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## Revision

# The Jacobite threat

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Consider the following question, then take a look at the sample student response and the examiner's commentary (in red).

## Question

*How serious was the Jacobite threat of 1715?*

### Student answer with commentary

Defeat of the Scottish Jacobite force at Sherrifmuir and the surrender of English Jacobites at Preston in November 1715 suggest that the Jacobite threat was not serious. The rising was a dismal failure, as a result of a lack of coordination between the different groups, poor leadership, lack of foreign support and the counter-measures taken by the government in England. However, this view ignores the strong sympathy there was for the Jacobite cause among many Scots (who opposed the Union with England), English Tories (who disapproved of the accession of George I) and Irish Catholics. It should not be forgotten that the Scottish Jacobites had achieved victory at Killiecrankie in 1689 and it would certainly be true to argue that the Jacobite cause stood far more of a chance in 1715 than it would in 1745. Despite the sympathy for the cause and the support in each of the three kingdoms, it was the potential for threat rather than actual threat that should be seen as serious.

The opening paragraph offers a clear view about the threat posed by the Jacobites in 1715 and outlines the issues that will be discussed in the main body of the essay. The argument is balanced, suggesting that there are potentially reasons why it could be seen as a threat, but stronger reasons why this was not the reality.

There were many reasons for the growth in support for the Jacobite cause in the period after 1688. The victory at Killiecrankie did appear to suggest that the Jacobite threat was serious, but the control they achieved was short-lived. Support had undoubtedly grown for the Jacobite cause because of the disillusionment surrounding the Nine Years' War, the religious policies of the government and the policies pursued in Scotland. However, despite this growth in support, there were many weaknesses in the cause. In Ireland, the Catholic population had been defeated and, since 1692, the Protestants were able to enforce their monopoly of political power. As a result, the Jacobite cause there relied on the support of impoverished peasants who lacked power. In England, although many Tories wanted the return of the legitimate monarchy, they were strong supporters of the Anglican Church and would therefore not give their full support to the Pretender, who would not abandon his Catholic faith or who owed their potential threat to French support.

The paragraph focuses on the issue of support for Jacobitism in England and Ireland and has a clear and consistent argument that despite support it was not a serious threat.

It was Scotland that offered the most serious Jacobite threat. There were many people in Scotland who were disgruntled with government policies. Although the government could not be blamed for the harvest failures of the 1690s it led to disquiet. The lack of government support for the failed Darien scheme only added to their unpopularity, while the Act of Settlement and its attempt to deprive Scots of control over their foreign policy and succession created more hostility. This culminated in Scottish anger towards the malt tax of 1713 and helped to secure much support for the Earl of Mar, helping him to raise an army of 10,000 men in 1715. However, despite the dislike of English rule there were still divisions and weaknesses within Scotland that reduced the threat. The 1715 rising was more part of a Scottish civil war and anti-English uprising than an attempt at a Jacobite restoration. Divisions within Scottish society further weakened the Jacobite cause. Scottish Presbyterians, who dominated the lowlands, would not rise to support a Catholic restoration and there were even divisions among the Highlanders, some of whom were Hanoverian loyalists. Scottish Episcopalians, who hated the destruction of their church in 1689, and others who hated the Union were concerned not to put the Stuarts on the throne of England but to see the Jacobites overturn the Union. As a result of these divisions the Jacobite threat was reduced, as different groups had different aims and they failed to coordinate their actions.

The response suggests that the main focus for support for the Jacobite cause was Scotland, but again there is a clear argument that this potential for threat did not materialise. The reasons for this are clearly explained and an interim judgement is reached in the final sentence. The argument is well supported, with reference to specific policies and knowledge of the size of Mar's force shown.

The leadership of the Jacobite cause further weakened the threat it posed. The Pretender was unable to coordinate his supporters from abroad and lacked the financial resources needed to arm a large and well-equipped army that could pose a serious threat to the government. James also failed to take immediate advantage of the situation in England which followed the Tory defeat in the 1715 election. If he wanted the support of the Tories he needed to renounce his Catholic faith. But this he refused to do, showing a lack of political reality, and thus many Tories would not rebel to bring in a monarch who would destroy the Anglican Church to which they were loyal. Furthermore, James failed to act quickly on Queen Anne's death. She had been ill for some time and this had given the Jacobites plenty of time to prepare, but they failed to do this, so that by the time James arrived in December the rising was virtually over. James's own actions – or inactions – further weakened the cause and made it much less of a threat. It appears that he and his half-brother, the Duke of Berwick, were deluded, believing that the country was simply waiting for them to appear to declare for them. They saw the 1715 pro-Tory riots as evidence there was mass support for a Jacobite restoration and therefore when James finally arrived, he did little to rally his supporters and soon returned to the continent, further lessening the threat.

The response considers the leadership of the Jacobites and again has a clear and well-supported argument. The response focuses on issues in 1714–15 and therefore uses material closely linked to the focus of the question on 1715. The argument is consistent and again there is a sense of an interim judgement that the leadership reduced the seriousness of the threat.

Not only was James unable to rally sufficient support in Britain for him to seize the throne, but the threat was further reduced as he was unable to secure support from overseas. This was an important factor as it was evident that James could not raise a sufficient force in Britain and therefore would need a large overseas army if he was to succeed. The French had offered support for an invasion in 1708, but this failed because James had measles and the invasion had to be delayed. However, in 1715 the situation was very different. England and France had signed the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713

and were therefore at peace, while Louis XIV had died and his heir was his 5-year-old great-grandson. The Duke of Orleans, his regent, was unwilling to aid James and potentially find himself at war with England. As a result, James lacked the military support he needed, and this further weakened the threat posed.

The response considers the need for foreign support if there was to be a military threat. Again, this is well explained and shows good supporting knowledge, with a further brief interim judgement linking the material back to the actual question.

Government action also reduced the Jacobite threat. The government's intelligence and pre-emptive measures were effective, as confiscations and forfeitures of estates weakened support so that many people actually deserted Mar before Sherrifmuir, while Catholics had their weapons and horses seized. The militia was called up and deployed to places such as Bristol and Oxford, and those who uttered treasonable words were fined. Parliament issued addresses of loyalty to George, which discouraged potential support for James. As a result, in Northumberland and Lancashire, where there was still strong Catholic support, very few people were willing to join the Jacobite cause, further reducing its threat.

The depth of support for the argument is sustained in this paragraph, with a good range of examples of government action. This is then further linked back to the question and used to support an interim judgement about the threat.

The Jacobite cause did have the potential to be a serious threat, but despite its potential appeal there were divisions within both Scotland – where its base of support was the strongest – and also between England and Scotland. James's actions, particularly his understanding of the political situation and his religious beliefs, further weakened the threat, while his inability to raise foreign support meant he lacked the military force needed to challenge the government. The British government's actions served only to make it more difficult for James and, despite outnumbering government forces at Sherrifmuir by two to one, desertions and the lack of action from James ensured that the rising was over by early 1716 without ever being a serious threat.

The conclusion follows from the line of argument pursued throughout the response and the argument outlined in the introduction. The consistency of argument is strong and there are also indications of judgements about each issue considered. These are then brought together in the conclusion to provide an overall judgement, which has been supported throughout with good, accurate and relevant factual knowledge. This response would reach the top level of the mark scheme.

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