

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2013

GCE Government and Politics
Global Political Issues

6GP04 4D

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General Comments

The small number of entries for this unit in January means that comments on the responses are in danger of reflecting trends in particular centres as opposed to general trends that all centres should be aware of. The comments below should be understood in this light.

Question 1

This was the second most popular short response and there was a real mix of responses. Sadly, a number of candidates appeared to ignore the specific wording of the question. More successful candidates discussed hard power and influence although a number argued that nuclear weapons were a requirement of the Security Council. Many candidates discussed ultimate deterrence with reference to Israel, Iran, N Korea and MAD between India and Pakistan. Prestige and status were discussed by a decent number of candidates including the view that nuclear weapons sustain France and the UK as significant powers worthy of global recognition.

Question 2

This was the most popular response for short questions but there were few definitions- Humanitarian intervention is intervention carried out in pursuit of humanitarian rather than strategic objectives, as an attempt to prevent harm to people or to reduce human suffering. Stronger candidates discussed the idea that it breaches International Law and that it has inevitable consequences for the concept of state sovereignty. A few candidates were able to argue that it is based on a western view of human rights which can be seen as a form of cultural imperialism or that double standards may exist where intervention sometimes should but doesn't take place.

Question 3

This was the third most popular response. There was an attempt by most candidates to provide a definition of both terms but often they then failed to get to the heart of the question and to explain why there is a tendency to adopt one rather than the other. Some of the stronger responses explained that 'shallow' strategies are seen as more realistic and that they require a more modest response from states and leaders as they are based on an acceptance of capitalism and belief that environmental issues can be adequately dealt with without significant constraints being applied to the capitalist market. There was a reasonable knowledge of conferences and agreements.

Question 4

This was certainly the least popular of the short questions. This may be because this term hasn't yet appeared in a question. It seemed that most who tackled it did a decent job but some missed that this was clearly a two part question and they struggled as a consequence. Most students had an understanding of the key International Financial Institutions, the IMF and World Bank and the 'orthodox' model of development. Only a few students could provide a wider explanation of the term which encompassed a range of elements from trade liberalization, deregulation, acceptance of foreign direct investment and public spending cuts. The criticisms provided ranged from a discussion of the failure of a 'one size fits all' model to the view that these policies benefit developed rather than developing states and the interests of the Western financial community in particular.

Question 5

This was the joint third most popular of the short questions. Most candidates provided definitions or basic explanations but only a small number of candidates provided a range of justifications. The wider justifications included countering structural inequalities in the world economy and the moral obligation to help less prosperous states. Reciprocal benefits to Global North through the support for longer term trading partners was aired. A widening of discussion to humanitarian assistance in periods of humanitarian crisis and disaster and the growing view that there is a responsibility to intervene in such circumstances.

Question 6

This was the least popular of the 45 mark responses which may be a reflection on the desire to tackle alternatives or a reluctance to tackle a question linked to international courts for the first time. It was the knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of international courts which was the big discriminator here. Numerous candidates seemed prepared for a different question, specifically on human rights, and relating to success/failure in protecting them generally. This was a different and more specific question although some of the weaker responses stumbled into relevance. Weaker responses often had a focus purely on European Courts with a reference to UK cases. Better responses raised the actions of the International Criminal Court and the special tribunals for Yugoslavia, Rwanda etc with examples of cases and prosecutions. Stronger candidates were also well prepared with examples of perceived success and also failures or double standards such as extraordinary rendition, Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib as well as perceived violations in Sudan, Syria, Chechnya etc.

Question 7

This was by far the most popular question with a number of particularly pleasing and sophisticated responses. Unsurprisingly, Samuel Huntington and the 'clash of civilizations' thesis was central to most debate relating to this question and discussion relating to a decline of the West and resurgence of Islam focussed on likelihood of increased tension. Many candidates debated the incompatibility of what they saw as an arrogant West and an intolerant Islam. Globalization was argued to be increasing the likelihood of conflict with a spread of Western values and an inevitable backlash from the Islamic world. Western actions in Iraq and Afghanistan could be seen as acts of aggression and most candidates discussed the consequences of action in these states.

There were a number of potential flashpoints explored by candidates which included human rights, global governance, weapons of mass destruction and the role of the individual in society. Counter arguments focussed on the idea of complex interdependence and areas of areas of cooperation were raised such as promoting economic growth, dealing with global warming, nuclear proliferation etc. The Arab Spring was seen as a possible shift towards a long term democratic peace.

Question 8

This was the second most popular of the longer responses with a varied quality of response. Knowledge tended to be good and a fair number of students had real detail on key conferences such as Kyoto and Copenhagen. The Tragedy of the Commons- Garrett Hardin was raised by stronger candidates who also discussed tensions between developed and developing states and the more general economic and ideological obstacles. One of the central problems that candidates had here was in providing a degree of balance to responses. This had consequences for their synopticity marks. More optimistic candidates made the point that climate change has dominated the global agenda since the early 1990s and there is at least a global acceptance that it is both happening and caused by human beings.

Kyoto and Copenhagen were the focus of most responses and candidates highlighted successes such as - the continuation of the Kyoto process and potential milestones such as the Copenhagen Accord, through which the USA, China and other major developing countries committed themselves to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. A more pessimistic approach was to stress that Copenhagen did not result in a legally binding agreement or any clear commitment to reach one in future. The Copenhagen Accord does not set even non-legal targets for states to cut greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, candidates made the point that the Accord is vague as to how the \$100 billion fund for supporting developing countries in reducing emissions will be achieved.

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