



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

History

Pearson Edexcel Advanced

Paper 2: Depth study

Option 2E.1: Mao's China, 1949-76

Option 2E.2: The German Democratic Republic, 1949-90

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9HI0 2E: China and the GDR

It is recommended that centres should refer to previous Principal Examiner reports to achieve a more rounded view of what is a typical performance in this paper. This examination series has taken place under exceptional circumstances and the comments in this report are based on a significantly smaller entry than is usual.

GCE A level Paper 9HI0 2E provides a choice of topics: either Mao's China, 1949-76 (9HI0 2E.1) or The German Democratic Republic, 1949-90 (9HI0 2E.2).

The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory question which is based on two linked sources. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). For Section B, candidates answer one essay question from a choice of two that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting second order concepts. Second order concepts targeted can include cause, consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and significance. Candidates appeared to organise their time effectively and there was little evidence of candidates being unable to attempt both answers within the time allocated.

All candidates were able to engage with the source evaluation and the extended essay of choice and there were some very interesting and well-written responses that were a pleasure to read.

2E.1 – Mao's China, 1949-76

Mao's China was the more popular of the two options. Q3 and Q4 were equally popular in candidate choice.

Q1.

On Question 1, stronger responses clearly considered the sources together (e.g. Source 1 is from a CCP perspective and Source 2 from a cadre working on the ground), although treatment of the sources may have been uneven. Such responses also analysed the source material in relation to the enquiry with a sense of interrogation which went beyond selecting key points and made reasoned inferences (e.g. the differences in the positive claims made in Source 1 with regard to production and the condemnatory claims made in Source 2). Knowledge of the historical context was used to discuss limitations/what can be gained from the content of the source material and revealed an awareness of the values and concerns of the society from which it was drawn (e.g. the political background to the evidence provided by both Liu Shaoqi and the cadre). However, even many of the stronger candidates began their responses with a paragraph of contextual knowledge that was free-standing rather than being linked specifically to the sources and, in so doing, added little to the response and may have wasted time that could have been used to apply this contextual knowledge to the evaluation of the content.

High-scoring candidates also evaluated the source material relevantly in line with the specified enquiry and considered matters of provenance confidently (e.g. the utility of a cadre with first-hand knowledge of the situation being interviewed anonymously in post-Mao China). The weight of the evidence was taken into

consideration when coming to a judgement (e.g. the official version of events as opposed to the reality on the ground).

Weaker responses began to consider the sources together (e.g. a positive and a negative view of the effectiveness of the Great Leap Forward). In addition, such responses showed some limited understanding and analysis of the source material through the selection of key points relevant to the question (e.g. 'the Wind of Exaggeration' in Source 2) and valid inferences (e.g. the Great Leap Forward was transforming China in Source 1). However, these valid inferences had only limited support or remained undeveloped. Knowledge of the historical context was mainly used to expand, confirm or challenge matters of detail with some attempt to support inferences (e.g. using statistics to confirm the actual productivity). Lower-scoring candidates tended to evaluate the source material with some relevance regarding the specified enquiry and noted some aspects of source provenance to draw conclusions about reliability or utility. At this level, judgments often lacked support and could be based on questionable assumptions (e.g. the cadre in Source 2 would have forgotten most of what had happened so making the evidence very unreliable).

Almost all candidates were able to identify the references to backyard furnaces and were able to develop this in the responses.

Q3.

On Question 3, stronger responses were targeted on an analysis of the extent to which the most significant consequence of the Korean War for China was the enhancement of its international prestige. There were some well-informed responses that explored the consequences of the Korean War for China and that directly addressed the impact that the Korean War had on China's international prestige. Some used knowledge of the key issues to argue that, although China's international prestige had been enhanced, the Korean War also had negative effects on its international standing and it was the impact that the war had on the domestic situation in China that was more significant. Reasoned judgements were made based on clear criteria as to the impact on China. These responses were well-organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and were sometimes unsure of what was meant by international prestige. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on 'the most significant consequence' or were essentially a description of China's involvement in the Korean War or the domestic events in China during the Korean War. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it tended to lack range/depth and attempts to establish criteria. These responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Q4.

On Question 4, stronger responses were targeted on an analysis of the extent to which the launch of the Cultural Revolution was motivated by the genuine desire of Mao to restore the principles of the communist revolution in China. There

were some thoroughly engaging responses that really attempted to explore Mao's motivations and the extent to which they were genuine. This involved an analysis of the relationships between the desire to restore communist principles after a period of perceived decline and other issues of the period such as the popularity of Liu and Deng, Mao's own desire to establish a cult of the personality and the extent to which Mao was manipulated by others. Judgements made about the relative importance of the desire to restore the principles of the communist revolution were reasoned and based on clear criteria (e.g. genuine commitment to permanent revolution and that the masses were more important than the individual as opposed to personal feelings of jealousy and the desire to be remembered). These responses were also effectively communicated and the argument organised and coherent.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly limited analysis of the motives for launching the Cultural Revolution. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on causation or were essentially a description of the events leading up to the launch or the Cultural Revolution itself. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it tended to lack range/depth and attempts to establish criteria (e.g. Mao's ideological and personal aims) were limited. Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

Candidates approached this question in two different ways, both of which were valid. Candidates either analysed the launch of the Cultural Revolution in the context of what had gone on in China since the height of the Great Famine or through an exploration of what the events of the Cultural Revolution itself indicated about the motivation. Weaker candidates who used the second approach, however, often tended to narrate the events rather than analyse.

2E.2 – The German Democratic Republic, 1949-1990

The GDR has fewer candidates than Mao's China. Q3 and Q4 were equally popular in candidate choice.

Q2.

On Question 2, stronger responses clearly considered the sources together (e.g. Source 1 is written from an official SED perspective and Source 2 is written by a woman who experienced the reality of life for women), although treatment of the sources may have been uneven. Such responses also analysed the source material in relation to the enquiry with a sense of interrogation which went beyond selecting key points and made reasoned inferences (e.g. from Source 2 that the experience of women was not uniform as suggested in Source 1 but dependent on circumstances). Knowledge of the historical context was used to discuss limitations/what can be gained from the content of the source material (e.g. that Honecker's claim of 34% of women in government and managerial roles may have been accurate but did not really reflect the lack of female representation in the upper echelons of the SED) and revealed an awareness of the values and concerns of the society from which it was drawn (e.g. the

circumstances surrounding Honecker's speech on the 40th anniversary of the founding of the SED). Furthermore, high-scoring candidates evaluated the source material relevantly in line with the specified enquiry and considered matters of provenance confidently (e.g. the significance of Scherzer having a reputation for being honest about life in the GDR). The weight of the evidence was taken into consideration when coming to a judgement (e.g. Daske's evidence is balanced in content and tone so making Source 2 more reliable than the official speech made by Honecker).

Weaker responses began to consider the sources together (e.g. one is an official speech and one is an eyewitness). In addition, such responses showed some limited understanding and analysis of the source material through the selection of key points relevant to the question (e.g. Honecker's uses statistics to show improvements) and valid inferences (e.g. from Source 2 that gender equality was not always observed). However, these valid inferences had only limited support or remained undeveloped. Knowledge of the historical context was mainly used to expand, confirm or challenge matters of detail with some attempt to support inferences (e.g. the SED policies in place to support women in work). Lower-scoring candidates tended to evaluate the source material with some relevance regarding the specified enquiry and noted some aspects of source provenance to draw conclusions about reliability or utility. At this level, judgements often lacked support and could be based on questionable assumptions (e.g. that none of Honecker's speech was trustworthy because of his position).

Almost all candidates referred to the lack of women in high positions in the SED and government and the concept of the 'dual burden' of women in the GDR.

Q5.

In general, candidates were well-prepared for this question and there was good knowledge of the events that led to the formation of the GDR. On Question 5, stronger responses focused directly on the extent to which the formation of the GDR was primarily due the attempts of the western allies to undermine the post-war agreement. This involved an analysis of the relationship between key issues such as the attitudes and actions of the western allies at the time in relation to the attitudes and actions of the Soviet Union and to the unfolding events in Germany itself. Some candidates argued that the western allies were responsible while others that it was the provocation of the Soviet Union that led to the chain of events that occurred. Reasoned judgements were made and based on criteria, such as, the motivation of the different sides in the dispute. Stronger responses were well-organised and effectively communicated.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly limited analysis of the reasons for the creation of the GDR. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on causation or were essentially a description of the events leading up to the formation of the GDR. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it tended to lack range/depth and attempts to establish criteria were limited. Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported

judgements. Some candidates were confused as to the events of the Berlin blockade and airlift and the significance of it for the formation of the GDR.

Q6.

There were some interesting and engaging responses to this question with good knowledge of the relationship between the GDR and West Germany during the time period. On Question 5, stronger responses focused directly on the impact of the relationship on the GDR and the extent to which the GDR benefited greatly. Candidate responses indicated an analysis of the effect that the relationship had on the GDR and analysed key issues such as the political, social and economic impacts. Reasoned judgements were made with some candidates arguing that initial benefits bringing economic support and social contact ultimately led to economic problems and social discontent. Strong responses were characterised by well-organised and coherent arguments.

Weaker responses tended to be generalised and, at best, offered a fairly limited analysis of the impact of GDR's relationship with West Germany. Low scoring answers also often lacked focus on causation or were essentially a description of the key events in the relationship over time. Where some analysis using relevant knowledge was evident, it tended to lack range/depth and attempts to establish criteria were limited. These responses were often focused on either the earlier or later part of the period rather than across the date range of 1969-85. Some candidates also analysed the extent to which relations improved rather than the impact of the relationship. Furthermore, such responses were often brief, lacked coherence and structure, and made unsubstantiated or weakly supported judgements.

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

Section A

- Candidates should go beyond paraphrasing the content of the sources to draw out reasoned and developed inferences
- Candidates should move beyond stereotypical approaches to the nature/purpose and authorship of the source by, e.g. looking at and explaining the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer
- Contextual knowledge should not be used to list all the information that is missing from the sources, unless omission was the aim of the author
- Contextual knowledge should be linked to the material provided in the source
- Candidates should make use of the sources together at some point in the answer.

Section B

- Spending a few minutes planning helps to ensure the second order concept is correctly identified; candidates need to be aware that not all questions demand a factor/other factors approach
- Candidates must provide more precise contextual knowledge as evidence.

Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range

- Candidates should avoid a narrative/descriptive approach; this undermines the analysis that is required for the higher levels
- Candidates need to be aware of key dates as identified in the specification so that they can address the questions with chronological precision
- Candidates should try to explore the links between issues rather than merely present a list of factors.