

OCR – AS GCE
European and World
History Period
Studies
F 962

**Unit 1 The Cold War in Europe
from 1945 to the 1990s**

ESSAY

Examiner's Specific Advice

Candidates need to evaluate the relative policies of the USSR and the USA and the western Allies and their developing positions around the issue of the division of Berlin in the period from 1945 to 1961. The Berlin Blockade of 1948 to 1949, and then the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, are likely to provide the core structure for analysis in many answers. The geographical position of Berlin could be used as an effective consideration of each side's perspective: this was the one place where East and West faced each other so dramatically – a capitalist island in the communist East. This could be developed further to particular periods, e.g. the 'new' Cold War, which began in the Kennedy/Khrushchev era. Perspectives on the wider Cold War will also help answers to reach Levels I and II.

Exemplar Question

Assess the reasons why Berlin was such an important issue in causing the Cold War in Europe between 1945 and 1961.

[50 marks]

**Click Here for a
Chronology
Relating to this
Topic**

Examiner's Exemplar Plan and Essay 1

Plan

Yalta and Potsdam 1945

Berlin Blockade 1948/9

Berlin Wall 1961

In 1945 the Second World War came to an end in Europe. At the Yalta and Potsdam conferences the victorious Allies divided up Germany between themselves (1). Each Ally received a zone of occupation in Germany. They also received a zone of occupation within Berlin.

The division of Berlin between the Allies led to a major crisis in 1948 (2). Britain and the USA introduced a common currency to their zones. This area became known as Bizonia. Stalin retaliated by closing off west Berlin from the western zones of occupation. This caused the Berlin Airlift Crisis of 1948. In order to keep West Berlin supplied, the western Allies airlifted in thousands of tonnes of supplies from 1948 to 1949. This created great tension between the USSR and the West. It almost caused another world war (3). The Soviets did not directly interfere with the airlift but they did use intimidatory tactics like using Soviet fighters to buzz transport planes. Once Stalin realised the West could supply West Berlin indefinitely from the air he called off the blockade in 1949.

In 1961 the USSR created a new crisis by building the Berlin Wall between East and West Berlin (4). Until 1961 there was no border checkpoint between East Berlin and West Berlin. People from each side of Berlin could cross freely from one part of the city to the other. This situation was used by many East Berliners to flee to the West. To stop East Berliners leaving, the Soviet and East German governments built a wall. This was the last part of the Iron Curtain that divided communist Eastern Europe from Western Europe (5). Many East Germans still tried to flee to the West by climbing over or tunnelling under the Wall. Several were killed. The Wall became a symbol of tyranny to many in West Germany and West Berlin. US President Kennedy visited the Wall in 1961. This gave the Wall enormous importance. This created another major crisis in the Cold War in Europe. The USA and the West feared the USSR was trying to force them out of West Berlin yet again. Although there was great tension while the wall was built the crisis did not lead to war.

Therefore, Berlin was a major issue in the Cold War in Europe because it caused the two worst crises in Europe since the defeat of Nazi Germany (6).

(1) The answer begins with a very general statement. The opening paragraph is descriptive and is used as a way of 'setting the scene'.

(2) The start of the second paragraph is much better. It identifies a major Cold War crisis associated with Berlin.

(3) You score good marks for making this assessment of the importance of the issue of Berlin within the context of the Cold War.

(4) In this paragraph the student identifies another major crisis but there is quite a gap in coverage from 1949 to 1961.

(5) There is a clear attempt here to place the issue in a broader context.

(6) A relevant but rather brief conclusion.

Examiner's Assessment

This answer is clearly written, well organised, relevant and focused on the question set. It is at Level II and worth 17 marks (AO1a).

The essay provides an argument that helps to explain why the issue of Berlin was so important in the Cold War in Europe in the 1945-61 period. However, it answers the question in a narrative-chronological way beginning in 1945 and ending in 1961. The candidate doesn't prioritise the reasons why Berlin was such an important issue. The answer also contains significant elements of description. It has therefore been placed at Level III and given 16 marks (AO1b).

The total mark for the essay is 33 (Grade C).

Examiner's Exemplar Plan and Essay 2

Plan

Introduction

Reasons

- a) Cold War tension between the USSR and the Western powers following the end of the Second World War
- b) Geographical position of West Berlin within Soviet zone of occupation
- c) The Berlin Blockade and Airlift of 1948-49
- d) The loss of population from East to West Germany through Berlin
- e) The Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961

Conclusion

The main reason why Berlin was such an important issue in the Cold War in Europe between 1945 and 1961

In the period 1945 to 1961 Berlin was the main issue in the confrontation between the USSR and the Western Allies, led by the USA. On two occasions, in 1948 and 1961, the issue of Berlin almost caused a third world war (7).

The main reason why Berlin was such an important issue was its geographical position (8). It was located well within the Soviet zone of occupation some 75 km from the zones occupied by the western Allies. As a result of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements of 1945 Berlin had been divided into four military zones each occupied by a different ally. The largest zone was East Berlin. It was occupied by the USSR. The other zones were occupied by the western Allies: the USA, Britain and France. This naturally caused tension between the USSR and the West. All supplies to the western zones of Berlin had to pass across the Soviet zone in eastern Germany.

To make matters worse, the western Allies decided in 1948 to introduce a new currency for their zones (9). The new

(7) The answer begins with a focused introduction. It identifies the importance of the issue of Berlin within the context of the Cold War in Europe in the period 1945 to 1961.

(8) The second paragraph begins extremely well. The student identifies what he/she regards as the most important reason. This is then supported by detailed evidence which explains why the geographical position of Berlin was so important.

(9) This paragraph offers very effective links with the previous paragraph. The issue of geographical

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currency, the Deutschmark, suggested they planned to create a western German state, of which west Berlin would be a part. To prevent this development the Soviet leader, Stalin, blockaded west Berlin from 1948 to 1949. This created enormous tension between East and West. If west Berlin was abandoned by the western Allies it would be seen as a major triumph for the USSR.

The Berlin Blockade failed because the western Allies organised an airlift of supplies, Operation Vittals. It kept west Berlin supplied throughout 1948–49. The Berlin Blockade crisis led directly to the creation of NATO in 1949. This development made the Cold War in Europe even more intense, dividing the continent into two armed camps (10).

The issue of Berlin continued to be a major problem throughout the 1950s (11). West Berlin became prosperous compared to East Berlin. As a result, tens of thousands of East Germans fled to West Berlin for a better life. This development undermined Soviet control over East Germany. It resulted in the Soviet leader Khrushchev's demand, made in 1958, for the western Allies to leave Berlin.

The second time the issue of Berlin almost caused a third world war occurred in June 1961. To stop the loss of population to west Berlin, the Soviet and East German authorities built the Berlin Wall. This created great tension because it happened at a time when East/West relations were in crisis (12). US President Kennedy had faced a major crisis over the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba. This was followed by a very tense meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev in Vienna. As a result, the Berlin Wall crisis caused great tension.

Therefore, the main reason why Berlin was a major issue in the Cold War in Europe was its geographical position within East Germany (13). It became the focal point of tension between the communist East, led by the USSR and the democratic West, led by the USA.

Examiner's Assessment

This is a very well organised answer that is relevant, factually full, detailed and accurate, and well written. It has been given a Level IA mark of 22 (AO1a).

The essay covers the whole period and provides an explanation of why the issue of Berlin was central to the development of the Cold War in Europe between 1945 and 1961. It prioritises the reasons why Berlin was an issue. Also, of equal importance, it provides links between reasons. The concluding paragraph again highlights the importance of the geographical position of Berlin as the major reason. To achieve full marks the answer should have included some extra contextual information explaining why there was so much

position is linked to Soviet fears about the creation of a west German state with territory deep within its own zone.

(10) The linking of the Berlin Blockade to the creation of NATO is most effective.

(11) In pointing out that the issue of Berlin within the Cold War continued through the 1950s, it links effectively the impact of the Berlin Blockade crisis with the Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961.

(12) A good example and explanation of cause and effect.

(13) The answer highlights the major reason identified in making Berlin such an important issue in East/West relations in Europe between 1945 and 1961.

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tension between the USSR and the western Allies so shortly after their joint defeat of Nazi Germany. This element of the essay has been put at Level IB and given 23 marks (AO1b). The total mark for the essay is 45 (Grade A).

Click here for a Mark Scheme that accompanies the exemplar answers provided above

Click here for further sample Questions to test your skills

Mark Scheme

Examiners use Mark Schemes to determine how best to categorise a candidate's essay and to ensure that the performances of thousands of candidates are marked to a high degree of consistency. Few essays fall neatly into the mark levels indicated below: some answers will be particularly well argued but offer little supporting detail; others may be factually full but poorly organised or contain few judgements. Examiners therefore try to find the 'best fit' when applying the scheme. Each essay has a final mark based on two Assessment Objectives (AO1a and AO1b) worth 24 + 26 = 50 marks. As the standard of the two essays lies between Level 1 and Level IV, only the descriptors and marks for these levels have been tabulated below.

	AO1a Mark Scheme for Levels I, II, III and IV
Assessment Objectives	Recall, select and use historical knowledge appropriately, and communicate knowledge and understanding clearly and effectively
Level IA 21–24 marks	Uses a wide range of accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. Accurate and confident use of appropriate historical terminology. Answer is clearly structured and coherent; communicates accurately and legibly.
Level IB 18–20 marks	Uses accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. Accurate use of a range of appropriate historical terminology. Answer is clearly structured and mostly coherent; writes accurately and legibly.
Level II 16–17 marks	Uses mostly accurate, detailed and relevant evidence, which demonstrates a competent command of the topic. Generally accurate use of historical terminology. Answer is structured and mostly coherent; writing is legible and communication is generally clear.
Level III 14–15 marks	Uses accurate and relevant evidence, which demonstrates some command of the topic but there may be some inaccuracy. Answer includes relevant historical terminology but this may not be extensive or always accurately used. Most of the answer is organised and structured; the answer is mostly legible and clearly communicated.
Level IV 12–13 marks	There is deployment of relevant knowledge but level/accuracy of detail will vary; there may be some evidence that is tangential or irrelevant. Some unclear and/ or under-developed and/or disorganised sections; mostly satisfactory level of communication.

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AO1b Mark Scheme for Levels I, II, III and IV	
Assessment Objectives	Demonstrate an understanding of the past through explanation and analysis, arriving at substantiated judgements of key concepts and of the relationships between key features of the period studied
Level IA 24–26 marks	<p>Clear and accurate understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Clear and accurate understanding of issues in their historical context. Answer is consistently and relevantly analytical with developed and substantiated explanations, some of which may be unexpected.</p> <p>The argument evaluates a range of relevant factors and reaches clearly substantiated judgements about relative importance and/or links.</p>
Level IB 22–23 marks	<p>Clear and accurate understanding of most key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Answer is mostly consistently and relevantly analytical with mostly developed and substantiated explanations.</p> <p>Clear understanding of the significance of issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Substantiated judgements about relative importance of and/or links between factors will be made but quality of explanation in support may not be consistently high.</p>
Level II 19–21 marks	<p>Mostly clear and accurate understanding of many key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Clear understanding of the significance of most relevant issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Much of the answer is relevantly analytical and substantiated with detailed evidence but there may be some description.</p> <p>The analysis of factors and/or issues provides some judgements about relative importance and/or linkages.</p>
Level III 16–18 marks	<p>Some uneven understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and of concepts relevant to their historical context.</p> <p>Answers may be a mixture of analysis and explanation but also simple description of relevant material and narrative of relevant events OR answers may provide more consistent analysis but the quality will be uneven and its support often general or thin.</p> <p>Answer considers a number of factors but with very little evaluation of importance or linkages between factors/issues.</p> <p>Points made about importance or about developments in the context of the period will often be little more than assertions and descriptions.</p>
Level IV 13–15 marks	<p>Understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and the topic is variable but in general is satisfactory.</p> <p>Limited and patchy understanding of a few relevant issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Answer may be largely descriptive/narratives of events and links between this and analytical comments will typically be weak or unexplained OR answers will mix passages of descriptive material with occasional explained analysis.</p> <p>Limited points made about importance/ links or about developments in the context of the period will be little more than assertions and descriptions.</p>

Further sample questions

1. To what extent was the USSR responsible for the development of the Cold War in Europe in the period 1945 to 1949?
2. How successfully did the USA contain the spread of communism in Europe from 1945?
3. How successfully did the USSR control Eastern Europe during the 1950s and 1960s?
4. Assess the reasons for the development of a new Cold War in Europe during the early 1980s.
5. Assess the reasons for the decline of Soviet control over Eastern Europe during the 1980s.
6. To what extent were disagreements at Yalta and Potsdam in 1945 the **main** cause of the Cold War in Europe?
7. Assess the reasons why the Cold War in Europe had ended by 1989.

Chronology: Key Events in *The Cold War in Europe 1945-1990s*

- 1945: Yalta and Potsdam Conferences (1).
- 1946: Kennan's Long Telegram from Moscow.
- 1947: Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan (2).
- 1948: Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia; Berlin Blockade begins.
- 1949: Berlin Blockade ends (3). Creation of NATO. Soviets explode A bomb.
- 1953: Stalin dies. Riots in Poland and East Germany.
- 1955: Austrian State Treaty. West Germany joins NATO. Warsaw Pact (4).
- 1956: Hungarian Uprising.
- 1961: Berlin Wall Crisis (5).
- 1968: Prague Spring.
- 1969: Beginning of détente (6).
- 1972: SALT 1 Treaty (7).
- 1975: Helsinki Agreements.
- 1979: SALT II Treaty.
- 1979: Soviet invasion of Afghanistan starts. 'New Cold War'.
- 1980: Solidarity movement in Poland.
- 1982: Start talks begin (8).
- 1986: Reykjavik Summit.
- 1987: INF Treaty.
- 1989: Revolutions across East Europe (9).
- 1990s: Collapse of communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

(1) At Yalta, Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt outlined their plans for Europe after the Second World War. Germany and Austria were to be divided into four administrative zones under Soviet, British, American and French control; the USSR would recover lands from Poland lost in 1921; and a United Nations would replace the League of Nations. Six months later at Potsdam, Stalin, Truman and Atlee met and the USSR took a much tougher line. It demanded 25% of reparations from western sectors as well as its own allocation; it seized a large portion of Poland; it agreed that free elections should be held in states formerly occupied by Germany but no date was fixed. The conference also failed to produce a long-term plan for the government of Germany, which led to future problems during the Cold War.

(2) In the light of Kennan's Telegram, President Truman decided to adopt a policy of containment towards the USSR by supporting anti-communist forces. The Marshall Plan provided financial and economic aid for any country (including the USSR) after the war but specifically assisted European states such as Greece and Turkey that might succumb to communism.

(3) The Soviet Union began the blockade of land routes across East Germany from West Germany to West Berlin following the creation of the Allied single currency. Stalin ended the blockade when it became clear that the Allies had no intention of abandoning West Berlin and the threat of an atomic war between the USSR and the USA became a real possibility.

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(4) This military alliance between the USSR and Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and East Germany followed the West German announcement of rearmament and its decision to join NATO. Europe was now divided into two armed camps.

(5) The request to build a wall separating East and West Berlin came from the East German government anxious to stop the large number of people emigrating to the West. The wall filled the last gap in the Iron Curtain and remained in place until 1989.

(6) Nixon (USA) and Brezhnev (USSR) were the main architects of détente – an improvement in international relations after 1971. It led directly to SALT I in 1972, a peace treaty on Vietnam in 1973 and the Helsinki Accords in 1975 on the protection of human rights in Eastern Europe. However, détente did not end international rivalry between the two superpowers.

(7) SALT I was the first agreement between the USA and the USSR to limit the growth of nuclear weapons. The second SALT treaty was not ratified by the US Senate because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

(8) President Reagan began the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks which were suspended in 1983 when the USA deployed Cruise and Pershing II missiles (Intermediate Nuclear Forces) in Europe. In 1991 Gorbachev and Bush finally agreed to limit their nuclear missiles, warheads and arsenals.

(9) Gorbachev's renunciation of communism in 1989 led to a series of revolutions in Eastern Europe. Without the backing of the Soviet army, the communist governments of Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany found they had little popular support.

Teaching Activities

Decision Making in the Cold War: The Berlin Blockade Crisis

Divide the class into two groups, one representing the Western Allies led by the USA and the other representing the USSR.

The Western Group will have to produce arguments for and against the following options:

- a) The Lucius Clay option of driving a heavily armed convoy from the western zones to Berlin as a way of breaking the Blockade
- b) Airlifting supplies even though in May 1948 the western Allies had a shortage of transport aircraft
- c) Doing nothing and accepting the abandonment of West Berlin

The USSR group will produce arguments for and against the following options:

- a) Taking no action following the creation of Bizonia
- b) Invading West Berlin
- c) Blockading West Berlin even though this will lead to the Western blockade of East Berlin

The two groups will then report back to the class with their own views on each option.

Then the class will decide on what they regard as the most sensible and most reckless options, with reasons to support their case.

Resources

- O. Edwards, *The USA and the Cold War* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1997)
J. W. Mason, *The Cold War 1945–1991* (Routledge, 1996)
D. Murphy and T. Morris, *Europe 1871–1991* (2nd edition, Collins, 2003)
A. Todd, *Democracies and Dictatorships. Europe and the World 1919–1989* (CUP, 2000)
J. Traynor, *Europe 1890–1990* (Nelson, 1991)

Weblinks

www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war