

Cambridge International AS & A Level

EUROPEAN HISTORY

9981/03

Paper 3 Historical Interpretations

For examination from 2027

SPECIMEN PAPER

1 hour 15 minutes



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **one** question.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 40.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [].

This document has **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Answer **one** question.

The origins of the First World War

- 1 Read this extract and then answer the question that follows it.

In December 1920 Lloyd George made a famous speech in which he argued that the nations had ‘drifted, or rather staggered and stumbled’ into war. As late as 1936 he still maintained, ‘No monarch or leading statesman in any country sought or desired war – certainly not a European war.’ This ‘slide to war’ thesis makes careful examination of the July Crisis unnecessary: no motive, no intention, no responsibility. I suggest instead a consistent pattern, multiple instances of moves for engagement, and argue that the very essence of decision-making is a matter of choice.

And so it was in 1914. For decades European leaders had thought about how conflict might occur on the Continent. In each case, they rejected the notion that a war could be localised or isolated. They recognised the danger of diplomatic disputes escalating into armed conflict. They knew the dangers of a general European war. In each case they accepted those risks and dangers in July and August, and they decided for war with the full expectation of winning and thereby solving the problems that prompted them to consider armed conflict in the first place. That is what made the July Crisis radically different from previous crises, such as the two Moroccan crises, the two Balkan wars, and the Tripoli crisis. In fact, there was a surprising single-mindedness of purpose in the decision-makers of 1914. They recognised that the strategic argument of perceived decline or threat implied a move to war. The murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand quickly disappeared from their considerations. Instead, the leaders in Vienna and Berlin, St Petersburg and Paris, persisted in their view that war alone could resolve their perceived vulnerable positions in the European balance of power. And when two monarchs, Wilhelm II and Nicholas II, at the last moment tried to pull back from the brink, those within governing circles in Berlin and St Petersburg forced them back on course.

The ‘slide to war’ thesis is also disproven by the various actions, especially in the three critical capitals – Vienna, Berlin and St Petersburg – to block possible mediation of the crisis. As early as 3 July Berchtold boldly informed the German ambassador in Vienna of his government’s need for a ‘final and fundamental reckoning’ with Serbia. Kaiser Wilhelm endorsed that with his note, ‘now or never’. Vienna refused a state funeral for Franz Ferdinand in part because it might have offered the crowned heads of Europe an opportunity to coordinate their responses to the assassination. Vienna was determined to punish Serbia; Berlin approved that initiative. And once Russia had decided to block the proposed attack on Serbia, Foreign Minister Sazonov prevented further discussion and possible resolution of the crisis by instructing General Ianushkevich, the chief of the General Staff, to smash his telephone!

Perhaps the last word on the ‘slide to war’ thesis should go to one of those most centrally involved, the chief of the German General Staff. Already in March 1913, Moltke confided to the Italian military attaché Germany’s intention to violate Belgian neutrality in case of war. The next war, he stated, would be between France and Germany. In brutal terms, he asserted that this war would be ‘a question of life or death for us. We shall stop at nothing to gain our aims. In the struggle for existence, one does not bother about the methods one uses.’ And in retirement in June 1915, Moltke in a private letter spoke openly of ‘this war which I prepared and initiated’. No drift, no slide.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the origins of the First World War to explain your answer.

[40]

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