



SUGGESTED ANSWER TO GCE 'O' LEVEL ELECTIVE HISTORY 2017

SECTION A

Question 1

a)

Source A is useful as evidence about Cuban attitudes towards the Castro regime as it shows that people were willing to follow his leadership. Source A says "retains positive support" and "substantial numbers of Cubans under the spell of Castro". This means that Cubans had faith in Castro's leadership.

This source is not useful as evidence about Cuban attitudes towards the Castro regime as it does not really give details about other Cubans who were opposing Castro.

According to my contextual knowledge, Castro was a wildly popular leader who led the Cuban Revolution in 1959 with Che Guevara. People received the two leaders favourably as they overthrew the previous dictator Colonel Batista. Since my contextual knowledge supports Source A, Source A is reliable, hence useful.

Source A is a confidential intelligence report by the Americans. Since it is an American perspective, it will be more likely to portray Cuba in an unfavourable light since by this time the relations between Cuba and the US were already tense. The report is meant to prepare for the Bay of Pigs Invasion and perhaps convince the government to go ahead with the invasion which would later be known as an embarrassing failure owing to the Americans' overconfidence. Since this source has a political agenda, it is not reliable hence not useful.

b)

Source B is published to illustrate the close connection between Cuba and Soviet Union as a cause of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In Source B, we see that Castro was addressing the public and he said "Cuba, Yes" in Spanish and "Yankees, No" in Russian. This shows that Castro was vehemently against the US and was aligning himself with the Soviets. According to my contextual knowledge, this is true as Castro officially called himself a Marxist-Leninist in 1961 as part of the larger communist bloc. He also had close economic partnerships with Soviet Union and a personal friendship with Khrushchev.

Source B is published in an American newspaper during the Cuban Missile Crisis to convince the larger public that Soviet Union controlled Cuba and was responsible for escalating the nuclear crisis. Naturally, this source represents the pro-American perspective as it hopes to gain support for the American government and for the public to blame Soviet leadership.



c)

Source C is talking about close Cuban-Soviet relations as a point of contention between the Cubans and the Americans as the Americans perceived it as extension of Soviet influence. Source C says "Soviet money and weapons were now flowing into Cuba and being used to undermine other Latin American countries which the US was trying to help". Source D is however about Khrushchev assuring Kennedy that Soviet assistance to Cuba was purely based on concerns of "humanity" and "enabling Cuba to live peacefully".

Source D is more reliable than Source C as Source D can be supported by Source F. Source F agrees that Soviet assistance to Cuba is motivated by desire to protect the Cubans, as seen from the source saying "we sent troops and strategic missiles only to protect the island". Since Source F supports Source D, Source D is more reliable than Source C.

Source C is more reliable than Source D as Source C can be supported by my contextual knowledge. From my contextual knowledge, it is true that Soviet assistance to Cuba might also have been motivated by other political agenda. First of all, the Soviets were involved in Cuba as they wanted political leverage over US missiles in Turkey, so as to catch the US off-guard. As Khrushchev was facing immense domestic pressure following the Sino-Soviet split in 1960. Thus, this proves that Source C was right about perceiving Soviet expansionism, hence proving that Source C is more reliable.

Source D is more reliable as it is published on 27 October 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis itself. Source C is published on 13 October 1962, prior to the crisis. Therefore, based on the timeline, Source D would be more relevant to the Cuban Missile Crisis directly, hence it is more reliable.

Source C is more reliable as it is a confidential report by the US government with the purpose of analysing and conceptualising the whole impending crisis as well as Soviet motives. It is not meant to be revealed to the public, therefore it does not need to speak in favour of anyone. This is unlike Source D which is Khrushchev's letter to Kennedy. As the tensions were still present, Khrushchev spoke with caution with the intention of assuring Kennedy that there was nothing more to Soviet actions than protecting Cuba.

d)

I am not surprised by Source E as Source E detailed the disappointment and shock felt by Cuba following the removal of the missiles. Source E says "countless eyes of Cuban and Soviet men who were willing to die with supreme dignity shed tears upon learning about the surprising, sudden and practically unconditional decision to withdraw the weapons". This shows that the Soviet-US agreement to remove Cuban missiles came as a shock to the Cubans.



This can also be supported by my contextual knowledge. I know that because the Soviet-US secret negotiations did not involve Khrushchev consulting his ally Castro. Castro, upon knowing about the sudden decision, expressed vehement disappointment in his Soviet ally. Since Source E can be supported by my contextual knowledge, it is reliable and thus I am not surprised.

I am surprised by Source E as Source E says that Cuba will not let the decision to remove missiles affect Soviet-Cuban relations. Source E says “nothing will destroy the ties of friendship and eternal gratitude we have towards the Soviet Union”. This is surprising as when I cross-reference to my contextual knowledge, Castro was in reality not that understanding of Khrushchev’s decision to remove the Cuban missiles without prior consultation. The way the Cuban Missile Crisis unfolded towards the end marked the irreconcilable cracks in the friendship of Castro and Khrushchev. Since Source E cannot be supported by my contextual knowledge, Source E surprises me.

I am not surprised by Source E as it was a letter written by Castro to Khrushchev after the removal of the Cuban missiles. Since the Cuban leader and the Soviet leader had a close relationship, Castro might be inclined to phrase his words properly and speak diplomatically to Khrushchev, the leader of the communist world. As the Source only wanted to express sadness and disappointment, it did not include any personal attacks on Khrushchev and hence it is not surprising given the close relationship shared by the two men.

e) “The Cuban Missile Crisis came about because the Americans were threatening Cuba”

Source E, F support the statement while Source C, D does not.

Source E supports the statement as it shows that the Cubans were very defensive against the Americans. Source E says “the imperialists are talking once again about invading our country, but our people maintain their indestructible will to resist the aggressors.” This shows that the Cuban Missile Crisis involved Cuban-US tensions and the Cubans knew that the Americans were threatening them.

Source F supports the statement as it shows that the US wanted to destroy Cuba. Source F says “they had a plan to strangle the economy of Cuba to bring down Castro’s regime without military intervention” and that the Soviets only got involved “so that Americans could not cause trouble in Cuba”. This shows that Soviet defence of Cuba, which led to the Cuban Missile Crisis, was motivated by the awareness that Americans were threatening Cuba.

Source C does not support the statement as it shows that the Cuban Missile Crisis possibly broke out due to the close Soviet-Cuban relations. Source C says “Soviet money and weapons were now flowing into Cuba and being used to undermine other Latin American countries which the US was trying to help”.



This shows that intimate Soviet-Cuban relations and the possibility of Soviet expansionism raised US' alarm and concern and therefore starting the crisis.

Source D does not support the statement as it shows that the Cuban Missile Crisis happened not due to the fact that the Americans were threatening Cuba, but due to US misunderstanding of Soviet assistance to Cuba. In Source D, Khrushchev explained that the US "have been alarmed by the fact that [the Soviets] have aided Cuba with weapons" but he clarified that that was entirely to enable "Cuba to live peacefully and develop in the way its people desire". This shows that Khrushchev was trying to say that the crisis broke out because the Americans overreacted to the supposedly close Soviet-Cuban relations.

Source D is unreliable as it cannot be supported by Source F. Source D saw Khrushchev reassuring the Americans that Soviet assistance was purely based on humanity and the sincere desire to help Cuba. This was disputed by a leading Soviet politician in Source F who said that Soviet assistance was "a plan of containment so that the Americans would not cause trouble in Cuba". Since Source D cannot be supported by Source F, Source D is unreliable. Source D is also unreliable as its motive was to reassure Kennedy thus he phrased things diplomatically and tactfully so as to maintain peace, hence he might not represent the most accurate Soviet intentions.

SECTION B

IMPACT OF WWI

a)

The Treaty of Versailles (TOV) was signed in 1919 as a peace settlement after World War I (WWI). The terms are as follows: War Guilt which dictated that Germany would take full blame for starting WWI; that Germany would have to pay 269 billion gold reichmark for the war damages; that Germany would be demilitarized and only be allowed a small army and navy and no air force and submarines; that Germany would have to give up its territories to the Allies, and the creation of the League of Nations which was an international body for peace and dialogue.

The TOV was hugely unpopular in Germany as it caused severe German humiliation. The War Guilt Clause dictated that they would have to shoulder full blame which was unfair to them as the other players did not have to take any responsibility. This led to a loss of German dignity and was a severe blow to their pride.

The territorial restrictions clause was also hugely unpopular as it saw the glory of the old German empire diminishing. The fact that they had to give up their



colonies in Asia, Alsace-Lorraine, Saar-Coal region and a union with Austria was a huge loss. The loss of land also resulted in physical vulnerability for the Germans as a smaller territory meant a lack of defence and further aggravated German insecurity and made the TOV hugely unpopular in Germany.

The TOV also aggravated the post-war problem of Germany. Already left with a crippled economy due to the loss of men, high unemployment and debts, the TOV deprived the Germans of their source of income in the Saar-Coal region and forced them to pay high reparations, as such the Germans were lamenting that their lives were made worse by the TOV.

The creation of the LON did not even make things any easier for the Germans as they were not even allowed to join in the first place. As such, this meant that the Germans were blatantly excluded from the post-war world, hence making the terms of the TOV hugely unpopular in Germany.

b)

The League of Nations (LON) was created in 1920 as part of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles as an international body for peace and dialogue. It was meant to be a platform for the various countries to talk things out instead of resorting to war. It was governed by the principles of Collective security, providing that any acts of war will invoke counter-action of the League, and Disarmament which aimed to reduce military capabilities so as to reduce war. I agree that the LON failed to provide for collective security in the 1920s.

The LON failed to provide for collective security in the 1920s as they were plagued by many problems. One of which was the lack of authority. The LON was not taken seriously since it had no military power and could only impose economic sanctions. Another problem was the limited membership. The USSR, Germany, and most importantly the US were not members. This means that collective security could not be implemented without active participation of key nations. The post-war attitudes of the major powers also impeded collective security as they merely saw the LON as a place to vent their frustrations and demand things.

Some, however, would argue that the LON did do significant things in the 1920s. For example, when Yugoslavia tried to invade Albania in 1920, the LON intervened successfully, forcing them to withdraw. In 1921 when Finland and Sweden were in dispute over the rights to Aaland Islands, both countries accepted the LON's decision to give it to Finland. In the same year, when Germany and Poland were in dispute over the rights to the industrial area of Upper Silesia, the LON conducted plebiscites and used the results to split the area according to public opinion – 40.6% decided to become Polish citizens. These case studies proved that the LON did provide for collective security in the 1920s.



The above argument would be fallacious as it failed to account for the bulk of the 1920s. Evidently, these successes were present only in the founding years of the LON. When countries were coping with severe economic problems in the late 1920s due to the Great Depression, the LON was helpless and did not manage to solve these burning problems. As such, one can safely say the LON only managed limited successes and aided a few countries which is not significant enough to say that it provided for collective and long lasting security.

COLD WAR

a)

The Korean War began as a civil war when the Communist North Korea invaded the Democratic South Korea on 25 June 1950. The US and the UN immediately sent aid to South Korea and the Chinese forces joined the war in October. USA was involved in the Korean War mainly to stop the invasion, to contain communism and to protect its political interests in the Asia-Pacific.

The US joined the Korean War right after the North invasion primarily to assist the South Koreans in fighting back. From September to October 1950, the South Koreans managed to push the North back with the help of the UN and US. However, US aid was not merely to stop the invasion, instead they stayed in Korea to prevent communism from taking over the entire country. This was because the US viewed Stalin as expansionistic and that he was responsible for orchestrating North Korean actions. This also stemmed from the fear of the Domino Theory which describes countries falling to communism one by one. The NSC-68, a document describing Soviet expansionism, has also influenced the US decision to stay in Korea. The US were also afraid that if they did not intervene, communism would spread to Japan as well. This cannot happen as the US was determined to help Japan recover from the war.

The US stayed all the way till the end of the Korean War in 1953. A part of this involvement could be attributed to the entry of China in October 1950 due to the fact that US commander Douglas MacArthur had pushed Chinese borders after crossing the Yalu River. The entry of China saw the globalisation of the Korean War, hence the Americans stayed in Korea. In Korea, they oversaw the subsequent stalemate from 1951 to 1953, the ceasefire and the armistice agreement that was signed on 27 July 1953. This was credited to the new US President Dwight Eisenhower and the new Soviet leadership. Hence, one can



safely say that American involvement in the Korean War was motivated by peacekeeping objectives as well as Cold War politics, in which they had to counter communist influences and protect their interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

b)

The US policy of containment was derived from President Truman's Truman Doctrine in March 1947. The US containment policy was an active US agenda to contain the spread of communism. This saw the pledging of monetary support to countries in need, based on the belief that it will stop spread of communism. This spawned the Marshall Plan (June 1948) where the US devoted US\$13 billion to help Europe recover. This also marked the active assistance the US provided to countries in need such as the troubles at the Korean Peninsula in the 1950s. I agree that the US policy of containment has failed in Europe.

The US policy of containment has failed in Europe as it only resulted in further Soviet aggression and deterioration of the Soviet-US relations. The Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine created an ideological conflict between the Americans and the Soviets. The Soviets created their own version of the Marshall Plan, known as the Molotov Plan which saw the Soviet monetary assistance to Eastern European countries which were united by the joint economic fraternity called COMECON in 1949. The active US policy to contain communism also manifested itself in the militarization of European relations with the creation of military alliances such as NATO (1949) and Warsaw Pact (1955) which were the respective US-led and USSR-led military pacts in Europe. We can see that the policy of containment did not succeed in controlling the spread of communism, instead it made the communist leadership even more vehement about countering capitalism.

However, some would argue that the US policy of containment did not fail in Europe as it did manage to prevent certain countries from subscribing to communism. Countries like Turkey and Greece did not fall to communism as they received US aid in the form of the Marshall Plan. Hence one can say that the US policy of containment did not fail since it prevented the spread of communism.

The above argument would be fallacious as it fails to account for the larger negative impact of the containment policy. While the containment policy did contain communism for Turkey and Greece, it failed to salvage the entire Eastern Europe as it was part of the Soviet bloc thanks to the economic and military segregation as a result of the Marshall Plan-Molotov Plan and NATO-Warsaw Pact divide. The Berlin Blockade of 1948 was a further testament to the failure of containment as it proved that the US could not do anything to stop Stalin from controlling the entire Berlin. They could only intervene with airlift and

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wait for Stalin to remove the blockade himself. A further proof of the failure of US containment in Europe was the reality that communism had spread to China and Korea in the 1950s.

Hence, with the limited success of the US policy of containment in Turkey and Greece, the argument that it is a failure in Europe far outshone the opposition. On a wider scheme of things, the US policy of containment failed not only because it failed to contain communism but more of how it motivated the communist leadership to retaliate strongly against the capitalist influences which accounted for half a decade of Cold War.