



Examiners' Report

June 2019

GCE Politics 9PL0 01

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Introduction

The summer of 2019 saw the first sitting of the new Politics specification. It was pleasing to see that many centres had prepared their candidates well. Candidate performance on core political ideas was impressive with some really excellent responses.

The political world has certainly been eventful in recent times – and we have seen record numbers taking the Politics A level exam – which is encouraging and positive.

However with all major changes on the educational landscape the demands of the new specification do differ from that of its legacy predecessor, not to a large extent in content, but in form and process. Four major changes – and thus challenges – stand out.

1. UK politics is now examined at A level as opposed to AS level standard. This does increase the expectation and demand.

2. New Assessment Objectives (AOs) – in particular the demands of the new AO3 which carries parity with the two other AOs in terms of mark allocation. This makes it imperative for the candidate to say which side in a contested debate they feel is the stronger and more pertinent and to justify their choice.

3. A more holistic approach to content. This means not only synoptic elements (though there are no marks for synopticity on 9PL01) but a broader and more inclusive approach to questions. This means that questions will cut across and be drawn from differing sections within the specification both on sources and on essays. This reflects the move from a modular based specification to a linear one.

4. A different approach to source questions. The drive will be that the source contains a contested topic – with no set correct or prescribed answer – but both sides have to be developed and a verdict reached on the stronger or favoured perspective.

Reference will be made as the report progresses through each question. Overall we see a good base – but one on which centres will wish to develop and progress.

Question 1 (a)

Source questions – general guidance

- Many answers to both questions simply explained the arguments in the source, with varying degrees of own knowledge added as exemplification.
- Where candidates did try to contrast arguments from the source, quite often they were unrelated arguments, so the trade-off was hard to assess.
- Some candidates barely mentioned the source, but as the question is '*using* the source' and not '*directly referring to* the source' they were not penalised; nonetheless, candidates should be advised to be more explicit in their use of the source.
- The better responses cited the source regularly, making effective use of quotes to guide the direction of the discussion presented.
- Better answers had a clear sense of the direction of travel, they considered their position at the outset and then planned their response.

In general, Q01(a) was less well answered than Q01(b). Almost all candidates were able to find competing viewpoints in the source and could identify what the two paragraphs were about.

At the lower end of the mark scale were candidates who did little more than this and used the source as a comprehension exercise, merely identifying what each side of the debate believed.

A large amount of answers had introductions that simply said that there were two sides to the argument and did not make clear which side they felt had the stronger line of argument.

Many candidates were unable to offer a clear line of argument throughout, instead just summarising both sides of the argument, and suffered accordingly with their AO3 marks.

Better responses offered a line of argument and compared the opposing arguments directly, rather than in separate halves of the essay.

The best answers were able to consider opposing arguments in conjunction with one another before reaching a judgement as to which was the stronger/more valid argument. These responses also made evaluative (as opposed to summary) judgements throughout their essay, offering sustained evaluation throughout, so their concluding paragraph flowed from what had been argued throughout, but this was rare. It was also rare for candidates to evaluate the relative strength of different arguments.

Other weaknesses were seen in responses that got sidetracked into a debate about which factors were more significant to the outcomes of elections, or into debating the importance of a particular factor such as opinion polls or the media, rather than how predictable elections are.

The source was used most effectively when candidates recognised changes over time and tied the evidence in the source directly into the issue of stability and predictability.

There was strong reference to the 2017 election, but less to other potentially relevant general elections. There was also some detailed knowledge of relevant voting statistics which some candidates deployed effectively.

Most students were able to use the arguments contained within the source and there were very few scripts that were one sided.

Weaker answers tended to be too descriptive and just explain each point separately. Better answers used signposting eg 'conversely' or 'the source contrasts' or the 'counter-argument is'.

All questions on the new specification take a contested political topic or issue, for which there are valid and competing viewpoints. The task is then for the candidate to appreciate this contest, investigate the depth and scope of the competing views and come to a judgment of the stronger case. This progress to AO3 is done by establishing clear AO1 and AO2 to form that judgement.

The outcomes of a general election are mostly stable and ~~predicatable~~ predictable. This is due to factors such as age and social class that allow for predictability in elections. However they may not always be stable and predictable due to politics being reactionary and volatile which means that factors cannot always be relied upon.

The outcomes of general elections have shown to be stable and predictable due to ~~factors~~ traditional factors such as social class and regions that have shown similar patterns. The source states "an individual's class and family background combined with the area in which they live all merge together to provide a clear indication of the way an individual will vote" this is shown recently as a traditional view which ~~shows~~ is highlighted in regions as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which will follow more nationalist parties. Therefore using traditional factors to predict the outcomes of general elections does allow for some stability as ~~people will follow~~ general

People are seen to follow their folk family views.

on the other hand the use of following traditions and factors has recently shown to be unpredictable and less stable as the growth in media ~~has~~ shows can "make and break a political party". This can particularly be seen in Theresa May's leadership the run up to the 2017 election as Jeremy Corbyn to start with was very unpopular but due to change in media opinion and social media publication by the end of the campaign Corbyn had become a fairly popular figure which help increase Labour party popularity. Therefore the media allows for unpredictable ~~other~~ outcomes of a general election. However

Meanwhile it can be argued that the media still show predictability as papers will still hold political affiliations and will back a certain party. Therefore readers of these papers will hold the same view of the paper and show no change in political opinion.



This response has some accurate knowledge but it fails to grasp the core demands of the question and as such it is limited to level 2 overall.



It is vital given that there is a political divide, that the candidate has to take sides and present a view of what they perceive as the stronger or superior viewpoint.

All questions on the new specification take a contested political topic or issue, for which there are valid and competing viewpoints. The task is then for the candidate to appreciate this contest, investigate the depth and scope of the competing views and come to a judgment of the stronger case. This progress to AO3 is done by establishing clear AO1 and AO2 to form that judgement.

Chosen question number: **Question 1(a)** **Question 1(b)**

The view in which outcomes in general elections are stable and predictable are true to an extent as ~~there are~~ ^{first past the} ~~polls~~ ^{post} allow for a two party ~~political~~ ^{political} system, ~~and~~ there are voting patterns such as class and ~~region~~ ^{region} which help predict outcomes, and the media supports and opinion polls. However in recent years these factors have challenged the stability and prediction of general elections as there has been two ~~coalition~~ ^{coalition} governments recently, partisan dealignment, false prediction of opinion polls and the media ~~backing the least favourable leader~~ ^{not predicting an accurate outcome}. ~~However~~ ^{Therefore}, the outcome of general elections is not stable and predictable.

One way in which general election outcomes are stable and predictable is that ~~opinion polls~~ ^{in the source} it states that opinion polls ~~are~~ ^{accurately} indicate the outcome of general elections as in ~~elections~~ ^{predictions prior to} prior to 2010, they have been mostly accurate. However the source also supports that in the 2017 general election, that they are no longer good indicators. This is true as the reason Theresa May called a general election is because opinion polls suggested that she ~~would~~ ^{would} win a majority, however the outcome resulted in a ~~of~~ ^{coalition} government. This then means that general elections are not stable and predictable as tools used to predict them such as opinion polls are unreliable. Secondly the source identifies ~~that~~ voting behaviours such as class and region ~~as~~ provide a clear indication on the way an individual will vote. This can be supported by the fact that there is a strong

North-South divide in voting as the north tend to favour Labour most likely due to their ^{industrial past, working class majority} industrial past and links with trade unions.

The Conservatives typically do well in the South as ^{they} ~~there~~ appeal to the middle-class in which lots reside in the South. As class and region are closely associated this means these are ^{more accurate} ~~being~~ predictions in ^{which} ~~which~~ influence the way people vote such as in 2001, 84% of Labour votes came from the north and Scotland. However, yougov ~~has~~ found that culture was the best indicator for election results ^{class and region} meaning that ~~class~~ isn't as influential. This is due to partisan realignment which has occurred due to Thatcher's influence of individualism and people now vote on salient issues rather than from class or region influences. This then disproves Putzer quote of 'class is the basis of British party politics and all else is embellishment and detail'. As people are now voting in their own self interest ^{this} ~~and~~ means election outcomes are more unpredictable and unstable as swing voters don't have party affiliations anymore. So it is hard to predict who they will vote for.

Another reason in which the outcomes of general elections are predictable and stable is that whoever the media supports, especially the Sun newspaper, this ^{usually projects} ~~influence~~ the winner. The Sun won't win show that every election since 1979, the Sun has predicted the winner of each general election (with the exception of 2010 and 2017 where no majority was reached). This is because the Sun reflects public opinion but can also influence the way in which people vote. This is because the Sun newspaper is the most read newspaper meaning that ^{whenever} ~~it~~ it promotes can massively influence how people vote.

and so by looking at what the Sun ~~endorsed~~ endorses, you can predict the outcome. However, ~~what~~ what wasn't known is that in ^{recent} years, no newspaper endorsed the Liberal Democrats and yet they ~~won many~~ saw their popularity rise and saw an increase in MEPs in the 2019 EU elections. ~~This means that~~ ^{The Sun also failed} to support the winning ^{Party} ~~Parties~~ in 2010 and 2017 when a coalition was formed meaning the prediction was ~~inaccurate~~ ^{inaccurate}. This then proves that the outcomes of general elections in recent years are not stable and predictable. Lastly, FPTP is used in general elections and has produced a ~~2P~~ two party system which is strong and stable. It also produces a strong and stable government which has been present in 1979 with Thatcher having a majority of 43 and in 1997 with Blair having a majority of ~~179~~. As the Conservatives and Labour parties are the two biggest parties this means it is predictable that they are most likely to be voted in power making the outcomes of general elections stable and predictable. On the other hand, FPTP failed to create a party with a majority in 2010 and 2017 with the Conservatives having to enter a coalition with the Liberal Democrats and DUP. Also in 2015, you saw a rise in votes for minority parties with ~~UKIP~~ ^{UKIP} gaining 13% of the vote so the two party system is slowly deteriorating. This is shown in the source as in 20 it says in 2015, 111 seats changed and in 2017, 70 seats changed. This could indicate a move away of support from the two main parties ~~and~~ and a growth of minority making the outcome of general elections no longer stable and predictable.

In conclusion, prior to 2010, the outcomes of general elections

had been stable and predictable due to accurate opinion poll, class and region being predictable factors, media outlets providing accurate projections and FPTP providing a two party system. However, since 2010 we have had two coalition governments in which there were no prediction of create instability in politics as well as opinion poll being inaccurate. ^{Although the media is} ~~and the use of~~ still seen to usually predict the right outcome it hasn't done so correctly in recent years and the rise of swing voter and partisan dealignment means that general elections are unstable and unpredictable.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This response has accurate knowledge although it could have made better use of the source. Its comparative analysis and evaluation are generally effective. It achieved Level 4 overall.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

It is vital that candidates make references to the source throughout the essay and use it as the basis of their answer.

This response not only has more detail it is constantly focused on the question and its implications.

Chosen question number:

Question 1(a)

Question 1(b)

General elections, held every five years, are an integral part of our democratic system and determine the policies and preferences the country will pursue by electing a political representative on our behalf. Within the UK we operate in a mainly two-party system, making to a degree, it predictable what party is likely to form a government. However despite key factors such as regional, race and class previously allowing us to predict the likelihood of the victorious party, in recent years elections may be seen as less stable and predictable.

A key method used to predict the outcome of elections is opinion polls, as the source states - 'opinion polls accurately indicate the outcome of general elections'. This reflects that opinion polls have a level of accuracy when determining possible outcomes.

Opinion polls are ~~compromised~~ a form of collecting information on how people will vote by asking them directly. This enables people to determine how voters will choose to allocate their votes before hand and offers a ~~a~~ level of predictability. These are even stronger when used as exit polls, where people are questioned once their votes are placed. And in recent years such as the 2017 general election, they have proved to be very accurate.

However this idea is ~~pe~~ of predictable outcome achieved through polls is eroded by the falling level of accuracy of them. This is supported by the source - 'no longer good indicators of outcome'. This can be illustrated through the huge misjudgement of the outcome of the 2017 election, where polls predicted May would win by 50+ seats, however as we are now aware she was not able to form a majority.

government and was forced into a 'confidence and supply' agreement alongside the Democratic Unionist Party. Overall this makes the significance of opinion polls obsolete. This may be to people potentially shifting their ~~Furthermore~~ social factors ~~have always~~ showed some indication to the level of partisan alignment or providing inaccurate information to data collectors. The information on opinion polls are also only a proportion of what society suggest they will do, making them unreliable.

Furthermore social factors have always showed some indication to the level of votes a party will receive. This is stated in the source - 'family background... provide a clear indication of the way in which an individual will vote'. The significance of this has historically been largely influential with those from a working class background typically supporting Labour and middle class favouring conservatives. ~~As~~

well as this younger and more ethnic diverse people tend to support Labour. This can be seen in Blair's 1997^{election} when he acquired 70% of the votes of ethnic minorities and a further 52% of votes from those aged 18-24. Conservatives similarly see this support from more elderly generations and those situated in more rural areas. This predictability allows people to calculate who is likely to vote where and has proved consistent and reliable for many years.

However the significance of social and regional factors can not be entirely dependent under all circumstances as it is influenced by other variables. This can be exemplified in Blair's win of the 1997 election again. Alternative to usual policies, Blair was more liberal in his manifesto and posed more economic freedom and privatisation. This appealed to both working and middle class

voters and undermined ~~the~~ the middle classes previous admiration for conservatives. Similarly, he achieved the most votes across all age groups and maintained the primary votes from ethnic minorities. This demonstrates how charismatic leaders and updated policy can undermine social norms and make it more difficult to predict outcomes, making them more dynamic and less stable.

As the source states - 'In 2015, 111 seats changed hands and in 2017, 70'. This opposes the view that elections are ~~as~~ stable and predictable as it suggests many of the 650 seats present volatility. This ~~is~~ shows the impossibility to depend on history of seats and that the response of the electorate is dynamic and therefore unpredictable. This ~~can further be supported when looking at North East fire in Scot~~ This is the idea of marginal seats, where it is unsure where the electorate will place their vote and

~~With~~ those victorious often only win with a small majority such as North West five in the recent Scottish elections that saw the SNP win by a slim two seats.

However it must be argued that this volatility does not often occur everywhere. Within the UK constituencies there are many that are considered 'safe seats', these are MP's that often win by a significant amount. This can be seen by Liverpool Walton, that see 82.5% of the constituency vote in one favour. This presents a degree of predictability and stability within the elections.

Overall general elections ~~are stable~~ ~~and~~ are not stable or predictable in regards to their outcome. As with the points justified within the text and my answer, there is too much volatility in recent years, to be dependent on particular factors to suggest voting patterns. This is largely due to the political uncertainty posed in recent times by Brexit.

(Total for Question 1 = 30 marks)



This candidate takes a point from the source and examines each side – thus providing balance throughout the response.



It is vital to always keep the source and the remit of the question in sight. New information works in a complementary way with the fact base of the source.

Despite election polls being used as a method to generate political predictions in general elections, it remains true that the instability of the political climate, accentuated by factors such as the media, age, and class mean that results in elections are ultimately unstable and unpredictable due to shifts in social organisations.

Most significantly, the source establishes the notion that "class and family background" are key indicators of electoral success in particular areas, however, fails to acknowledge partisan dealignment, which occurred as a result of Margaret Thatcher's privatisation of the coal industry which meant dispersal of individuals from staunchly labour regions (typically northern regions) to places in which they were able to find work. Class dealignment can be examined when

comparing class voting patterns - for DE voters who stereotypically vote Labour due to progressive taxation and increased welfare, 1964 64% voted Labour, compared to 59% in 2017. This is further exemplified with AB class voting - 79% voted Conservative in 1964, compared to 43% in the 2017 General Election. This clearly demonstrates that class dealignment has occurred, and the many different ways to measure class (such as through the eight class system of the Office of National Statistics, compared to the AB, C1, C2, DE system) establish that class alignment is no longer a tangible method of predicting voter results for the two main parties.

The source also asserts that individuals of a specific class "endorse the policies of a major political party". However, whilst some may be generally linked based on the taxation policies of parties, they are ultimately too broad and centralised to

simply align with a specific policy. The variety of factions within the Labour Party - from Blue Labour to Momentum, alongside cornerstone is the conservative party, ensures that alignment to a specific party as a result of a manifesto claim is unlikely to be sufficient grounds for political analysis. Similarly, as a result of the broad church nature of the two main parties, it is likely that many swing votes will vote as a result of the current political climate. As most swing votes are found in C1 and C2 (52%+ of the electorate), a manifesto commitment ~~is unlikely to be~~ could deter swing votes from third parties. For example, in the 2015 election David Cameron ensured that his manifesto said to have a vote on Brexit, thus deflecting votes from the United Kingdom Independence Party. Therefore, whilst it is unlikely that a manifesto could be the ^{reason} ~~reason~~ off for

working a certain way, it is highly unlikely due to the broad church nature of modern political parties. This could be an example of why so many states changed in the 2015 general election, and therefore the unpredictability and volatile nature of the results.

Another vital factor in the outcome of election is the combination of both age and the media. These are intrinsically linked as advancements in social media are utilised by young people, whereas the older generation is more likely to vote conservative and have a greater turnout. Young people often engage in slacktivism - participating in politics through social media engagements however not turning out to vote "demonstrating the importance of age". As 18-24 year olds typically vote conservative (67.8%) and older generations (60+) typically vote conservative (over 60%), it may be inferred that the 2015 parliament

may be disproportionately comprised of conservatives. However, in recent years as a result of engagement through social media, political participation amongst 18-24 year olds has increased, from 43% in 2015 to ~~64~~⁶⁴ % in 2017, a dramatic increase which therefore implies that, by only being 5% lower in turnout than the rest of the electorate, young people are, in fact, taking part in politics and giving an equal playing field to establish unpredictable turnouts. However, it may be indicated that this is purely as a result of the political climate.

Finally, and of least importance, the media does influence general election results. This should be considered when looking at 'the Sun', as it has supported every decision of the general election, even claiming in 1992 following the surprise failure of Neil Kinnock "It's the Sun that won it". However, the broadcast media ensures political

neutrality, and as only a fraction of the electorate read the newspapers, it is likely that they will order a newspaper reflecting their political views, and, therefore, newspapers are purely political echo chambers and have little impact on general election results. Therefore, whilst ~~they~~ election results are unpredictable, it is unlikely that "having media support... matters greatly".

Ultimately, it can be established that whilst the source does offer arguments for the reasons general election results may be perceived as predictable, it remains that in a modern society individuals have more freedom to have a 'swing vote', and class dealignment has meant complete unpredictability in election results. Similarly, the source indicates the complexities of manifestos and party politics in predicting results. However, does acknowledge that age has a significant factor in results. Overall election predictions are unpredictable due to the completely unpredictable nature of the political climate.



This has a good base of AO1 and AO2 - more could be developed on AO3. Despite the lack of high AO3 it does just enter the top level.



The use of clear and accurate data is a major boost to a response

Question 1 (b)

This was the better done of the two sources, perhaps because the arguments were very familiar, and because the source presented two clearly opposing views.

Candidates were able to use source points to frame each paragraph. The main issue, again, was the fault made by some candidates of answering essays using the principles of the legacy syllabus and AO's.

Most candidates recognised that the source presented two clearly opposing views and used these to frame their response to the question: this was done better where the views of Double and Lucas were directly contrasted in an alternating style, and explicitly rather than implicitly.

Weak answers did little more than summarise/illustrate the points uncritically ('on the one hand the source says ... but on the other the source also shows') and in a few cases ignored the source and wrote a pre-planned essay on the strength and weaknesses of FPTP.

AO3 was quite weak overall, where there was good evaluation; it was too often all dumped into the conclusion rather than spread throughout the answer.

The best responses selected key points that were found in both elements of the source and contrasted the points being made with effective analysis and the coming to a judgement throughout their essay which was consolidated in their conclusion.

Some own knowledge was used very effectively to analyse and evaluate, including the results of various elections eg the 2019 European Elections. Others used own knowledge to challenge assertions in the source, for example, that FPTP always leads to strong government.

A few candidates confused AV or SV as proportional systems, although others did make legitimate use of the AV referendum to argue that there was not support in general for electoral reform.

UKIP was often referred to as an extremist party, a qualifying 'some would regard...' would have been better.

The new source question demands that the focus is largely on the source content, this must be the core demand.

Proportional representation is an electoral system where the percentage of votes a party gets determines the amount of seats they obtain. The electoral system used in the House of Commons is first past the post (FPTP). This means that a party must only obtain a simple majority in order to win. However, FPTP has been criticised recently for allowing minority governments that are not strong and stable to win.

One way in which proportional representation would improve elections to the House of Commons is by "encouraging more people to vote" which in turn increases democracy and gives more legitimacy to the House of Commons. For example, proportional representation (PR) would encourage people to vote as it allows for smaller parties to gain more power by ending/reducing the two-party system which discourages people to vote. PR would therefore show that people's votes won't be 'wasted'. However, one way in which PR would not

improve elections in the House of Commons (HoC) is by allowing smaller parties to gain more power. Unlike PR the FPTP voting system "prevent extremist parties from gaining seats. For example, in the PR system, if an extremist party gains 40% of the public vote, they will obtain 40% of the seats in ~~Parliament~~ Parliament. For this reason PR will not improve elections to the HoC.

Another way that the PR system would improve elections to the ~~the~~ House of Commons is by ensuring that the public's decisions are well represented in the House of Commons. For example, PR prevents a "winner-takes-all approach to elections". This would improve elections to the House of Commons as the parties would be able to accurately represent the members of the public without worrying that the House of Commons is being mainly run by two parties. On the other hand, the PR system will not be able to deliver a "strong and stable government". This is because more parties will be able to gain more power thus making the passing of legislation more difficult in the House of Commons.

On the contrary, proportional representation would improve elections to the House of Commons by reducing the amount of 'safe-seats' across the UK. ~~This~~ As shown in the source, it is "very hard to persuade people when they live in so-called 'safe-seats'". This is arguably because people feel as though their vote may be useless or they may adhere to tactical voting which decreases democracy. This shows that PR increases democracy by encouraging people to vote truthfully. However, one disadvantage of using PR for the elections to the House of Commons is that it makes it more difficult for the public to be clear on who to hold accountable. As shown in the source "proportional representation will damage democracy by putting ~~more~~ more power into the hands of the parties". This therefore makes it more difficult for people to hold parties/the House of Commons to account as it could lead to the parties abuse of power. ~~Therefore making it~~ This means that the people/constituents will have less of an impact on the House of Commons unless if it is through voting. ^{Therefore, this} ~~This~~ demonstrates that PR could increase democracy through the removal of 'safe seats'.

In conclusion, proportional representation would not improve the elections to the House of Commons as it would allow for extremist parties to gain more seats/power in the House of Commons which threatens the stability brought to us by the FPTP system.

Another way in which PR would improve elections to the House of Commons is by improving "post-election cooperation" which means there will be less tensions in the House of Commons. This is an advantage as it could in turn, make discussions on legislation easier.



This response reads more like an essay around proportional representation than addressing the contested issues put forward in the source. It is a level 3 response: 14 marks.



In reflection the task is to 'unpick' the source and develop the arguments which it provides. It demands a consistent focus on the source content.

A response which is focused and from the outset appreciates the binary challenge posed in the source.

Chosen question number: **Question 1(a)** **Question 1(b)**

Proportional representation, although seemingly rejected by the public in the 2011 AV referendum, would improve elections to the House of Commons by encouraging a more consensual culture of politics, lending a government greater legitimacy and increasing engagement. Despite notable drawbacks, ~~no electoral system is perfect~~ but proportional representation ~~is~~ is more appropriate than our current First Past the Post System.

The weaknesses of proportional representation ^(PR) are important to address and an often made criticism, as Steve Double makes, is that PR would lead to turbulent governments unlike the "Strong and Stable" FPTP System. This claim has strong supportive evidence; since WWII only three hung parliaments have occurred in the UK and in the 2017 election the Labour/Conservative vote share was 86%, thus reducing the number of wasted votes required to achieve a strong and stable government. It is thought that under proportional representation governments will either not be formed or compromise so

in such to form coalitions that they do not resemble the parties voted for. For example, it took over two months of negotiation in Germany to form the Christian Democratic Union (Merkel's party) with the other centrist party. Since such coalition, turbulence has taken hold of Germany's parliament; Merkel's successor being so unpopular that Merkel has suggested she may not stand down which has thus threatened the coalition; potentially leading to early elections.

We should be cautious, however, not to take this argument too far. More disruption may not necessarily be the result of Germany's proportional system so it is unfair to rely too much on that example. Furthermore, as Cecilia Lucar highlights, moving to a more proportional system may change the culture of politics from an "adversarial" style to one of cooperation. The result may be more effective coalitions and cross party cooperation more broadly. Select Committees are a paradigm example of the effectiveness and indeed possibility of cross-party cooperation and thus it is conceivable that a similar ethos may be engendered under a more proportional system.

Steve Double goes further and claims the "direct link" between an MP and his/her constituent may ~~and~~ be undermined by a proportional system. ~~It does~~ Prima facie, it appears accurate: FPTP elects a singular MP representative who can be judged easily if they deliver their manifesto pledges. As Jeremy Hunt said, "it holds one's feet over the fire" whereas under PR many representatives would be elected creating less pressure to deliver on their respective commitments and creating ambiguity more broadly. Unlike, as Steve Double remarks, FPTP which is clear and easy to understand.

This argument, however, ignores the flaws created by the FPTP system. As Caroline Lucas argues persuading people to vote when they live in "safe seats" is futile and the existence of safe seats may create equal problems ~~with~~ with accountability and clarity. Firstly, in ~~the~~ Liverpool Walton a voter has 50x less power than an average voter because Labour have such a strong majority. Many people are thus deterred from voting, denied representation and therefore the legitimacy of any government formed can be called into question because legitimacy, some argue,

relies on the consent of the governed - which is denied for a Conservative voter in a Labour stronghold. Caroline Lucas is this apt in saying "FPTP is damaging the legitimacy" of our governance. Secondly, Safe Seats create lazy and complacent parliamentarians epitomised by Stuart Bell who was dubbed "Britain's Laziest Parliamentarian" by the Guardian ~~and so~~ because he didn't hold a surgery for 15 years. PR may alleviate these problems.

The last, and most intuitive, criticism of PR raised by Steve Doube is that "extremist parties" are facilitated by a proportional system and therefore our politics may be turned toxic and dangerous. Golden Dawn, a Greek neo-Nazi party, won 3 seats in the last European election who would only serve to divide politics rather than making it "less adversarial" as Lucas claims. ~~Furthermore~~ And again, BNP won a seat in the London Assembly and such a party once had a requirement of being white in its constitution to join. Thus, one can sympathise with Steve Doube regarding the dangers of a more proportional system.

It is crucial to note, however, that such examples are extreme and hyperbolic. In the recent European elections, ~~the~~ under the D'Hont System (PR) the Brexit Party came first, Liberal Democrats second and Greens closely fourth and it would be absurd to suggest any of these minor parties are "extreme" or dangerous. As Lucas highlights "PR will improve the chances of electing a parliament that reflects modern Britain" which rarely would include extremists. In addition, it is more desirable that the public express their opinions through the ballot rather than turning to violence as one man did with the murder of Jo Cox MP. It is thus crucially important to give all a voice to reduce the chances of unorthodox political expression.

In conclusion, arguments against proportional representation often rest upon a double-standard: FPTP has equal if not greater problems with accountability. Furthermore, the desire for a stable government ought not outweigh the need for a legitimate one with accurate representation and thus any argument from stability against PR fails. Lastly, the concern over extremism are often

hyperbolic and neglect that voting for extreme parties is preferable to political violence. Thus, all factors considered, proportional representation would improve elections to the House of Commons.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The response uses new political information (and accurate data) which aligns with the source and further enhances it. This response scored 27 marks.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

The source is the core platform to answer the question. However the probing of the source by showing further depth of knowledge and understanding builds up the AO1 profile.

Question 2 (a)

Q02(a) was the least popular and in many respects the least well done of all the essay questions. It was common for candidates to consider this question as a pressure groups only question and fail to consider lobbyists and think tanks. The best answers considered all three independently of one another.

Unsurprisingly many candidates focused heavily, and sometimes exclusively, on pressure groups: either not mentioning think tanks and lobbyists or naming them but making no specific relevant points about them and therefore could not get above level 3. Some confused lobbyists with the general practice of 'lobbying' MPs as carried out by pressure groups. Others gave examples of pressure groups and incorrectly applied the label think tank or lobbyist. Some considered think tanks as set up by government. Further, there seemed to be confusion as to what exactly lobbyists were – whether or not they were corporations themselves, hired by corporations or just a different, more covert type of pressure group. A few candidates made creditable points about all three sorts of groups with pertinent examples. Some stronger candidates also recognised relevant changes over time such as increased regulation of lobbyists. However, understanding of think tanks and lobbyists was relatively weak and perhaps this is an area of the specification which warrants more focus.

Most candidates considered arguments on both sides of the debate and many reached a judgement, but in many cases a conclusion at the end was their only significant AO3, with few candidates sustaining a judgement throughout their response. Very strong candidates made judgements as to the relative impact of the different types of organisation, but this was very rare. The best responses were able to provide a range of factors and circumstances which played a role in affecting how far the different groups influenced government decision making.

Some candidates spent too long on definitions at the expense of argument or got side-tracked into discussions of 'success factors' or the pros and cons of PGs for democracy. Also, many candidates did not focus on the 'impact on government decisions' and focused more on the notion of success or failure and a significant number of responses treated the question as if it were asking candidates to assess the factors that impact the power of pressure groups.

Some candidates were still using very old examples where much more relevant ones were available eg using Fathers4Justice rather than say, Extinction Rebellion, although Extinction Rebellion was used by a number of candidates.

The strongest candidates dealt with think tanks, lobbyists and pressure groups in turn with a paragraph on impact and lack of impact. Very few however considered who out of the three had the most impact (or least) as part of their evaluation.

One feature of the new specification is that questions will not tend to be repetitive and will encompass new material – here the importance of lobbyists and think tanks – new content to cover.

Chosen question number: Question 2(a) Question 2(b)

Think - tanks, lobbyists and pressure groups are ~~present~~ present within the UK, scrutinising the government and pressuring them to affect change.

It can be argued that pressure groups do have ~~wide~~ impact on government decision. Recently, pressure group Extinction Rebellion have caused disturbance by civil disobedience, in aim of tackling climate change. Meeting with Michael Grove was arranged, but no other activity has occurred. If change is effected, it is unlikely the government will admit the pressure group/ lobbyists were something that affected the decision. There may be a correlation between a lobbyist/ pressure group, however, this does not equal causation. The government will likely say they were going to make the decision anyway. If not, the government would look weak. Although this is a difficult argument to make since the group/ lobbyists could have impacted the decision in some way, without it being admitted.

On the other hand, there are few ~~was~~ instances where these pressure groups have influence. UKIP, for example, started off as a pressure group revolving around 7 ideas

to leave the EU. This gained a lot of support and media attention, with UKIP then becoming a political party. It was successful as a pressure group in impacting on decisions of the government, as in 2016 a referendum was held. The result was in favour of 'Brexit' which inevitably left the party in shreds as they were no longer required. As evidenced, there are examples of pressure groups, lobbyists and think-tanks having an impact on the government, the extent of this impact, differs and

The issue of funding and support is something to support the idea of there being little impact within government, and decisions. Within the UK, support for ~~post~~ ^{support} pressure groups has decreased after the winter of discontent, and further after Thatcher's government restricting the rights of Trade unions. Something Blair did not undo also, with this and less need for support with minimum and living wages support has dwindled and therefore there is little impact on governments decisions.

Similarly, funding and media attention are also key points with ~~post~~ pressure groups and lobbyists having little funding. Fundamentally, media attention is important as consumers of news articles on media outlets will make decisions based on what is being reported, giving the particular group a specific reputation.

There are particular groups known as 'inside pressure groups' that arguably can and do have influence on

government decisions. These groups often have help and support of a few people in the government working on the sympathies of some people. This likely gives them more success and enables them to have more impact on decisions of the government based on being already in the system.

It can be argued that the governments decisions are not impacted by pressure groups, lobbyists and think tanks with there being little support or such from the public. However, it is not to say there is no impact at all on the governments decisions. Correlation of a particular group and policy change does not mean the group was a causation, though it could have influenced the governments decision, regardless of whether such policy change (for example) was already being discussed. The insider pressure groups may have more support and influence, but it does not guarantee the impact on decisions.



This question really avoids any meaningful discussion on lobbyists and think tanks; all is built around pressure groups. This acts to restrict the level and it just makes level 3. This response scored 13 marks.



The full remit of the question should always be covered. It is damaging to choose a question if all aspects cannot be given their due attention.

Here the candidate does widen out to encompass all aspects of the question.

Chosen question number: Question 2(a) Question 2(b)

Think tanks, lobbyists and pressure groups are, by nature, designed to impact government policy. They achieve this through gaining insider status with the government and ~~proposing~~ ^{proposing}. However it must be noted that think tanks are often independent and many pressure groups have minority interests at heart instead. Despite this it is clear the government policy is significantly impacted by these groups.

Elitism is significant among these groups, and the more elite they are, the more impact on policy they have. For example, the Institute of Directors has headquarters in both Brussels and London so the government is more likely to meet and discuss policy, and the Conservative Friends of Israel have successfully maintained a neutral position in the government over the Israel - Palestine conflict due to threats of withholding funds. This shows that with a significant bank balance the government is keen to meet with groups to further their interests. This is because party support in elections is dependent on excessive spending on campaigns. However many pressure groups simply aim to get the electorate more interested in politics at periods other than election time. Liberty and Amnesty International

are both groups who fundamentally aim to improve citizen's knowledge of human rights so they do not tolerate restrictions on them. The government is already constrained by the Human Rights Act so they need not influence government policy. This ~~is~~ demonstrates that many pressure groups are targeted at citizens rather than the government as and as such do not require influence. Overall it is clear that ~~the~~ better funded groups can clearly influence government policy to a considerable degree, but there are also well-funded groups where government influence is not a priority.

The purpose of think-tanks are to stimulate policy creation, but many are independent so do not influence government decisions in their favour. For example the Adam Smith Institute and Demos have both been instrumental in developing policy for the ~~past~~ incumbent governments in the UK. The fact that governments use them whilst governing suggests that they have considerable influence, however their impartiality suggests that it is the governments that have the final say. However it could be argued that think-tanks can make the final decisions in many areas. For example the Bow Group is a Tory think-tank that has developed the 2015 and 2017 manifestos. Therefore it had the power

to influence the overall policy directions of two successive governments. It had the ability to decide how moderate or radical ~~policy~~ public policy would be for the next five years. Overall it can be inferred that think-tanks are generally used by governments as aids, but are not integral to decision-making. However the development of manifestos means that the lack of influence is conditional on opinions within the think-tank.

Many pressure groups prioritise minority interests at the expense of government approval. This prevents a period of executive dominance and tyranny of the majority. For example the Muslim Council of Britain campaigned heavily against ~~legislation~~ legislation that may have been islamophobic after the 7/7 bombings. This shows that impacting government decisions is not a key aim of many pressure groups, instead they are willing to hold the government accountable for its decisions that have already been made. However the fact that pressure groups embody accountability suggest a need to impact government decisions, so this argument is naive. For example the success of Justice for Gorkhas and the ability of the National Trust to reverse nationalisation of forests suggests that pressure groups can hold the government to account and reverse decisions. This means that pressure groups wield significant influence over the

government. Overall it is clear that ~~most~~ pressure groups have the ability to impact government decisions despite it not being at the top of the agenda for many.

¶ A significant factor limiting the ability of groups to influence the government is insider status. Outsiders can be as a result of the incumbent government not agreeing with its views, such as the trade unions, or no governments agreeing. For example the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is not accepted by any party, as all major ones support Trident renewal. The majority of pressure groups have outsider status which suggests that as a group they do not have noteworthy impact on government decisions. On the other hand lobbyists are used to gain insider status extensively. The lobbying industry is currently worth £2 billion a year and 15% of newly-elected MPs in 2010 came from lobbyist backgrounds. This exemplifies the extent to which lobbying has penetrated government and the fallibility of politicians to pursue personal gain. Lobbyists have gained a foothold in government and allows pressure groups to exert direct control over decisions. Overall it is clear that, while many pressure groups do not benefit from insider status, lobbyists obviously do.

To conclude, it is apparent that pressure groups,

think-tanks and lobbyist have been, and continue to be used to influence government decisions. This is due to the power of think-tanks to develop policy and the power of lobbyists to organise meetings with governments. However, many pressure groups suffer from outsider status. Nevertheless it is clear that these groups wield enormous power over government decision-making.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This response uses clear and relevant examples of all three collective organisations. It has debated the influence of all three groups with fine illustrations. It achieved a Level 5



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Examples in the main are a source of AO1 marks but they have the ability to lay the foundations for AO2 and AO3 marks.

Question 2 (b)

Q02(b) was a popular question with some very good answers and was generally answered better than Q02(a), using a range of contemporary examples.

The evidence supporting the view in the essay was more often older, including an excessive reliance from some candidates on the 1940s and 50s, although others also recognised such points as the decline of the Lib Dems in 2015 and UKIP in 2017. Brexit was ever present in most candidates' responses and its significance for showing increased influence of smaller parties. Weaker candidates focused too heavily on voting in Westminster elections, giving a narrow focus on the question which led to a discussion of FPTP. Stronger candidates considered a range of aspects of the question including impact of devolution, coalition governments and influence of smaller parties' ideas.

Most answers were able to refer to the Lib Dem coalition, DUP confidence and supply agreement, UKIP and the referendum. Better answers ranged even further discussing devolved assemblies, European elections, local elections and mayoral contests. They also assessed the way the two main parties modified manifesto commitments in the light of the threat they saw from minor parties.

As on other questions few candidates made any attempt to evaluate the relative weight of different arguments and it was common for candidates to offer reasonable arguments of both sides, but less common for them to effectively evaluate them. Again, too many candidates did not attempt significant AO3 until the conclusion, and even then, a significant minority did not come down clearly on one side.

Better answers tended to take a clear stand in their introduction and integrate the two opposing arguments as they went along, showing analysis and one point in agreement and then comparing this to the opposing viewpoint. This structure then helped them to reach these judgements throughout which made their answers more cohesive and their final answer more convincing.

Chosen question number: **Question 2(a)** **Question 2(b)**

Political parties are a group of people who share common values and ideas who have the aim of gaining political power. It can be argued the UK has a two party system due to the decline in partisan dealignment, Labour and Conservative being the largest parties in the Commons and due to the nature of the electoral system. However you could argue smaller parties are increasingly becoming more important shown through local elections and recent hung parliaments and popularity of their policies. Although these are important, with the two main parties currently dominating the Commons and smaller parties only gaining popularity due to rare circumstances, my judgement is that the Labour and Conservative parties are the only ones that matter in the political system.

One could argue there has been a decline in two party dominance due to the increase in hung parliaments over the past 10 years. There have been 2 hung parliaments in the last 10 years in the 2010 election and the 2017 election suggesting elections are less decisively producing a majority government. This increases the importance of smaller parties.

as the main parties will be fighting to get into government with them to gain power. For example, in the 2010 election, both Labour and Conservative parties were willing to form a government with the Liberal Democrats. This shows that smaller parties are becoming increasingly important in government formation indicating that the main parties are not the only ones that matter in politics.

Despite this, hung parliaments are still rare with the last coalition before 2010 being 1945 and the last confidence and supply agreement before 2017 being 1977, which suggests Labour and Conservative are still at the forefront of politics and produce majority governments almost every election showing they are the only political parties that matter.

Furthermore, we have potentially seen the end of partisan dealignment showing the two main parties increasingly dominate politics. For example, in the 2017 election 82% of the vote went towards Labour and Conservative suggesting voters are reverting back to ~~staying~~ ^{voting} by demographics such as class.

For example, 46% of AB voters voted Conservative compared to 38% AB voters voting Labour showing how the middle / upper classes voted Conservative in the 2017 election. 44% of DE voters voted Labour showing how working class voters vote Labour, with

only 18% of votes going towards smaller parties this shows how much more significant Labour and Conservative are during election time making them the only political parties that matter in the political system.

However, it could be argued that recent events have seen the decline in two party dominance. The local elections (May 2019) have shown the electoral backlash on the two main parties because of their disunity on Brexit. The two biggest parties have failed to pass a Brexit deal through Parliament ^{3 years after the referendum} showing their split views on the matter this is argued to be the cause of Conservatives losing 1,133 councillors in the local elections and Labour losing 87. With the Lib Dems gaining over 700 councillors, it shows how the electorate are supporting a smaller party with a more consistent view to remain, making them look more attractive. Therefore, this highlights that party disunity of the main parties declines their importance in the political system.

Nevertheless, with Brexit only being a current issue, it is unlikely this vote behaviour will continue once the Brexit process is settled because there will be less disunity showing how the decline in two party dominance is only temporary so overall the main

parties remain the most important.

In addition, that point is weakened by the fact turnout in local elections is not high. The local election (2019) turnout was 36.7% ^{showing a} ~~low~~ lack of electoral participation. This doesn't seem to be an ~~accurate~~ accurate reflection of the will of the people as there is not enough participation to make this view in two party dominance consistent or convincing. As opposed to general elections where the 2017 election turnout was almost double at 69%, this result put Labour and Conservative as the two biggest parties in the Commons showing they continue to dominate the political system with local elections granting local government little power the vote is not significant enough to validate the main parties are not important showing they are the only parties that matter in the political system.

On the other hand, it could be argued main parties are forced to respond to smaller parties ^{Popular} ~~for~~ small party policies forces major parties to adopt their policies to deter threat of support from smaller parties. For example, Cameron adopted greener Conservative policies to limit support for the Green party such as adopting green energy policies in 2010. Cameron also called an EU membership referendum ^{to deter} ~~from~~ UKIP's

influence after winning a seat in the 2015 election. This shows how smaller parties influence main parties affirming smaller parties also have importance in the political system. Despite this, you could argue by the main parties adopting these policies, it strengthens Labour and Conservative support as it gives them a chance to swing votes towards the main parties if they are perceived as not the only 'environmentally friendly' party for example. Therefore, main parties are the only ones that matter. This argument is strengthened by the nature of the electoral system. This is because the FPTP system is not proportional so punishes smaller parties if their vote is evenly spread. Because vote share is not proportional to seats, smaller parties vote is widely spread around the UK making it less likely for them to win seats. This differs from the main parties whose votes are concentrated in specific areas and so gain more seats. For example, the Conservatives were able to get a majority of 12 seats in the 2015 election with only 37% of the vote while Lib Dems only got 8 seats with 8% of the vote. ^{supported} ~~things~~ by the fact there hasn't been a Lib Dem government since 1927, Labour and Conservative are the only

parties who have a sufficient chance of getting a majority govt. and so are the most important in the political system overall, although there have been some hung parliaments, backlash against the main parties, the smaller parties influence and popularity is simply not enough to stop the two party dominance. At rare circumstances present the two parties as unpopular at the moment but the two parties have consistently dominated politics which is why Labour and Conservative are the only parties that matter in the political system.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

Here the answer is broad ranging and just about scores a Level 5 overall



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

The need to keep the question in focus and reach a reasoned conclusion is vital

This question has a wide hinterland and a clear example of how the linear specification can draw in several sections of the specification.

Chosen question number: **Question 2(a)** **Question 2(b)**

Currently in the United Kingdom our voting system of First-Past-the-Post creates a two-party system which leads to the election of either the Labour Party or the Conservative Party. For this reason along with with wasted votes and tyranny of the majority, many see these two parties as the only of importance other believe that despite not gaining a mandate, minority parties matter significantly in terms of influence.

One ~~is~~ reason ~~for~~ supporting the view that the only political parties that matter are the Labour and Conservative parties is the idea of a two-party system. With the outcome of general elections since 1945 inevitable resulting in Labour or Conservative victory the creation of a two-party system is crucial when evaluate the importance of other parties. Moreover, overtime, especially in recent elections it is aparent through the turnout of the unimportance of other

political parties such as the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party. Consequently the lack of ^{real} choice has resulted in voter apathy. The deterioration of voters however continually supports the two-party system and prevents change through governance of another party.

However, one way in which parties other than Labour or the Conservatives can be seen of importance in the UK political system is when looking at the influence of minority parties, for example UKIP. In a representative democracy the government gives power to the people to vote on a party which resides with them. Similar to a pressure group, the United Kingdom Independence Party, has one aim of British independence from the European Union. Under David Cameron's conservative government, UKIP showed the importance of minority parties through increased pressure on an EU referendum. UKIP are proof that parties other than Labour and the Conservatives matter due to the outcome of a referendum in 2016 which resulted in 52% of the 72% turnout wanting to

leave the EU. For this reason minority parties can be seen as exerting influence on decision-making and therefore proving their importance in the political system.

Another way in which the view that the only political parties that matter in our political system are the Labour and Conservative parties, can be supported with the idea of 'tyranny of the majority' with the current electoral system of FPTP being unproportional in votes to seats this creates ^{room} for majoritarian rule. This idea stems from the fact that minority groups and issues are inevitably underrepresented in parliament through policy. Consequently, ~~there is~~ with the fluctuation between either the Labour party or Conservative party majority rule will always be one of these two parties and therefore they are the only parties of importance. * An ^{key} example of 'tyranny of the majority' is the outcome of the 2016 EU referendum in which 48% ~~of~~ ^{of the} ^{voting leave} electorate were underrepresented despite having nearly half of the vote.

When evaluating the view that the

only political parties that matter in our political system are the Labour and Conservative, the view can be seen as false due to ~~the~~ ^{the} Liberal Democrat influence in politics. Through the election campaign in 2010, Nick Clegg ~~proved~~ gained support in particular in TV debates where opinion polls suggest he was on top at the first live television debate. Furthermore, the subsequent ~~winning~~ gaining of seats which led to the formation of a coalition government with David Cameron in 2010, proves the ability to influence change. An example of decision-making by the Liberal Democrats is the 2011 AV referendum suggested and carried out despite its defeat. This therefore, dismisses the view that the Conservative and Labour party are the only parties that matter. However, this influence may be undermined due to the Liberal Democrats preference to the Single Transferable Vote (STV). This shows their inability to change despite having some mandate due to the ~~liberal~~ ~~party~~ compromise of AV by the Conservatives.

Another reason why the Conservative

and the Labour party may be seen as the only ones that matter is because of the minimality of parties other than them having safe or marginal seats over the 650 constituencies. Labour domination in the Midlands and North England due to liberal policy such as tax cuts, increased public spending and ~~and~~ increased welfare spending, along with conservative dominance in the South East of England make it difficult for parties to successfully influence and change voters minds. Along with newspapers, which just reaffirm citizens political stance despite political bias, ~~providing~~ providing specific policy relevant to the demographic of areas such as Liverpool create 'safe' seats preventing ~~the~~ different political say. For this reason, the Labour and Conservative parties may be seen as the only parties that matter.

A final point to make in disagreement ~~with~~ with the view that the Conservative and the Labour party are the only parties that matter is the sole influence of the Scottish National Party (SNP).

with one main focus of Scottish independence, the domination of the SNP since 2007 when a minority government was formed has helped to ~~achieve~~ get closer to the goal in ~~the~~ British parliament. Under the power of Nicola Sturgeon the SNP have influenced government policy. For example, the 1998 Good Friday agreement along with further devolution of power in the Scotland Act in 2012. Both acts play a part in influencing parliament as well as proving the importance of other parties. Of course along with the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum which was defeated, the SNP contest the view that the only ~~two~~ important parties are Labour and the Conservatives.

In conclusion, when evaluating the view that the only political parties that matter are the Labour and Conservative parties, this can be contested by the sheer influence of minority parties such as the Green Party, UKIP and the SNP.



This is a top level response – it is true that more could be developed; however, in the time period allocated it is hard to expect much more to enter the top level. This response scored 30 marks.



This response uses examples really well and is well informed. The crafted use of examples does make a difference by supporting arguments and enhancing contested debates.

In agreement with the proposition, the only political parties that matter in our political system are the Labour and Conservative parties. This is because our political system is based on a two party system meaning that it disregards mega minority parties and focuses more on the two main parties Labour and Conservative.

Over the last decades or so the political system has been dominated by either the Labour or Conservative Party with the two parties receiving the majority of the votes leaving some parties such as UMP and the Green Party unable to gain seats.

However in recent years there has been an increasing significance of and rise in the minor parties. For example, in the 2016 elections the UMP party managed to obtain one seat. Furthermore in 2010 we saw a rise in the minor party the Liberal Democrats who formed a coalition government with the Conservatives allowing them to become more of a dominant force in the political

system, therefore showing that the Labour and Conservative Party are not the only political parties that matter.

Secondly, in agreement with the proposition, the Labour and Conservative parties ideologies are well recognised by the electorate and the political system. Due to their significance in the political system many of their policies which are in correspondence to the parties ideology are well known, this makes it hard for minority parties to gain significance by introducing 'new policies' as they have already been made by the two major parties and so Labour and Conservative remain as the only parties that matter. For example, emphasis of equality in education and care are common Labour policies so if a minor party were to offer the same, they wouldn't be bringing anything new to the table.

In disagreement with the proposition, the Labour and Conservative Party are not the only parties that matter. The increase in single-issue voting has increased the significance of minor parties such as UKIP and the Brexit party. In the most recent elections, in May 2019, the Brexit party received a significantly high percentage of votes receiving more than the more recognised parties such as the Conservative party. This is significant as it shows how the increase in single-issue voting has led to an increase in the significance of minor parties, thus disproving that the only ^{parties} ~~parties~~ that matter are the Conservative and Labour Parties.

Additionally, in disagreement with the proposition, the Confidence and Supply arrangement of 2016 with the Conservative Party and the DUP increased the significance of the minor party. As part of the arrangement the DUP were given money to spend on the education system in Scotland, this shows the increasing significance of the minor party as they were able to make such a request. This argument is key to the

debate as it shows that minor parties are able to be and have been in recent years a dominant and recognised force in the political system showing that Labour and the Conservative Party are not the only party that matters.

The most significant argument in this debate is that the increasing significance of minor parties in the UK now leaves the Labour and Conservative parties as not being the only ones that matter.



This response – although in the main correct – lacks detail and precision. It tends to make generic points but does not produce a 'sharp' picture – the facts in the vast bulk are correct but they do not raise the response out of level 3.



It is good practice for candidates to learn and reproduce key data to inform and illustrate their work.

Question 3 (a)

Core political ideas – general guidance

As question 3 has a different stem (“To what extent...” not “Evaluate the view...”) the nature of comparative analysis and evaluation is different from that on question 1 and 2. For question 3 on this paper, candidates were required to evaluate whether the similarities were greater than the differences within the named ideology over the economy or society. In order to do this, they needed, in the first instance, to look at areas of similarity and difference and then decide which was greater.

Most students were unable to come to a sustained judgement like this as too many students were not comparing strands within their answer. We would advise centres to focus on this going forward for question 3 on this paper.

While many centres have expressed concern over the use of thinkers, very few candidates were caught by the ‘thinkers cap’, and almost all of those who were had an otherwise weaker answer so were not significantly affected by it.

In overview given that many centres were new to the teaching and delivery of core political ideas, the work that had been done was excellent and often it was very pleasing to see a range of really good answers. The comments below may seem critical and pedantic however their core aim is to be constructive to build on this excellent start.

The biggest problem with Q03(a) was ‘storytelling’, whereby candidates would tell the “story of socialist views on the economy”, usually beginning with Revolutionary socialists, then moving on to a paragraph on Social Democracy and then finally a paragraph on The Third Way. The problem with this approach was that, even when the knowledge was very good, this was really only hitting AO1. In order to address the issue of the **extent of conflict** over their views on the operation of the economy, paragraphs should ideally address a theme and then discuss where there was agreement and disagreement within socialists, ie by comparing the different strands of socialists as identified in the spec.

Thus, the main distinguishing features between stronger and weaker responses were, firstly how far they directly compared branches, as opposed to a more ‘storytelling’ approach, and secondly how far they recognised similarities within the strands of socialism as well as differences, with too many candidates ignoring or rejecting the idea of any similarities.

A few candidates got overly sidetracked by the current policies of the Labour party which is not necessary for these answers.

Another area of confusion was that many students argued that Marx supported a totally state controlled economy and used as an example to assert their claim the so called ‘communist’ states. This is inaccurate on two counts. Firstly, Revolutionary socialists like Marx, Engels and Luxembourg reject the use of the state in the long term, supporting only a temporary use of the state in the dictatorship of the proletariat, before insisting that the state would “wither away” to allow a fully communist society to develop, ie a stateLESS society. Equally, the USSR and China, despite calling themselves Communist, were not run on the basis of the principles and beliefs of Marx and Engels.

Another area of concern was the confusion of the term “fundamentalist” with “revolutionary”. These terms are not the same. Fundamentalist has become to be understood as referring to socialists who want to abolish capitalism completely and replace it with socialism – its opposite is a revisionist approach. Revolutionary refers only to the process of achieving the change – its opposite

is evolutionary. So, while Marx & Engels are revolutionary fundamentalists, Webb is an evolutionary fundamentalist. There was a great deal of confusion over this with students.

In addition, it appeared that a number of students had been taught many additional strands of socialism than are prescribed by the specification and, although very useful in educating and engaging students with this new aspect of the course, actually caused them to not focus on the key aspects as required by the specification. To recap, the three strands identified in the specification are Revolutionary Socialists (illustrated by Marx & Engels & Luxembourg), Social Democracy (Crosland) and the Third Way (Giddens).

In the case of Webb, better responses associated her with “the inevitability of gradualism”. While Webb was indeed a Democratic Socialist, a detailed analysis of Democratic Socialism (as opposed to Social Democracy) is not required. Webb is perhaps best used as an effective critique against the revolutionary perspective. This perhaps needs clarifying in terms of teaching.

Also, while there was a great deal of focus on the thinkers by students, lots of very generalised and sometimes dubious ascription of views to key thinkers was recorded by students. For example, far too many candidates labelled Webb as a revolutionary socialist, and only the strongest responses were able to identify the fact that Beatrice Webb was one of the earliest evolutionary socialists who were still committed to the eventual overturning of capitalism, with many responses confusing Webb’s views with those of Crosland.

It is also perhaps useful for centres to note that questions should be answered with primary reference to the strands and then exemplified by thinkers. Too often students framed their answers on the basis of the view of thinkers, not strands.

Also, a number of candidates did not focus on the 'economy' but simply discussing the state without connection to it was a common feature of weaker responses.

Focus and attention to the question is crucial and important in handling political ideas questions. This is because marks can easily be lost when the confines of the question are breached and the candidate veers off to where marks cannot be gained.

The economy is the involvement of factors such as tax, welfare and monetary transactions within a state or region.

Whilst ~~there~~ there are areas of agreement across the three strands: revolutionary, social democrats and third-way, there is also much disagreement on the state's role in the economy.

Both revolutionary and social democrats agree on the need for capitalist state intervention within the economy in order to achieve equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. Revolutionary socialist Marx believes in some form of capitalist intervention as a "instrument of class rule" in order to ensure that the proletariat can rise up and overthrow the bourgeoisie in order to gain equal economic outcomes (such as equal wealth) and therefore gain an inevitably worker controlled economy. Similarly, social democrats agree in the need for some form of intervention within the

economy to provide support for those on lower-incomes and bring the bottom half up in order to provide equality of opportunity and outcome.

This is echoed by social democrat Crosland's support for "state-managed capitalism".

~~Therefore, who~~

However, social democrats and third way disagree on the extent of the welfare state and how it is achieved.

Social democrats will support huge welfare state in the economy through progressive taxation and ~~and~~ unemployment and sickness benefits to support those ~~or~~ less fortunate.

Whereas third way Socialist

Griddens promotes the economy being left to the free market through Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'.

Social democrats and 3rd way also disagree on nationalisation. Webb was "committed to nationalisation of industry" as stated in clause 4 of her 1920 Labour Constitution. Giddens on the other hand support private - public competition hence Blair's mantra 'education, education, education!' Overall, mainly agree on intervention in economy to provide equality of wealth.



This response on the surface mentions key thinkers but fails to connect in many ways - indeed some of the links and connections are mistaken. This response scored 11 marks.



Focus, as noted in the introduction, is central to a good performance on political ideas. As above we veer off and cover the role of the state and equality is beyond the remit of the question: stick to the brief on the economy.

Question 3 (b)

Q03(b) was the least well answered of the two questions while being as popular, although there were some very good responses.

As on Q03(a), a storytelling approach was less effective than direct comparisons, with many candidates simply summarising the views of the various conservative strands and thinkers. Strong candidates clearly stated the differences between organicism and atomistic individualism and could differentiate clearly between traditional, one-nation and New Right conservatism. As with Q03(a), the strongest candidates took a number of aspects of conservative views of society and looked at areas of agreement and disagreement between the strands within a single paragraph, which was an effective way of structuring the answer. Again, most students did not adequately compare the differences between the strands, and this held them back.

A significant number of candidates lacked focus on 'society' and instead treated the question as if it was a generic question of the differences that exist between different strands of conservatism. While the role of the state, the economy or the imperfection of individuals were relevant to a discussion of society, it was important that they were related back to society if it was to receive maximum credit.

Many candidates showed a fair grasp of the major issues around the organic society versus atomism and related principles, although a worrying number stated that all conservatives believed in an organic society (and some going on to discuss atomistic individualism within an organic society), thus demonstrating a lack of understanding as to what the terms actually represent. Additionally, a worrying amount of candidates did not discuss the organic approach to society throughout their entire essay which severely hindered their ability to do well.

Some candidates were confused by the distinction between traditional and one nation conservatives, the confusion being what the differences are between them, although most recognised their similar approaches to society and their clear contrast with the New Right. Distinctions within the New Right were used effectively by some candidates, with the very strongest responses able to differentiate between the neoliberal and neoconservative strands of the New Right and the contrasting ideas they offer regarding society, whereas the vast majority of responses talked simply about the New Right as a cohesive whole.

A few candidates got sidetracked into a general commentary of the development of the different strands of Conservatism without linking this to their view of society. Often these candidates referenced conservative politicians (eg Disraeli and Thatcher) instead of key named thinkers.

Nonetheless, there was again good reference to thinkers, and few candidates were caught by the 'thinkers cap'. Many students were able to contrast Burke's 'little platoons' and Disraelian paternalism with Rand's neo-liberalism in terms of society and used these ideas effectively to identify areas of disagreement within Conservatism.

Many candidates referenced Disraeli and Thatcher (Disraeli cited at least as often as any of the actual key thinkers), which although useful and relevant, could not be credited as a key named thinker. Burke and Hobbes were often treated as having the same views and it was rare to see any contrast drawn between them, likewise Nozick and Rand.

Another common issue was that candidates understood what different conservative thinkers believe, but were unable to link this to the premise of the question. Additionally, candidates seemed to have greater confusion with which strand of conservatism they relate to.

This is a good example once again of how a sharp focus and close attention to the question does deliver – here is a top level response.

Chosen question number: **Question 3(a)** **Question 3(b)**

The extent to which conservatives are united in their view of society is shown by the fact that traditional conservatives and one-nation conservatives believe in the 'organic society' but differ slightly in their views of how to use the state to support this belief.

New Right ^{conservatives} ~~conservatives~~ however, especially neo-liberals, reject the organic society and the paternalism element of the organic society, favouring ~~the~~ atomism and triumph individualism. ~~Not~~ neo-conservative, emphasise the ~~+~~ importance of law and order in suppressing flawed human nature. Ultimately, conservatives are more divided than united on this issue.

Both traditional conservatives and one-nation conservatives believe in the idea of an organic society, one in which humans rely on institutions such as the family and certain social groups and class divides to function in a natural unequal society. Traditional ^{conservative} ~~conservative~~ such as Edmund Burke believe that

tradition and empiricism underpin society and must be respected in order for society to function properly. Burke was particularly critical of the French Revolution as they had abandoned traditional institutions, such as the monarchy, in favour of ideological ideas of flawed positive human nature. Burke wasn't critical however of the American Revolution as they had retained their institutions that triumphed a functioning society. Both these strands also champion the idea of paternalistic paternalism in which the upper-classes have a duty to help the poor through 'noblesse oblige'. This was seen under Benjamin Disraeli's social welfare reforms such as the Artisan's Dwelling Act 1875 in order to help the poor lower-classes but also to prevent rebellion.

Traditional conservatives take a more fixed approach to human nature within society as Thomas Hobbes stated that 'humans are needy and vulnerable in their attempts to understand the world around them' supporting the traditional conservative idea that humans are flawed psychologically, morally and intellectually. Hobbes also suggested all members of society sign

a ~~their~~ theoretical 'social contract' in which they give up some of their freedom to the state, which conflicts with ^{the} neo-liberals view of 'negative liberty'. Hobbes also suggested this type of society ~~of~~ 'organic ~~society~~' was needed otherwise life would be 'brutish, poor, nasty and short' and would descend into atomism.

Michael Oakeshott (as a one-nation conservative) recognised that the 'organic society' needed to be extended ~~passed~~ promoting paternalistic values and these ~~needs~~ needed to be put into practise. He influenced many, such as David Cameron to take a more pragmatic view towards society and inspired something Cameron called 'compassionate conservatism'. This inspired many of Cameron's social welfare reforms and support for ~~traditions~~ acts usually against tradition such as the legalisation of gay marriage as the climate in public support had changed dramatically and needed this reform.

New Right ideology completely rejects the organic society and paternalism and has a more

positive view of human nature, promoting individualism and atomism (a society in which humans exist and act independently and in self interest). ~~Neo~~ Neo-liberals such as Robert Nozick suggested a 'night watchman state' ~~or~~ which triumphed a minimal state was only needed to provide the basics in society. He fundamentally disagreed with the view of 'social contract' and believed ~~the state owed nothing~~ individuals in society owe nothing to the state saying the idea that the state expects individuals to 'fight it's battle, ^{and} pay us taxes.' is absurd. Nozick also believed in a free-market economy ~~within~~ within individualism and disagreed with taxation saying 'taxation of public earning is on par with forced labour'. Neo-conservatives, however, have a slightly more pessimistic attitude towards society and human nature, calling for stronger law and to order e.g. ~~Thatcher~~ ~~or~~ Margaret Thatcher's government and her ~~to~~ zero-tolerance policy towards trade-union strikers, promoting anti-permissiveness within society.

In conclusion, while elements of conservatism triumph an organic society ~~on~~ based on paternalism

and upholding tradition and empiricism, One-Nation Conservatives endorse social welfare to improve the position of classes in society as a whole, the New Right take a completely different approach promoting individualism ~~and~~, a minimalist state and strong law and order.



The key thinkers alongside additional contemporary politicians are noted and this is effective (though it is not essential) and produces clear AO2 and the basis for AO3. This is a level 5 response



Key thinkers have to be covered to satisfy the demands of the specification. However other thinkers and politicians can provide effective support in many responses and gain credit. Care has to be taken however that we are dealing with the idea of conservatism – with a small 'c' and not essentially the Conservative Party.

A central message issued with regard to political ideas is that coming from the question stem command 'to what extent'. This indicates we are dealing not with a one sided outcome but we are dealing with tensions on both sides - yes a verdict has to be reached - but the counter point has to be articulated. A total rejection of one side with no consideration of alternatives will weaken the overall mark.

Chosen question number: **Question 3(a)** **Question 3(b)**

Conservatism is the idea that Society should be preserved. Conservatives tend to reject ideologies that enforce change in the society. ~~There~~ Conservatives are usually traditional and favour pragmatic ways of thinking. There are different types of Conservatives. The Traditional Conservatives, One-Nation Conservatives, Neo-Conservatives and Neo-liberal Conservatives. They all have differing views of society. However some of the conservatives agree on some level of ~~them~~ over the view of the state.

Traditional Conservatives believe that Society cannot flourish without having a father figure which should be the state. Thomas Hobbes argued that the state should act as a father figure for people in Society because people in Society are self-interested and can not act rationally by them selves, therefore a Paternal figure would be needed to guide them in order for Society to be peaceful. Another type of conservatism that agrees with this ideology of paternalism is the One-Nation Conservatism. They agree that Society needs a paternalistic figure in Society.

Traditional and One-Nation Conservatives both agree that society shouldn't undergo major changes. This is because they argue that what makes society is the history behind the society and the people in society is what makes society. Therefore they see changes in society as a threat. They also agree that society should turn to pragmatic ways of thinking; as proposed by Michael Oakeshott. They argue that when individuals seek answers they should turn to people from the past because they have previously lived the moment ~~so they have~~ and have more experience.

On the other hand, Neo-conservatives and neo-liberals have opposing ideas to Traditional and one-nation conservatives because instead of asking the government to act as a paternal figure in society as the Traditional and one-nation conservatives say, they call for a limited government intervention in society. They argue that the government shouldn't be too involved in the lives of people in society this is because government intervention may undermine individuals in society which goes against the idea of atomism, which is a key conservative ideology.

In comparison to liberals, liberals argue that the society can only flourish when individuals are totally free. Conservatives believe that the state should act as a paternal figure for individuals in society whereas liberals believe that the state and society should have a social contract (as proposed by John Locke) in order for society to flourish well.

In conclusion, it can be seen that conservatives are definitely not united in their view of society because they disagree greatly on ways in which the society should operate.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

In this response we see a primary focus on the disagreements within conservatism about society – in order to increase marks and move beyond what is a level 3 response areas of agreement need to be referenced. This response scored 9 marks.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

As noted few candidates were caught by the level restrictor or 'cap' by failing to cite two thinkers in the relevant political idea. However good practice is not just to simply 'name drop' but to effectively understand how a key thinker contributed to the political idea.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- a pattern where higher level answers were not attained as a result of not fully developing and articulating judgements, verdicts and conclusions – AO3, heavily visible in the source question but equally relevant elsewhere;
- a need to see the source question as an essentially binary challenge with differing – but nonetheless acceptable positions to adopt;
- a clear confidence in candidates approaching the core political ideas –with detailed knowledge and understanding. An impressive start to this area;
- as always with politics good contemporary examples add sophistication and depth to responses;

Pearson Edexcel will continue to offer support and guidance in reflection to this first examination and throughout the academic year – please use our dedicated website to access these along with other training events.

Grade Boundaries

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

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