



A-level HISTORY 7042/2T

Component 2T The Crisis of Communism: the USSR and the
Soviet Empire, 1953–2000

Mark scheme

June 2024

Version: 1.0 Final



2 4 6 A 7 0 4 2 / 2 T / M S

Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

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Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity, you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level, you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, i.e. if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

- 0 1** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying Soviet foreign and international policy in the years 1973 to 1983.

[30 marks]

Target: AO2

Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.

Source A: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- as an official letter sent by the President of the United States, this source provides a clear indication of Nixon's understanding of the USSR's foreign and international position and the growing rapprochement between the two countries. Nixon is providing the official American line on the agenda and expectations of the forthcoming talks with Brezhnev – although we do not know if Brezhnev is of like mind
- written in early June 1973, the letter indicates that the policy of détente is already underway – with Nixon's visit to the USSR the previous year and Brezhnev's talks with Brandt of Germany earlier in 1973
- although writing in an official capacity to Leonid Brezhnev, the letter provides an indication of the cordial relations between the two countries and their two leaders; this meeting is clearly of great importance both for Nixon's and Brezhnev's reputations and for world peace
- Nixon writes in a somewhat forced friendly manner, hinting at the need to flatter Brezhnev with his 'congratulations', and the 'as I know you do, Mr General Secretary' comment as well as the reference to 'splendid hospitality' in the USSR. He also hints at his desire to push Brezhnev further than agreements so far by slipping in 'the effect of our prospective agreement would undoubtedly be further enhanced..'. The letter does not seem entirely honest, as might be expected in the circumstances.

Content and argument

- the source makes reference to Brezhnev's talks with Brandt in May 1973 when Brezhnev made a 10-year agreement on economic co-operation with the FRG and discussed the future of Berlin and reduction of military forces; this provides evidence suggesting the Soviet Union was genuinely trying to pursue a policy of détente; it increased Western optimism
- the source clarifies that an agreement on the prevention of nuclear war is to be the main focus of the Washington Summit. It mentions that draft proposals had already been put together, which is an indication of Brezhnev's commitment. He had spoken of peaceful co-existence with the West in his 1969 Peace Programme at the 24 CPSU Congress; Brezhnev believed he negotiated from a position of strength because the USSR had become the USA's nuclear equal
- it is also suggested that the Washington Summit would lead to further discussions on international security: matters of pressing concern included the Paris Peace Accords, the strengthening peaceful relations in Europe, the conflict in the Middle East, scientific cooperation and strategic arms limitation, although the source fails to identify any specific issues except the last
- the source alludes to the success of Nixon's visit to the USSR in 1972, although without full explanation: Brezhnev sought deals with the West to boost the Soviet economy, Nixon wanted to reduce the USA's military commitments and find markets in the USSR; SALT 1 was signed in May 1972. The source brings out the personal rapport established between the two leaders; their co-operation culminated in the Helsinki Accords of 1975.

Source B: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- these speeches, which come directly from Brezhnev and Gromyko, men in positions of authority at the head of the Soviet government, are valuable for understanding Soviet foreign policy and the way in which the regime justified its own actions and rebuffed Western criticism
- given in June 1980, these speeches were made six months after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979); this was undertaken to protect a recently-established communist regime from rebellion; the speeches are intended to counter the strong Western reaction which had ended US grain shipments to the USSR, led to the abandonment of SALT II and brought a 65-country commitment to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympics in July/August
- the speeches are addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and minuted for the Party; they set out to confirm what the audience has already been taught to believe and are intended to prevent any criticism from within the Party; as such they are clearly one-sided but valuable indications of the Soviet propagandist argument
- the speeches are forceful and dogmatic with a very different tone from that used in earlier messages of détente; ‘Washington is trying to revive the spirit of the Cold War’ and ‘the ruling circles of the USA stop at nothing’. They are also defensive with suggestions that the USSR helped the Afghans ‘at the request of its government’ and had no ‘greed whatsoever’. They make a strong case but an exceptionally self-regarding one.

Content and argument

- these speeches provide evidence of the fundamental misunderstandings that persisted between the USA and the USSR in 1980; Brezhnev accuses the USA of stopping at nothing to keep the Afghans from ‘building a new life’ while the USA has accused the USSR of aggression; the Soviets reject this accusation – they had never regarded détente as detracting from their leadership in the promotion and spread of Communism
- Brezhnev’s suggestion that the USSR was not seeking any gain through intervention in Afghanistan is somewhat misleading; Afghanistan was close to strategically important oil-producing states in the Middle East and also offered a route whereby Muslim fundamentalists could infiltrate the USSR spreading anti-Soviet Islamic ideas (particularly in Turkestan); the invasion was at least partly defensive, as well as an opportunity to show Soviet military might
- Gromyko counters the suggestion that Soviet foreign policy has taken a new direction; the USSR believes it is the USA that has changed its approach; the American insistence on human rights’ issues (seemingly unimportant to the USSR) in the SALT discussions had suggested to them that the Americans wanted an excuse to escalate the arms race
- Gromyko takes credit for persuading the USA to accept ‘peaceful coexistence’: although peaceful coexistence was spoken of by Khrushchev and Brezhnev, several crises, eg Berlin and Cuba, were largely provoked by the Soviet Union; the USSR had also continued to develop its store of nuclear weapons; it is disingenuous of Gromyko to claim otherwise.

Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- this is a letter from Yuri Andropov, General Secretary of the Communist Party and leader of the USSR 1982–1984 and is therefore a significant statement of the view that the USSR wishes to advance; whether it represents Andropov’s true beliefs, is uncertain
- the year 1983 is significant: under Andropov, the USSR’s relations with the West had deteriorated; in March, (shortly before this letter was written), Reagan, (elected US President November 1980), had referred to the USSR as an ‘evil empire’; Reagan had committed the USA to increased arms spending and announced a ‘Strategic Defence Initiative’ (SDI) to counter any Soviet missile threat; as the USSR knew it could not equal Reagan’s defence spending, it was keen to show it was not an aggressor
- the letter is addressed to a 10-year-old American girl but Andropov would have been well aware that his letter would be leaked to the press and so wanted to state unequivocally that the USSR was peace-loving; the media interest makes this source more important than it might originally have been; it summarises the fears of 1983 in the wake of the ‘Second Cold War’
- the tone is generally personal, warm and kindly – particularly the ending ‘we want peace for our children and for you, Samantha’. Nevertheless, official statements such as ‘We have solemnly declared...’ intrude to suggest this is more than an exchange between a powerful adult and a precocious child nonentity. It still uses the traditional Soviet rhetoric of Khrushchev and Brezhnev in its attempts to convey a single message.

Content and argument

- this source dismisses fears of nuclear war and a Soviet desire to wage war: Russian foreign and international policies had turned on peaceful co-existence and détente since 1953 and the summits and SALT talks, as well as the Soviet back-down over Cuba, would seem to confirm this; nuclear war was not in Soviet interests so the source seems to be genuine in this respect
- Andropov writes that the Soviet people ‘know what a terrible thing war is’; there is no doubt that the devastation and loss of life sustained in the Second World War had a deep effect on the Soviet people and this would confirm Andropov’s assertion that the USSR did not want war
- the source suggests that the USSR wants ‘to trade and co-operate’: economic concerns were a major driving force of Soviet foreign and international policy at this time; Soviet spending could not match that of the USA and the nuclear parity achieved in 1969 was impossible to maintain; the USSR needed Western investment in Soviet gas and oil as well as grain from the West to offset its own agricultural deficiencies; this would make Andropov’s letter a valuable statement of the Soviet position
- Andropov paints a child-like picture of the USSR in which people are occupied with ‘growing wheat, building and inventing, writing books and flying into space’. He emphasises Russian inventions and the space programme – as the Soviet people took pride in such matters which distracted them from economic concerns; the Space race had fostered rivalry with the USA, but it is seen here as something to be admired. Andropov is perhaps being too fanciful in suggesting the USSR had no other preoccupations.

Section B

0 2 'The GDR (East Germany) was politically and economically weak in the years 1953 to 1963.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that the GDR (East Germany) was politically and economically weak in the years 1953 to 1963 might include:

- in 1953, the GDR's future was uncertain: the Soviet view of all Germans was that they were the defeated enemy and needed to be kept weak; they had removed over 1 000 industrial plants and continued to demand 25% of all its industrial products as reparations; Ulbricht was seen as a 'puppet' ruler and subject to Soviet control
- Ulbricht faced factional challenges from within his own party, the SED, where differing views on the future of the GDR, socialism and reform prevailed; there were also different parties to appease within the Volkskammer (the GDR's legislature) challenging one-party dominance
- riots in June 1953 indicated political instability (and economic problems): strikes against increased work norms led to calls for the resignation of SED leaders and more political freedom; Ulbricht was forced to back down on work norms and the USSR sent 20 000 troops to help crush the rising
- the GDR faced economic problems: re-orientating an economy that had previously relied on Ruhr coal and steel and had limited home supplies towards a USSR/Soviet bloc-orientated economy brought weaknesses and slowed growth; new central planning arrangements exacerbated these problems; collectivisation brought food shortages and price increases; industrial growth was impeded by workers lacking motivation and too impoverished to stimulate internal demand; large numbers of East Germans and much skilled labour were lost to the FRG, especially via Berlin
- the GDR was a flash point internationally: it was in the front line of the Cold War – especially in divided Berlin; the West flaunted its wealth in West Berlin and sent spies into the heart of the GDR; before 1961, the numbers fleeing west threatened the legitimacy of socialism; the situation made the USSR watchful of any SED moves, fearing unrest which could spread to other satellite states.

Arguments challenging the view that the GDR (East Germany) was politically and economically weak in the years 1953 to 1963 might include:

- the SED was in a supreme position of power: despite the appearance of multi-party politics the SED directed voting and imposed its influence on all aspects of life through democratic centralism; after August 1953, the USSR ceased taking reparations and supported the building of a strong GDR; Ulbricht responded to the 1953 rioting with a purge of civil servants and apparatchiks: as he became entrenched, he felt sufficiently strong to ignore Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation
- after initial re-adjustment, collectivisation and five year plans brought economic growth and there was some decentralisation in 1963; the GDR had the highest growth rate, the highest standard of living and the highest worker productivity of all the satellite states by the 1960s
- repression was effective in preventing discontent that might otherwise have weakened the state; from 1953, the Stasi was under firm party control supplying daily reports on all districts; it employed psychological harassment, torture and murder becoming the most effective of all such forces in the satellite states; there was strong censorship; 'socialist legality' made legal processes subservient to the Party; a weakened Church lost its influence in education and youth groups; no alternative institution challenged state power
- the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 on Ulbricht's initiative, showed his strong position – the USSR was reluctantly persuaded to agree; the wall plugged a gap that had weakened the state politically and economically and made the GDR extremely stable
- the building of the wall failed to produce an international incident and by 1963 Berlin was no longer the prime focus of Cold War tensions; Ulbricht and the SED were able to focus on 'building socialism' in the GDR and whether through fear, political apathy or support the population was quiescent.

Students should be able to balance some of the strengths of the GDR, politically and economically, against the limitations in order to assess the degree to which it was a 'weak' state. The best answers may analyse its weaknesses more thoroughly, perhaps challenging some of the points made here. For example, some might suggest that heavy repression was more indicative of a state that was politically weak than a strong one. Equally, some might argue that the influence of the USSR on the GDR was a benefit rather than a weakness which prevented Ulbricht and the SED from possessing full authority. Whatever the argument, reward those that are able to balance and support their views effectively.

0 3 How significant was the influence of Solidarity in the collapse of Communism in the satellite states in 1989?

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that the influence of Solidarity was significant in the collapse of Communism in the satellite states in 1989 might include:

- Solidarity was the first effective anti-Communist reform movement to challenge Communist Party dominance; from the shipyards of Gdansk to nationwide strikes that threatened the Polish economy, it was the first independent labour movement within a satellite state and in 1980 forced Poland's Communist government to recognise it; it inspired all levels of society and had a wide membership; it set an example of 'people-power' that was to be the driving force of revolution elsewhere, especially in East Germany
- Solidarity gained international attention, sympathy and media coverage; this increased its influence on neighbouring satellite states such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary where Communist oppression was equally keenly felt; international pressure also made Communist rulers, eg in Hungary, readier to concede change; Lech Walesa's award of the Nobel Peace Prize and Solidarity's survival, despite suppression 1981–83, inspired opposition groups; the success of Solidarity's non-violent methods would be copied by pressure groups such as Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia
- Solidarity used control of local party organisations to put pressure on the leadership; when free elections were permitted in June 1989, it became the first opposition movement since the 1940s to participate in free elections in a Soviet-bloc nation; this gave hope to reformers elsewhere, particularly in Czechoslovakia and East Germany
- Solidarity's achievements were crowned by the formation of a coalition government with the PUWP in August 1989 whereby Poland received a non-Communist Prime Minister and became the first non-Communist government within the Soviet bloc since 1948. This directly fuelled the events of November 1989 in East Germany.

Arguments challenging the view that the influence of Solidarity was significant in the collapse of Communism in the satellite states in 1989 might include:

- the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in the USSR in 1985 was fundamental for the changes that took place in the satellite states: Gorbachev abandoned the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' and encouraged local Communist leaders to undertake reforms; from the mid-1980s, Gorbachev's reformist views proved an inspiration to and opportunity for dissidents in all satellite states
- economic difficulties lay behind the collapse: the recession of the early 1980s hit economies already distorted by their Soviet-orientated command structure; the USSR's own financial troubles rebounded within the eastern bloc; eg East Germany became dependent on imports from the West, Bulgaria relied on foreign loans, reduction in imports plunged Romanians into serious poverty and food rationing
- the collapse of Communism was as much the implosion of the various communist regimes as the result of outside pressure; eg Honecker's refusal to consider any sort of reform hastened the demise of Communism in East Germany; Ceausescu's total reliance on repression brought his demise in December 1989
- campaigns varied according to the circumstances in the different states; in Hungary, pressure was largely led by intellectuals, who persuaded the Party to relinquish its leading role in February 1989 allowing for a peaceful transition to a new constitution in October 1989 – predating Solidarity's success; the movement for reform in Czechoslovakia embraced environmental concerns in the wake of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster (also shared by campaigners in Bulgaria), and religious opposition, which led to the Velvet Revolution
- the Hungarian government's decision to open its border with Austria in May 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall, November 1989, were both significant steps: the first provoked the collapse of

Communism in East Germany as the exodus from the country further weakened a leadership facing pressure, eg from the Church vigils in Leipzig. The fall of the Berlin Wall was the trigger for Czechs and Slovaks to take to the streets and also inspired demonstrations in Romania, where Ceausescu was executed on 25 December 1989.

Students are likely to conclude that while Solidarity was extremely significant in the collapse of Communism in Poland, its influence elsewhere was not necessarily as strong. Whilst it undoubtedly provided inspiration to opponents of Communism – both leaders and followers – and its non-violent methods were widely copied, the overthrow of Communism in each of the separate satellite states took place in slightly differing political and economic circumstances. Some students may suggest that the arrival of Gorbachev and the end of the Brezhnev doctrine were more significant, while others might assert the primacy of economic factors or the inherent weaknesses of the Communist regimes. Reward any well-argued response that attempts to address relative significance and provides a supported judgement.

0 4 To what extent did Russia and its people benefit from Yeltsin's presidency, in the years 1991 to 1999?

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

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- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Russia and its people benefited from Yeltsin's presidency, in the years 1991 to 1999 might include:

- the demise of the USSR in December 1991 brought an end to oppressive Communist domination: the former centralised one-party state was replaced by a new de-centralised Russian Soviet Federative Republic (RSFSR) in which Russian interests came first and a variety of different political parties gave the Russian people some control over the direction of government
- the new 1993 constitution increased democracy with an elected parliament, the State Duma, and an upper house, the Federation Council; political rights and freedoms were enshrined in law; regional and local governments were given considerable autonomy; social welfare access to pensions, free health care, and affordable housing was guaranteed
- the KGB was reformed in 1994 and made more accountable; it became the Federal Security Service (FSB), marking a major break with the past and seeming to make the regime more open
- Russia's old command economy was transformed into a capitalist market economy allowing more opportunity for enterprise; 'shock therapy' brought economic restructuring: state planning organisations were dismantled, state-owned enterprises privatised and restrictions on trade, eg price controls dropped; this ended the shortages and queues of the past, improved the quality of goods and services and reduced housing shortages, increasing owner-occupation; for some it was an opportunity to get rich quick
- relations with the West were helped by Yeltsin's restructuring; the Warsaw Treaty was abandoned in 1991, the threat of war was reduced and in 1997 Yeltsin signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act, with a commitment to building peace based on democracy and co-operative security.

Arguments challenging the view that Russia and its people benefited from Yeltsin's presidency, in the years 1991 to 1999 might include:

- Yeltsin did not introduce genuine democracy nor multi-party politics as understood in the West; the 1993 constitution gave the President significant powers which he used to the full, even employing the military to crush opposition; the Duma was weak, lessening the voice of the people
- the army and the intelligence services continued to exert considerable influence and the powers of the FSB gradually increased, particularly after Putin was appointed Director in 1998
- the economic reforms benefited the mafia bosses and oligarchs but did nothing for most Russians; there was inflation, regional unemployment and increasing levels of poverty with a huge divide between the very rich and poor; there was an increase in the black market and a growth in crime and corruption; public health deteriorated in the 1990s with pollution, inadequate medical facilities and high rates of alcoholism
- Russia lost some of its international prestige: it came to rely on foreign loans and profits were taken out of the country; internally, many Russians regretted the collapse of the USSR, believing Yeltsin had brought political instability; Yeltsin's own behaviour and insobriety brought shame to the Russian people
- Yeltsin refused to accept the independence of Chechnya leading to the first Chechen war (1994–96) – a disaster in which 50 000 Russians were killed.

Students may argue that Russia and its people derived considerable benefit from Yeltsin's presidency as the country became more liberal in outlook, both politically, economically and socially. Yeltsin propelled the democratic changes in government that many Russians had sought and his economic reforms fulfilled the hopes of those who wanted to see a more capitalist economy and made living easier for many. Such policies also helped Russia's accommodation with the West. However, Yeltsin also

perpetuated an authoritarian style of rule, prosecuted a war in Chechnya and pushed policies which created inflation and economic and social upheaval. Such criticisms may lead students to question the extent of benefit and perhaps even suggest there was none. More nuanced answers will understand that some Russian people, for example those who profited as oligarchs, would have benefited far more than others. Reward any well-argued response which reaches a substantiated judgement.