched by the communists to put pressure on the US) resulted in victory for the US military and a “significant” defeat for the communists. The source states that although it was a military victory for the US, North Vietnam remained optimistic about the battle even though it left them with major setbacks due to the number of Vietcong killed. Source A is biased due to it being by Kissinger who would want the US to seem victorious due to him being high up in the government and influential over military strategy. There is no mention of the ARVN’s contribution which although may have been smaller than the Americans but nevertheless they impacted on the battle and gained recognition from it. Source A seems to suggest that the Americans took great pride in the battle as a military success.

However Source B differs from this view significantly. Source B suggests that TET was a military setback and dented the American confidence. This source states that as a result of this battle, the US was more willing than ever to pull out of Vietnam at the earliest opportunity. Again this source may not be completely reliable due to it being a source from Nixon (who favoured American withdrawal and was the President to get the US out of Vietnam) and so he would want to show that he was right in his foreign policy.

Both sources agree on TET being a significant battle in the Vietnam war but there are significant differences over their opinions about the result of the conflict. Source B tells us little about the actual battle so there is little contradiction to Source A in terms of military success for the US against the communist guerrillas. However, the view in Source A suggests that at TET the Americans broke the North Vietnamese Vietcong as they were no longer an effective force. Source B on the other hand suggests that the broken force was the Americans as this was the turning point leading to their definite withdrawal.

Principal Examiner’s Comments

The answer begins with descriptive detail based on the content of Source A. Following this the answer begins to lose focus. Reference is made to the biased nature of the source and to some irrelevant knowledge based detail. The answer recovers and identifies a difference in the views. The difference is that Source A views Tet as a defeat for the communists while Source B views it as a setback for the USA. This is placed within further descriptive detail based on Source B. There is also some further loss of focus as the answer considers the reliability of Source B. There is some attempt to establish a similarity but this lacks clarity and accuracy because it simply states that both sources regard Tet as a significant battle. At the end there is some development of the scale of the military outcomes referred to in each source. This does not reach the status of a further difference. Overall the answer identifies difference but does not develop focused own knowledge or any similarities. Level 2 – 5 marks.

Candidate 3

- 1 (b) How important was the Tet Offensive as a reason for the USA adopting a diplomatic solution to its involvement in Vietnam. (24 marks)

The Tet offensive gave a very real wake-up call to the US forces within South Vietnam.

Source B supports the view that the US should adapt their strategy and begin diplomacy with Nixons quote of, "It was no longer a question of whether the next president would withdraw troops but how they should leave".

Here Nixon clearly shows his view against simply withdrawing troops, and since he did in fact become the next president his slogan of "peace with honour" is very important to how he would achieve this.

Source C also heavily supports the view of withdrawing from Vietnam achieving the peace with honour campaign using a system Nixon and Kissinger used called "shuttle diplomacy".

Shuttle diplomacy, combined with Nixon's Triangular diplomacy and Linkage campaigns were his greatest strength. He used shuttle diplomacy as a way for his 'advisor' Henry Kissinger to travel quickly to other countries and create treaties and friendship ties with them. From there Nixon would then announce he would travel to communist countries such as China and Russia and shock the public at the warm welcome he would receive there.

This tactic proved to produce very effective results for Nixon particularly when used with China and Russia in 1972 when he began his talks of peace and ending the cold war; further shocking the public and increasing his popularity around the world. Also his policy of Linkage proved effective when talking with Russia of reducing the Nuclear war-heads each country were creating.

This policy coined the era of 'detente' and a calming of the cold war threat of US vs the USSR.

As well as these diplomatic policies Linkage was used to make China fear a unification of US and USSR powers and attack the recently formed 'PRC'. This potential threat gave Nixon the opportunity he exploited of friendship talks with the communist China and a potential agreement of stopping the supplies China were aiding to North Vietnam.

All of this diplomacy Nixon manipulated gave him much power and opportunity to create persuasive peace talks with the North Vietnamese and it worked.

It seems that Ho Chi Minh saw this threat and through desperation launched the Easter offensive of 1972 which again Nixon countered with bombing of North Vietnamese capital cities, Hanoi and Haiphang, also known as 'Linebacker 1'.

This last attempt formed the October agreement of 1972 between North Vietnam and the US; and later the final end of US conflict with the Paris accords of 1973.

However without the "Tet offensive" and the conventional battles that took place within South Vietnam Nixon would never have come to power and his diplomatic skills never used to reach the peace the US looked for after their "psychological

defeat” with the Tet offensive.

In conclusion source A backs the importance of the Tet offensive with the “wiped out ...guerrilla organisation” of the Vietcong yet the “psychological victory” North Vietnam had due to the capturing of the US embassy; and because of the Tet offensive America finally sort peace for Vietnam with new president Nixon achieved.

Principal Examiner's Comments

The answer begins by using detail from Source B to emphasis the importance of diplomacy following the Tet Offensive. Source C is also called upon to link Tet with a diplomatic solution and the answer shows the candidate's clear understanding through the reference to shuttle diplomacy and the concept of linkage. There is some well developed contextual detail focused on diplomacy. The answer shows a grasp of linkage and this contributes to the development of a balanced response because it suggests an alternative motive for diplomacy beyond it being simply a reaction to the Tet offensive. Towards its end the answer forms a clear judgement and links the Tet Offensive to diplomacy. There is also a reference to Source A in this section. Overall the response is focused and it displays considerable understanding and analytical balance based both on the sources and the candidate's own knowledge. Level 5 – 22 marks.

Candidate 4

- 1 (b) How important was the Tet Offensive as a reason for the USA adopting a diplomatic solution to its involvement in Vietnam. (24 marks)

The ‘Tet Offensive’ was a massive turning point for the Americans in the Vietnam war, as it persuaded many to realise that it was a foreign affair that the Vietnamese should be sorting out themselves. It lead to the collapse of the Home front, with thousands of students from prestigious universities like Yale, protesting and circulating petitions to bring an end to US involvement in the Vietnam war in, as Johnson referred to it as, ‘that ruggedy-ass little fourth-rate’. These protests became more popular, with teachers and academics supporting them and it also lead to the attempted prevention of drafting new recruits, with displays of public outrage with the burning of drafting cards, and many would make excuses like having disabilities, in order to fail the drafting interview. It became increasingly obvious, when the press began to take the side of the anti-war movement, that America was not winning the war. Public support of Johnson dropped from 72% to 42% and, consequently, President Johnson decided to stand down at the next election, accepting partial responsibility to to the ‘Rolling Thunder’ operation and also due to the resignation of McNamara as secretary of defence.

It was now recognised that the war was unwinnable, especially in terms of American bombing and military advice and a conclusion was reached that the USA should adopt a more diplomatic policy, following the accession of Richard Nixon as President in 1969 and Kissinger as his adviser.

Principal Examiner's Comments

The answer develops some of the candidate's own knowledge in terms of the link

between the Tet Offensive and the anti-war protest movement. This becomes descriptive in character. This descriptive detail continues through references to Johnson's unpopularity. The final paragraph makes some attempt to refer to the specific issue in the question but the degree of supporting evidence is very limited. Significantly there is no reference to any of the sources. Overall the answer is based entirely on the candidate's own knowledge and does rely on a largely descriptive approach with some limited comment. Level 2 – 9 marks.

Candidate 5

2 (a) Explain why President Diem was assassinated in 1963. (12 marks)

President Diem was assassinated due to various reasons.

He was unpopular with his people and therefore contributed to the unpopularity of the US as they supported him. He isolated many of the Buddhists as shown through one monk setting himself on fire in protest.

He was a tyrannical leader who was selected due to being the 'best of a bad bunch.' Corruption was rife within his Government as shown through the 'leaked' reports of Ambassador Lodge which went back to Congress.

This was another reason, he wasn't liked by Ambassador Lodge who frequently fed back negative reports to Washington over his regime.

Another crucial reason why was that Kennedy ceased to stop the assassination from taking place once again representing the dislike the US had towards Diem by 1963.

He was also militarily incapable as proved by the disastrous Battle of Ap Bac in which his forces were easily defeated by the VC, an embarrassment both for him and the US.

In comparison to Ho Chi Minh he wasn't the best. Minh was an well-respected inspirational leader whereas Diem was disliked and thrived on an extravagant lifestyle something which the US grew tiresome of.

Overall, a combination of unpopularity and military incapability majorly contributed to Diem's assassination. It was these which were needed in order for South Vietnam and therefore the US to succeed in Vietnam yet he failed to possess these qualities.

Principal Examiner's Comments

The answer quickly identifies a relevant factor by its reference to Diem's alienation of the Buddhist majority in South Vietnam. A further factor is developed through the reference to Diem's alienation of the USA. This is slightly developed with some supporting evidence in the form of the USA's reluctance to intervene against an assassination attempt. A final factor is based on Diem's weak leadership and some comparative own knowledge is included by reference to Ho Chi Minh's popularity in the North. Overall the answer targets three factors and there is some developed supporting detail. Level 3 – 8 marks.

Candidate 6

- 2 (b) 'The Vietcong gained support in South Vietnam because of the attraction of communism.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

(24 marks)

The Vietcong were able to gain much more support in South Vietnam than the Americans managed for a variety of reasons, one of them being the appeal of Communism.

Vietnam's history since 1887, was that it was dominated by Imperialist foreigners, both French and Japanese. The Vietnamese people found life difficult as a result, and so when the Americans arrived in Vietnam, they were viewed as yet another imperialist force. This association naturally led them to oppose their beliefs and turn to a very different idea, which was Communism from the North.

The nature of the lives of the Vietnamese people meant that the ideas of Communism appealed to them on a greater level. The majority of Vietnamese were farmers, who lived communally by sharing and harvesting crops. They were often abused by wealthier landowners. The idea that equality is essential to a functional society was common to the Vietnamese people, and so they gave greater support to the Vietcong as a result.

The Communist forces were led at the time by Ho Chi Minh and his general, Giap. Both of these figures were very popular with the Vietnamese, as shown by their support when they fought the Battle of Dienbienphu in 1954. Giap in particular, recognised the needs of the people and its' importance in the war. He urged VC to respect the people and not act like the ARVN, who frequently raped and pillaged Vietnamese villages.

On the other hand, you could argue that the Vietcong gained support not from agreement with their beliefs, rather that they simply wanted to oppose both the ARVN and the Americans. The ARVN had a bad reputation in the South, and were known for their disrespect of the peasants. The Americans were similar, who often viewed them as inferior due to their vastly different lifestyles. An example of this is the My Lai massacre, where 374 people; women, children and elderly included, were murdered, raped and tortured by American soldiers. This one event was capitalised on by the Vietcong, who publicised it widely to citizens of the South. This led to increasing opposition of the American and Capitalist armies.

The rule of Diem also played a vital part. He was unpopular with Vietnamese peasants at the time. He persecuted and murdered Buddhists simply because of their different religion. This discrimination was highlighted further to the Vietnamese people when a monk burned himself alive in protest.

The tactics used by the US did little to endear them to the Vietnamese people. Operation Rolling Thunder was particularly significant. This bombing campaign involved use of chemical weapons such as napalm and Agent Orange. These had serious effects on the people, as they found out their landscape was destroyed and they were often horrifically burned by napalm. These tactics were not used by the VC, which meant that they were distinguishable between the two sides, increasing the support for the Communists. Another unpopular policy was the strategic Hamlet programme. Despite being designed to improve their lives, Vietnamese people resented being forcibly moved from their homes, and was further reason to resent the Americans.

To conclude, I feel that the attraction of Communism was important, but other factors, such as the poor relations of Americans and Vietnamese people, were more important in the appeal of the Vietcong's war effort.

Principal Examiner's Comments

The answer establishes the view that the Americans were imperialists followed Japanese and French imperialism. A link is made between the rejection of western imperialism and support for communism. A further link is made between the nature of Vietnamese culture and communism as an ideology. The answer explains the affinity that Vietnamese peasants had with the notion of social equality implicit in communist ideology. A comparison is made between the methods employed by the Vietcong and the Americans. The VC showed a greater awareness for the cultural identity of the South Vietnamese people while the Americans consistently failed to win the hearts and minds of the masses. Reference to the My Lai massacre is indicative of this. Anti-American detail is further developed through references to the US bombing campaigns and their impact on the lives of the South Vietnamese. Overall the answer displays good range and balance but it lacks sufficient focused judgement to reach Level 5. Level 4 – 18 marks.