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Option 33: The USA, 1954–75: conflict at home
and abroad

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PE Report Paper 33

Introduction

Due to the special circumstances in which candidates sat the November series papers the entry for this paper was much smaller than usual. This means that lessons learned from this series reflect the outcomes for this small candidature and may not accurately reflect patterns and trends for a larger cohort. Therefore, in seeking further understanding of how the marking operates on this paper it is recommended that interested parties also read the reports from Summers 2018 and 2019.

It was noted in the 2018 and 2019 reports that candidates were well prepared for this unit. Although candidates appeared to have been well prepared on the specification, there were fewer examples of the wide-ranging knowledge seen in previous series. Despite seeing some good knowledge and understanding of the period fewer candidates than in previous series were able to precisely select material to address questions directly. Candidates appeared to be reasonably comfortable in dealing with a range of political, economic and social aspects of the period. Candidates were generally well prepared for the question styles and there was evidence of good understanding of the demands of all questions.

The Modern World Depth Studies are designed to encourage students to understand the complexity of a society within a short coherent period and the question styles reflect this. Section B provides a single enquiry based on two interpretations and two contemporary sources with the focus in this paper being the reasons for the failure of the USA in Vietnam. The questions in this section form a coherent package leading to a final question in which candidates, having explored the utility of the provided sources, analyse the different views presented in the interpretations and the reasons for those differences, and are then invited to judge the extent to which they agree with one of the interpretations. Because of the specific focus in Section B, the questions in Section A are designed to explore other areas of the specification which are not covered in B.

In question 1 candidates are asked to provide two supported inferences from Source A. No marks were available for candidates who described the photograph or ignored the specific focus of the question.

In question 2, the focus will always be on causation but the question does not require a judgement to be made, or for the answer to prioritise or show interaction of factors and no marks were available to reward this evaluation, however strongly argued. In question 2 the stimulus points in the question will often be useful reminders to candidates of specific areas of content which they can write about. Candidates do not need to use these stimulus points but there is an expectation that there will be some depth of knowledge, shown by three discrete aspects of the question being covered. This does not mean candidates need to identify three different causes or events. It was pleasing to see that candidates had understood this expectation and most answers were clearly structured in paragraphs, making it easy for the examiner to identify the different aspects being covered.

All of the sub-questions in Section B relate to either the two interpretations, Sources B and C, or both the sources and interpretations. Question 3 (a) targets the ability to analyse and evaluate source utility and, in doing so, introduces the enquiry which will be dealt with in further detail in questions 3(b), 3(c) and 3(d).

In 3 (a) candidates are expected to evaluate the usefulness of the content, taking account of the provenance of the sources and applying contextual knowledge in making judgements about the utility of the sources as evidence for the specific enquiry in the question. These strands are linked and should be dealt with together, rather than in isolation. There is no need to compare the two sources and, indeed, only a handful of students did attempt to do this.

Questions 3(b) and 3(c) examine the views expressed in the two provided interpretations. It should be recognised that the interpretations offer alternative views but do not necessarily conflict with each other. Candidates are expected to identify the main difference between the views in 3(b) and use the interpretations to support those claims. This question was generally well done and most candidates who were able to show how the interpretations differed, could also support their answers with direct references to, or examples taken from the interpretations. The focus in 3(c) is on why the interpretations might differ and this question was more challenging and the specific areas of weakness explained below should be read carefully. It is not possible to provide effectively substantiated reasons why the interpretations are different based on such things as where and when the interpretations were published although a number of candidates did attempt to do so without success (see specific information about 3c below).

Question 3 (d) carries the highest number of marks on the paper. Successful candidates will have already seen how the views in the interpretations are different, why this might be the case and, in completing 3(a) have understood that there is likely to be evidence in support of both interpretations. They are now asked how far they agree with one of the interpretations. The strongest answers to 3(d), therefore, focused clearly on the interpretations themselves, reviewing the alternative views and coming to a substantiated judgement. Candidates who focused exclusively on the view provided in Interpretation 2 and used this as a basis for an essay based on their own knowledge were less successful than those who considered the alternative views from both interpretations. There is no expectation that both interpretations are dealt with in equal depth but both should be examined explicitly. The use of contextual knowledge is an important element in this evaluation but it must be precisely selected to support the evaluation and not just used to display knowledge of aspects of the topic which the candidate has revised but are not relevant to the enquiry. There were fewer high quality answers to this question than in previous series although most candidates dealt comfortably with the interpretations. However, this question was accessible to all candidates and even those who did not score highly understood the need to offer evaluative responses leading to an overall conclusion.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar were assessed on 3(d).

Question 1

In question 1 candidates were invited to make inferences about the March on Washington (1963). There were two marks available for each valid inference – one for the inference itself and one for the supporting information. Most candidates seemed to understand how to make an inference, and most used the content of the source to provide support for the inference. Such candidates tended to make inferences about the about the multi-racial nature of the march which could be referenced by the existence of both black and white people in the crowd. A small minority of candidates made appropriate inferences which were not appropriately supported. A further group of candidates described the photograph rather than drawing inferences from it.

1 Give **two** things you can infer from Source A about the March on Washington (1963).
Complete the table below to explain your answer.

(i) What I can infer: I can infer that the march on Washington was something that all peoples races were behind
Details in the source that tell me this: There is just as many white people as black people
(ii) What I can infer: The march brought people together to and people connected as brothers and sisters
Details in the source that tell me this: The people in the photo are holding hands and singing or shouting.

(Total for Question 1 = 4 marks)

Examiner Comment:

This candidate has made two valid inferences about the march on Washington, and has supported them with valid detail and so gains full marks.

Question 2

Candidates performed reasonably well on this question and the majority of candidates were able to go beyond the stimulus points, with reference to three aspects of content, and relate these to the question. It was noteworthy that even candidates with more limited knowledge of the content were often able to provide a clear structure in their answers, if not a clear analytical focus. The stimulus points are provided to help candidates to link the question they have been asked with the material they have studied and to provide a prompt to the analysis of the process of change.

The majority of candidates were able to discuss beliefs of white supremacy as a reason why there was opposition to the civil rights movement in the years 1954–60. Many candidates referred to the KKK and the Dixiecrats which were stimulus points for the question. Most candidates described these examples without clearly linking them to the conceptual focus of the question. These candidates tended to focus on how rather than why. There were a small number of candidates who clearly focused on the question throughout and provided aspects of content beyond those in the stimulus to aid their causal explanation.

Candidates did not need to provide a conclusion to show a sustained line of reasoning and those who were most successful showed a sustained focus on the question in every paragraph. Candidates are not expected to prioritise or link factors in this question and it is not rewarded in the markscheme at any level. In cases where candidates did prioritise factors, examiners were able to reward some aspects of the candidate's argument as showing a clear line of reasoning but it was not a strategy that automatically gained levels 3 and 4.

At Level 2, candidates often described the KKK or the Dixiecrats which left links to the question too implicit to meet the AO2 focus on analysis. At Level 3 candidates were mainly focused on the conceptual focus of the question but sometimes lacked the wide-ranging knowledge required at Level 4. At Level 4 there were some sustained analytical responses supported by well-chosen examples which displayed clear understanding of the precise question.

Overall, candidates were comfortable with this style of question.

Example

2 Explain why there was opposition to the civil rights movement in the years 1954-60.

(12)

You may use the following in your answer:

- Ku Klux Klan
- 'Dixiecrats'

You **must** also use information of your own.

Between 1954 and 1960, significant progress was made in the civil rights movement, including advances in desegregation of education, the appointment of black people in positions ~~in~~ in the government, and the formation of groups who would continue to fight for racial equality and civil rights. Here, we will discuss and consider the effects of different forms of opposition to civil rights and why they existed.

One reason for opposition to the civil rights movement was that racist white people objected to black children going to the same schools as white children. In 1954, after the NAACP combined 5 failed anti-segregation cases and took them to court in the Brown v. Topeka case, the Supreme Court ordered all schools to desegregate. 723 school districts had done this by 1957, despite the lack of a clear deadline, but there was still 'massive resistance', especially in the deep South, when black children tried to go to 'white schools.' For example, the Little Rock Nine arrived at Little Rock High School to face bullying and ~~more~~ ^{this was opposition to the civil rights movement.} who wanted to murder them.

Another reason for opposition to the civil rights movement between 1954 and 1960 was the civil rights bill Truman had attempted to introduce for the military during his presidency. This led to a group of racist politicians leaving the Democratic party to oppose civil rights. This group, the Dixiecrats, was still large enough within the government in the 1950s that the President had to consider what they wanted because there were enough of them

to stop bills from being passed. This had significant implications for the civil rights movement because Dixiecrats could vote against policies ~~that~~ included in the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts.

Another reason for opposition to the civil rights movement between 1954 and 1960 was groups like the KKK. These people claimed that the Bible supported segregation and had significant support from ^{white} churches and Christian leaders in the Deep South. They would regularly attack and kill black people. For example, in 1955 two black men were killed for registering to vote in Mississippi. This made the civil rights movement extremely dangerous to be involved in, and both black and white activists could be murdered by the KKK.

Another reason for opposition to the civil rights movement was the profit interests of white people. Estate agents often faced pressure from white neighborhood residents not to show properties to black families. This was because black people were stereotyped as lazy and violent, so some white people believed that if they moved in to their neighborhoods then house prices would fall. This contributed to black people being forced to live in ghettos, preventing them from accessing resources and education that would have helped advance the civil rights movement.

Examiner comment:

The candidate has covered three areas of content and has, therefore, satisfied the requirements for higher marks in Assessment Objective 1 to go beyond the stimulus points and to show wide-ranging knowledge. The quality of analysis also meets the demands of the markscheme for Assessment Objective 2. The candidate achieved a Level 4 mark for both Assessment Objectives.

Question 3a

This was probably the question where candidates' performance was most unbalanced and few managed to display the analysis required to reach L3. Although many answers consisted of thoughtful comments about the content of the sources, there are three strands to the mark scheme that all need to be addressed. Candidates need to approach the utility question bearing in mind that judgements about utility should be based on the usefulness of the sources for the specified enquiry, in this case the reasons for the failure of the USA in Vietnam. The best responses were those that were able to address 'how useful' by establishing the strengths sources have as evidence before determining how far the limitations affect their usefulness. It is important for candidates to remember that judging utility may involve some comments about reliability but answers which focus solely on this criterion do not fully consider the value of the sources as evidence

Reliability can only ever be a small element of utility because an unreliable source can still be very useful. It is also important that in judging utility provenance is related to the content of the source. Only a small number of candidates effectively utilised the provenance to establish that the content of the source could be useful, precisely because it was a critical comment from a sympathetic outsider.

It was disappointing to see the number of generic responses commenting on the provenance of the sources. This part of the response is only likely to gain marks at Level 1 for this element of the mark scheme. Many candidates who offered otherwise quite interesting analysis of the content and applied good subject knowledge to the interpretation of the sources still had a tendency to fall back on simplistic judgements about provenance.

Many answers made good use of contextual knowledge but some well-prepared candidates spent too much time talking about the reasons for the US failure in Vietnam without using that material to support reasoning about the sources' utility, becoming stuck in Level 2 at best for many of their points. In addition, it is not possible to gain credit for simply asserting that the candidate knows an aspect of the source to be true without using specific knowledge to demonstrate this. It is also worth noting that simple comprehension – it states, it shows – based on the assumption that such information is useful, remains low level. Developed statements about the usefulness of the content can reach Level 2 but answers consisting solely of such comments are unlikely to progress beyond mid-Level 2, irrespective of the length of the answer, because the other strands of the Assessment Objective have not been addressed.

Answers reach Level 3 by assessing the usefulness of the content in the light of the provenance and the candidate's own knowledge; the criteria used to make the judgement could be its accuracy, reliability), the relevance of the source, the way it could be used by the historian, how representative the source is etc. An evaluation of a source's utility should be explicit about the criteria being used, for example an answer should be able to explain that while the language may be emotive, the facts included can be supported from the candidate's own knowledge so the source is very useful despite any loaded language. Please note that accuracy and reliability are different criteria.

Although a judgement should be reached on the overall usefulness of each source, there is no requirement to compare the sources or to use them in combination and no marks are available for this. Very few candidates tried to do this. Candidates who use this approach should ensure that they come to a judgement about the utility of each source within the response. The focus of the question is usefulness of the individual sources.

Example

SECTION B

For this section, you will need to use the sources and interpretations in the Sources/Interpretations Booklet.

3 (a) Study Sources B and C.

How useful are Sources B and C for an enquiry into the reasons for the failure of the USA in Vietnam?

Explain your answer, using Sources B and C and your knowledge of the historical context.

(8)

Source B is useful to the enquiry as it is an official government documentation that was kept a secret until about 30 years later. This clearly implies that it would be telling the truth and the US government feels embarrassed about why they failed in Vietnam. The source states 'bombing raids cannot slow down the movement of supplies [into the South]' and this clearly shows that their techniques are failing to cause any harm or ~~bring~~ bestow any difficulty upon the North Vietnamese, showing usefulness to the enquiry about the reasons for the failure of the US in Vietnam. The source was also written at the time of conflict between the two sides and therefore useful as it ~~is~~ means it wasn't exaggerated or biased from hindsight.

Source C is useful to the enquiry as it is the account of a soldier who actually fought in the war - therefore it is a first hand account of the ~~the~~ conditions and

tactics used in the war - and also their effectiveness.
However it was a television interview which was recorded
10 years after the source served in the war, therefore it
may be biased or exaggerated in ~~order~~ ^{kind of} or in order
to generate media attention or popularity etc.
It is useful as it describes the reasons for failure.
Eg: in this source he says the reason is ~~the~~ the lack of
morale. He says 'most soldiers were high' and this
will probably account to the South Vietnamese and
American army being unable to make a big enough
impact ~~on~~ on the Vietcong and North Vietnamese.
The interviewer says 'it almost sounds as if your unit
was fighting among itself' this gives us another reason
for the failure of the USA in Vietnam - making it useful
to the enquiry. It shows us the USA's lack of
able officials to ~~control~~ control and and actually
disrupt the proceedings of the North Vietnamese.

Examiner comment:

This candidate has evaluated the utility of sources B and C effectively, making judgements which apply the provenance of the source to evaluate the content. The analysis of both sources lacks sufficient contextual knowledge to test them thoroughly. The candidate therefore achieved a low level 3 mark.

Question 3b

In this question candidates are expected to identify the main difference between the views presented in Interpretations 1 and 2. In this case the interpretations provided different views about the reasons for the failure of the USA in Vietnam. In order to access Level 2 marks candidates are expected to provide some support from the given interpretations which many did in the form of well-chosen, short quotations. It should be noted that the interpretations do not necessarily offer contrasting views, merely different views.

It is important for candidates to remember that the focus of this question is to identify the differences between the views rather than identifying differences of surface detail as the latter can only be awarded marks in Level 1. Responses which asserted differences without support, for example stating that Interpretation 1 emphasises the failure of the bombing

raids, whereas Interpretation 2 emphasises the lack of morale amongst US troops, stayed in Level 1.

Level 2 was achieved when the candidates indicated a clear difference of view and supported it with detail from the extracts. Many candidates were able to score full marks.

Examples

(b) Study Interpretations 1 and 2. They give different views about the reasons for the failure of the USA in Vietnam.

What is the main difference between these views?

Explain your answer, using details from both interpretations. (4)

I think the main difference is ~~is~~ how the two interpretations assess the failure of the U.S. Interpretation 1 implies that the reason was because the bombings failed. Shown in the quote "It was clear that American bombing was failing to defeat the enemy." However in ~~source~~ interpretation 2 places the blame on the lack of morale of the soldiers as shown in the line "American troops began to lose belief in the cause for which they were fighting."

Examiner comment

This answer clearly states the main difference of view between the interpretations and supports this with extracts from the interpretations and as a result gets full marks.

Question 3c

There was a limited understanding of the demands of this question this year and few candidates were able to provide convincing explanations why the interpretations may differ. The majority of candidates gaining marks at Level 2 explained that the historians might have relied on different types of sources in forming their opinions and, used Sources B and C to support this explanation. In order to gain marks at Level 2 it is also essential that the

explanation is substantiated effectively and this might be based on information taken from either the sources or the interpretations themselves depending on the approach taken.

In trying to give an explanation for a reason for difference between interpretations some candidates are still attempting to use the provenance of the interpretations to provide this explanation and this is unlikely to provide a valid basis for a response to this question. The full reasons for this are explained in the *Getting Started Guide* on pp 43-44. As stated in *Getting Started*: 'Students should distinguish between their comments on contemporary sources and on these texts. Responses based on matters such as the origin or time of production of these secondary works are unlikely to be valid for this question.' A significant number of candidates did try to provide explanations for difference on the basis of such factors as the titles of the books, their origin or date of production.

Question 3d

There were several responses to this question which consisted of clear attempts to evaluate the different views about the reasons for the failure of the USA in Vietnam presented in the two interpretations. These answers were well focused on the AO4 target for this question, namely the analysis and evaluation of interpretations. These views are not intended to illustrate a controversy. This is the only time candidates will be tested on AO4: Analysis and evaluation of interpretations. The overall quality of a response to this question is determined by reference to the three strands presented in the mark scheme:

- the quality of the judgement based on reasoning
- the analysis of the provided material
- the deployment of knowledge of the historical context to support the application of criteria.

The second strand of A04 requires an analysis of the Interpretations. In order to be successful candidates needed to correctly identify a valid point of view presented in Interpretation 2, in this case that it was lack of morale amongst US soldiers that caused the failure in Vietnam. Pleasingly most candidates were able to do this, identifying the gist of the interpretation clearly. Less successful candidates showed an awareness of the gist but did not analyse the interpretation effectively. Successful candidates were able not only to identify the gist but also to pick apart the details of the interpretation and show how these details were valid using their own knowledge.

Although some candidates produced responses which were solely based on the consideration of one interpretation, which limited the candidate's performance particularly on the second strand (analysis of the provided material), most candidates were able to establish some form of discussion based on the different views which they had established in 3(b).

Many candidates produced responses which considered the view presented in Interpretation 2 and then contrasted it with the view given in Interpretation 1 and this structure produced some good responses. Some candidates looked to compare the different views directly and used both interpretations throughout the response and this was often used to very good effect. At Level 4 candidates are expected to demonstrate precise analysis of the interpretations indicating how the differences of view are conveyed. This level of analysis was not present in the responses to this question this year.

The selection of contextual knowledge to support the evaluation was often a strong aspect of candidates' responses with most candidates showing a good awareness of how to deploy their knowledge as well as being in possession of an appropriate level of detail. Some responses focused primarily on providing contextual knowledge for its own sake and candidates generally showed an awareness of how to use their knowledge to help them decide on the validity of views selected from the interpretations. A small number of candidates were unable to apply their own knowledge effectively. Merely asserting agreement with points in the interpretation by saying 'from my own knowledge I know this to be true' is not sufficient evidence of contextual knowledge.

It is expected that candidates will reach a judgement when answering this question and the strongest candidates developed their evaluation throughout the answer, creating a consistently argued evaluation. Less successful answers offered points to support the views expressed in Interpretation 2, then used Interpretation 1 to challenge those views, before reaching the view that Interpretation 2 was 'somewhat accurate' or saying that they 'partially agreed' with the view.

The existence of the strands which make up AO4 leads to 'best-fit marking'. All strands are considered before a final mark is decided upon. The most successful candidates, therefore were able to display evidence of a clear understanding of all 3.

In addition, most candidates were able to provide full and structured responses with very few appearing to be rushed or running out of time.

Conclusion

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

- In question 3(a) focus on using the provenance and also contextual knowledge to evaluate the usefulness of the content of the sources
- When analysing the reasons for the different views in the interpretations focus on their content – candidates should **not** be concerned with the book title, date, the author or the type of publication
- In question 3(d) candidates must review the alternative views in both interpretations as well as using specific contextual knowledge to support the points made
- All the sub-questions in question 3 should be seen as part of the same enquiry with each question guiding candidates towards the final analysis in 3(d).