



2005 International Studies GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

When reading this report it is important to keep in mind that both the *International Studies VCE Study Design* and the exam format have changed in 2006, and it's therefore necessary to be selective when reading this report in preparation for the 2006 examination.

The overall performance of students fell this year. The mean score dropped several percentage points, reversing the trend from the previous two years. The spread of results from the standard deviation was broad, indicating a greater spread in the quality of student efforts in the examination. The mean for the essay sections was approximately 53%, while for the short-answer sections it was close to 63%. This is a substantial gap and indicates that students need to pay more attention to the required content and practise their essay writing-skills in order to improve the quality of their performance.

Student should be encouraged to back up their statements with evidence or relevant details, and also reminded to paragraph their essays properly. Good quality essays addressed the question (including the timeframe), provided terrific detail (both past and contemporary), used quotes and several paragraphs per page, and were at least four pages in length. Students should be advised to avoid pre-prepared answers.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Section A – Short-answer questions

Despite the unusual format for the globalisation question, students maintained a high standard in this section. The definitions were very well handled, which was not surprising given that most of the options were repeated from previous years. The format for the globalisation question appeared to throw some students despite the question giving students a range of possibilities to cover this broad concept.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	4	8	16	21	24	25	4.2

The general rule of providing a definition and an example to gain full marks was applied. However, as some of the terms were exclusive to events (for example, war on terror) answers to these needed to be solid. Alternatively, if the definition was impressive it was possible to obtain full marks without an example.

- Nuclear proliferation

The development of nuclear weapons stockpiles/capacity by rival states, such as during the Cold War (vertical proliferation), or the number of states with nuclear weapons capacity (horizontal proliferation).

- Sovereignty

The international legal status a government/regime/group/nationality achieves from other sovereign states that it is the recognised authority within a certain territory.

Frequently students emphasised that this is where states have complete authority without influence from external bodies. This definition is problematic because being influenced by other states or bodies doesn't negate a state possessing sovereignty. By using such a definition, almost no countries would have sovereignty.

- Containment

A policy to restrict or limit the expansion of a perceived rival state or bloc of states. This policy was adopted by the US towards the USSR. A more contemporary response would highlight the US approach to Iraq until intervention in 2003. For instance, in contrast to Cheney and Wolfowitz, Powell favoured continuing a policy of containment of Iraq after September 11.

- Pre-emptive strike

Taking a military initiative against a perceived enemy before they strike first. The term is associated with the Bush doctrine and was implemented in Iraq. This was controversial because it largely contradicted international law. Some students also used Howard's recent comments on pre-emption, which was impressive.

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- National security

Typical definitions of this term referred to a state's desire to protect its borders from external threat and/or to protect its citizens from physical threat within their borders from groups associated with terrorism. Other good responses referred to environmental and economic aspects needed to achieve the security of a state or nation. Poor responses gave a purely circular definition.

- War on terror

This term is closely associated with Bush's response to the September 11 attacks on the US. The term has arguably commenced a new era in international politics, with Bush stating, 'You are either with us or against us,' in combating international terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda.

- Nationalism

An ideology that rallies an ethnic group or nation of people to achieve a political objective. It is usually associated with achieving self-determination or projecting power internationally. Frequently students just said it was like patriotism and involved a love of one's country. While this is an aspect of nationalism, full marks not possible without some reference to mobilising a population to achieve a political end.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	13	24	24	30	2.6

The unusual format of this question was generally handled well; however, some students ticked two boxes or confused the order of their arguments for and against the selected statement (in this situation assessors were directed to be lenient). Astute students recognised that the first and second statements gave clues as to the opposing contentions of each other, as did the third and fourth statements. Better answers usually used the words 'therefore', 'because', 'consequently' or 'thus', which indicated a fuller explanation of the selected statement. A common aspect to students' responses was that they had a strong subjective inclination to one particular statement, but often struggled to convey a similarly creditable opposing argument. Good answers were along the lines of those given below.

Globalisation is a means of more efficient use of the world's resources.

- For: Prime agents of globalisation, multi-national corporations (MNCs), can facilitate the movement of resources to ensure global access to national resources and thus stimulate economic activity at a far higher rate.
- Against: The efficient exploitation of resources for a global economy can work against the needs of a local or national economy in developing those resources; for example, using land to produce commodities for first world consumption, at the expense of developing the land for the local food requirements of Third World countries.

Globalisation facilitates the more efficient exploitation of the less powerful nations and groups of the world.

- For: Exploitation by more powerful nations and groups occurs due to their control of capital, technology and access to first world markets. Consequently, underdeveloped states have little option in accepting the terms and conditions of more powerful nations and groups if they want to participate in the global economy.
- Against: Globalisation provides opportunities to develop the resources of less powerful nations and groups by facilitating access to more powerful states, thus accelerating the economic development of developing states.

Globalisation reduces the risk of international conflicts.

- For: The risk is reduced because economic interdependence between states eliminates the use of armed conflict, given that each side stands to lose economically (for example, China and Taiwan).
- Against: Globalisation raises expectations of interdependent economies, thus fuelling external interest in a state's internal affairs, which has the potential to cause international conflict.
OR: Tension between those states that resist globalisation processes and those that advocate globalisation can be the cause of international conflicts.

Globalisation is a threat to national sovereignty.

- For: Globalisation weakens a state's ability to determine its own economic destiny and consequently affects its capacity to determine its own priorities.
- Against: Effectively embracing globalisation strengthens the state's economy and therefore increases its capacity to meet the expectations of its population.



Section B – Short-answer questions – Power and national interest

The quality of answers to this section was not as high as last year (the mean score was 14.6 out of 24, down from 15.9). Students frequently made only a general point and struggled to give a context that might be convincingly assessed. It is possible that this was due to the nature of the questions and the breath of the combined Areas of Study. It was disappointing to see that students often recycled their responses to Question 1 for Question 3, and thus didn't fully exploit the content of the combined Areas of Study.

The most frequent responses were on China (PRC) and either Taiwan (ROC) or the US; tensions in Indonesia or the Koreas; and Vietnam.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	2	7	14	26	22	23	4.1

Students were given one mark each for correctly identifying each nation state or group's goals. The other four marks were awarded on the basis of the description of the form of power applied.

The most commonly used cases were China and Taiwan. There were several variations of this situation, with some students using the US or contrasting the major Taiwanese political parties' stances.

In regards to China, its goal of reunifying with its 'renegade province' was clearly expressed by most students. Quality responses on the use of power highlighted details concerning its display and the threatened use of military power to influence political events within Taiwan.

When contrasting with China's goals, the best answers on Taiwan indicated a distinction between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic People's Party (DPP) (unless they had raised them as the contrasting groups). The DPP and KMT have differing goals related to independence and reunification. Brief references to the visit of the KMT's leader to Beijing this year were impressive, as these student displayed knowledge of a contemporary development.

Most responses brought up the Taiwan-US relationship, particularly the Taiwan Relations Act (1979). Strangely, there were also references to the 1954 US-Taiwan defence arrangements, when clearly the 1979 Act is more pertinent. In regards to the US's goal in this situation, students should have noted that the official policy is support for 'One China', with discussions between China and Taiwan over their dispute to be conducted without resorting to force. The Taiwan Relations Act does not commit the US to a full military response against China; instead the US position is one of 'strategic ambiguity' to ensure that neither side draws the US into a conflict.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	14	32	55	1.4

This question was worth relatively few marks and was well handled. Students could usually qualify whether a power had been effective. Responses that indicated total or no effectiveness did not usually gain the full two marks. There was some confusion over China's testing of missiles in 1996 and what its effects were on the election outcome. Although most students noted that the US responded by displaying its own military power, few noted that the US did not back Taiwan's push for political independence either. Some students who wrote on the recent re-election of Chen noted how Bush vetted Chen's victory speech to ensure it didn't contain material that enraged China.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	9	14	31	22	24	2.4

Responses to this question should have recognised the difference in power assets that nation states possess and then discussed the relevance of these assets to different situations or contexts. Students frequently noted different forms of power or how, within one form, it was difficult to determine what rated as more powerful (military, economic, etc.). Good answers used an example of a form of power. For instance, a state may possess nuclear weapons, but how is this power asset capable of achieving a goal related to trade negotiations? Many students struggled to provide a second reason related to their situation.

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Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	10	4	12	17	23	16	18	3.6

Students frequently had difficulty in outlining two contrasting perceptions involving one nation state, often just noting a group (as if they were responding to the first question) without outlining any perception of the national interest. Where students had identified two perceptions, the second perception often had little connection to the initial one.

Indonesia was commonly used. Many good answers noted that one perception is that Indonesia remains a unitary state, while another is for it to become a federal state or one in which religious/cultural/ethnic differences exist that desire separation from the Javanese or a military basis for the Indonesian state. It was then necessary to highlight the basis of these perceptions, and a reference to Indonesia's historical origins and/or its authoritarian style of governance could generate full marks. Full marks were given when a particular detail was connected to the argument behind a perception. For instance, the West Papuans generally believe they were fraudulently incorporated into Indonesia during the 1969 Act of Free Choice.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	27	24	27	22	1.5

This question posed real problems for students, as they had to relate their answer back to the issue selected for part a. In order to answer such a question well, it is vital that students use the reading time to select content that allows them to best respond to the whole question.

Very good answers highlighted how international attention on Aceh emerged in the wake of the tsunami disaster, contributing to the Helsinki Accords this year. However, some students seemed to abandon the initial issue they sought to address and revert to, say, East Timor. Some leniency was encouraged, but high marks were not possible if the issue being addressed had changed.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	23	21	31	25	1.6

Although most students identified a relevant organisation, the exception was responses that erroneously included ANZUS. Only a few students were caught out by the time limits given, generally in regards to the UN in the Korean War or Taiwan's exit from the UN in the 1970s.

The best answers displayed a full list of UN involvements in East Timor (for example, organising voter registration, endorsing the Australian-led role after the vote, reconstruction efforts and preparing for statehood) or the role of the IMF during the Asian Economic crisis 1997–98. Students often struggled to connect other organisations, such as APEC and ASEAN, to a particular issue, although discussion of Burma's membership of ASEAN was well handled.

One controversial aspect was the role of the IMF in regards to the East Timor's independence. Did Habibie allow a vote on independence because of specific IMF pressure? Many students confidently asserted just such a connection but, although leniency was displayed towards such a view, the connection is highly doubtful. It is well documented that the US threatened Indonesia to allow the Australian-led forces into East Timor in Sept 1999, and that part of this threat included withdrawal of IMF credit. But in terms of Habibie's surprise announcement in January 1999, IMF criteria for funds to stabilise currency had already been negotiated with the Suharto regime. Certainly Habibie was keen to improve Indonesia's international image, and he displayed Howard's letter encouraging a vote on autonomy during the cabinet meeting that announced the vote, but it is questionable whether the IMF supported the cause of national self-determination struggles.

Section C – Essay – Australian Foreign Policy

Question Chosen	0	1	2	3
%	2	62	21	15

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	3	1	2	4	5	7	9	10	12	12	12	8	7	5	3	1	8.0



Question 1

This straightforward question on the value of the US alliance to Australia attracted the vast majority of responses. Given that Costello had remarked that a student questioning its value disturbed him, and that Latham's dairies argued that the alliance is far more important to the US than it is to Australia, this debate had renewed coverage in this year's (2005) media.

The important aspect of this question was that students needed to discuss the alliance since the end of the Cold War. Clearly some reference to the alliance's Cold War origins was expected before moving on to more contemporary history, but a number of essays remained stuck for the most part in the Cold War era. Good answers provided a balanced argument, and then assessed the alliance's perceived value in comparison to the perceived costs. Even better students recognised the implied assumption of the question – with the demise of the Soviet Union, the absence of a common enemy that sustained the alliance from the 1950s to the 1980s is now absent. The 2001 attacks on the US were highlighted as reviving the relevance of the alliance, but this led students to question whether it was in Australia's national interest to be so closely aligned, given that it has increased Australia's chances of being a target for terrorist activity.

In general the alleged benefits of the alliance include:

- US military support of Australia's defence
- enhanced trade and investment opportunities
- access to US decision-making processes
- easier access to military procurement
- intelligence sharing arrangements.

The alleged costs of the alliance include:

- qualification of Australia's independent sovereign status
- limiting Australia's capacity to engage in its immediate region
- tying Australia to US foreign policy decisions and thus US national interests
- highlighting that the ANZUS alliance was not a guarantee of the US's military commitment.

All these potential benefits and costs then needed to be supported or challenged with evidence.

Evidence generally should have been from the post-Cold War era. For example, the point concerning US military support might be challenged on the basis that it has never been tested and, given the Guam Doctrine, it is dependent upon US interests at the time of any attack. This might then be supported by the fact that Australia has no traditional enemies or pending state-based threat, a fact that is recognised in the Dibb Report. This might be countered by considering that the alliance will make any country that poses a potential threat calculate the likelihood of US support – perhaps enough to desist any 'rational' state-based strike.

The East Timor crisis of 1999 could be highlighted as an example of either a benefit or cost. The lack of direct US military support could be an example of the hollowness of the US alliance. Others might have pointed out that the US provided sufficient political and logistical support to ensure that the Australian-led intervention was successful. Supporters of the alliance might also have pointed out how the Australian government failed to engage the US early in 1999, and effectively discouraged US involvement at several meetings.

Another area that could have been discussed was the economic benefits of the US alliance. Many students argued that the Free Trade Agreement has come about as a consequence of our support for the US in Afghanistan and Iraq. Others questioned whether this agreement would lead to a significant economic benefit. A few students highlighted the massive trade imbalance in favour of the US and questioned whether this would now narrow, while others highlighted the considerable investment which flows from the US and Australia's dependence upon the US to sustain the current account deficit. Whether a severing of the US alliance would weaken this beneficial flow of capital is a question that remains untested.

In regards to intelligence sharing, many essays questioned the value of Pine Gap. The 'joint facilities' were highlighted by some students as invaluable at the present time in monitoring international terrorism. Others stressed that the facilities make Australia a target for such terrorist groups. Others speculated about whether the development of the US missile defence system (the Son of Star Wars) was worth Australia's support for the joint facilities, given that these might be directed towards China.

Many of the better responses discussed Australia's relationship with China. Many of these students recognised the importance of China's economic value to Australia, and were concerned that Australia might be drawn into the hostility



between the US and China over issues such as Taiwan. The recent comments by Howard in the US, encouraging the US to accept China's rise in power status as good for the region and the global economy, might have been highlighted to suggest that this was an example of Australia influencing US policy-makers towards a position less critical of China.

Another area of cost/benefit analysis was in regards to regionalism. Many students stressed that Australia's relationship with the US and the recent imitation of US positions in the aftermath of September 11 marginalised Australia from regional engagement. Comments by a past Malaysian prime minister and past Indonesian governments were frequently cited. However, this seemed to ignore more contemporary developments such as Australia's invitation to the inaugural East Asia Summit. It has been suggested that Australia's inclusion was in part due to its alliance with the US, as the ASEAN organisers had wanted to assuage US concerns that this summit was emerging as an anti-US bloc. Critics of Australia's current emphasis on the importance of the alliance might have highlighted how Howard's reluctance to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation nearly derailed Australia's participation. Despite belatedly signing, this only confirmed regional sentiment about Australia's priorities in favour of the US alliance over the region.

Nearly all papers, of varying quality, analysed the costs and benefits of Australia's participation in Iraq and, more generally, the 'war on terror'. The benefits of Australia associating so closely with the Bush campaign were regularly placed in the context of continuing Australia's practice of paying a premium on the insurance policy, thus confirming our support of the alliance.

Better essays that supported Australia's current backing of US policy direction highlighted the ideological and cultural similarities between the countries and made a connection with the past struggle against communism. Critics often highlighted that Australia has placed itself unnecessarily in the front line and consequently is being targeted by terrorist activities. Evidence given for the folly of Australia's emphasis on the alliance included the attacks in Bali and on the Jakarta embassy and preferences by Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiah, as well as the fact that the new laws on sedition weaken civil liberties. In addition, the value of US intelligence was questioned, given the absence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Some students criticised Australia for joining a conflict without a UN mandate and discussed the potential cost for Australia, a middle power, of ignoring international law. These responses were highly sceptical of whether Australia's acting as deputy sheriff of the US effectively promotes Australia's national interest

Essay conclusions varied greatly in quality. Students often had difficulty in producing an unequivocal position in regards to the question; however, where the student had indicated why this was the case, they were rewarded. Often the unequivocal concluding statements were simplistic and less convincing than those that did not give a definitive answer. Nevertheless, where the conclusion displayed a consistency with the initial stated position and the body of the paper, excellence was more likely to be achieved.

Question 2

Students generally produced good responses to this question; however, some answers descended into purely narrative accounts of Australian Foreign policy concerns since 1945. Students were expected to compare the pre-1970 period to that after 1970, and discuss the relative importance of military to non-military factors in the pursuit of national security. Not unexpectedly, most students agreed with the statement given, noting that concerns about the re-militarisation of Japan and the spectre of communism in China, and for a while in Indonesia, led to ANZUS, SEATO, Konfrontasi, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Additional marks were possible when students qualified whether this period was really completely fixated on military aspects of security by also drawing attention to trade initiatives, particularly with Japan.

The major challenge of the question was to explain why other factors, such as economic and environmental approaches, have risen in importance, and whether they have continuously dominated over military factors. Some students wrote that the change was due to the Whitlam Government's focus on seeking a more independent foreign policy that engaged its immediate region. Others noted the need for change, given significance of the Guam Doctrine and the US's defeat in Vietnam.

Whatever the cause of change, responses were expected to show an awareness of the complexity confronting different governments' responses to security. Many students recognised that Australia's economic security faced a dramatic challenge due to the rising current account imbalance, which required the expansion of Australia's trading performance from the late 1980s through to the present. Initiatives such as APEC, the Cairns Group and a general effort to develop a multilateral approach to securing Australia's security were emphasised under the Labor government.

Students frequently commented that military factors have once again been at the forefront of Australia's security concerns since Howard's active support for the US's 'war on terror'. Others noted that, from the time he came to power in 1996, Howard sought to reinvigorate the alliance, giving evidence such as the massive joint military exercise with the



US in 1997 that occurred in the wake of Chinese missile testing in the Taiwan Straits. Even better responses also highlighted how economic factors have also played an important role, including the signing of numerous bilateral FTAs and the government's encouragement of economic relations with China (the major factor behind recent growth rates). Others also noted that an alternative approach to achieving security purely through military options was the current government's active support for Indonesia after its currency collapsed.

There was a great deal of potential detail that could be covered in this question. So long as there was a understanding of pre-1970 military emphasis, an explanation for some change in the early 1970s, and a discussion of the change in prominence with other factors (particularly economic) ever since, then the essay achieved good to very high marks

Question 3

In responding to this question, students were expected to define idealism and its relationship to the national interest, and then work through a series of case studies to explain whether idealism or self-interest was being expressed in Australian foreign policy. Few students recognised that idealism could be associated with a number of internationalist themes in Australia's foreign policy: human rights and refugees, the environment, disarmament, and global inequality and underdevelopment. Rather, when students made reference to idealism, it was generally in terms of whether Australia was acting in its own interests and not for the benefit of others. This stance frequently ignored the relationship between achieving ideals and self-interest. Excellent responses noted how the Australian government used the rhetoric of humanitarianism when pursuing other agendas, which generally enabled them to achieve high marks.

Australia's action in East Timor was one of the case studies commonly used. Many students concluded that the humanitarian character of the operation in 1999 is being tarnished by the hard stance Australia is pursuing today in regards to the combined gas and oil fields. Other students discussed Australia's approach to climate change and Kyoto, noting that the protection of Australia's fossil fuel industries has limited any commitment to cutting greenhouse gases by joining any international agreements that cut carbon dioxide emissions. Another case study used to highlight a humanitarian commitment in Australian foreign policy was Australia's response to the tsunami. Some students noted how the Australian government used this effort to help restore relations with Indonesia, which is a vital state to Australia's security, particularly in regards to cooperating in combating terrorist groups.

Australia's support for the 'war on terror' was also cited as being connected to idealism by bringing democracy to Iraq. This led to a potentially interesting case study of whether Australia's support for the US violated the UN, and whether US motivations are connected to maintaining energy supplies. Most students explained that Australia's commitment is another example of support for the alliance in the hope of some future support for Australia's security.

It is impossible to give a comprehensive list of possible case studies that could have been used. However, it was expected that students would clearly define 'national interest' and 'idealism', and then apply these terms/concepts to the various examples they covered. Students who produced a conclusion that recognised the complexity of the question generally achieved excellent marks.

Section D – Essay – International conflict

Question Chosen	0	1	2	3
%	2	55	15	28

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	3	1	3	4	4	6	8	11	13	12	10	9	7	4	2	1	7.9

The quality of essays for this section was not as good as last year. This was frequently due to the quality of the contrast between the two specific conflicts and student's ability to make some sort of sophisticated comment about the nature of conflict from the two eras. In other cases, essays were made weaker due to the selection of conflicts that were discussed which meant that a sophisticated analysis was not really possible.

The Cuban missile crisis and the Gulf War of 1990–91 were the most commonly used contrasting conflicts. When writing on the Cuban missile crisis, students frequently produced a narrative of events, which, although extensive, generally read as though they were pre-prepared essays. In many of these essays, the Gulf War also appeared to just stop in 1991, and the students made little effort to set the context of the present conflict in Iraq.

Much better essays emerged when contrasting the conflicts in Afghanistan. Most disappointing was that the current comparison between the Vietnam War and the US's involvement in Iraq provided a real contemporary debate that



should have given this comparison real meaning for students; however, most students did not use this current and interesting debate in their responses.

Question 1

Responses to this essay question needed to provide a direct comparison between two conflicts, not necessarily a massive coverage of the respective eras. In a way this made the task simpler, as causes, groups involved, and outcomes provided the key to a structured response.

Students who compared each conflict for similarities and differences in each of the aspects of the question had the potential to score high marks. The very good essays noted that although the causes may appear to be completely different, they did, in fact, have similar aspects. Students who recognised the distinguished short-term and long-term outcomes for similarities and differences also scored high marks. However, those who provided a narrative with just a concluding comment on one aspect being similar or different did not score as highly.

Question 2

This question focused on the resolution of conflicts and the role of nuclear weapons, and had the potential to produce more interesting responses. Conflicts of the Cold War, including the Cuban missile crisis, Korean War, Vietnam War, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the Berlin crisis all involved concerns about nuclear confrontation in various ways.

Students who discussed the Cuban missile crisis generally wrote that it lasted 13 days, was resolved without conflict and involved certain compromises. Such essays rarely mentioned that despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US has maintained its embargo on Cuba and blocked its entry into the Organisation of American States (OAS) for over forty years. This should be an indication of the partial, rather than complete, nature of the resolution.

In the Korean War the theory of limited warfare emerged as Truman rejected the nuclear option once China had entered the war. However, few students recognised that the war stalemated within the first six months and yet continued until 1953. Why? What kept the respective sides from compromising? The longer the conflict went on, the higher the US's military budget went, including the expansion and development of nuclear technology (National Security Council Plan 68).

In Vietnam nuclear weapons were deliberately avoided in order to avoid a repeat of what happened in Korea when China entered the conflict, although the use of such weapons was seriously discussed in 1954 (Operation Vulture) by the National Security Council. Did the bombing campaign equate to using nuclear weapons? And, if so, given the length of time, it could be suggested that resolution in the form of compromise was difficult to achieve.

A few students wrote about the Berlin crisis, but they did not seem to realise that the fact that it occurred before the Soviet Union had the bomb should have been significant to their argument.

Too often students merely accepted the initial premise as it related to Cold War conflicts without challenging or qualifying the statement in any way. Understandably, students accepted that post-Cold War conflicts were difficult to resolve without nuclear weapons or, more specifically, accepted the balancing role of the Soviet Union in creating a bipolar international order. Post-Cold War conflicts were described as being caused by longer-standing concerns that involved hostile ethnic groups or tribal groups in much of Africa, or religious divisions in Iraq.

It was disappointing that students' reference to nuclear weapons invariably ended with the Cold War; students could also have referred to the threatened role of nuclear weapons in the Gulf War of 1990–91 (Baker gave Aziz a letter warning Iraq not to use chemical weapons or the US would use nuclear weapons). This threat did not lead to compromises, but did determine the nature of the war. Also, the concern in the present 'war on terror' about nuclear weapons or 'dirty bombs' falling into the hands of terrorists has been a factor in justifying the US's intervention in Iraq. Given that Iraq didn't have weapons of mass destruction, this may have contributed to other states in the 'axis of evil' making progress towards acquiring them.

Students who responded to this question had far more room to interpret the question and the selected case studies before drawing comparisons.

Question 3

This question, on comparing factors that caused Cold War and post-Cold War conflicts, produced the best essays. These essays generally engaged in whether the same causes were entirely responsible or whether some additional dynamic



was at work. Better students recognised that the causes of any conflict centre upon the combatants' different perceptions of the motivations behind the conflicts and in this way could find some similarities between the respective eras. In addition, many good responses highlighted that the causes of conflicts stretched across eras, questioning the validity of the distinction between Cold War and post-Cold War conflicts. Another successful approach was to suggest that international conflicts have now entered a new era: post-Cold War conflicts were said to be generated largely by the vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, while the emergence of non-state actors now signals a new cause for conflict. Some students speculated whether this was Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' or more closely resembled Tarag Ali's 'clash of fundamentalisms'.

Students who sought a serious explanation for causes across eras frequently referred to the national interest or, even better, nationalism. For example, while the US's aim was to contain the spread of communism, the VietMinh's cause was based upon nationalist aspirations. Similarly, Iraqi groups that oppose the US include those that believe they are resisting a foreign invasion, while the US believes it is combating the global threat of terrorism by intervening in/invading Iraq.

When considering the causes for the US's involvement in Iraq, students had to bear in mind the role that key figures played in convincing Bush of the merits of a 'regime change' – the so-called neo-conservatives. Also, students needed to recognise the radical nature of the Bush doctrine that states that US national interest is founded upon 'American internationalism', and that America alone will determine the legitimacy of using its massive military superiority. In other people's language this represents a version of imperialism.

Another successful approach to explaining the causes of conflicts was to discuss the hegemonic tendencies of great powers. The difference students noted here was the reordering of international politics from bipolar to unipolar. Students who focused on Afghanistan noted that US military power now exists in several central-Asian states. Nothing signals a change in international politics from the Cold War era more than the presence of US forces in former Soviet republics. However, in the essays that focused on the Afghanistan conflict, more students might have noted that support from the Americans for the Islamic fundamentalists commenced under Carter on the advice of National Security chief Zbigniew Brzezinski, which was before Soviet intervention in 1980. In fact, Brzezinski claims to have commenced military funding for the purpose of drawing the Soviets into their Vietnam War. To quote Brzezinski 'What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? A few crazed Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?'