



Examiners' Report

January 2011

GCE Government & Politics 6GP01 01



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January 2011

Publications Code US026394

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Introduction

January 2011 saw an increased cohort sitting the examination - the third continual rise. It is becoming clear that more centres feel confident that the paper is accessible for many who commenced the study of politics in the September intake. The boost to numbers perhaps comes in the wake of an increased interest in politics which follows a General Election year.

The most popular choice in terms of questions was Question 4 on democracy, followed by Question 2 on pressure groups which for the first time on this paper fell to second choice. The margin between the two was minimal and both of the two former questions were the combined choice of many candidates.

Political parties remains the least popular in terms of candidate choice, but very often when this question was taken it was invariably well handled with high marks being earned in the process. Question 1 was popular but there were clear areas where centres need to take note and clarify certain key aspects of the specification. These are now detailed.

Question 1

Most candidate responses failed to access level three for both questions B and C of this question, though the A section at the beginning offered few problems. Many failed for part B to understand the key distinction between majoritarian representation and majoritarian electoral systems, so went into the examination having prepared for a question on AV, SV or such like and then describing the key features of these systems. Marks were awarded, however, for pointing out how proportional representation systems and majoritarian systems worked and most candidates could make an implicit point at least that majoritarian representation tends to result in the dominance of one party of the chamber. The difference between representation and electoral systems needs to be made much clearer.

The vast majority of candidates managed to write a considerable amount on this question. Some of them missed the focus of the question and wrote entirely on the advantages and disadvantages of FPTP and therefore tended to do no better than mid level 2. More candidates tried to come to terms with the question as set but failed to go beyond trying to explain that FPTP provides strength and stability in normal times but that 2010 was an exception that may or may not become the norm. A few stronger candidates distinguished between strength and stability and introduced previous examples of minority governments and pacts e.g. 1974 Lib-Lab, whilst the very best furnished examples of Governments with parliamentary majorities lacking strength, e.g. Major, Brown, whilst stressing that coalitions can bring strength. The weakness was making an implicit assumption that coalitions are automatically weak which is not accurate or correct: weakness can emerge from the Westminster electoral system when it delivers majorities.

This was a typical response to the A section and as noted this caused little difficulty.

Chosen Question Number: **Question 1** ☒

Question 2 ☒

Question 3 ☒

Question 4 ☒

(a) Elections promote democracy in many ways. Firstly, it enables representation of the electorate, which means they can have their views represented in the House of Commons and governments. Elections also enable participation. They do this by giving the people a chance to get involved with politics and determine their government and leaders. Another thing that elections provide is accountability. This is the government being accountable to the people rather than above the people, a crucial part of democracy. Examples of this could be the Labour victory in 1997, the Conservative victory in 2010 to an extent and even with specific MPs like Jacqui Smith who lost her seat due to the public outrage at the expenses scandal and probity. Elections also promote democracy by giving the government the legitimacy that comes with their decisions. Since elections are every five years a government can only be in power so long without having the chance to be ousted and this makes their rule fairer and more legitimate. Finally, elections promote democracy through education, as it is an opportunity for the electorate to be educated by the parties on their policies and various issues in the country, which give the electorate more knowledge, enabling them to vote with confidence in the party they believe in the most.



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Examiner Comments

The response lists a whole host of factors relevant to the response, representation, participation, choice, accountability, legitimacy and education. Furthermore, some of these are exemplified and given detail which earns top marks.



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Examiner Tip

This response earned more marks as it was able to expand and give more detail from the real political worlds on the link between elections and democracy. This shows wider knowledge and understanding which can be rewarded.

This proved to be a challenging question for many candidates and responses that achieved level 3 were not common with a majority of candidates failing to score more than 5 or 6 marks at best. Most candidates understood the concept of PR and most could usually provide an example, linking it to the likely consequences of elections held under it. A number of candidates even went on to provide precise details of the details of such systems. The concept of majoritarian representation was not well understood. There was a general understanding that it was a 'winner takes all' system and many candidates could provide examples of FPTP, SV and AV but there was confusion surrounding a precise definition. A significant number of candidates stated that at least 50% of the votes were needed and few introduced such terms as plurality. Centres could possibly look at preparing candidates with sharper definitions of such concepts.

(b) Majoritarian representation and proportional representation are two very different things.

Majoritarian representation concludes in a majority of the electorate being represented. For example in the House of Commons, in a Westminster election the winning party would have all of the seats in parliament because they hold most constituencies.

Representative Proportional representation is different in that the electorate are represented ~~prop~~ in proportion to votes. For example, say a party gain 30 per cent of votes, they would gain 30 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons, or based on constituents rather than votes.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

Here on section B there is only a tangential link to the question. There is no conception essentially of majoritarian representation whereas there is some link with proportional representation.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

Ensure the conceptual nature of some political topics. Here representation is clarified from the practical applications of that concept in this case voting systems.

(b) Majoritarian representation is based on an exaggerated majority of support for a representative government as is resultant from the First Past the Post election system in the UK. Proportional representation is composed of in an election the number of seats should directly transfer to the number of Parliamentary seats won.

The main differences between the two concepts is that typically majoritarian election systems result in strong, stable, single party governments that have a powerful executive body and a lot of control over the legislative process as could typically be seen since before the recent election back to the ending of World War two. Here the controlling party has the exaggerated majority from First past the post giving them disproportionate seats in the House of Commons and a powerful Prime Minister. Strict party discipline means few rebellious MP's as they are forced to follow the party line and so legislative bills are almost always passed.

In contrast to this Proportional Representation is achieved from a different family of systems based on giving a fairer and more democratic outcome. Systems such as Alternative vote, list,

In contrast to this Proportional Representation is achieved from a different family of systems based on giving a fairer and more democratic outcome. Systems such as Alternative vote, list,

((b) continued) Additional Member System and Supplementary vote - The purpose is that these systems as aforementioned give a fairer outcome and people whose votes under First Past the post would have had their vote wasted now find their vote equally important to anyone else's. These systems typically result in coalition governments which have been shown to produce both strong governments such as Germany and unstable ones such as Italy.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

Here the candidate has accurately referenced both majoritarian and proportional representation. It is both precise and focused on the question.

A generally well addressed question with certain caveats. Weaker answers dwelt heavily on the general one-party government outcome vs. the 2010 election result but many stronger candidates were willing to challenge the assumption that coalition government is always 'weak'. A few also considered that single-party government may not be 'strong'. The pitfall was an exclusive focus on the 'general pros and cons of First Past the Post'.

((c) continued) *How far does the Westminster electoral system ensure a strong and stable government*

PLAN

- FPTP
- lots of safe seats
- discriminating against 3 smaller parties
- Does usually provide a majority
- Things get done as there is less political bickering

The electoral system used at Westminster is first past the post, generally this does provide the country with a strong and stable government, but as seen in the 2010 general election, this is not always the case. This system has always been used and to date there has not been a huge public outcry. It does however create a huge amount of safe seats and there is a lot of wasted votes. It cannot be said to be the most democratic of systems but the government it produces is, for the most part, strong and stable.

For a government to fully undertake its role it needs the legitimacy to rule, this is provided by first past the post. In most cases this electoral system provides

one party with a majority for a government to have credibility and be able to actually get

anything done it needs a majority. With our current coalition government you can question whether they have any legitimacy to rule; nobody voted for a Conservative / Liberal mandate majority. If they were to change the system the Houses would be thrown into chaos. Without a clear majority, or even a clear leader, nothing would be achieved in parliament without a great deal of bickering and sacrifice on all sides. We need a strong, one party government, to make decisions that the public can hold them accountable for.

With a change in electoral system, voting would become far more democratic. This on the surface sounds like a good thing but it also opens up the possibility that small, extremist parties such as the BNP ~~the~~ may gain a few seats landing them the respectability of Westminster.

To achieve a strong and stable government Westminster needs to keep its current electoral system as it is its best chance of achieving a clear majority where one party has a clear legitimacy and ability to control the government.



(c) It can be said that the Westminster electoral system of "First Past The Post" allows for strong and stable government as its strengths such as the ~~creation~~ establishment of a party with a large majority is the norm. However, while this may be the case, this electoral system has faults that need to be acknowledged.

"First Past The Post" (FPTP) is an electoral system where plurality is needed to win and become an MP for a constituency. The party with the most votes becomes the leading party in Parliament and has the obligation to form government. FPTP normally allows for a ~~strong~~ ~~majority~~ ~~government~~. This is a strength as a party with a large majority can push almost everything through Commons. As a result of Tony Blair's Labour party becoming the largest party in government in the 1997, 2001 and 2005 election, New Labour was able to exert its dominance over Westminster. The large majorities ensured Blair did not suffer a single Commons defeat from 1997 to 2005. This shows that parties can become strong and effective if they have the means to win votes. ~~Furthermore,~~ ~~it is also unheard of a party to~~ Although this point may be valid it is ~~more~~ important to comprehend that FPTP doesn't lead to a strong and stable government as vulnerable administration can occur with minority governments. John Major's Tory government of the early 1990s was prone to greater

Another point is that FPTP normally leads to single party governments. In the last century only 13 1/2 years of it was spent with a coalition government and 8% of those were in the war. That's more than the rest of coalition. The importance here is that coalition ~~normal~~ like in Israel and Italy normally lead to dissatisfaction with a variety of ~~deep~~ ideological views. ~~A party~~ ^{As} FPTP produces single party governments, if not it leads to a single party government that is not subject to the wishes of others. Nevertheless, there have been ~~many~~ instances where this doesn't happen. In the recent 2010 election, voters produced a hung parliament with a minority Tory government. As a result, the Tories were almost defeated at in the ~~Ten~~ ^{Ten} ~~year~~ ^{year} vote of 2010 as they

((c) continued) won by a mere 20 votes. In addition, it can be ~~and~~ argued that without the ~~see~~ backing of the Liberal Democrats on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 then the Tory government would have faced a election. This shows that single parties that do not always occur from FPTP. Consequently, FPTP doesn't go very far in producing single party government as there is a consensus policy. However it must be reiterated that this is a party and single parties usually exist which shows FPTP that leads to a system with a strong single government party.

Also, finally, a government are less likely to be defeated on issues because of the FPTP system. The Labour government was able to be for hunting and get Britain involved in the Iraq war. Nevertheless, while this may be true, governments can be defeated which was true of James Callaghan in the 1970s when he lost a vote of no confidence. This shows that FPTP isn't doesn't lead to strong and stable government.

To conclude, FPTP goes very far in producing strong and stable governments as it leads to majority governments, single party government and governments that are secure in their position. While anomalies like leadership challenges and votes of no confidence may arise it is important to state that these are rare and in the end FPTP provides for a strong and stable government.


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Examiner Comments

The strength of this answer is that it does keep in focus the set question of strong and stable government and furthermore it makes reference to examples to maintain that focus.

Question 2

This question was popular and nearly all candidates were very clear on part A. Not all candidates understood what was meant by direct action, muddling up with lobbying and insider groups having 'direct access'. There was very good use of examples - particularly the tuitions fees protest. C was generally well answered with lots of knowledge about the different measures of success but sometimes not very well balanced or analysed.

Chosen Question Number: **Question 1** ☒

Question 2 ☒

Question 3 ☒

Question 4 ☒

- (a) One difference between a political party and a pressure group is that pressure groups do not seek to gain governmental power like political parties, they only seek to exert influence from the outside. Another difference is that pressure groups usually have a narrow issue focus, for example Greenpeace is only ~~really~~ focused on the issue of the environment. Political parties generally have a broad issue focus in order to try and appeal to the largest amount of voters ('catch-all parties').



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is a mid range response. The supporting detail and embellishment is limited although Greenpeace is cited. More detail and depth would earn a higher reward



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

The candidate here has not used examples to fully detail the difference between the two; given the vast amount of material available to do this it is a missed opportunity.

Chosen Question Number: Question 1 ☒Question 2 ☒Question 3 ☒Question 4 ☒

(a) One difference between pressure groups and political parties is that pressure groups usually have a single issue focus, whereas a political party has a range of different policies encompassing a whole range of different areas of society, including immigration, health, defense and transport. Pressure groups have only the one focus, such as ~~Green~~ Friends of the Earth ~~task~~ which is concerned about the environment only.

Another difference is that pressure groups do not usually stand for election, whereas political parties do. This is because pressure groups seek to influence policy without becoming the government, whereas political parties, such as the Labour Party, actually wants to become the ~~most~~ ruling force in the country. For example, the Conservative Party stood for election in most UK constituencies in 2010, whereas the Greenpeace did not.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

Here the candidate has provided the depth and scope absent in the previous example and collects maximum reward in the process.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

The move from a mid-range response to a top range response is often the detail and supporting evidence which develops the knowledge and understanding.

This question was not answered quite as well as expected. The question was in two parts. Candidates did not range as expansively as perhaps expected. They tended to concentrate on a narrow range of methods such as protests, demonstrations and stunts, legal and otherwise with common illustrations including Fathers for Justice, Greenpeace, ALF and the recent student fees protest. Strikes, sit ins, internet etc were less commonly developed. Many candidates clearly understood why such tactics were used including outsider groups, effectiveness of such methods and publicity.

A good number of candidates scored almost as many marks and occasionally more for AO2 than AO1 which is somewhat unusual. A significant minority of candidates included insider activities such as lobbying as direct action or stated that direct access equated to direct action and it clearly does not, where this arose candidates earned little if any credit for this part of their response.

(b) Direct action is methods used by pressure groups such as demonstrations and marches. It is where the group actively do something by mobilising its members into action. For example, Greenpeace destroying genetically modified ^{crops} ~~groups~~ is taking direct action.

Pressure groups are most likely to use direct action if they are an outsider group, meaning they are not consulted by government. This is because it is the ~~was~~ most effective way of getting a response, and getting their argument heard. It is unlikely that an ^{insider} ~~outsider~~ group would use a method of direct action, as it is not the best way to stay in favour of the government, and is also not necessary as they can influence the government in far easier ways anyway.

Direct action is often the method used by cause groups. A cause group is formed to promote different ideas on a specific issue, such as being against modified crops, as greenpeace are,

so direct action is often the only way they feel they can effectively make their point.

however, some sectional groups, such as the NUS ~~and so~~ have used direct action in the form of mass demonstrations to get there

((b) continued) opinions heard, so it is also an ~~effective~~ questionable effective method for sectional groups.

Therefore, direct action is used by creating ~~as~~ something that will be noticed, ~~and~~ to get their opinions known to more people, so their cause is known.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

This candidate shows a mid range response, there is a lack of detail on the both aspects of the how & why components of the question, with a dominance of the 'why'.

The vast majority of the candidates did grasp the point of the question and did attempt to look at size as a factor. Many provided information about the power and influence of larger groups with examples to support the basic thrust of the question. Less strong candidates tended to agree with the assumption and did not offer the counter argument which meant they could rarely achieve more than mid level 2. There were, pleasingly a significant number who went further, arguing that size is only one of a number of factors including structure, leadership, finance, media, celebrity endorsement, ideology and insider/outsider status.

The strongest answers included examples of large groups not achieving success eg anti war marches, countryside alliance, TUC and of smaller groups who were extremely successful including NFU, BMA, ASH and the Gurkhas. There were a limited number of excellent answers dealing with the issue of size and giving a well illustrated and balanced viewpoint.

(c) Pluralists would argue that a key feature that determines the success of a PG is their ^{membership} size. This is because they have more people to turn up to demonstrations and can cause greater disruption. ~~For example, the 2000 fuel lobby protests~~ For example, ~~the 2000 fuel lobby protests~~ the 2000 fuel lobby protests involved thousands of people campaigning against the rise in fuel price, and they successfully managed to influence the government. As well as this, the more members a group has, means the more donations they will receive and the more money they will have to spend on advertising and employing professional lobbyists. For example, the NSPCC and the RSPB both have over a million members and this allows them to broadcast adverts on television and heighten the awareness of their cause and ~~are~~ are therefore more likely to be successful.

On the other hand, ~~as~~ many of these members may be passive, 'chequebook' members who do not offer the group much direct action and are therefore less influential. As well as this, elitists would argue

that there are in fact many examples of when large pressure groups have not been successful. For example, although the Stop the War Coalition in 2003 brought millions of members to the streets, it did not stop Tony Blair from invading Iraq. Another example is the

((c) continued) recent tuition fee protests, which, despite thousands of students and plenty of news coverage, have not been able to stop the rise in fees.

Therefore, elitists would argue that it is not the size of the group, but the wealth that makes them more successful. Wealthy groups are able to employ professional lobbyists who may charge over £3000, professional advertising campaigns and are also able to sponsor MPs and therefore give them a stronger link with the government. For example, wealthy groups such as the CBI and the IOD can be seen to be ~~very~~ have great influence over the government due to their ~~own~~ economic status in society and the power that they hold. An example of a ~~a~~ recent successful pressure group is the British Bankers' Association. ~~the recession~~ Although many would blame the bankers for the recession, they managed to get off very lightly in the October spending review, whereas those of lower classes seem to have been affected more.

Pluralists however would argue that there are

instances of wealthy groups that have not managed to influence government policy. For example the Countryside Alliance, despite being a small but very wealthy group, were not able to avoid the ban on

((c) continued) fox hunting by the Labour government.

Elitists would further argue that instead of size, ~~the~~ it is the status of the group that depends on their success as the government ~~is~~ ~~is~~ is said to be biased towards the wealthy, insider groups. For example, after the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak, the NFU, a powerful insider group, were able to gain millions of pounds of compensation for the livestock that they lost, and this is most likely because of their close relationship with the government. Elitists ~~say~~ state that in fact, outsider groups have very little influence over ^{the formation of} government ~~legislation~~ ~~as~~ as they are more influenced by behind the scenes lobbying and negotiating, rather than large protests in the streets.

Pluralists do not believe this is true and feel that because the government is unbiased, a key feature that depends on the ~~the~~ success of a pressure group is ~~the~~ how in touch they are with public opinion. An example is after the Dunblane massacre, the Snowdrop Campaign were able to ~~the~~ ~~the~~ influence the government ~~the~~ and make the handling of

weapons illegal. This was primarily due to the immense public support the campaign gained.

Therefore, to conclude, although it is a positive

((c) continued) pluralist thought that the government is unbiased and the size is the most important factor, I disagree. I believe that in this day and age, in a society ruled greatly by economic power, the elitist view that the wealthy groups are the most successful is correct.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

This is a good example of a level three response. It refers to political theory and is supported by accurate examples.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

The hallmark of a good level three response is the ability to analyse and evaluate. This often considers differing political viewpoints which are contested.

Question 3

Question 3 was the least popular of candidates' responses. Possibly for this reason, it tended to elicit a narrower range of answers, with responses tending towards the higher levels of the grade boundaries. In respect of part B, many responses showed appropriate knowledge of the nature of Thatcherism with use of relevant language such as free market capitalism, Euroscepticism and so on, and a contextual awareness of these ideas in relation to Conservative government policy. Consequently, this had a tendency to spill over into part C, with some candidates falling into the trap of continuing to analyse Thatcherism or relating the movement exclusively to the Conservative Party and thus failing to address the true nature of the question. Less able candidates overlooked the influence of other movements such as One Nation conservatism, and only made cursory references to either Labour or the Liberal Democrats. More able candidates were able to address the synoptic nature of the question and draw on the similarities and differences between the parties in this respect.

This proved to be an accessible question with many candidates gaining 4 marks for a definition of two factors plus a development of each.

The most common responses included the functions to formulate policies and provide a manifesto, to contest elections and for the provision of officers in government both nationally and locally. Less common was the provision of education. As with Q2c the difference in candidates lay in the depth of description and/or illustration. Fewer candidates went on to earn an additional mark for such depth and illustration of a particular point

Chosen Question Number: Question 1 ☒

Question 2 ☒

Question 3 ☒

Question 4 ☒

- (a) A Political party is a group of people with like minded democratical ideas that seek government power. ~~The~~ A political party uses representation. This is popular in liberal democracies. A political party will form a popular mandate in order to win the elections. And 'catch all parties' hope to catch ~~under~~ the wider public to seek to majority of the vote (35-40%). Parties also ~~are~~ use mobilization and participation not only to educate the public with their views but to use media attention to ~~are~~ capture as many voter by having interviews, making

posters and using their ideology to represent themselves - themselves. However 48% of the pupil ~~seems~~ seemed to be attached to their parties. ~~There~~ Therefore this function can be questioned. An example of a political party is Labour and conservatives.

**ResultsPlus****Examiner Comments**

This does not achieve full marks, the material presented is correct but it moves to make evaluative comments and this is not required for part A.

**ResultsPlus****Examiner Tip**

Stick to clear facts and precise detail for section A parts on Unit 1. Critical comments do not have the scope to be rewarded even if they are correct!

Chosen Question Number: Question 1 ☒Question 2 ☒Question 3 ☒Question 4 ☒

(a) Political parties have a main objective which is to gain power in government. They do this by providing a manifesto with their policies and ideas on it, which they present to the public. They use this to see if the public agree with their ideas so then vote them into power. Through doing this they provide a choice for the electorate on who they wish the country to be run.

Another function is that they offer representation to people in politics. It means once they vote can have their views political views expressed on a larger scale. It means that whole groups of people are parties vote on issues as they see fit representing the people who voted them into power.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

Here we do move to gain some clarity but the function of office seeking is defined more clearly than representation.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

It is possible to reach a maximum of three marks for one function here; hence how well one aspect is defined determines if you reach that maximum.

Question 3

Chosen Question Number: Question 1 ☒Question 2 ☒Question 3 ☒Question 4 ☒

(a) A political party is a group of people ~~the~~ organised for the purpose of winning government power. Usually in democratic systems, this is done by ~~the~~ ^{putting} ~~standing~~ candidates forward for elections in the hope of winning political office. Two main functions of a political party include the recruitment of leaders and the mobilisation and participation of the electorate.

Almost all political careers begin by joining a political party. Political parties identify individuals that are actively engaged in the activities of the party and largely believe in the policies the party stands for. By including such individuals in ^{future} political activities such as canvassing and electioneering, parties then choose members they wish to nominate as a parliamentary candidate, or leadership positions within the party. ~~the~~ Members of political parties usually play the important role of voting for an individual they wish to see elected as a leader of their party.

Political parties engage the wider public in political activities as well through advertising, ~~community~~ party meetings, and focus groups etc. The campaign trail of ~~political leaders~~ parties and leaders see the parties rallying to gain the attention of

((a) continued) The public. The public are introduced to their ideas and policies, and there is a greater scope for political participation beyond the simple, ritualistic act of voting.

(b) Thatcherism is the ideological conviction and general policies held by Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Prime Minister ~~of~~ ^{and her government.} of the UK between 1979 and 1990. Thatcherism is an attempt to marry two broad schools of political philosophy, neoliberalism and ~~neoclassic~~ neoconservatism. These two ideas can be separated also by what is often referred to as "economic Thatcherism" and "Social Thatcherism."

Economic Thatcherism or neoliberalism focuses on the key ideas of a market economy, ^{characterised by privatisation,} reduction in taxation, reduction in union power and deregulation.

Thatcher's belief in a market economy led to considerable privatisation of many UK industries such as steel, the railways and telecommunications. Thatcherism focused on the efficiencies brought about by the interaction of market forces in ^{economic} allocating resources.

Thatcherism also, as part of their belief in a market economy attempted to reduce levels of taxation. While this aspect of policy failed in reducing overall levels of taxation, Thatcher was successful in shifting a majority of the burden of taxation from direct taxation such as income tax to indirect taxes such as VAT. This led to lower-income groups being proportionally more affected by the tax burden, in turn leading to greater inequalities.

The miners, taken on in 1984-85 and defeated, is a prime example of the reduction in union power Thatcher believed in. By reducing their powers significantly, Thatcherism succeeded in promoting a free market economy where wage prices (the cost of

((b) continued) labour) could not rise above the market-determined equilibrium level, and workers could not demand further benefits such as safety measures or shorter working hours.

The deregulation of financial markets, possibly most importantly the allowing of the Sterling pound to "float" on the forex market is also an important aspect of economic Thatcherism. The overall idea behind the neoliberal policies of economic Thatcherism was a belief in a minimal state.

However, social Thatcherism was characterised by a belief in a strong state.

Thatcherism promoted "tough" law and order, which saw the wider use of custodial sentences and the implementation of longer, harsher prison sentences for criminal offenders.

Thatcherism also believed in "traditional" or "family" values, usually referring to a Christian ethos, remaining pessimistic over the "permissive" views ^{that had spread} largely associated with the 1960s. Thatcher's claim that "There is no such thing as society - only individuals and their families" perhaps best describes Thatcherism for its minimalist approach to a strong state.

- (c) The UK's major political parties accept some, but not all of Thatcherite ideas and policies, and each of the three parties (Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat) adopt different views.

The Conservative party under Cameron is perhaps the most convinced by Thatcherite ideology. Their commitment to reduce levels of taxation, such as by raising the threshold of inheritance tax to £1 million is a prime example of their alignment with Thatcherite economic thinking and belief in a free market economy.

Indeed, all three parties appear largely in agreement that the UK must adopt a free market economy. Labour's final break with its traditional ideology of Socialism came by the revision of Clause Four of its 1995 manifesto, when it dropped its belief in the public ownership of property. The Liberal Democrats too, agree on a free market economy, though to a lesser extent.

However, Cameron's commitment to a reduction in taxation is limited ~~characterised~~ by his commitment to fund public services such as the NHS and education. The "greening" of the Conservatives, most notably their commitment to the further introduction of "green taxes" is also a break from pure Thatcherism.

The Liberal Democrats under Clegg in the Tory-led coalition government, while appearing not to, also seem to favour certain Thatcherite policies. Despite its commitment not to, Clegg advocated for the raising of university tuition ^{election} fees, something that traditional Thatcherites would applaud. However, it is arguable that this policy was introduced not

((c) continued) for ideological but rather more for pragmatic reasons. The public spending cuts currently proposed by the Tony-led coalition is also one such example. The UK, faced by extremely high levels of public sector debt and an unsustainable budget deficit is forced into these cuts.

The Labour party under Blair and Brown did not appear to reverse the changes made by Thatcher, and as such largely appear to condone much of her policies, though they are highly unlikely to admit to it publicly. It is more difficult to determine ^{the} current ideological beliefs held by the Labour Party (the "overall" belief - there are serious ideological divides within the party), and indeed what course the party's policies will take under Ed Milliband, as Milliband Sr. has still not clearly identified his ideological convictions.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

This response is a good example of a top level three.

Chosen Question Number: Question 1 ☒Question 2 ☒Question 3 ☒Question 4 ☒

- (a) ~~There~~ A function of a political party is to represent the public. This is done through voting in elections, and in the UK, constituents vote for an MP they wish to represent them and make decisions on their behalf in parliament. Another function is to widen the opportunities of political participation. This is carried out through either membership of parties or by voting. Currently, ^{while} under 1% of the UK are members of the 3 main parties, ~~however~~ voter turnout has increased since 2001, to 61% in 2005, and 66% in 2010, showing parties' ability to promote participation in politics.

(b) The term Thatcherism ~~is defined as~~ describes the ideologies and policies inaugurated by Thatcher during her premiership. It refers to Margaret Thatcher's distinctive economical stance, which is to "roll back the frontiers of the state" in the economy and to privatise all industries such as coal, iron, steel, gas and water, that were previously nationalised. Ultimately Thatcher believed in less government intervention, and a 'laissez-faire' approach to businesses.

Thatcherism is additionally a term that can turn up Thatcher's views on society. Thatcherites believe in an 'atomistic society' and that the individual takes precedence over society. As Thatcher put it, "There's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families".

Thatcherism also relates to social mobility, a belief that ~~that~~ everyone has the power to move between social classes, and this is achieved by meritocracy. Thatcherites ~~were~~ ~~are~~ believe that regressive taxation such as VAT, which effectively hit the poor the hardest can be defended by this

((b) continued) ideology ~~the~~ of meritocracy.

(c) In many ways, the UK's major political parties are seen to accept Thatcherite policies and ideas, although recently some events suggest that this is not always the case.

Concerning the economy, ~~both~~ the Labour party, the Conservative party and the Liberal Democrats all broadly accept the Thatcherite neo-liberal consensus. This is that inflation is the main economic concern, rather than unemployment. ~~This general~~ Additionally, they all believe in a free market economy where the market is regulated by the price mechanism, this was particularly inaugurated by Thatcher, demonstrating that this general agreement on how the economy should be managed shows an acceptance for Thatcherite economical policies.

However, while this may be the case, ~~the Labour party have declared~~ ~~on~~ the topic of ^{indirect} taxation show how some of the UK's ^{main} political parties do not necessarily accept Thatcher's legacy. The Labour party, under Brown introduced a the 50% tax rate on earners above £150,000, ~~while~~ an increase from the previous 40%. The conservatives accept this,

((c) continued) as a temporary measure, while Ed Miliband has expressed it should be permanent. This general consensus on ~~that~~ direct taxation on

income differs greatly from the Thatcherite policy of reducing income tax.

Despite this, in some ways the main political parties have been seen to accept aspects of Thatcherism. This can be seen through their more pro-business stance. The Conservative party are extremely compatible and co-operative with CBI and big businesses. Even the Labour party since the 1990's has shifted to being increasingly pro-business, an attribute often related to Thatcherism.

Although, the parties don't accept Thatcherism on the topic of law and order. There is general consensus that different methods such as rehabilitation of criminals should be used ^{increasingly} as it would solve the root of crime, and prevent people from reoffending. This is demonstrated by Ken Clarke's stance on this topic and also by Cameron's 'hug-a-hoodie' speech. This in many ways goes against Thatcher's 'prison works' ideology.

((c) continued) In contrast, there is a noticeable agreement on housing, between the major UK parties. ~~only~~ They all agree to reforming the housing benefit in order to reduce government dependancy. The Conservative party ~~have~~ are

reducing LHA as a part of this scheme. This shows an acceptance of Thatcher's dislike towards the 'dependency culture' and Thatcher even sold off many council houses in the 'right to buy' act. The fact that the main UK parties accept aspects of this policy indicates that they agree with certain Thatcherite policies.

On welfare, all parties agree to 'ringfencing' the NHS from any public spending cuts. This is an Thatcherite goaling as Thatcher expressed her lack of support for the 'nanny state' as it made citizens too reliant on the government, thus she

((c) continued) introduced ^{more} private healthcare. The fact that ^{the main} parties accept the importance of the NHS (Labour even increased spending) shows consensus, and that they're abandoning Thatcherite ideals on this topic.

To conclude, it can be seen that the major UK parties ~~accept~~ accept some features of the Thatcherite legacy, although more recently are making efforts to distance themselves from her policies and ideas.



Responses to Q3 generally indicated a clear understanding of Thatcherism as a description of new right policies associated with the Conservative PM during the 1990's. Most candidates were able to describe a selection of specific policies, by reference to exemplars - most commonly privatisation of state owned industries, anti-unionism, and low taxation. Such candidates were also aware of the political shift which these policies represented and a number were clearly imbued with a strongly critical stance which enlivened their answers but encouraged an overlap with 3c.

A pleasing number of good answers were able to structure their responses in terms of the over-riding philosophy of 'rolling back the state' in both economic and social affairs and illustrate this with a variety of specific policy examples.

Chosen Question Number: **Question 1** ☒

Question 2 ☒

Question 3 ☒

Question 4 ☒

(a) Political parties have many functions. One of these functions is to develop policy. Policies have to be developed by political parties because this is what distinguishes them from other parties. This is particularly important when there is an upcoming election because these policies will be ~~mainly what~~ form the party's manifesto - which is mainly what the party will be judged on. Policies in a manifesto outline what the party hopes to do, if elected.

Another function of political parties is to educate the electorate. This means that the political parties have the responsibility to explain political issues and give a variety of arguments, in order to give the electorate a good understanding of politics. This is important because, as the electorate are voting for their government, they need to understand what each political party stands.

((a) continued) for, for instance. Political parties can do this by campaigning, by having debates in ~~the~~ Parliament and via the media. An educated electorate is best placed to choose its government

(b) ~~restate, state, state, state, state, state~~

Margaret Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister in 1979, as the head of the Conservative Party. Her time in government showed she was a right-wing politician and her beliefs led to the term 'Thatcherism' being coined.

Margaret Thatcher believed in minimum state intervention. This is shown by her belief in the free market and her desire to privatise the big industries in this country.

Her desire to keep taxes low also shows that she felt government interference should be kept to a minimum. During her time in government, income tax was cut. She believed that it was not the government's place to take people's money and redistribute it to other areas.

Thatcher's desire to keep state intervention to a minimum was also shown by her desire to attack welfare. She understood that

the welfare state was there to help those who needed it most and that it was a safety net for the most vulnerable. However, she believed that people should work if they

((b) continued) could, rather than accepting handouts from the state. This led to her attack on the 'dependency culture'. This is what Thatcher wanted to avoid - where people are supported so much by the state, that they become dependent on government handouts. She wanted to encourage people to work for their living.

She also tried to cut back on the NHS, by promoting the use of private healthcare.

Thatcher also followed some traditional principles of the Conservative party. She promoted family life, promoted an authoritarian approach to law and order and was very sceptical of ~~the~~ Britain's involvement in ~~the~~ European ~~the~~ politics, as it detracted from Britain's independence + power.

Her patriotism is also shown by her invasion of the Falklands.

To conclude, Thatcherism is based on Margaret Thatcher's key principles of minimum state intervention.

(c) After the Conservative Government's of Thatcher and Major, the main political parties decided that they should move towards the centre of the political spectrum, to attract the voting power of 'middle England'. This is shown by Tony Blair's idea of New Labour and, more recently, David Cameron's attempt to moderate the Conservative party. This move to the centre now creates debate about whether there are any Thatcherite ideas remaining in UK politics.

One key area of Thatcherism is the idea of minimum state intervention. This was not supported by Labour during their time in government from 1997-2010. This is shown by their target-setting in the NHS. Rather than let the NHS regulate itself, Labour felt it was the government's place to intervene and set targets. This was heavily criticised by David Cameron, who believed in minimum state intervention. This is shown by his 2010 election flagship policy - the introduction of 'free schools'. Free schools are those set up and run by parents/charities, which are free of local government control. Thus, this shows Cameron's desire to limit state intervention.

((c) continued)

Thatcher also, was Euro-sceptic. This is another area where Cameron, and the Right of the Conservative party, retains Thatcherite elements. This is shown by his scepticism of the Human Rights Act - which ~~the~~ brings European law into British law - and his European Bill, which is to be debated this week. This Bill proposes that any further transfer of power to Europe will require a referendum. This shows that the Conservatives are not willing to make it easy for Europe to introduce any further legislation - However, Labour and the Liberal Democrats support Europe. Labour introduced the HRA in 1998 and the Lib Dems have said that they would join the Euro, if it was financially practical.

Another area of Thatcherite policy is the desire to limit welfare. This is not broadly supported by any of the main parties. The Conservatives do agree that people should have to do more to earn their benefits, but Cameron is a huge supporter of the NHS - so much so, that it is ringfenced from economic cuts, during the recession. Labour also ^{pledged to} ringfence the NHS at the 2010 election, as well as putting recording levels

((c) continued) of funding into it during their time in office. The Lib Dems are also supporters of welfare. This is shown by the coalition agreement, where they ~~also~~ negotiated so that Nick Clegg's 'pupil premium' would be supported. This is a scheme that sees the poorest children supported by more education funding.

Thatcherite policy on law and order has seen some agreement. Labour promised to be "tough on crime" and the Conservatives have to. The Lib Dems also pledged to increase police numbers in their 2010 manifesto. However, the main parties support the idea that there are also social causes of crime. Labour's introduction of ASBOs has shown that they believe there are other ways of tackling crime than Thatcher's authoritarian approach.

Conservative support for the family follows Thatcherite and traditional Conservative ideas. However, all three parties support the idea that the environment is an important area of policy - shown by 2010 manifestos - which does not fit with Thatcherite ideas. Also, the main parties pledged to raise taxes in their 2010 manifestos, going against Thatcher's idea of low taxes - but this was

((c) continued) fuelled by the recession.
To conclude, although some Thatcherite elements remain, no Party can be considered to be fully Thatcherite. Of course, the Conservatives have most elements remaining whilst Labour and the Lib Dems have a couple of substitutes. Therefore, Thatcherite ideas no longer have much of a place in UK politics, due to the move towards the centre from the main parties.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

Here the maximum mark for A continues on with the B section. Little more could be anticipated or delivered in the time allowed.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

This candidate in A & B has combined accurate political knowledge with salient examples and illustration. As a full response it is a good illustration of a level 3 answer throughout.

(c) To what extent do the UK's major parties accept Thatcherite ideas and policies?

Despite Thatcher's fall from power in the late 1980's, it is argued that her policies still remain in the UK's major parties. The ~~leader of today~~ current Prime Minister, David Cameron has referred to himself as a Thatcherite and in entering a coalition government with the Conservative party, the Liberal Democrats must now advocate similar policies. However, the Labour Party still remains a predominant force in British Politics and ^{although} their traditional policies oppose those of Thatcher, it is arguable that with New Labour and the emergence of Third Way Socialism, the Labour Party are too merging Thatcherite policies and ideas.

Thatcherism incorporates Neo-Liberalism with Conservatism therefore meaning a link should be established between Liberal Democrats' policies and Thatcherism. Although their belief in a minimal state ~~and~~ ~~has~~ remain the same, many Liberal policies disregard Thatcher's beliefs. In the build up to the 2010 election, the Liberal Democrats stated their wish to lessen or remove university fees, contrasting to the Conservative wish to increase them. This view

((c) continued) is regarded more so with the collective principle with the Labour Party and Socialism rather than Thatcherism suggesting a drift between Thatcherism and the Liberal Democrat Party.

Conservative's ~~are~~ arguably share the closest links to Thatcherism. David Cameron's proposed and actioned rise in tuition fees reflects Thatcherite belief, as does wish to remain distanced from Europe, a wish held by many Eurosceptics within the party. The close relationship held between the UK and USA also reflects the attitudes between Thatcher and Regan. With regards to economic policy, the spending cuts put in place reflect Thatcherite belief and the reaction from the public remain the same; such as that of the Poll tax riots. However, the Conservative party also disagree with Thatcher ~~on~~ over issues such as the state owned businesses within ^{the UK} England as so far little opposition has been made to institutions such as the NHS.

The Labour party traditionally should hold no similarities to Thatcherism. However, ^{the} modern day Labour Party has a much more Liberal stance on issues such as the redistribution of wealth and Equality of outcome. They now advocate a hand up rather than a hand out and agree with a greater

((c) continued) range than expected of Thatcher's economic policies.

All three major parties in the UK now incorporate many of the Thatcherite ideas put in place by Thatcher. They all advocate the lessened nanny state of the post-war consensus governments as an example. However, all three still remain separate parties and all differ from Thatcher in different ways whether it be on social or economic policies.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

This is a mid range response, note that the A02 is slightly better than the A01. There is a lack of detail which restricts this overall response into level 2

Question 4

Q4 was a popular question. Candidates were mainly strong on A and B, although weaker on analysis for B. Some candidates would focus on the opposing arguments for B, meaning they didn't have quite enough points and reach their full potential. C was generally answered well with clear understanding of referendums but they were stronger on the problems with them rather than how they could improve democracy.

Most candidates performed well on this question, many scoring 4 marks and more. Most candidates scored marks for identifying Parties and Pressure Groups as further means of participating and almost all could develop their responses to include the work that could be undertaken for parties and/or the type of activity possible by joining a pressure group such as protests and campaigning. A good number could develop such points and use illustrations thereby achieving a maximum 5 marks. Other, less popular responses included links to constituency MP's, citizens juries and marches and protests not linked to pressure groups.

Chosen Question Number: Question 1 ☒

Question 2 ☒

Question 3 ☒

Question 4 ☒

(a) Becoming a member of a political party or pressure group is a way in which to participate in politics. Membership of political parties was around 2 million in the 1980's, however recently in 2008 ~~it~~ it was found there has been a decrease to just 600,000. On the other hand pressure group membership is rising and ^{thus} a rise in popularity for single issue politics.

Participation in politics also includes participation in a citizens jury or even participating in an 'e-petition', this was used in Britain recently on the issue of ^{the} road pricing tax where over 1 million people signed the petition.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is a typical example developing two avenues of participation.

Q4(a)

(a) Apart from voting in elections and referendums the public can participate in various forms of politics. For example people can join political parties, this way they can learn more about the party agenda and have some effect on the decisions made. Secondly citizens can join or fund pressure groups who represent more specific issues than political parties and try to influence the government to put through legislation that will be in favour of their wishes. Father4Justice, trade unions and the countryside alliance are all examples of pressure groups.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

This response is more complete; the exemplification is clearer.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

As continually noted, to hit full marks ensure that wherever possible the response provides examples to show depth of knowledge and understanding.

Question 4, unsurprisingly, attracted some heartfelt responses which moved encouragingly to engage candidates (as they were the audience responding in the main). However, less able candidates were beguiled by their ability to speak from personal experience and to concentrate too heavily on a narrow fairness argument, dominated frequently by the tuition fees issue.

It was encouraging to learn, however, of the universal belief in the power of 16-18 year olds to rescue political participation from its downward spiral! The question received a satisfactory level of response but tended to not often reach level 3. Many candidates included increased participation, (although there is not necessarily a link between increased turnout if the voting age is reduced the numbers may go up but the % who turnout will not automatically follow) parties responding with issues to attract young people including tuition fees, the range of other 'adult' responsibilities that are open to 16 year olds and better education as a result of compulsory citizenship classes in schools. A01 tended to be stronger than A02 on this question.

(b) Arguments in favour of lowering the voting age include issues such as an irrational cut off age, as there are no limitations for uneducated or apathetic adults and if the age is a reflection of educational development, this argument is flawed as it does not take into account that educational standards have increased. According to HESA (higher education statistics agency) over the past 6 years, the amount of people under 18's going to university has increased by 50%. Under 18's are therefore clearly educated and deserve the opportunity to express their views in politics.

Also, the impact of lowering the voting age may increase civic engagement for young people with

an increase in more attention and fresher thinking brought to issues concerning young people such as drugs, education or indeed university education. Young people have the

((b) continued) lowest turnout, according to the electoral commission in 2001 the turnout for 18-24 year olds was 39% dropping to 37% in 2005 and increasing the lowering the voting age may increase turnout for young people, emphasising that voting is a civic duty, as only 56% of 18-24 year olds recognise this compared to 92% of 65+ year age group.

There is also the issue of responsibilities with out rights, young people at 16 can get married, join the army and give consent to medical operations yet do not have the responsibility of voting.

(c) Referendums have advantages and would benefit democracy in certain ways. As a device of direct democracy, referendums would put power in the hands of the people, ensuring that their opinions and views are properly articulated without reliance on potentially self-serving politicians who are liable to think for themselves and serve their own interests.

Referendums therefore make politics meaningful to citizens and as provide a method for exerting control over government as which is an important factor in our representative democracy.

Referendums also ensure a responsive government (gov.) for maintaining responsiveness in between electoral terms and ensuring that gov. engage with public interest and opinion on a regular basis, making sure

((c) continued) gov. cannot ignore the people

especially minority interests. Another benefit of referendums in improving democracy is its focus on minority interests (such as the issue of devolution in 1997) which is of electoral reform as there is an upcoming referendum on the introduction of AV) which is hard to achieve in a general/broad based issue focus election, and even harder when both ~~part~~ main parties agree on the issue.

Referendums have educational advantages, focusing the debate on a single issue of policy so the publicity campaign and media present arguments for the issue at stake giving the people ~~increased opportunity~~ opportunity to learn about certain issues, one such example is the debates concerning our current electoral system in comparison to proportional or majoritarian systems in light of the referendum in May this year.

((c) continued) * The referendums concerning devolution in 1997 and the good

Friday Agreement 1998 would also have given the electorate increased knowledge on such issues.

However, there are disadvantages of referendums that threaten ~~to~~ our democracy, such as their ~~inapprop~~ ability to only give an insight into public opinion at one point in time ignoring the fact it is likely to change, making referendums inappropriate for decisions with long term far reaching implications.

Referendums also weaken parliament, as they do not strengthen our representative democracy but merely supplement it as they undermine the basic democratic principle of parliamentary sovereignty, ~~means~~ and resulting in issues being decided upon without debate and discussion in the House of Commons between politicians who are elected to do so.

((c) continued) ¶ As a device of direct democracy referendums also pose the problem of decisions being made

too by an ill informed electorate.
 Our politicians have superior knowledge and expertise, 4/10 in 2010 MPs went to university and 35% are ex-~~or~~ former private school pupils compared to only 2% of the population proving politicians are elite and decisions should be left to them so they can use their superior knowledge and govern in the public's ~~not~~ best interests.

Referendums threaten democracy in the sense that they increase the power of government, as there is suspicion that gov. only call referendums when they feel they know the outcome for example ~~labour~~ Labour promised a referendum on EU constitutional reform treaty in 2005* (the Lisbon Treaty) which never happened, & neither did their referendum in 1997* on an alternative
 *manifesto

((c) continued) to the Westminster electoral system. Gov. also control the publicity campaign for a referendum where it ~~be~~ held, on what the

issue is and the question (although this has been policed by the Electoral Commission.)

In conclusion ~~the~~ referendums do have advantages in ~~promoting~~ enhancing democracy that outweigh the disadvantages. As an instrument of direct democracy they strengthen ~~or~~ civic engagement providing means of participation and education as well as checking gov. power, which comes at the ~~expense of ill informed decisions~~ ~~and only~~ a small expense* as it is important civic engagement is enhanced in such a way, when turnout is declining, and ~~is~~ from 71% in 1997, 59% 2001 61% 2005 and 65% 2010, and other forms of participation such as referendums are important.

~~not do threat of ill informed decisions~~ (25)
 increasing gov. power and weakening

(Total for Question = 40 marks)



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

Q(b) This is a good example which identifies the points raised above. It reaches level 3 and is support well with AO2 insight.

Q(c) This is a clear example of a level 3 response. It is accurate balanced and logically infers the outcome in the UK of the increased use of referendums.

(b) There are many reasons for government in the United Kingdom ~~should~~ to introduce an lower age for voting. Some say that if ^{stranger do's} one is allowed to have sex, marriage and join the army. They should be allowed to vote. If one is mature enough to do these activities then should be able to decide who has power in Great Britain. Political participation has been declining in recent years. Citizens have lost interest. An advantage of lowering the age would increase it as young voters will be introduced on how to vote and how to get involved more. More memberships will be granted from lower the age as more look to understand on certain party. Lowering the age will increase the turnout levels during election as young voters would look to use their first vote to full effectiveness. Now that politics has been put into citizenship lessons across the country more teenagers understand politics than the generation before them, meaning that have an strong knowledge of the parties and politics. This would decrease the percentage who do not use their vote on election day.


ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

Here the candidate is operating in a lower level than the previous example. The A01 and A02 are not at the same standard.

This was seen by Assistant Examiners as the most popular and best answered part C on the paper. This was a standard question and candidates were, by and large, extremely well prepared for it. Most candidates really addressed the demands of the question, relating their responses to democracy and achieving balance, very few looked at one side of the question only. The majority of the response included a range of factors, both for and against and even more limited candidates were scoring in the mid to high level 2 areas. A significant number of candidates could marshal a considerable number of factors for and against with examples of the EU referendum in 1975, the Devolution referendums in Scotland and Wales in the late 1990s and many were aware of the forthcoming referendum in May 2011 on AV. Arguments against tended to be more varied although concerns about biased presentation and the impact on the principle of representative democracy were most frequently cited. Very few candidates failed to draw their answers together into a conclusion. The majority of candidates showed a sound knowledge of the standard arguments for the use of referendums to improve democracy, particularly those surrounding voter participation and legitimacy of Government decisions. The Iraq war and tuition fees featured heavily as examples of the failure of Government to tap into the wishes of 'the people'

(c) A referendum is a vote by the public on a single issue.

Past examples include membership of EEC and devolution to Scotland and Wales. It is argued that wider use of ~~more~~ referendums will improve democracy in the UK.

Referendums act as a way of getting people involved in politics.

For many there only act of political participation is at election time. Through referendums comes an opportunity for

people to ^{participate} ~~participate~~ in democracy. This point leads into referendums being good in educating the public. Prior to the 1975 membership

of the EEC referendum, many citizens knew little about the real arguments for and against membership. Through referendums and ^{the} subsequent

media coverage of it, citizens were enabled to educate themselves on an issue they may ordinarily not have. A more politically educated

Britain can only ~~then~~ ^{therefore} ensure a pluralist democracy.

Referendums in their nature are highly democratic. They are a form of direct democracy and can judge a public's opinion accurately. This public opinion can then give the government

consent to carry out or not carry out an action. In 2004, the people of Northern Ireland were asked if they wish to have their own assembly. The result was an NO, therefore not giving the government consent and leading to no assembly.

((c) continued)

The use of referendums act as a way of covering topics that may not have been covered at an election. For example in the 1992 election, all three major parties supported the membership of the EU. Thus giving the electorate any real choice on the matter. In 1997, this led to the referendum party standing at elections and gaining around 800,000 votes.

Finally a referendum can be used and will improve democracy on matters that are too 'big' for parliament. These matters could be on the Constitution or more recently devolution. Politicians decided that in 1997 Scotland and Wales should be able to decide for themselves if they wished to have their own assembly. This was later followed by Northern Ireland in 1998.

On the other hand some argue that wider use of referendums will actually diminish democracy in the U.K, for the following reasons.

Parliamentary Sovereignty is undermined by referendums. Through representative democracy the parliament is the supreme power. This means that they should decide on issues of the country and effectively that the government should govern.

Governments have been said to use them cynically.

((c) continued) ~~Using them~~ when they know they are going to win. ~~It is frequently used for~~ ^{meaning that the} use of them is used for the good of a particular party and not the country as a whole.

Some issues are too complex for the citizens. People have to do research into the subject in order to give an informed decision. If they can't then democracy is brought into question, as politicians themselves have the time and commitment to do the job more effectively.

Finally, resources can affect a result. In 1975 the 'yes' campaign had more time and money to carry out their campaign thus giving a more one-sided view in the press and media. ~~leading to~~

Overall I believe that the use of referendums improves democracy. It leads to a citizen movement and education which can only be good for democracy. However, the overuse of them can lead to issues with the legitimacy of government and apathy of the public.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is typical of a mid range level 2 response. There is balance but there is lacking a level of analysis and knowledge which is the hallmark of a level 3 response.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Although in terms of content and analysis there is scope to improve what is refreshing here in the response is the structure and layout. We have paragraphs and lines of argument encapsulated and presented for the examiner.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx> A generally well addressed question with certain caveats. Weaker answers dwelt heavily on the general one-party government outcome vs. the 2010 election result but many stronger candidates were willing to challenge the assumption that coalition government is always 'weak'. A few also considered that single-party government may not be 'strong'. The pitfall was an exclusive focus on the 'general pros and cons of First Past the Post'.

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