

Examiners' Report January 2012

GCE Government and Politics 6GP03 3C

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January 2012

Publications Code UA030551

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Introduction

It is pleasing to report that overall achievement in 3C was markedly up on the previous January sitting, and the paper gave nearly all candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The spread of answers across the different questions is always revealing and, as usual, the popularity of a question was not always a guide to the success with which it was tackled. The questions on minor parties and the invisible primary were the most popular short answer questions, followed by the question on pressure groups and the question on caucuses. The Black Nationalism question was only answered by a select few although, given that Black Nationalism is a key concept in the specification as it was in the previous one, its appearance should not have come as a surprise. The race question continued to be the most answered long answer question, but it was quite closely challenged in popularity by party ideology, with pressure groups relegated to third place for once. As usual, the party question produced the best long answers, some of which were really outstanding, and as a question choice the parties topic was almost certainly to the advantage of most candidates who chose it.

The impressive level of contemporary detail in many of the parties answers, and indeed several others, is obviously testimony to the efforts of candidates and also their teachers' in keeping on top of the daily developments in US politics, and presenting relevant material to their students in an accessible and stimulating form. Politics teachers are perhaps uniquely burdened among their colleagues in this need for constant up-dating but, of course, it is also what makes the subject so fascinating. Where candidates, for whatever reason, did not have access to this sort of detail and, for example, could only cite the Blue Dogs and the apparently defunct Democratic Leadership Council as an example of ideological divisions among the Democrats, the quality of their answer inevitably suffered.

Aside from the need for contemporary detail, examiners highlighted three useful lessons for candidates to be drawn from this series. Firstly, the importance of *answering the question* is probably the most hackneyed exam advice, but it was striking in a number of answers how candidates were determined to answer their own question and not the one in front of them. If the terms of the question barely appear in the answer, it is a fairly strong sign to an examiner that it is being ignored. Secondly, a significant number of candidates persist with long introductions to their short answers which add very little that is rewardable. Finally, most candidates are now aware that it is not necessary to refer to conservative and liberal viewpoints to score synoptic marks, and where candidates did invoke them – for example, in equating conservatism with elitism and liberalism with pluralism in the pressure groups question – it rarely served to advance or clarify their argument.

The 'Threshold Guidance' examiners receive has been added to the end of the report on each question; this defines the characteristics of typical bottom Level 2 and bottom Level 3 answers.

It is worth pointing out to any centres which have not so far found them that further notes of guidance on topic C were issued last summer, and they can be found via the 'GCE from 2008' politics page on the Edexcel website under 'Teacher Support Materials'.

Question 1

As was the case last January, third parties continue to be a popular topic. Most candidates had a sound grasp of the subject matter and could discuss the effect third party candidates – mainly Wallace, Perot and Nader – had had on the elections they took part in, and the extent to which they had influenced the policies of the major party candidates, although there was often a degree of confusion over exactly who had stood in which year, and for what. Weaker answers made the reasons for third-parties' lack of impact their focus, often touching on impact itself only tangentially, and a large number failed to provide any detailed evidence of the dominance of the Democrats and Republicans, which they seemed to take as a given. Relevant topical references always raise the quality of an answer, and a number of candidates compared the impact of Ron Paul as a Republican primary candidate in 2012 with his impact as a Libertarian presidential candidate in 1988. Some generally stronger answers referred to minor party success at state level, such as the tenure of Jesse Ventura as Reform Party Governor of Minnesota.

Threshold guidance

To attain level 2, candidates typically need two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation.

To attain level 3, candidates need a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points), a sense of competence and control in their handling of the material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points, some degree of balance and a logical structure.

Though the ~~the~~ US political system is often looked at, and assumed to be, a 'two-party system' it would be incorrect to ignore the presence of 'minor' or 'third parties' in the US political system too, especially considering 29% of America's registered voters declared them selves as 'independent voters' in 2004. The impact of these minor parties however, is often the factor that leads to their position being overlooked. Although we can assess their impact by looking at the state/local achievements - separately to the National impacts.

~~At~~ At a state and/or local level the influence and impact of minor

parties can be seen more prominent
ly. Local and State elections often
favour these minor parties due to
their cheaper cost of advertising
and organisation for example - therefore
this leaves room for money to be
spread across a number of varying
areas including travel and staff with
helpful expertise. Though minor parties
are often prevented from having ~~an~~
an impact on US politics - for
example by the Restrictive Ballot
Access laws - where in Arizona alone
a minor/third party needs to achieve
20,000^{per} signatures ~~in order just to be~~
~~place~~ from registered voters, just in
order to be placed onto the ballot. -
Which the Green Party did in fact do
in 2004.

However, it would be incorrect to
assume that they have had little
impact on US politics even at a
national level. ~~Minor~~ Minor parties
often choose to run ~~for~~ ~~at~~
at a national level - these including
~~co-optation~~ just to achieve the
spoiler effect for another candidates
party (often a Democrat or a Republican).
~~The~~ The spoiler effect has most famously

~~the~~ the 'spoiler effect' has most famously come to light in 1992 and Perot's running for presidency. However ~~the~~ the minor parties often only choose to run in order to influence a specific parties policy (as minor/third parties often only have one policy 'Green' party) - and US politics is in fact effected by these minor parties when co-optation occurs and one of the two larger parties (either Republican or Democrat) will adopt the minor party's policy/ideology in order to stop their race being affected by the spoiler effects.

Therefore minor party impact is most prominent and undeniable at both local & national levels by using a number of different techniques for a different impact & outcome.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer is a typical mid-Level 2 answer. It makes three points, regarding ballot access laws, the 'spoiler effect' and co-optation; the last two are really the heart of the answer but are not developed in detail or evaluated. It is worth 8 marks.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Introductions - it is never necessary to introduce a short answer; time is too short and you need to get straight in with your first point. The introductory paragraph on the first side of this answer is essentially unrewardable.

Statistics - unless they have a precise attribution, statistics in an exam answer always look made up; the claim here regarding '29% of registered voters', aside from apparently being eight years out of date, is unconvincing and adds nothing to the answer.

Question 2

Candidates were generally able to define the 'invisible primary' but, given that the 2011 Republican version had been playing out during their A2 studies, it was surprising how many candidates based their answers on 2007 (or indeed 1999 and the ever ubiquitous Elizabeth Dole). The demise of Tim Pawlenty and Herman Cain, the role of the debates in raising Newt Gingrich and sinking Rick Perry, and the sudden emergence of Rick Santorum in the invisible primary were all cited relevantly by stronger answers as evidence either for the significance of the invisible primary, or lack of it. Any question which uses the phrase 'how important' requires candidates to evaluate the points they are making, and certainly to move into Level Three candidates needed to show how some elements of the invisible primary are more important than others.

Threshold guidance

To attain level 2, candidates typically need a simple and partially accurate definition, and two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation.

To attain level 3, candidates need a full and mostly accurate definition, and a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points), a sense of competence and control in handling of material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points, some degree of balance and a logical structure.

The invisible primary is the period of time after the last presidential election leading up to the current one. Presidential elections happen every 4 years.

During the invisible primary candidates declare an intention to run for a major party candidate.

It is called an invisible primary as there is usually nothing to see, however this is ~~also~~ not always true.

Candidates will have to campaign for name and face recognition and build up a war chest which is vital ~~it the candidate~~ for the candidate to have it they wish to have a chance with winning the presidency.

Candidates will gain recognition by articles in newspapers such as the 'Washington Post' or political TV programmes such as 'face the nation'.

It is essential to make a fair amount of money in primaries (build up a war chest) in other words. In the ~~broth~~ invisible primary of 1999, Elizabeth Dole.

pulled out of the Presidency race, as she felt she could not make enough money 'money has become the message' she claimed.

Invisible primaries also weed out those candidates who are not up to becoming a major party leader, those who do not ~~require~~ possess presidential qualities such as being telegenic, organisation skills and oratorical skills.

During the invisible primaries many ~~parties~~ parties have gatherings in each party, to decide on the shortest of candidates to go on to ballot. The republicans have the Iowa straw poll and the Democrats have the Jefferson-Jackson day dinner, here candidates will make speeches to try and persuade other members of the party that they will be a viable candidate.

Opinion polls take place during invisible primaries, which ~~of~~ gives insight to how the US citizens feel about each candidate, there is often a ~~for~~ correlation between who was in the lead ~~of~~ on opinion polls at the end of the invisible primary and who is chosen as party leader. However in 2008 this was not the case as Hillary Clinton was ahead of Obama by 15%, Obama went on to become party leader.

In conclusion invisible primaries are ~~are~~ much like a popularity ~~test~~ contest. Candidates This is to find whose candidates will campaign to

get face and name recognition, and ~~real~~ build
up a war chest to be taken seriously
as a Presidential Candidate



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The question explicitly asks for a definition, and this answer provides a generally accurate one. It goes on to make a number of rewardable points, and uses an example from 2007-8 to point out that the 'winner' of the invisible primary does not always end up as the nominee. Aside from the reference to Elizabeth Dole, however, this is the only evidence used, when there are other points, for example about candidates being 'weeded out', which could easily have been illustrated, and strengthened, from 2011. It is worth 9 marks.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Try to make your evidence as up to date as possible - sometimes an older example will be the only one available, but plenty of candidate have dropped out at the invisible primary stage since 1999, the year of the case cited here.

Question 3

The Iowa caucuses took place three weeks before the date of the examination, and it was surprising that more candidates did not have a detailed knowledge of the workings of caucuses and their benefits and drawbacks. Most candidates knew there was an element of participation involved, but a number believed they involved the candidates addressing a meeting and being questioned by the participants, and some discussed the role of Iowa as 'first in nation'. Candidates who followed the news were aware that Rick Santorum had been declared the winner of the Iowa caucuses a few days after Mitt Romney had, and were able to use this to make a point about the shortcomings of events largely run by unpaid volunteers.

Threshold guidance

To attain level 2, candidates typically need two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation and show some understanding of what caucuses are.

To attain level 3, candidates need a fairly precise understanding of how caucuses work, a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points), a sense of competence and control in handling of material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points, some degree of balance and a logical structure.

Caucuses are part of the presidential and congressional nomination process and they are used in some more rural states in place of a primary. Caucuses are a selection of small meetings where ordinary voters gather to discuss and choose delegates to go to the NPL and register support for their chosen presidential candidate. The first caucus is in Iowa, which was held on January 4th this year, and it was eventually won by Rick Santorum.

Caucuses are an appropriate means of selecting candidates in a number of ways. Firstly, they provide another means of political participation by allowing ordinary citizens to choose the candidate, thereby removing party bosses power and ensuring that any chosen candidate has significant support from the party's core voters. For example, whoever wins the Republican Primaries, ^{+caucuses} Romney or Gingrich, they should be able to claim support from these core voters. Caucuses are also beneficial as they encourage political discussion and debate about issues rather than just a tick on a ballot, thereby enhancing political awareness and education but also a sense of party community as meetings are held all over, evident in Iowa where meetings

were held in churches and gas stations.

However, caucuses can also be seen to be inherently flawed as a means of selecting a candidate. Firstly, they suffer from extremely low turnout, demonstrated in Iowa 2012 when only 19.8% of Republicans voted and only 5.4% of the entire state's electorate. This raises questions of the legitimacy of the outcome and the system as ~~they~~ with so few voters turning out, issues about the 'tyranny of the majority' are evident. Caucus voters also tend to be unrepresentative of the electorate in a state as only the more extreme party enthusiasts turn out, such as the Republican Christian Right in Iowa, ~~often~~ often producing outcomes which support more extreme candidates like Santorum. Like Primaries, caucuses can also weaken the party before an election, ~~as~~ as they are extremely divisive demonstrated this year by attack ads between Gingrich and Romney. These 'war wounds' can provide hard to mend before the General election and make the party look divided and weak.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is a strong answer. Unless it is actually asked for, it is never a requirement to define the terms of a question, and sometimes the same information can be more economically conveyed in the course of the answer, but the first paragraph establishes that the candidate knows exactly what they are writing about. The points on both sides of the question are lucidly advanced, and three separate bits of evidence are relevantly cited in the second half. It would arguably be improved by a final paragraph indicating which is the stronger side of the argument, but this is not essential in a short answer. It is worth 14 marks.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Structure - in any short answer question which asks 'how' or 'to what extent', the simplest and probably best approach is to divide your answer into two halves, as this candidate does here.

Question 4

This question explicitly asked about 'the most powerful US pressure groups', which really required candidates to show knowledge of the groups which might plausibly be argued to be in this category. There are a number of groups beyond the three in the mark scheme to whom the term might apply, but the case for MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving, a perennial favourite of candidates, is not persuasive. Some candidates made pressure group methods the focus of the answer and, while this was certainly rewardable, it had to be linked to the success of powerful groups to score highly; the methods of the 'Occupy' movement, for example, could consequently only receive minimal reward.

Threshold guidance

To attain level 2, candidates typically need two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation which need not name individual groups.

To attain level 3, candidates need a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points) based securely on a knowledge of specific groups, a sense of competence and control in handling of material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points and a logical structure.

There are a variety of reasons for some pressure groups being more successful than others.

Firstly, having the backing of the Constitution. If a group is based around an idea that is mentioned in the Constitution, it can be very successful if the Supreme Court interprets it favourably. For example the National Rifle Association bases many of its campaigns on the 2nd Amendment which states that citizens have the right to bear arms. It is hard to argue with this, and as a result the NRA are very successful despite surveys showing that a majority of Americans favour some form of gun control.

The second factor that can explain success is wealth. Money is required to buy adverts, lobbyists, lawyers and other things associated with successful groups. This is particularly true of adverts on TV. Much of the opposition to Clinton's healthcare reform

came from large insurance company groups and they were able to use their huge wealth to make and air TV advert campaigns, such as the 'Harry and Louise' advert, against the bill. The bill eventually failed, showing how money can be a factor that helps groups to be successful.

The final factor is probably the most important however. A price cannot be put on having large amounts of popular support whether it be local and concentrated or widespread nationally. Groups such as the American Association of Retired Persons or Mothers against drink driving are so successful because a lot of people are members or supporters of their causes, so they hold a lot of voting power which can influence the decisions of those in power. A Fortune Magazine study questioned Congressmen and found that to them, popular support was more important than wealth in a pressure group.

The factors that explain the influence of successful pressure groups in the US are therefore constitutional backing, money and popular support.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is a very typical answer. It makes three separate and rewardable points on pressure group methods, relating to the constitution, wealth and popular support. The second is most convincing, in that it gives an example of a pressure group actually exercising power. It would have been stronger still had it attempted to evaluate it, by considering, for example, to what extent factors other than the 'Harry and Louise' ad contributed to the demise of the Clinton health reforms. It is worth 9 marks.

Question 5

This was not a popular question, but it was often quite well answered. Most candidates showed a detailed knowledge of the aims of Black Nationalism and its influence in the 1960s, but then struggled to find more current names and events, which was obviously a guide to the answer and which stronger answers were able to point out. A minority thought Black Nationalism was synonymous with the civil rights movement which, if nothing else, illustrates the dangers to centres of leaving some parts of the specification uncovered: if candidates at least knew enough about Black Nationalism to avoid writing about it, they may have been able to make a more judicious choice of question.

Threshold guidance

To attain level 2, candidates typically need a simple and partially accurate definition, and two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation.

To attain level 3, candidates need a full and mostly accurate definition, and a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points), a sense of competence and control in handling of material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points, some degree of balance and a logical structure.

Black nationalism is not easy to define. It is most commonly associated with the pro-segregationist leader of the early 1960s, Malcolm X (and other leaders before him such as Marcus Garvey). X himself described black nationalism as a philosophy. A philosophy which favours the rights of African Americans to demand their rights which had been refused them and to use the violence violent and direct methods of achieving them if necessary.

Black nationalism was never a prominent philosophy during the civil rights era, in comparison to the peaceful protest ideas of M.L.King, and it has never resonated with since then with the African American population at large. Instead today ideas of unity, cooperation and integration between races is favoured by those in positions of authority rather than the ideas of division, antagonism and segregation espoused by Black Nationalism.

The best Exemplification to prove that black nationalism ~~has~~ is not influential today is by the policy of affirmative action (Affirmative action being positive discrimination, initially ~~is~~ for African Americans

but none other groups, ~~what gives~~ in the selection of university and work places.) ~~Affirmative~~ The lack of influence of black nationalism is evident by the proactive position of both parties (even if the GOP oppose affirmative action) in active integration. This has been shown in Supreme Court cases: Brown Vs Board of Education, Sumner Vs. Dubeau and Charlotte Vs. Mecklenburg which have ~~not~~ promoted the idea of integration, ~~but~~ trying to stop 'de facto' segregation and promoting individual based affirmative action.

The whole purpose of black nationalism is about segregation and a building of black communities in a monocultural fashion. The promotion of multiracialism, multiculturalism and affirmative action in the pursuit of compensation (for past crimes); correction (releasing the potential and prospects of less fortunate people); and diversity ~~within~~ within schooling and business is all evidence that, despite a few, the majority of people ~~have~~ (Federal and state Govt.) have rejected X's black nationalism and have instead favoured the peaceful protest approach espoused by King, the SCLC and the NAACP. Therefore, Black Nationalism never had great influence, and today it is even weaker - evident by Govt. policy.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

There is an intelligence and confidence about this answer which is persuasive. It shows a clear understanding of what Black Nationalism is, and makes a convincing case for its past and present lack of influence. To be critical, it is a little short on specifics and, although the attitudes of the main political parties and the Supreme Court are undoubtedly relevant, evidence of the views of the black population would strengthen its argument. It is worth 11 marks.

Question 6

The extent to which the two main parties have become ideologically coherent – and consequently distinct – is obviously a core question of this part of the specification, and many candidates showed a confident grasp of the issues and the recent history of both parties. Considering the relatively brief period which most of them will have had to study for this paper, the insight and command of detail the best answers showed was very impressive. Some answers were based to a large part on congressional voting patterns and, although this was obviously rewardable, it is worth pointing out that ideology may only be one factor in the polarisation which has taken place in Congress in the last few years. Less rewardably, a number included a section on the different groups of voters who support the two major parties, and this was at best indirectly relevant to the question.

Threshold guidance

To attain level 2, candidates typically need a couple of undeveloped points on each side of the argument, or one more developed point, with some simple explanation; points need only be partially accurate; the argument may not be consistently clear, and some points made may not be relevant to the question.

To attain level 3, candidates typically need at least three reasonably developed points on both sides of argument; the answer conveys a sense of competence and control in both explanations and direction of argument; expression is mostly precise, and relevant contemporary examples are fairly consistently used to develop and qualify points; the argument keeps the question firmly in focus and has a convincing conclusion.

- Pro
- recent partnership
 - similar
 - majority
 - solid support

- Not Pro
- Bush + Obama are
 - moderate + conservative parties
 - coalition
 - split votes

The two major parties in the US are the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Historically, the two parties have covered huge ideological ranges, as well as showing increasing distance between ideologies. Some theorists describe the two parties as the 'same two bottles, with different labels.' However, it seems that because of the huge range of ideologies within party, they are not as distinct as some make out.

Firstly, some may argue that they are ideologically distinct because there has been increasing polarisation, especially in recent years in Congress. In 2010, no

Republicans voted for 'Obamacare' as it was passed through Congress and only three House of Representatives ~~to~~ Republicans voted for the 2010 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: another key Act of Obama's. This shows ideological difference because all Republicans were against Obama ^(Democrat) providing a National Healthcare System; and many were against ~~the~~ a smaller deposit reduction package, as

shown by the deadlock in Congress in 2011 almost leading to Government Shutdown over the passing of the budget, resulting in heated exchanges between House Speaker Boehner and Democrat Obama. On the other hand, this partnership has been counteracted by compromise from President Obama, and less recently G. Bush. Regarding ~~to~~ the pragmatically to the will of the people shows a lack of ideological distinctiveness. This year Obama announced plans to cut Government, by merging six departments into one, for example. This shows that Democrat Party are willing to have policies on whole ideological lines. Similarly, Bush, noted as a "compassionate conservative" straddled both traditional party lines by introducing both welfare in the form of "No Child Left Behind" education reform and an expansion of foreign policy (more interventionist). These two most recent presidencies show that the two parties are not ideologically distinct.

However, some may further argue that the recent leadership of both parties has led to more ideological distinction. The Democratic leadership is

Congress of Pelosi and Harry Reid was seen to be ^(see) distinctively traditional Democrat, up until 2010. There were distinct and obvious differences between this and the Tea Party, emerging in the Republican party, who dominated the headlines in the 2010 mid-terms. The Tea Party believe in very conservative views on both welfare and budget, wanting to reduce it significantly! However,

Still, in US politics, it can be dangerous to focus on ^{single} the dynamics of Congress. The US political system is based on decentralised government and strong localism and regions are very powerful areas. Representatives in Congress ~~are not~~ cannot be considered to party line, because they are left accountable to their voters. The US is such a huge country, that this will undoubtedly mean creating party lines lines. For example, the North-East is a traditionally liberal area, ~~not~~ with all 11 states voting for Obama in 2008. In order to win elections in this area, the Republican and Democrat parties must both have liberal agendas, to have any hope of this. For example, Senator Marco Rubio is a more moderate conservative because his states demands so, shows no ideological ^{distinction} ~~for~~

This leads onto another factor that suggests parties are not ideologically distinct. There will always be parties within both parties. Within the Democrats the faction that most obviously is ideologically more conservative and therefore closer to Republicans, is the Blue Dog Democrats. The influence of this group is explained by the fact that

they have their own Whip, far from ~~that~~ ^{strong} their ranks dwindled in 2010 Mid Term. They are nonetheless a powerful group. Similarly, moderate Republicans (previously known as Kochyeller Republicans) are a significant faction in the Republican Party, shown by influence in Bush's policy of the lead to Top Fund, as well as how many disagree with this, though, stating that recently these

^{moderate} factions have become increasingly weak, as Senators / Representatives move from one party to the other due to ideological lines. One reason for this is the break up of the Solid South. Democrats previously used to dominate the area, but now Republicans have a foothold, as shown by 7 of the 11 southern states voting Bush / Quayle in 1992 despite a strong Clinton candidacy. This has led to many Democrats who previously held office in the South moving to their ideological roots in the Conservative / more conservative Republican Party of Phil Gramm in 2003 was a ^{conservative} moderate Democrats who moved to Republican. The movement was both ways too, as Republican Jay Byrd in the North East (traditionally liberal) became an Independent, who votes Democrat. This all shows the weakness of parties and blurring of ideological distinction between the parties.

However, ^{some} arguments can be made that the two parties are ~~very~~ in fact quite similar. In Presidential and Congressional elections, there are clear shades of people where the votes of one state vote for both

Republicans and Democrats. For example, in 2008 southern states Virginia voted for Democrat Obama, but also for two Republican senators. This same point is shown in the phenomenon of split ticket voting, whereby in the 1990s, up to 30% of the public voted for one party for one set of ballots and one for another, therefore showing that to the public there is less ideological difference.

In terms of policy, there are arguments that differences are clearly seen, such as in immigration, where Republican local governments such as in Arizona pass strict laws against illegal immigrants such as the 1070 laws in 2011 that meant any person of ~~any~~ foreign-looking must be carrying identification. Democrat however, are more for helping immigrants achieve citizenship, e.g. in 2012 Barack Obama's goal last year. This came to a head in recent years in heated debate over "birthright citizenship" in Congress between the two parties. However, in terms of the voters public less ideological differences is shown by the increase of independent voters. It has been thought to have risen to 40% of the electorate, but was never 50% in the recent New Hampshire primary for Republican Presidential candidate. This shows a decrease in party loyalty, and there is a sign that ideological differences between parties and their government support is decreasing (or becoming more disillusioned). In conclusion, the extent to which the two major parties are ideologically distinct varies over

this. From its bipartisanship in the 1960s to the nationalised campaigns of the 1990s of Clinton with Moore 1996 led by Newt Gingrich, differences between the parties have always become clear on certain issues, especially mainly on leadership and the President's ability to compromise. However, with a country as large as the US, there will always be key important policies within the parties, across the ideological divide. As long as people in

the US remain united and different, there will remain some ideologically ~~contradictory~~ controversy between Republicans and Democrats - the gap widening and closing over time.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer is typical of the stronger answers to this question, in the range of its knowledge and the sense it conveys of a genuine personal engagement with the subject. It could certainly be improved; there are inaccuracies, and some parts of the argument are more convincing than others. The structure zigzags between the two sides of the argument, and the first part of the conclusion relating to the significance of time has not featured in the rest of the essay. Nevertheless, it is a secure Level 3 answer and is worth 34 marks in total.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

An essay is an exercise in advancing a case, and persuading the reader that your argument is stronger than the alternatives. Make it clear throughout your answer what your case is, and don't leave it until the conclusion to reveal it.

Question 7

Pressure group questions rarely seem to bring out the best in candidates, and do not play to the strengths of weaker candidates in particular. Either their examples are mostly UK-based, with even the RSPB and RSPCA being cited as supporting evidence, or they produce a formulaic answer about pluralism and elitism, which conveys minimal sense of engagement with the subject (or sometimes both). Stronger answers were able to draw on a detailed knowledge of US groups, and link it explicitly to the question. Topical and relevant examples are not usually a feature of pressure group answers, but some better ones rewardably discussed the impact of the 'Occupy' movement and the success of the recent protests against SOPA and PIPA.

Threshold guidance

To attain level 2, candidates typically need a couple of undeveloped points on each side of the argument, or one more developed point, with some simple explanation; points need only be partially accurate; the argument may not be consistently clear, and some points made may not be relevant to the question.

To attain level 3, candidates typically need at least three reasonably developed points on both sides of argument; the answer conveys a sense of competence and control in both explanations and direction of argument; expression is mostly precise, and relevant contemporary examples are fairly consistently used to develop and qualify points; the argument keeps the question firmly in focus and has a convincing conclusion.

In the USA, pressure groups are very much a feature of the political landscape, with influence across the spectrum of the political process. Pressure groups make use of executive, legislative and judicial access points and involve much of the American population. Thus, it could be argued that they disperse power by allowing ordinary people to become involved. However, the hierarchical nature of pressure groups, as well as the demand for wealth, means that US political parties concentrate power rather than dispersing it.

There is certainly a case to be made that pressure groups in the USA disperse power. Primarily, they allow for increased

participation in the political process between elections - the average American is a member of three - and mean that the government is made aware of the people's opinions between elections. In addition, there are thousands of

pressure groups in the USA, meaning that every interest can be represented, including minority rights - NAACP and NCLR. This dispersion of political power has led to decisions which have benefitted minorities, such as *Brown v. Board* and *Lawrence v. Texas*, which the Federal government might have ignored. Pressure groups such as the ACLU routinely bring cases which act as a check on the government and prevent civil rights violations, as with current cases over immigration legislation. Moreover, pressure groups allow federalism - the epitome of dispersed power - to flourish by making use of numerous access points ^{such as the Supreme Court and executive} and offering countervailing views, such as those given by abortion groups, which allow all sides to be represented. This is particularly valuable in the absence of ~~any~~ strong third parties, since elections arguably do not provide voters with a meaningful choice and concentrate power with the two main parties. Finally, less wealthy pressure groups with a compelling message can

still be heard, including many groups active on a state level; were the system one which concentrated power, their voices would not be heard. Consequently, it can be argued that US pressure groups serve to disperse power

through their use of different access points and allowing the people to participate.

However, pressure groups generally seem to concentrate power rather than dispersing it. Above all, money is extremely important to their success. Wealthy pressure groups can afford to hire people to collect signatures for petitions, organise effective campaigns - such as those in support of candidates who agree with their values - and even bring in outside help, as with the Mormons who campaigned on Prop 8 in 2008. Moreover, only wealthy pressure groups can hire professional lobbyists who are well-connected by means of the Revolving Doors; the value of connections reinforces the idea that power is concentrated in the hands of the few, even though they claim to represent the people. Moreover, Iron Triangles^{such as those related to agriculture} - although less important in recent years - concentrate power with pressure group leadership whilst excluding the democratically-elected President. This issue

is compounded by the undemocratic nature of pressure group leadership, which further serves to create a hierarchical system (as in the NRA) and exclude ordinary people. In addition, pressure groups concentrate power by

giving disproportionate influence to certain groups; the NRA and AIPAC are numerically small, but have greater resources and thus more influence, and this dominance cannot be broken by other groups. Moreover, pressure groups often seek to hold the interest of the electorate at the expense of the national interest, thus concentrating power with pressure groups rather than allowing interest in all levels of the political process; electoral turnout has decreased ^{to around 60%} as a result. Finally, "checkbox membership" and involvement solely for material gains - such as legal cover from trade unions and cheaper insurance from the AARP - mean that many members arguably take little interest in the pressure group, creating "tyranny of the majority" and concentrating power with those members who really care. * Thus, it is clear that although pressure groups seem to disperse power, they actually concentrate it.

Although pressure groups seem to disperse power by involving the electorate and raising awareness

of issues, their undemocratic nature means that they serve to concentrate political power with PG leadership, as well as lobbyists. This can serve to limit political power dispersed in other areas, such as elections, as people lose

interest and feel that it is easier to get things done by a pressure group. Moreover, the disproportionate influence of pressure groups such as the NRA and AIPAC indicates a stranglehold over the political system which is antithetical to dispersed power.

* as with Prop 8, which passed with only 52% support.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This answer illustrates the point that pressure group answers do not always show candidates in their best light. It is well written, makes a range of points and advances a case logically. Many of the points though are undeveloped and some are just a sentence. The claim, for example, that iron triangles are 'less important than in previous years' is entirely unsupported, as is the point about the disproportionate influence of the NRA and AIPAC. It is a mid-Level 2 answer and is worth 26 marks in total.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Introductions - unlike short answers, an introduction is an important part of an essay. You should briefly explain the nature of the debate the question raises, and which side of it you propose to argue is the stronger. Although it could be sharper, the introduction to this answer does a reasonable job in both these respects.

Question 8

This question was better answered than some race questions have been in the past. It required candidates to explicitly link their knowledge of racial issues to their political significance (which, given this is a politics exam, should not be a surprising requirement) and stronger answers analysed the significance, for example, of racial voting blocs. Answers which discussed measures of black inequality such as graduation rates and home ownership without considering what, if any, their political impact was, could not be highly rewarded. As seems inevitable with any question on race, a number of candidates wanted to discuss the arguments for and against affirmative action, some of which could have been made relevant to the question but which were frequently not made so. Some generally stronger answers discussed the legal action by some states against the Voting Rights Act and the significance of the 'Birther' movement.

Threshold guidance

To attain level 2, candidates typically need a couple of undeveloped points on each side of the argument, or one more developed point, with some simple explanation; points need only be partially accurate; the argument may not be consistently clear, and some points made may not be relevant to the question.

To attain level 3, candidates typically need at least three reasonably developed points on both sides of argument; the answer conveys a sense of competence and control in both explanations and direction of argument; expression is mostly precise, and relevant contemporary examples are fairly consistently used to develop and qualify points; the argument keeps the question firmly in focus and has a convincing conclusion.

Question 6 ☒ Question 7 ☒ Question 8 ☒

The ~~Deep~~ continued existence of racially-focused voting patterns, economic inequality across the races and lack of consensus with regard to how to tackle these problems renders race an important issue in US politics to this day. However, it must be noted that the election of Barack Obama in 2008 and increase in representation of ethnic minorities in government could be utilized to conversely argue that the racial gap is closing and that race no longer defines US politics.

Firstly, the existence of clear racially-driven voting patterns seems to suggest that race still is an important issue in US

politics. For instance, in 2008 95% of African Americans and 67% of Hispanics voted for Obama, whilst 55% of white voters (compared to just 4% of blacks) supported the GOP. Equally, with Rove's famous voting agenda of 2004, Bush was supported by 78% of white evangelical Christians according to CNN national exit polls, whilst in Mississippi in 2008 McCain received 88% of the white

vote and 94% of the evangelical Christian vote. So long as the races vote in such blocs, with the parties thus targeting key voters along racial lines, it is overly evident that US society has far from become a 'melting pot' where 'E Pluribus Unum' prevails, rendering race an enduring issue in US politics.

Additionally, the huge economic gap across the races means that race must play a part in public policy. US census Bureau statistics for 2009 showed 9.9% of non-Hispanic whites living below the poverty line, compared to 24.7% of Hispanics and 27% of African Americans. In 2010, 74% of whites owned their own homes, whilst 46% of Hispanics and 44% of black Americans did. 2010 unemployment statistics were 8.9%, 12% and 16% for the 3 groups respectively. This

continues to deem race an issue in politics as policies such as the 2010 universal health care reforms are inevitably targeted to a greater extent at minority communities. The economic gap also means ^{racial} minority groups are more greatly affected by crime and punishment measures, as crime is ~~so~~^{too} often a part of the cycle of poverty. ^{law} Professor of Ohio University Michelle Alexander estimates

that more African American men are currently in prison/~~the~~^{on} parole or probation than there were slaves in 1870, meaning that more are disenfranchised now than ~~there~~ were in 1870. With statistics such as these, and the prediction that by 2050 America will be a majority-minority country, it is difficult to argue that race is anything other than an important issue in US politics - with Hurricane Katrina (2005) persisting as a stark reminder of the inequality that needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, racial profiling perpetuates this issue. Though this peaked for African Americans in the 1990, under the 'offence' of Driving whilst black in such states as New Jersey and Maryland, today Hispanics are subject to effectively racial profiling under anti-illegal immigration laws.

under anti-illegal immigration laws such as Arizona's SB 1070 (2010) and Alabama's HB 56 (2011), which allow police to demand proof of residency from suspected persons and requires schools to keep records of the immigration status of its students respectively. The case of Arsen Bayaa, who in 2011 was asked to leave an aircraft due to

making other passengers feel uncomfortable also outlines the racial profiling of Arabic Americans post 9/11. This violates the 4th Amendment right to security from unreasonable search and seizure without probable cause, and the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. It also widens the race divide; by alienating racial minorities and reinforcing white stereotypes of blacks as law breakers (still evident today in cases such as the Jena Six in 2008) and the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates in 2009), hispanics as illegal immigrants and Arabs as terrorists. Race is therefore still an issue.

However, some would argue that affirmative action has ended the

problem of racial inequality. Between 1960 and 1996 the percentage of blacks with college degrees increased from 5% to 15%, whilst those with white collar jobs soared from 15% in 1960 to 70% in 2006. Thus, Republicans often argue that race is no longer a barrier to achievement and that equality of opportunity

now truly exists. Although, the fact that the debate surrounding affirmative action is ongoing, and as Justice Roberts suggested in 'Plc vs Seattle school district' (2007) "the way to stop discriminating on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race," the very existence of these programmes demonstrates that race is still an issue. So long as there is no consensus as to the extent of racial discrimination and how it should be tackled, race will remain an issue in US politics.

The most compelling argument as to show that race is not an issue in US politics is the increased representation of ethnic minorities.

Barack Obama ran as a unity, not race, candidate in 2008 and became the first African American president. He gave his Democratic nomination speech 45 years to the day since Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech, suggesting that his proclamation that 'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a

nation where they will be judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character" had finally been realised. In his March 2008 'a more perfect union' speech, Obama also said "despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens, we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in the country. In South Carolina, where the confederate flag still flies, we built a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans. Black justices Clarence Thomas (1991) and Hispanic Sonia Sotomayor (2010), as well as former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice and current secretary for justice

Eric Holder also seem to suggest that race is no longer an issue. *

In conclusion, economic inequality and racial discrimination, as well as the continued lack of consensus with regard to how to address these problems, renders race an enduring issue in US politics. The increased

representation of ethnic minorities in government and the ~~etc~~ presidency of Barack Obama does, however, signal that these issues may soon be overcome - though the ~~the~~ conservative argument that this evidences that they are already is surely undermined by the aforementioned factors to the contrary.

* Additionally, 10% of Bush's appointments to the federal judiciary were hispanic. To use Clinton's words



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

It would be difficult not to be impressed by this answer, and it is a good example of a candidate intelligently adapting what they know to the demands of the question. Every point made is brought back to its political significance, and there is a pleasing fluency in the delivery. Admittedly, it is a little statistics-heavy in places, but at least in most cases there is an attribution. It is worth 36 marks in total.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Structure - as with short answers, simplest is often best, and a two part structure as used here works very effectively. In the first half, explain the arguments for your case, and in the second why the alternative arguments are flawed.

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