

Examiner's General Advice on Unit 2

In this AS Unit students are expected to demonstrate the following skills:

- the ability to recall, select and use appropriate historical knowledge and to communicate it effectively (AO1a)
- historical understanding involving explanation, analysis and judgement, and key concepts such as causation, consequence, change and continuity; and an understanding of the relationships between key features of the period studied (AO1b)
- the ability to analyse and evaluate a range of source material (AO2a)
- the ability to analyse and evaluate how the past has been interpreted and represented in different ways (AO2b).

These skills are also **assessment objectives (AOs)**. All questions will aim to test more than one of these objectives, and in an examination answer will be marked accordingly. On any given examination paper, there will be a planned balance of the various skills across the questions to ensure that all are covered. However, individual questions or part questions will focus on certain skills, not necessarily all of them at once. One of the ways of writing an effective answer is therefore to learn to recognise the particular skill that is the focal point of a particular question. However, it is also important to remember that accurate knowledge and understanding are key elements in any AS answer. In a source-based question, generalised statements showing, for example, a student's awareness that one piece of evidence is less objective and more biased than another will not earn much credit. There must also be a clear indication of some background knowledge and understanding of the topic in addition to the ability to make comparisons and contrasts between sources.

In **Unit 2** you must answer **one** compulsory two-part source-based question plus **one of two** two-part questions, not source-based, on the chosen option from European, World or British history.

It is important to divide your time well. The first part of each question carries 12 marks; the second part carries 24 marks. You should therefore aim to spend less time on the part (a) questions, or you will risk running out of time on the second and longer part (b) questions.

While Question 1 requires a precise focus on sources and your own knowledge, Questions 2 and 3 do not involve sources. Questions 2 and 3 require demonstration of your own knowledge. There are several skills implicit in this. One element is simple **recall**. You will need to **explain**, for example by giving the reasons for a particular event. This requires more than simply listing a series of reasons from memory – a high-level answer will require you to put these reasons in context and relate them to each other. The 24-mark question will require you to examine a particular historical issue, often dressed in the form of a quotation. You must not only call up your knowledge of the topic but also **use** that knowledge in such a way that you are able to **analyse** the issues and produce a **reasoned argument** using the knowledge you have.

| <p>AQA – AS GCE Historical Issues: Periods of Change Unit 2 HIS2Q</p> | <p>The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975</p> | <p>SOURCES ACCOMPANYING EXEMPLAR QUESTION 1</p> |
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| <p>SOURCE A</p> | <p><i>A letter from President Nixon to President Thieu of South Vietnam, sent during the final stages of the Paris Peace Talks, 19 January 1973.</i></p> <p>The essential fact is that the situation in the United States makes it imperative to put our relationship on a new basis. Long-term friends in the Congress are making public declarations that a refusal by your government of reasonable peace terms would make it impossible for the US to continue providing aid to South Vietnam. It is this situation that threatens everything for which our two countries have suffered so much. I can no longer hold up my decision. When Dr Kissinger leaves Washington on Monday morning, our basic course must be set. As I have told you, we will initial the Agreement in Paris on 23 January. I must know now whether you are prepared to join us in this course, and I must have your answer by 12.00 Washington time, January 21, 1973.</p> <p><i>Quoted in J. Hanhimaki and O.A. Westad, The Cold War, 2004</i></p> | |
| <p>SOURCE B</p> | <p><i>Adapted from the diaries of Bob Haldeman, President Nixon’s chief of staff, 23 January 1973.</i></p> <p>Got word from Henry Kissinger that he has initialed the Vietnam agreement, so we had sessions on planning the President’s speech for tonight. The P read out the official statement he will read on TV tonight, and said all our conditions had been completely met. The P said the GVN and Thieu are totally on board. He said we have a cease-fire for Vietnam, possibly also in Laos and Cambodia. We have peace with honour; the POWs are coming back; it’s a supervised cease-fire; and the right of South Vietnam to determine their own future. He got a little bit emotional at the end.</p> <p><i>Quoted in J. Hanhimaki and O.A. Westad, The Cold War, 2004</i></p> | |

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| SOURCE C | <p><i>From a modern historian's account.</i></p> <p>In January 1973 a cease-fire was finally agreed. The Americans would withdraw within sixty days and the final settlement would be left to the Vietnamese. But the cease-fire was not the prelude to peace. The North Vietnamese soon resumed the conflict and, despite massive supplies of American arms, the badly led South Vietnamese army crumbled completely. The Watergate scandal had removed Nixon in 1974; his successor President Ford knew only too well that the American people would not sanction a renewed US involvement in the war. As the North Vietnamese army thrust south, millions of refugees fled in terror towards Saigon, but the capital itself fell on 30 April 1975 as the last Americans and accompanying Vietnamese were lifted from the American Embassy in a frenzied evacuation.</p> <p><i>Adapted from J.A.S. Grenville, The Collins History of the World in the Twentieth Century, 1994</i></p> |
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| AQA – AS GCE Historical Issues: Periods of Change Unit 2 HIS2Q | The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975 | QUESTION 1 (01) |
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Examiner's Specific Advice

This question is testing both your knowledge and your ability to use the source material provided. It is important that you do both. The key words are 'explain how far', 'differ' and 'views'. It is not enough just to describe the content of the sources – that will earn very few marks. You need to identify and explain the differences, but also identify and explain any similarities between the sources for a good mark. If you do that well and clearly address 'how far', you should get a high-level mark. There is no need to write a full essay – two or three paragraphs should be sufficient.

Exemplar Question

Read the sources and then answer the questions that follow.

Use **Sources A** and **B** and your **own knowledge**.

1 (01) Explain how far the views in **Source B** differ from those in **Source A** in relation to the peace agreement of January 1973. **[12 marks]**

Plan

- Identify views in both sources and identify differences and similarities
- Use own knowledge to explain the content and the context
- Make a judgement on 'how far'

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 1

In Source A, Nixon is very determined to get Thieu to agree to a ceasefire in Vietnam. He wants him to agree in less than two days. It is almost a threatening letter (1). Source B gives a different impression. Nixon claims that Thieu is 'totally on board' and it will be 'peace with honour'. This is a lot different from having to force Thieu to agree because Congress will not support the war any more, which is what Source A says (2).

Examiner's Assessment

This is a limited answer. The comprehension is accurate and the candidate has identified a difference between the sources, mainly in tone, but no areas where they agree. There is little or no use of own knowledge to explain the sources or their context. The answer lacks depth and merits a mark in Level 2.

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 2

These two sources, both showing the views of Richard Nixon, are from within a few days of each other. They both focus on the urgent need of the US to obtain a ceasefire at the Paris peace talks and the special urgency of persuading President Thieu of South Vietnam to agree to the ceasefire (3). By early 1973, Nixon was much more concerned with his new policy in China than with South Vietnam. He just wanted the war over as fast as possible (4).

Yet although there are similarities, there are significant differences in tone and content. Nixon's letter in Source A shows how much the US is under pressure because support for the war in the Senate is falling away. He is virtually giving Thieu an ultimatum. It is clear from the tone of the letter that Thieu did not really want to agree –

(1) This is mainly a summary of the source, although there is a brief comment on the tone.

(2) Again, this is mainly comprehension, although with a focus on comparing the tone of the sources, not just the literal meaning.

(3) There is a clear and effective focus here on similarities.

(4) Concise use of own knowledge to explain the context of the sources.

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| <p><u>and we know that later on Thieu re-started the war against the North</u> (5).</p> <p>Haldeman’s description of Nixon in <u>Source B is different. He shows Nixon claiming that Thieu is ‘on board’ and that the ceasefire will mean ‘peace with honour’, and that the people of South Vietnam will decide their own future</u> (6). <u>Source A is all about Nixon bullying Thieu in private but Source B is all about presenting an image of a great diplomatic success for Nixon and Kissinger on national TV</u> (7).</p> | <p>(5) This is a very good paragraph, clearly identifying the evidence and with effective use of own knowledge.</p> <p>(6) Concise evidence from the source to show differences.</p> <p>(7) A skilful conclusion, going beyond the literal meaning of the sources to make a judgement about their tone and purpose, with good knowledge of the context.</p> |
| <p>Examiner’s Assessment</p> | |
| <p>This is a strong, confident answer that does not waste words. There is good use of own knowledge of the context to support the comparison of the sources. Areas of both agreement and disagreement between the sources are explained, with selective evidence and awareness of tone and intentions. Overall, the answer clearly meets the criteria for Level 4.</p> | |

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| <p>Mark Scheme</p> |
| <p>L1:</p> |
| <p>The answer essentially paraphrases or describes the sources with no development. [1–2 marks]</p> |
| <p>L2:</p> |
| <p>The answer identifies some differences and/or similarities between the sources. There may be some limited own knowledge to explain why Nixon’s attitudes towards the peace agreement were what they were. [3–6 marks]</p> |
| <p>L3:</p> |
| <p>The answer identifies both differences and similarities between the sources, and uses own knowledge about Nixon’s attitudes and the events of the Paris peace negotiations to explain and evaluate the sources. For example, there is evidence in Source B that Nixon’s private views were different from his public statements, but there are also areas of agreement between the sources. [7–9 marks]</p> |
| <p>L4:</p> |
| <p>The comparison between sources is well developed. Own knowledge is used effectively to demonstrate good contextual understanding. In this instance there will be a well-sustained examination of how Nixon’s attitudes towards South Vietnam were influenced by the political and diplomatic circumstances at the time. [10–12 marks]</p> |

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| AQA – AS GCE Historical Issues: Periods of Change Unit 2 HIS2Q | The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975 | QUESTION 1 (02) |
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Examiner's Specific Advice

This question requires an essay-type answer, so it is quite demanding. You must use both the sources **and** your own knowledge to get to a high level. In the process of displaying your knowledge and understanding of the topic, there is no obligation to use all three sources equally. However, you should refer to the sources, either with brief quotations or by selectively paraphrasing their arguments as appropriate. To earn the highest marks you must answer the specific question, with a judgement. It is not enough just to describe the role of Thieu in the collapse of the South and the end of US involvement in Vietnam in 1973–75, although of course this information is relevant. You must relate what you know about the various factors that were pushing the Americans towards withdrawal. You might also consider whether the long-term factors before 1973 were important, such as the weaknesses of the South, the strength of the North, or the wider political situation in the US.

The key thing is that you back up your arguments with evidence, reaching a clear and balanced assessment of the relative importance of Thieu alongside other factors. It is entirely up to you whether you state your argument clearly at the start of your answer, or let the conclusion arrive naturally towards the end having discussed all your evidence. But do remember, good answers are those that are relevant, do more than just describe events or state facts, and answer the specific question directly. There is no ideal length, but a good answer is often a concise one!

Exemplar Question

Read the sources and then answer the questions that follow.

Use **Sources A, B and C** and your **own knowledge**.

1 (02) How far was President Thieu responsible for the collapse of South Vietnam between January 1973 and April 1975? **[24 marks]**

Plan

- Introduction: the political context of the peace talks
- The situation of the war at the beginning of 1973
- Weaknesses in the South Vietnamese army and Thieu's regime
- The importance of other factors
- Evidence selected from the sources
- Conclusion/judgement: how far was Thieu responsible for the collapse?

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 1

The sources show that Thieu was a bad leader. Source A shows how impatient Nixon was with Thieu because he would not go along with American policy. Source B shows that even those in the Congress who supported the war strongly were starting to give up on the war because they did not believe in Thieu any more. Source C explains that the South Vietnamese army was badly led (1).

From my own knowledge I know that Thieu's regime was very corrupt and as a result the morale and discipline of the South's troops was nothing like as good as the North. When Nixon and Kissinger started to make peace, Thieu was stubborn and unrealistic. He would not take in the idea that he had to agree with the Americans because they provided all the money and weapons. Even after the American army had pulled out, Thieu re-started the war against the North in 1974 and the result was a disastrous defeat (2).

It was not all Thieu's fault. Previous South Vietnam leaders, like Diem and Ky were just as corrupt and unsuccessful. The anti-war protests in the US were getting stronger all the time and Thieu could not do much about this (3).

But Thieu was the South Vietnam leader who was in power the longest during the war and it was up to Thieu to make the policy of 'Vietnamisation' work. He failed to do this. North Vietnam had much better leaders than Thieu, like Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, and that is why they won decisively in the end (4).

Examiner's Assessment

Although relevant to the question and based on broadly accurate evidence, this answer lacks range and depth. The sources are treated separately from 'own knowledge', and not used very effectively to support an evaluation. The later use of own knowledge is accurate, but rather brief and with limited depth of comment. Evaluation/ judgement is also limited. Overall, it is an explicit answer, but extremely brief and with limited support. The direct relevance to the question and the attempts to balance Thieu's role against other factors merits a mark in Level 3 rather than Level 2.

(1) There is some relevant material from the sources here but the answer summarises the sources without really *using* them to focus on the context of the question.

(2) There is some accurate basic own knowledge to assess Thieu's role.

(3) This is a potentially useful attempt to balance other factors against Thieu but it is rather general evidence and the assessment is not developed.

(4) This is a sound overview conclusion, even though lacking depth.

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 2

President Thieu was obviously a key figure in everything to do with the collapse of South Vietnam. He had been president since 1967 and even before then he was a leader in the government from the time Diem was assassinated. Thieu was, therefore directly responsible for the military failures of the ARVN and the political corruption of the Saigon government. It would be ridiculous, however, to put all the blame for the final collapse on Thieu. He was merely the puppet ruler of a puppet state and it was his American masters who were to blame (5).

Although the final collapse occurred in 1973–5, there were deep long-term causes. The Viet Cong were disciplined and got a lot of support from the countryside in the South. The Communist leadership in the North was far superior to the corrupt regimes in Saigon. The whole of Vietnam would easily be taken over but for the Americans (and before them the French) propping up the South which was incapable of defending itself. It could be argued, therefore, that the final collapse was already inevitable long before January 1973 (6).

The only hope of maintaining a democratic regime in the South was massive military and economic backing from the US. At first, the US wasted billions of dollars of aid to Diem's regime until it became obvious that huge numbers of US troops would be needed. The escalation of the US military effort meant that the army and government of the South became completely dominated by American policy. So Thieu was never an independent leader and it is unreasonable to blame him for what went wrong. Nixon's letter in Source A shows clearly how Thieu was being bullied into something he did not want to do and is typical of the way the US was always in control (7).

There was always a chance of the US achieving a military victory and stabilising the South (as had previously happened in Korea in the 1950s) but this was only possible if the US fully committed to the war for many years. The Tet offensive of 1968 showed that the Americans could win militarily but it also showed that there was not enough political and public support at home in the US. By 1972, the

(5) A solid introduction, showing good grasp of the demands of the question and indicating the line of argument to be followed through.

(6) Using sound own knowledge to place the issues in the question in a wider context.

(7) This paragraph includes some excessive long-term background but is well linked to the question at the end.

US was looking for a way out, especially when Nixon launched his new policy of reconciliation with China. Haldeman's comments in Source B show how desperate the Nixon administration was to have a face-saving formula to get out of the Vietnam mess (8).

From 1972, the policy was 'Vietnamisation' – letting the South defend itself as the US forces gradually pulled out. This policy might have worked if it had been put into practice properly ten years earlier but it had no chance of success in 1972–73. It is true that Thieu and his generals made many errors at this time but it was already too late to turn the situation round, even if Thieu had been a military and political genius (9).

Source C makes it clear who was really responsible for the disasters of 1973–75. It says that the Southern forces were 'badly led' and it shows how Thieu took the wrong decision to start up the war again in 1974. But it also shows that the decisive factors were outside Thieu's control. The US will to fight was badly weakened by the Watergate scandal and the humiliating resignation of Nixon. President Ford 'knew only too well that the American people would not support renewed involvement in Vietnam'. There was nothing to stop the advance of Northern armies to Saigon (10).

In the end, Thieu had little control over the fate of the South. The Communist enemy was too strong by 1973, already knowing they would win if they just waited. The US, who had taken over the whole war and made Thieu a weak puppet ruler, then decided to back away and leave him to accept defeat or to fight on alone. All Nixon's claims about 'peace with honour' in Source B were just wishful thinking to cover up the fact that Vietnam had been an American war that was going to end in an American defeat (11).

Examiner's Assessment

This is a very strong answer, meriting Level 5. It is confident throughout. The candidate shows a good range and depth of knowledge, which means that arguments and evaluation are well supported. Even though there is some excessive coverage of events before 1973, there is a sustained focus on the question and the role of Thieu is clearly addressed. There is good awareness of the context and the

(8) Again, there is some descriptive material but it is clearly linked to the question and uses selective source evidence effectively.

(9) Using sound knowledge to develop the assessments previously made.

(10) Confident and purposeful use of the evidence of the source to support an evaluation.

(11) A focused conclusion, with integrated use of source evidence and some judgement.

interplay between long-term and short-term factors. The sources are used selectively to support the central argument.

Mark Scheme

L1:

The answer is based on **either** own knowledge **or** sources. It is likely to be generalised, descriptive and/or assertive, and with little focus on the question.

[1–6 marks]

L2:

The answer may be based on relevant selection of material **either** from the sources **or** from own knowledge, or they may be combined. The answer might be mainly descriptive about the defeat of the South and the American withdrawal, with limited links to Thieu; or the answer may be explicit about the question but containing limited support.

[7–11 marks]

L3:

The answer shows developed understanding of the issue of how Thieu's leadership impacted upon American policy and the military defeat, using material **both** from the sources **and** from own knowledge. The answer is likely to lack depth or balance in assessing the importance of Thieu or other factors, but will be a relevant response, and there will be some understanding of interpretations.

[12–16 marks]

L4:

The answer shows explicit understanding of the demands of the question and provides a balanced explanation of Thieu's role, backed up by appropriate evidence from the sources and own knowledge. There will be a good understanding of interpretations, for example of how important the changing political situation in the US was in relation to other factors such as the poor leadership of the ARVN. The answer may focus mostly on Thieu, or it may balance his role against other relevant factors.

[17–21 marks]

L5:

The answer is well focused and closely argued – supported by precise use of evidence from the sources and own knowledge. There will be a well-developed understanding of interpretations leading to a good understanding, with judgement, of the impact of Thieu's leadership on the military, political and diplomatic failure to defend South Vietnam. As with Level 4, the answer may focus primarily on Thieu, or may balance him against other relevant factors.

[22–24 marks]

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| AQA – AS GCE Historical Issues: Periods of Change Unit 2 HIS2Q | The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975 | QUESTION 2 (03) |
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Examiner's Specific Advice

This question is testing your knowledge and your ability to communicate it effectively. There is no source material involved. You are required to explain motives for a particular decision, why Kennedy committed US forces to the support of South Vietnam in 1961. You are not expected to explain all possible motives, but you should certainly try to find a range, perhaps three. Therefore the question requires no more than a 'mini-essay' of probably two or three paragraphs at most, certainly not a full-length essay. You should aim to give a brief explanation for each motive. A high-level answer might include a brief summary and possibly a conclusion tying the motives together, identifying different types of motive (e.g. linking long-term and short-term factors) or deciding whether one motive was more important than others.

The examiner is not looking for sophisticated interpretations, but brief, clear explanations.

Exemplar Question

2 (03) Explain why President Kennedy approved plans to provide US military support for South Vietnam in 1961. **[12 marks]**

Plan

- Introduction: Kennedy's position as a new President
- Long-term factors: the context of the Cold War; the previous collapse of French rule; policies inherited from the Eisenhower administration
- Short-term factors: the weaknesses and corruption of Diem's regime; reports from fact-finding missions; Kennedy's desire to stand up to Khrushchev
- Conclusion: making the links

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 1

Kennedy went into Vietnam because of the Cold War. He had just won the presidential election against Nixon and he wanted to prove how tough he was in defending the West against Communism (1). The French had been defeated in Vietnam in 1954 and after that the Americans made up the domino theory that said if one country was allowed to go communist then others would fall down one by one as a result. The US was also obsessed about the danger from Communist China (2).

(1) Here, one of Kennedy's motives is explained, with a link to 1961.

(2) The theme of anti-Communism is developed further here, with reference to the long-term context.

Examiner's Assessment

This is a valid answer, because two motives for Kennedy's policy are introduced, although neither is developed particularly effectively. Other relevant motives, such as the short-term situation in Vietnam in 1961, are ignored. There is no real development of context, and no conclusion or real attempt to link or prioritise motives. There is a direct focus on explanation but the analysis and use of knowledge are fairly basic. Overall the answer merits a mark at the borderline between Level 2 and Level 3.

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 2

In 1961, John F Kennedy inherited the problem of South Vietnam from the previous Eisenhower administration. Since the defeat of the French army at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, Eisenhower's secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, had backed Western support for South Vietnam to prevent it falling to Communism (3). Kennedy was seen by many as a young, inexperienced president and he wanted to show people like Khrushchev that he was a good Cold Warrior. This is why he also authorised the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 (4).

Kennedy sent fact-finding missions to Vietnam. He also sent Vice-president Johnson to show support. The reports from these visits convinced him that the South was in danger and so he gave orders for large-scale financial aid and a big increase in the numbers of American military advisers (5).

One important reason Kennedy got involved in Vietnam is that he did not realise what it would lead to. He had no intention in 1961 of starting a major American war in Asia (6). He thought that the Diem regime would be strong enough to defend the South as long as the US provided money and weapons. By 1963, he had realised Diem was a liability and encouraged other leaders to overthrow him. Nobody knows what Kennedy would have done if he had faced demands to send hundreds of thousands of Americans into war, as Johnson did after 1964. In 1961, Kennedy thought he was taking a limited step, for good reasons based on what he knew at the time (7).

(3) This accurately defines the context of Kennedy's decision.

(4) An effective use of a comparative example to develop the explanation.

(5) A precise definition of the short-term issues in 1961.

(6) A convincing judgement, placing other motives in the wider context.

(7) A well-developed and concise conclusion.

Examiner's Assessment

This is a strong answer. It displays both good, precise knowledge and analytical ability. There is a narrative approach but the knowledge is used confidently to explain a range of motives. The conclusion shows judgement and an evaluation of the relative importance of different factors. Overall, the answer clearly merits Level 4.

Mark Scheme

L1:

The answer is descriptive and only loosely linked to the question, or is explicitly linked but with little support. It is likely to be assertive and generalised.

[1–2 marks]

L2:

There will be some relevant knowledge and understanding, but the answer will be mainly descriptive about Kennedy's decisions, with few links; or explanations will show limited range and/or depth.

[3–6 marks]

L3:

The answer will show good understanding, with a range of relevant explanations of why Kennedy acted as he did, using appropriate knowledge, although it may not cover all aspects.

[7–9 marks]

L4:

The answer will be well focused on the issue of Kennedy's motives, with a range of explanations, backed up with precise evidence about motives and probably showing differentiated judgements, or good awareness of links/connections.

[10–12 marks]

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| AQA – AS GCE Historical Issues: Periods of Change Unit 2 HIS2Q | The USA and Vietnam, 1961–1975 | QUESTION 2 (04) |
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Examiner's Specific Advice

This question is testing several skills and also your knowledge of the topic. It is not a source-based question. Because the question is on a fundamental topic, you are expected to know the main details of the theme, in this case the escalation of the US war effort in Vietnam between the death of President Kennedy and the end of 1965. You are also being required to provide an historical explanation and make a balanced assessment of Johnson's actions.

As always with an essay-type question, relevance is the key – your answer should be as concise as possible and should directly address the precise question. The key thing is not to narrate and describe, but set out a coherent, argued answer to the question. It is important to make a judgement and to back it up with selective evidence. This judgement can either feature in a summative conclusion or in a running commentary throughout the essay.

Exemplar Question

2 (04) 'The decision by President Johnson to escalate the US military support for South Vietnam in 1964 and 1965 was justified in the situation he faced at the time'.

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[24 marks]

Plan

- Introduction: the situation by 1964–65
- Kennedy's motives, successes and failures to 1963
- Johnson's motives, successes and failures to 1965
- Conclusion: judgements on the extent to which Johnson's decisions were 'justified' or represented avoidable errors

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 1

US involvement in Vietnam began very slowly and on a small scale. In 1961, President Kennedy was aiming to support the regime of President Diem in South Vietnam by financial aid and a small number of military advisers. But Diem's regime was very corrupt and spent more time attacking political opponents in the South than fighting the Vietcong. The Communist forces were supplied with weapons and reinforcements along the Ho Chi Minh trail (1).

(1) This first paragraph is very descriptive. The information is accurate but does not refer to the question.

By early 1963, the military situation was getting worse and the Vietcong defeated the South's army, the ARVN, in a battle at Ap Bac. Kennedy's advisers told him that Diem was mismanaging the country and that change was needed. In November 1963, Diem was overthrown and killed in a coup by army leaders. The US almost certainly gave the go-ahead for this coup. Then President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. His vice-president, Lyndon Johnson, became the new president and faced a very difficult situation in Vietnam (2).

Another problem Johnson had was that his administration was full of people loyal to the Kennedys. It took him a long time to establish himself and he also had the 1964 presidential elections to worry about. In 1964, General Khanh seized power in another coup. This showed how divided the leadership of the South was and how incapable they were of defeating the Communists (3).

Then the Gulf of Tonkin incident happened. Supposedly, North Vietnamese patrol boats fired on an American destroyer. Johnson used this attack as an excuse to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Both the House and the Senate voted almost unanimously in favour, showing it was a popular action. This allowed Johnson to wage war against North Vietnam as well as against the Vietcong (4).

In the 1964 election Johnson was against Barry Goldwater, who was very right wing. It was important for Johnson to prove he was strong on national security. Actually, Johnson was hoping to de-escalate the American war effort (5). In 1965, however, Johnson was persuaded by the air force that it was essential to bomb North Vietnam to cut supplies to the Vietcong. Operation Rolling Thunder began and American combat troops started to be sent in large numbers. By late 1965 there were 200 000 Americans fighting in Vietnam (6).

What Johnson did was the logical thing to do at the time. The situation in Vietnam was very bad and the South needed defending. The army and air force told Johnson he had to escalate. Congress was 100 per cent in favour. Johnson did what any US president would have done (7).

(2) This paragraph displays accurate knowledge, but it is mostly description although, at the end, there are implicit links to the issues in the question.

(3) Again, this paragraph deals with relevant factors but is not direct enough.

(4) Another descriptive paragraph, with only implicit focus on the precise question.

(5) This opens up a relevant line of argument but fails to develop it.

(6) Once again, good, relevant information but too descriptive.

(7) Finally, the conclusion provides a direct argument in response to the key words of the question.

Examiner's Assessment

This answer has significant faults. It provides accurate and relevant knowledge of events but it is *much* too reliant on narrative description. The few links to the question are very indirect and implicit. The answer is saved to some extent by the conclusion, which is direct and effective, though not well developed. If only these arguments had guided the answer from the beginning, instead of being tacked on at the end! As it is, the answer merits a mark in Level 3.

Examiner's Exemplar Answer 2

The idea that Johnson's actions in escalating the Vietnam War in 1964 and 1965 were justified is very unconvincing. The decision to commit huge numbers of combat troops into an unwinnable war was a disaster for Johnson himself, for the United States and for the people of Vietnam. The decision was also based on the deliberate deception of Congress and American public opinion by the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, rushed through Congress on the back of dishonest claims that North Vietnam had carried out unprovoked aggression against a US warship. The escalation of the war was the wrong decision taken for the wrong reasons (8).

Johnson was not the only person to blame for leading the US into the wrong war for the wrong reasons. The US had allowed itself to be sucked in to the Vietnamese civil war after the defeat of the French army at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. American policy under Eisenhower and Dulles was hard-line anti-Communism, based on the so-called 'domino theory' and exaggerated fears of Communist China. Kennedy moved further down this path between 1961 and 1963. Johnson was also led astray by US military commanders, who were badly over-confident. But the decision was Johnson's and he got it wrong (9).

Johnson's fatal errors over Vietnam ruined his presidency. In domestic affairs, with the 'great Society' and the passing of civil rights legislation, Johnson was a skilful and successful president, maybe even a great one. But he was weak on foreign affairs and he failed to stand up to the warmongers in Washington, partly because he was not confident enough at first to go against the gung-ho advisers he inherited from JFK (10).

(8) This is a lively and relevant introduction, showing a good grasp of the demands of the question.

(9) This shows awareness of other factors and other views but ends with a convincing restatement of the main argument.

(10) This is a strong paragraph, with good knowledge of the political context.

Ironically, many people expected Johnson to be more of a dove than a hawk over Vietnam. His Republican opponent in the 1964 presidential election was the extremely right-wing Senator Goldwater and, during the campaign, Johnson took a much softer line on Vietnam than Goldwater did. Johnson was also well informed on the political infighting in the South's government, and of the poor performance of the badly led ARVN. In the ten years since 1954, the US should have learned a lot about the weakness of the South and the growing support of the peasants for the Viet Cong (11).

After being re-elected in a landslide, Johnson should have been in a strong position, out of Kennedy's shadow and able to take his own decisions. It was still possible to hold back, as only a few US combat troops were in Vietnam at the start of 1965. Instead of looking for a realistic political solution, Johnson allowed himself to be persuaded by his military advisers that a purely military victory was possible. During 1965 the US started on the slippery slope down into the quagmire of the Vietnam War (12).

Johnson accepted the plans of the air force chief, Curtis Lemay, to isolate the Viet Cong by mass bombing of the supply lines from the North. Operation Rolling Thunder was launched and lasted three years without achieving anything. Johnson let the army chief, General Westmoreland, deploy more than 200 000 US combat troops by the end of 1965. This was the start of a long and painful lesson in how not to fight a guerrilla war. By 1968, American public opinion had turned completely against the war. Johnson decided not to run for re-election. US troops stayed in action until 1973. The North easily took over the South in 1975. All this was due to the fatal errors of Lyndon Johnson, especially in 1965 (13).

Examiner's Assessment

This answer is direct and well sustained. The written communication is crisp and concise. There are trenchant judgements that nonetheless show sound awareness of other perspectives. Detailed evidence is used selectively, not described but integrated into the arguments being put forward. The answer is focused on the key years 1964 and 1965 but also has secure synoptic understanding and good use of the wider context from 1954 to 1975. This answer clearly merits Level 5.

(11) Effective development of the answer, supported by selected evidence.

(12) The candidate again makes a relevant case, with secure factual support and a focus on the key dates of the question.

(13) This is a cogent conclusion. It is consistent with the ideas developed throughout the essay and shows synoptic grasp of later consequences.

| Mark Scheme | |
|--|----------------------|
| L1: | |
| The answer is descriptive, only loosely linked to the question, or it is an explicit answer with little or no effective support. The answer is likely to be generalised and possibly assertive rather than argued. | [1–6 marks] |
| L2: | |
| The answer shows some understanding of the wrong turnings taken by US policymakers up to 1965. It may be predominantly descriptive about the escalation of US support for the South, with some links to the question, or it may have explicit links with relevant but limited support. | [7–11 marks] |
| L3: | |
| The answer shows understanding of the context of US policy. There will be some assessment, supported by relevant and well-selected knowledge, although there will probably be a lack of weight of detail and/or balance. There will be some understanding of interpretations. | [12–16 marks] |
| L4: | |
| There is explicit understanding of the causes of policy errors and some evaluation of their importance in relation to other factors. A balanced argument will be supported by good use of evidence and understanding of interpretations. | [17–21 marks] |
| L5: | |
| The answers will be well focused and closely argued. The arguments about the responsibility for policy failures will be supported by precisely chosen evidence leading to a relevant conclusion/judgement, incorporating a well-developed understanding of interpretations and debate. | [22–24 marks] |

Chronology: Key Events in *The involvement of the USA in Vietnam, 1961–1975*

- 1954** Defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu. US 'Domino Theory' set out by the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. USA refusal of proposed partition of Vietnam.
- 1955** Diem proclaims himself President of South Vietnam.
- 1956** Departure of last French forces from Vietnam. US army advisers begin training South Vietnam armed forces.
- 1957** Start of Communist insurgency in the South.
- 1959** First use of the Ho Chi Minh trail to infiltrate the South.
- 1960** Victory of John F. Kennedy in presidential election. Failed assassination attempt against President Diem. Formation of Viet Cong.

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- 1961** Fact-finding missions sent to Vietnam by Kennedy. Vice-president Johnson visits Saigon and calls Diem 'the Churchill of Asia'.
- 1962** Failed attempt to kill Diem and carry out a coup d'état. Kennedy advised that Diem has wasted two billion dollars of US aid.
- 1963** ARVN defeated by Viet Cong in battle of Ap Bac. Buddhist protests against Diem, including suicides by burning. Diem overthrown and killed in military coup (backed by US). Assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas.
- 1964** General Nguyen Lhanh seizes power in Saigon. Gulf of Tonkin Incident; Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed by Congress. Re-election of President Johnson after landslide victory over Goldwater.
- 1965** Launch of bombing campaign against the North, Operation Rolling Thunder. US troop levels in Vietnam exceed 200 000.
- 1966** Bombing campaign extended to hit North Vietnam. Meeting between Johnson and South Vietnam leaders in Honolulu. Anti-war protests by US army veterans in New York City.
- 1967** Big US and ARVN offensive, Operation Cedar Falls. Anti-war speeches by Martin Luther King. Bombing campaign assessed as 'ineffective' by Robert McNamara.
- 1968** Tet Offensive launched by the North; Battle for Hue. 206 000 extra US troops requested by General Westmoreland. Massacre at My Lai. Announcement by President Johnson that he will not seek a second term. Assassination of Robert Kennedy; election of Richard Nixon as president.
- 1969** Secret bombing of Cambodia authorised by Nixon. Policy of 'Vietnamisation' launched. Massive anti-war protest in Washington.
- 1970** Overthrow of Prince Sihanouk in Cambodia. Students killed in protests at Kent State University. Start of secret negotiations between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho.
- 1971** Publication of the 'Pentagon Papers'; intensification of anti-war protests. Announcement by Nixon of his forthcoming visit to China. Re-election of President Thieu as leader of the South.
- 1972** US troops reduced by 70 000. Bombing of Hanoi. Watergate break-in (attracts little attention at the time). Landslide victory for Nixon in presidential election.

- 1973** Cease-fire agreed at Paris peace talks (January). Numerous violations of the cease-fire. Main American forces leave Vietnam. Watergate Scandal becomes a national political sensation. Nobel Peace Prize awarded jointly to Kissinger and Le Duc Tho.
- 1974** Thieu declares resumption of the war against the North. Resignation of Nixon; replaced by Gerald Ford.
- 1975** Major military offensive launched by the North. Hurried withdrawal of last US forces from the American Embassy. Saigon re-named Ho Chi Minh City.

Teaching Activities

1. Consider the policies of John F. Kennedy, 1961 to 1963, and Lyndon Johnson, 1963 to 1968, and assess the similarities and differences between them in terms of aims, processes and results.
2. Role-play exercise. Divide the class into two groups, each playing the part of students at university in the USA in 1967. Each group will prepare and argue its case as to why American troops should be withdrawn from Vietnam; or why it is imperative that the US should remain there until the war is won. (Make sure that the evidence assembled is appropriate to 1967, not later.)

Additional Sample Questions

- (a) Explain why Lyndon Johnson announced he would not seek a second term as President in 1968. **[12 marks]**
- (b) 'President Nixon and Henry Kissinger skilfully negotiated a peaceful solution to the Vietnam War in the years 1969 to 1973.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. **[24 marks]**

Weblinks

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http://americanhistory.si.edu/subs/history/timeline/different/america_wars.html