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History

Paper 2K (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 02 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

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## Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

### Paper 2K (AS): Specimen question paper

**02** 'The fact that Germany faced 'encirclement' from the Triple Entente by 1907 was entirely due to German foreign policymakers.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

**[25 marks]**

### Student response

German foreign policy certainly played a part in the encirclement by the Triple Entente. The Germans had pushed Britain out of Splendid Isolation and had abandoned Russia, forcing her to look for other allies. However, France actively sought an alliance with Russia and made colonial concessions in order to get their old enemy Britain onside.

Germany's biggest mistake was abandoning Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. Bismarck tried his best to keep an alliance with Russia, following the collapse of the Dreikaiserbund by signing the Reinsurance Treaty. This gave Russia influence in the Balkans, a key objective of their foreign policy. However, Kaiser Wilhelm II favoured more Austro-Hungarian influence so he failed to renew the treaty after Bismarck's resignation. The formation of the Dual Alliance made matters worse as it was anti-Russian in character. This left Russia isolated and in search of an alternative ally. This would eventually lead to an alliance with France and leave Germany facing the old threat of a war on two fronts. This was definitely due to German foreign policymakers.

Germany also pushed Britain into the enemy camp. There been clashes in Africa that saw Germany back French interests to prevent British success, such as in the Congo. Germany was keen not to miss out on valuable commercial opportunities. They had tried to make amends with partition agreements in the 1890s and may have been able to achieve a full alliance with Britain. Negotiations took place and Britain seemed willing to reach an agreement. However, once Germany began its naval building programme, any chance of an alliance was lost.

The Kaiser's actions in Morocco were the final straw and led directly to the strengthening of the Entente Cordiale and the formation of the Triple Entente, thus the 'encirclement' was complete. The Kaiser's speech in Tangiers in 1905 was designed by his foreign policymakers to force the French to back down. He also wanted to show Britain that France was a weak ally and one who might drag them into other disputes. It completely backfired and actually strengthened the alliance. Germany was embarrassed at the Algeiras Conference which followed and it paved the way for the Anglo-Russian Agreement. Germany again intervened in Morocco in 1911, raising the stakes by seemingly threatening the British naval base at Gibraltar. This led directly to military and naval agreements between Britain and France. Whilst Russia was less concerned, it did increase the tension amongst all the Powers and Germany did now face encirclement.

However, the emergence of the Triple Entente was not solely due to German actions. France worked tirelessly to form their alliance with Russia, making massive loans to secure an alliance. France did want revenge for their defeat in 1871 and wanted some support in the event of another war. France

also made considerable concessions in terms of colonial aims in order to reach agreement with Britain. This was as important as German policy decisions.

Britain had abandoned Splendid Isolation due to a number of military and trading considerations. It was increasingly clear that having no alliances made Britain vulnerable and this was underlined by the events in the Boer War. Britain sought alliances with France and Russia for reasons other than being pushed by Germany. Their alliance with France was a way of avoiding conflict over colonial ambitions and the alliance with Russia did the same for both countries' interests in Afghanistan. However, German policy decisions on naval expansion were a major influence on Britain's decision to ally with France.

So, whilst Germany foreign policy decisions definitely influenced the events that led to the formation of the Triple Entente and the encirclement of Germany, it was not entirely their fault. Each member of the Triple Entente had their own policies and ambitions but Germany did provoke all three and so was largely responsible for their own encirclement.

#### **Commentary – Level 4**

The answer shows clear understanding of the demands of the question and considers a range of issues both to support and then challenge the proposition. The major weakness of the answer is the lack of development of some important issues and developments. For example: Why did Germany make the Dual Alliance and with which country? Why did Germany not pursue the possibility of an alliance with Britain and embark on a Naval race.

Structurally and in terms of understanding, this is a level 4 response, but the lack of development places it in the lower end of the level.