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Past Qualifying Test Questions - History

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Course Outline

The rubric for this core paper is set out in the Examination Regulations 2004, pp. 619, as follows:

The Development of the International System since 1900. The history of the relations between states in peace and war, and the development of the international system since 1900. It will include such topics as: the pre-1914 system; the balance of power and the causes of the First World War; the effects of the peace settlement and the rise of liberal and realist approaches to international relations; collective security and the League of Nations system; political and economic co-operation in the interwar period; the USA, Soviet Union, Middle East, and Far East in the interwar years; the impact of domestic politics and ideology on foreign policy; the causes of the Second World War; the relationship between politics and strategy in the Second World War; post-war reconstruction and the origins of the Cold War; the evolution of the Cold War; decolonization and self-determination; regional conflicts; integration in Western Europe; détente and the end of the Cold War; the evolution of international economic institutions; the evolution of security institutions; and international relations in the post Cold War world.

Explanations for the Outbreak of the First World War

Origins of First World War

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- How important was the role of misperceptions in the origins of the First World War? (QT 2001/Trinity)
- 'None of the powers involved had a clear idea of their war aims in 1914.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2003)
- 'Neo-realism can explain the causes of the First World War but not those of the Second.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2002)
- To what extent was the outbreak of war in 1914 the result of colonial rivalries? (M.Phil 2001)
- Was the deadlock during the First World War military or diplomatic or both? (M.Phil 2000)

War Aims

- Did German War aims differ in principle from those of the other European great power at the outbreak of the First World War? (QT 2002/Easter)
- Why was Germany prepared to take the risk of war in July 1914? (QT 2002/Trinity)
- How far did domestic factors shape the foreign policy of Germany in the period EITHER from 1900 to 1917 OR from 1933 to 1941? (QT 2001/Easter)
- Analyse the reasons for which any one European power went to war in 1914. (QT 2000)
- 'War aims were, in fact, weapons of war' (Taylor). Discuss with reference to war aims in EITHER the First World War OR the Second World War. (M.Phil 2001)
- 'Germany went to war in 1914 because its leaders believed that doing so was bound to be better than not doing so.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2000)

Competing Notions of Peace Making after the First World War

- 'The League of Nations did not fail; it was never tried.' Is this a fair assessment? (QT 2005/Easter)
- How did the war aims of the Allied powers affect the final peace settlement at Paris in 1919? (QT 2005/Trinity)
- 'If they could have done better, they certainly could have done much worse' (Margaret Macmillan). Is this a fair assessment of the achievements of the peacemakers at Paris in 1919? (QT 2004/Easter)
- Was the peace settlement of 1919 doomed from the start or was it undermined by the Great Depression? (QT 2003/Easter)
- Would a truly Wilsonian peace have been an improvement on the Paris peace of 1919? (QT 2003/Trinity)
- "Peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game, even the great game, now for ever discredited, of the Balance of Power" (Woodrow Wilson February 1918). Assess Wilson's view of the necessary conditions for peace at the end of the First World War. (QT 2002/Easter)
- Was national self-determination the only realistic principle on which to base the Paris settlement? (QT 2002/Trinity)
- 'It was national interest not ideals or principles that explains the policies of all of the Great Powers in the negotiation of the Paris Peace settlement.' Do you agree? (QT 2001/Easter)
- 'Woodrow Wilson combined profound idealism with profounder ignorance' (L.C.B. Seaman). Discuss. (QT 2000)
- While Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points 'provided a splendid propaganda platform of high moral tone, they were too ambiguous to serve as the basis for a peace settlement.' Do you agree? (M.Phil 2005)
- 'The peace settlement in the Middle East after the First World War lacked both legitimacy and a stable distribution of power.' Why then did it last until after the Second World War? (M.Phil 2002)
- 'The Paris peace settlement was harsh in the wrong places and lenient in the wrong ways.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2000)

Middle East

- Assess the impact of the post-World War I settlement on the stability of EITHER the Middle East OR the Far East. (QT 2001/Trinity)
- Is it fair to call the post-World War I settlement in the Middle East a victors' peace? (QT 2000)
- 'The peace settlement in the Middle East after the First World War lacked both legitimacy and a stable distribution of power.' Why then did it last until after the Second World War? (M.Phil 2002)
- Did Britain plant the seeds of conflict in Palestine during the mandate period? (M.Phil 2000)

Collective Security and International Order

Collective security and the League of Nations system

- 'The League of Nations did not fail; it was never tried.' Is this a fair assessment? (QT 2005/Easter)
- Did the Locarno agreements undermine the League of Nations? (QT 2005/Trinity)
- Was the collective security system of the interwar years flawed in design or in practice? (QT 2004/Easter)
- Did this period demonstrate the irrelevance of collective security to international order? (QT 2003/Easter)
- Was the peace settlement of 1919 doomed from the start or was it undermined by the Great Depression? (QT 2003/Easter)
- Did the Locarno agreements strengthen or weaken the League of Nations? (QT 2003/Trinity)
- "The League of Nations could work effectively only as a concert of great powers. That explains its relative success in the 1920s and its failure in the 1930s" Do you agree? (QT 2002/Easter)

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- Did the League of Nations fail because of specific historical circumstances or because the idea of collective security is unrealizable? (QT 2000)
- Why was there such a divergence between the theory and the practice of collective security? (M.Phil 2004)
- Did the League of Nations achieve more than to set a new agenda for international Relations? (M.Phil 2003)
- Did the revisionist states in the 1930s share a common view of the international system? (M.Phil 2003)
- 'Woodrow Wilson was ahead of his time and did not live long enough to know what

great and commanding relevance his ideas would acquire' (George Kennan). Do you agree? (M.Phil 2006)

Political and economic co-operation in the interwar periods

- 'The collapse of the inter-war international order in Europe was a classic case of spillover from the economic to the political realm.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2004)
- What remained of the Entente Cordiale between France and Britain in the four decades that followed? (M.Phil 2004)
- To what extent was there a 'democratic peace' in Europe in the 1920s? (M.Phil 2002)
- To what extent did the difficulties of Anglo-French cooperation in the period from 1920 to 1933 result from misperceptions? (M.Phil 2001)
- 'The collapse of the inter-war international order in Europe was as much the result of domestic and transnational ideological conflict as of shifts in the international balance of power'. Discuss. (M.Phil 2001)

Domestic Politics, Ideology and Foreign Policy

- Realism alone cannot explain their foreign policy.' Discuss with reference to EITHER the Soviet Union OR the United States in the inter-war period. (QT 2003/Easter)
- How does ideology affect foreign policy? Answer with reference to the foreign policy of EITHER the U.S.S.R. OR the U.S.A. in the inter-war period. (QT 2001/Trinity)

Soviet Union

- Did the Treaty of Rapallo represent the victory of realism over revolutionism in Soviet foreign policy? (QT 2005/ Easter)
- To what extent was the Soviet Union socialised into the system of states between 1917 and 1945? (QT 2002/Easter)
- Was Hitler's foreign policy more ideological than Stalin's? (QT 2002/Trinity)
- 'The relationship of revolutionary states to international society is ambiguous if not entirely paradoxical'. Discuss with reference to the foreign policy of the USSR between 1917 and 1941. (QT 2001/Easter)
- How revolutionary was Soviet foreign policy in the period 1917-1943? (QT 2000)
- How did the principle of 'socialism in one country' affect international order in the interwar period? (M.Phil 2004)
- Did the Soviet Union cease to be a revolutionary power under Stalin? (M.Phil 2003)
- Did the revisionist states in the 1930s share a common view of the international system? (M.Phil 2003)
- Was there more justification for appeasing Stalin in the 1940s than there had been for appeasing Hitler in the 1930s? (M.Phil 2002)
- Did personality matter in the making of Soviet foreign policy from 1917 to 1940? (M.Phil 2000)

USA

- What were the determinants of U.S. isolationism in the inter-war years? (QT 2005/Trinity)
- Did the United States fail to live up to its responsibilities in the interwar years? (QT 2004/Easter)
- Which theory of international relations best explains United States "isolationism" in the inter-war period? (QT 2002/Easter)
- Why was the United States neutral at the outset of both wars and why did it subsequently intervene each time?(QT 2002/Trinity)
- Can American isolationism in the inter-war period be explained in terms of the 'balance of threat'? (M.Phil 2003)

The Impact of Nazism in Germany and Europe to 1941

Germany: Impact of Hitler and ideology

- 'German foreign policy in the 1930s is still best explained at the level of one individual: Hitler' Do you agree? (QT 2003/Easter)
- Was Hitler's foreign policy more ideological than Stalin's? (QT 2002/Trinity)
- How far did domestic factors shape the foreign policy of Germany in the period EITHER from 1900 to 1917 OR from 1933 to 1941? (QT 2001/Trinity)
- How far was Hitler's foreign policy constrained by domestic factors? (QT 2001/Trinity)
- 'Hitler's foreign policy was a ragbag of unconnected objectives' (Theodor Ernst Mommsen). Discuss. (QT 2000)
- What does German foreign policy between 1900 and 1939 tell us about the role of domestic politics in international relations?

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Origins of Second World War

- Whose ambitions represented the greatest challenge to international order in the inter-war period: Japan's or Germany's? (QT 2005/Easter)
- 'The major factor forcing Europe toward the inevitability of the Second World War was the intense yearning of the western democracies for peace...' Do you agree? (QT 2005/Easter)
- Was Winston Churchill right when he called the Second World War the 'Unnecessary War'? (QT 2005/Trinity)
- How important is the Great Depression for understanding the breakdown of international order in the 1930s? (QT 2001/Easter)
- What were the most important consequences for international relations of international economic instability in the inter-war period? (QT 2001/Trinity)
- Did the revisionist states in the 1930s share a common view of the international system? (M.Phil 2003)
- 'Neo-realism can explain the causes of the First World War but not those of the Second.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2002)
- Was the Great Depression a major cause of the Second World War? (M.Phil 2000)
- What were the most important consequences for international relations of international economic instability in the inter-war period? (QT 2001/Trinity)
- How useful is the proposition that 'arms races cause wars' in understanding international conflict between 1900 and 1945? (M.Phil 2006)

Appeasement

- 'The mistake of appeasement was to assume that Hitler was rational.' Do you agree? (QT 2003/Trinity)
- Was there a better case for appeasing Japan rather than Germany in the 1930s? (QT 2002/Easter)
- What lessons can be drawn from the failure of appeasement in the 1930s? (QT 2002/Trinity)
- 'Appeasement was a rational response to the realities of power in the inter-war period'. Discuss with reference to EITHER Europe OR the Far East. (QT 2001 Easter)
- 'The key lesson of the 1930s is the evil of appeasement.' Do you agree? (M.Phil 2005)
- 'Appeasement in the 1930s and superpower détente in the 1960s and 1970s rested on the same theoretical assumptions and both betrayed a fundamental conservatism towards international order'. Discuss. (M.Phil 2001)

The International System in East Asia

Japan

- Whose ambitions represented the greatest challenge to international order in the inter-war period: Japan's or Germany's? (QT 2005/Easter)
- To what extent was Japan responsible for instability in the Far East during the interwar period? (QT 2005/Trinity)
- How far can Japanese imperial expansion after 1931 be explained by the need for security? (QT 2003/Trinity)
- Was there a better case for appeasing Japan rather than Germany in the 1930s? (QT 2002/Easter)
- How far was Japanese expansion after 1931 a result of the great depression? (QT 2002/Trinity)
- Was Japanese expansionism in the 1930s a response to the international environment? (QT 2000)
- Japan's decision to go to war with the United States was 'difficult to reconcile with prudence or even sanity.' (Winston Churchill) Discuss. (M.Phil 2005)
- Do the characteristics of the East-Asian international system in the interwar period help to explain the conflicts in the region? (M.Phil 2004)
- Did the revisionist states in the 1930s share a common view of the international system? (M.Phil 2003)
- What were the consequences for the international system of Japanese expansion after 1931? (M.Phil 2002)
- Which state bore the heavier responsibility for international instability in the Far East in the inter-war period -- Japan or the United States? (M.Phil 2001)
- 'For Japan, Pearl Harbor was a tactical triumph but a monumental strategic blunder.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2000)

Far East / China

- 'The conflicts in East Asia during the interwar period were a direct result of the breakdown of the operation of the balance of power.' Discuss. (QT 2004/Easter)
- How far did external powers influence the outcome of the Chinese civil war? (QT 2003/Easter)
- 'Appeasement was a rational response to the realities of power in the inter-war period'. Discuss with reference to EITHER Europe OR the Far East. QT 2001/Easter)
- Assess the impact of the post-World War I settlement on the stability of EITHER the Middle East OR the Far East. (QT 2001/Trinity)
- 'It was the weakness of China rather than the strength of Japan that was the principal explanation for instability in the Far East in

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Lessons of interwar period

- How far were the policies of EITHER the Soviet Union OR the United States in the 1940s influenced by the lessons of the inter-war period? (QT 2003/ Trinity)
- What were the lessons of the great depression for the management of the international economy? (QT 2002/Easter)
- Why was the United States neutral at the outset of both wars and why did it subsequently intervene each time? (QT 2002/Trinity)
- Does the experience of the international economy in the inter-war period show that a hegemon is necessary for stability? (M.Phil 2003)
- What were the most important consequences for international relations of international economic instability in the inter-war period? (QT 2001/Trinity)
- Can any general conclusions be drawn from the peaceful replacement of Great Britain by the United States as the leading global power? (M.Phil 2002)

Security, Alliances, Diplomacy

- Why did the Grand Alliance come into existence only in 1941? (QT 2000)
- 'The key lesson of the 1930s is the evil of appeasement.' Do you agree? (M.Phil 2005)
- 'War aims were, in fact, weapons of war' (Taylor). Discuss with reference to war aims in EITHER the First World War OR the Second World War. (M.Phil 2001)

Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War

Post-war reconstruction

- 'The Marshall Plan was designed to implant an informal American empire in Europe'. Do you agree? (QT 2005/Easter)
- What were the lessons of the great depression for the management of the international economy? (QT 2002/Easter)
- What were the most important consequences for international relations of international economic instability in the inter-war period? (QT 2001/Trinity)
- In what ways did the Bretton Woods framework seek to avoid the economic problems of the inter-war period? (M.Phil 2005)
- Can any general conclusions be drawn from the peaceful replacement of Great Britain by the United States as the leading global power? (M.Phil 2002)
- Did the absence of a peace settlement in 1945 have a significant effect on international relations between 1945 and 1950? (M.Phil 2006)
- 'The existence of NATO eased the creation of the European Community, but it has also set limits to its political development.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2006)

Origins of the Cold War

- Was the division of Germany the major cause of the Cold War? (QT 2005/Trinity)
- To what extent does 'the German Problem' explain the deterioration of East-West relations after 1945? (QT 2004/Trinity)
- To what extent were the origins of the Cold War the result of a 'security dilemma'? (QT 2003/Easter)
- How important is the Great Depression for understanding the breakdown of international order in the 1930s? (QT 2001/Easter)
- What were the most important consequences for international relations of international economic instability in the inter-war period? (QT 2001/Trinity)
- Did the way in which the Cold War ended help us better understand its origins? (M.Phil 2005)
- Why did the Grand Alliance break down between 1945 and 1947? (M.Phil 2004)
- Why did the post-war settlement in Europe of 1945 prove more stable than that of 1919? (M.Phil 2003)
- To what extent did the establishment of a multilateral economic order after 1945 reflect the 'power and purpose of the United States' (John Ruggie)? (M.Phil 2006)

Cold War Period

- 'U.S. policy in the Middle East tried to reconcile too many different objectives, and failed to achieve any of them.' Discuss with reference to the Cold War period. (M.Phil 2006)
- 'Accounts of the end of the Cold War should begin with the detente of the 1970s.' Discuss. (M.Phil 2006)
- Was decolonization driven more by the rise of new ideas, or by a decline in material capability? (M.Phil 2006)
- 'The policy of containment was successful in Europe but disastrous outside of it.' Do you agree? (M.Phil 2006)

Post Cold War Period

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