
AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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Free Response Question 7

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AP[®] COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

2019 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 7

5 points

Part (a):

One point is earned for correctly describing one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections.

Acceptable descriptions may include:

- To build internal or external legitimacy
- To help the regime maintain control or power
- To prevent unrest, build support for the system, or create the perception of representation
- To shape policies or leadership
- To build a favorable reputation in the international community

Part (b):

One point is earned for correctly explaining how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia.

Acceptable explanations may include:

- Weakened democracy because of less competition
- Weakened democracy because there was no alternation of party control or top leadership
- Weakened democracy because voter fraud reduced legitimacy or political efficacy
- Weakened democracy because liberal parties were weakened
- Strengthened democracy because of stabilized parties
- Strengthened democracy because of increased legitimacy or political efficacy

Part (c):

One point is earned for correctly explaining how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Mexico.

Acceptable explanations may include:

- Strengthened democracy because of more competition
- Strengthened democracy because of alternation of parties in power or development of multiparty system
- Strengthened democracy because of increased legitimacy or political efficacy
- Weakened democracy because of widespread fraud reducing legitimacy or political efficacy
- Weakened democracy because of the use of state resources in elections
- Weakened democracy because of the return of the formerly dominant party

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Question 7 (continued)

Part (d):

One point is earned for correctly identifying one factor other than elections that strengthens democracy.

Acceptable factors may include:

- Civil rights or civil liberties
- Civil society
- Independent judiciary
- Linkage institutions including media, interest groups, or political parties
- The establishment and adherence of rule of law
- Checks on power
- Governmental transparency

One point is earned for correctly explaining how that factor contributes to democracy.

Acceptable explanations may include:

- Increased political participation not related to voting
- Consideration of alternate viewpoints
- Increased protection of civil liberties
- Prevent concentration of governmental power
- Increased accountability of government officials
- Increased legitimacy or political efficacy

A score of zero (0) is earned for an attempted or off-task answer that earns no points.

A score of (—) is earned for a blank.

Country Context: We suggest that you spend approximately 40 minutes (20 minutes each) on questions 7 and 8.

7. Elections are held in both democratic and authoritarian regimes.
- Describe one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections.
 - Explain how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia.
 - Explain how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Mexico.
 - Identify one factor other than elections that strengthens democracy. Explain how that factor contributes to democracy.

Start: 9:20

10:00

9:20 11:00

a. Authoritarian regimes hold elections in order to bolster their support and ~~the~~ sense of legitimacy among the citizens. Because the citizens have some voice in the election process they are more likely to support some parts of the regime. This creates and helps support the regimes legitimacy among its citizens making citizens revolt less likely.

b. Presidential elections since 2000 have weakened democracy in Russia by consolidating power in the single party of United Russia.

The continual election of Putin or Putin's elite party members to high office, and the majority of United Russia candidates in the Duma since 2000 has established a single party system within Russia. This single party dominance weakens democracy by limiting dissenting opinion within Russia's government.

c. Presidential elections since 2000 have strengthened democracy in Mexico by limiting PRI's one-party dominance. Since 2000 PRI has lost its previous stranglehold on the government. This downfall has included the Presidency as the latest election resulted in Morena's candidate's victory. With the loss of the Presidency the one-party dominance of PRI is no longer possible. Mexico ~~has turned into~~ has transitioned into a competitive multi-party system because of these elections thus strengthening their democracy.

d. Another factor that contributes to and strengthens democracy is a free press. When the media is free to openly criticize and monitor the government it is able to fulfil its role as a watchdog. When the media fulfills its role as a government watchdog it helps to limit corruption within the government. They (the media) can inform citizens of proceedings that may raise concerns as well monitor if elected representatives are remaining true to their constituents' concerns. This level of accountability helps limit corruption, protect rule of law, and forces officials to be responsible for their actions; all of the above help to strengthen democracy.

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Country Context: We suggest that you spend approximately 40 minutes (20 minutes each) on questions 7 and 8.

7. Elections are held in both democratic and authoritarian regimes.
- Describe one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections.
 - Explain how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia.
 - Explain how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Mexico.
 - Identify one factor other than elections that strengthens democracy. Explain how that factor contributes to democracy.

7a) One reason authoritarian regimes hold elections is to gain legitimacy, by making it appear as though the people elect the political process. B) Presidential elections since 2000 have weakened democracy in Russia. Since 2000, Putin has either been president, or have his puppet Medvedev as President in Russia. This weakened Russian democracy, as Putin being in power for so long, and gaining many powers during his time, has greatly weakened Russian democracy. Additionally, Russia's Constitution stipulates the president may serve 2 consecutive terms. To get around this and stay in power, ~~Putin~~ ~~after~~ Medvedev was President briefly (with Putin as his Prime Minister) with Putin now again holding two ~~terms~~ consecutive terms. This dominance of government by a single person in Russia ~~lets~~ ^{helps} it help to ~~authoritarianism~~ ^{authoritarianism} and ~~weakens~~ ^{weakens} democracy greatly. C) Presidential elections since 2000 have strengthened democracy in Mexico. Throughout the 20th century, Mexico's presidency and government as a whole were dominated by the PRI political party. Since 2000 however, other parties

Like all the PRD ~~and~~ PAN have successfully completed in only in one case won Presidential election. This competition in government, as well as legitimate free and open elections greatly strengthen Mexico's democracy. One factor that strengthens democracy other than free and open elections is a strong, ~~and~~ efficient, and uncorrupted bureaucracy. Effective bureaucracies help to serve the people's needs through the power of the government. For example, ~~the~~ ~~that~~ Britain's bureaucracy is very strong, which leads to a ^{high} degree of democracy in Britain. In contrast, the bureaucracy in Mexico is plagued with corruption, which hinders democracy, ~~and even hinders~~.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Country Context: We suggest that you spend approximately 40 minutes (20 minutes each) on questions 7 and 8.

7. Elections are held in both democratic and authoritarian regimes.
- (a) Describe one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections.
 - (b) Explain how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia.
 - (c) Explain how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Mexico.
 - (d) Identify one factor other than elections that strengthens democracy. Explain how that factor contributes to democracy.

The major reason an Authoritarian regime would hold a election is to make people feel like they have a choice in who leads the government, thus portraying their citizens human rights as being present and safe and their government as just and legitimate. However many countries perform these mock elections, and it strengthens sometimes and other times it only serves to weaken their government. For instance when Russia even pretends to loosen it's authoritarian grip and holds mock elections, it is simply obvious and serves to increase the tensions between the government and it's citizens. The Russian news outlets begin to leak criticism of the government and other countries observe this and begin to raise suspicions on the humanitarian conditions of ~~that~~ the Russian people. However, for third world countries where the civil society just isn't developed enough

to either come about who's in charge of government or they just truly don't realize they are being deceived. Their main focus ~~is~~ remains on survival and feeding their families. So ~~what~~ ~~can~~ third world countries like Mexico can actually be strengthened by these so called elections that actually serve to put their civil societies mind at ease. Thus they can focus on governing or any other plans they have in mind. Another way that ~~the~~ Mexican can strengthen it's "Authoritarian" yet "democratic" government would be to cater ~~and~~ assist the common citizen and increase their political capital. This can be achieved with welfare help and city repairs of streets and side walks. While Mexico might be untrue to it's democratic responsibilities due to corruption at times, their peoples ideals of democracy will continue to thrive and so enough become all to real, instead of the Pri making all the decisions for all Mexicans despite what Mexicans want for their country.

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2019 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 7

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the reason authoritarian regimes hold elections, of how presidential elections since 2000 have strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia and in Mexico, and of how a factor other than elections strengthens democracy. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had five specific tasks: to describe one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections, to explain how presidential elections since 2000 have strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia, to explain how presidential elections since 2000 have strengthened or weakened democracy in Mexico, to identify a factor other than elections that strengthens democracy, and to explain how a factor other than elections strengthens democracy.

Sample: 7A

Score: 5

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for identifying one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections as “to bolster their support and sense of legitimacy.” The response describes the building of internal or external legitimacy as a reason why an authoritarian regime holds elections. Additional acceptable descriptions include helping the regime maintain power, preventing unrest, building support for the system, creating a perception of representation, shaping policies, and building a favorable reputation in the international community.

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for explaining how presidential elections since 2000 weakened democracy in Russia “by consolidating power in the single party of United Russia.” The response explains how presidential elections since 2000 weakened democracy in Russia with no alternation of party control. Additional acceptable explanations include less competition, reduced legitimacy or political efficacy due to voter fraud, and weakened liberal parties.

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for explaining that presidential elections since 2000 strengthened democracy because “Mexico has transitioned into a competitive multi-party system because of these elections.” The response explains how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened democracy in Mexico with the development of a multiparty system. Additional acceptable explanations include more competition and increased legitimacy or political efficacy.

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for identifying “free press” as a factor other than elections that strengthens democracy. The response provides a specific example that demonstrates understanding that the civil liberty of freedom of the press is a factor other than elections that strengthens democracy. Additional acceptable factors include civil society; an independent judiciary; linkage institutions including media, political parties, or interest groups; the establishment of and adherence to rule of law; checks on power; and governmental transparency.

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for explaining how freedom of the press contributes to democracy: “They (the media) can inform citizens of proceedings that may raise concerns as well monitor if elected representatives are remaining true to their constituents concerns.” The response explains how freedom of the press contributes to democracy by increasing the accountability of government officials. Additional acceptable explanations include increased political participation not related to voting, consideration of alternative viewpoints, increased protection of civil liberties, preventing the concentration of governmental power, and increased legitimacy or political efficacy.

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Question 7 (continued)

Sample: 7B
Score: 3

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for identifying “to gain legitimacy” as one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections. Additional acceptable descriptions include helping the regime maintain power, preventing unrest, building support for the system, creating a perception of representation, shaping policies, and building a favorable reputation in the international community.

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for explaining how presidential elections since 2000 weakened democracy in Russia: “This dominance of government by a single person in Russia lends itself to authoritarianism and weakens democracy greatly.” The response explains how presidential elections since 2000 weakened democracy in Russia with no alternation of top leadership. Additional acceptable explanations include less competition, reduced legitimacy or political efficacy due to voter fraud, and weakened liberal parties.

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for explaining how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened democracy because “other parties such as PRD, PAN have successfully competed.” The response explains how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened democracy in Mexico with the development of a multiparty system. Additional acceptable explanations include more competition and increased legitimacy or political efficacy.

In part (d) the response did not earn a point for identifying a factor other than elections that strengthens democracy as “a strong, efficient, and uncorrupted bueracracy” because this is not a factor that strengthens democracy. Acceptable factors include civil rights; civil liberties; civil society; an independent judiciary; linkage institutions including media, political parties, or interest groups; the establishment of and adherence to rule of law; checks on power; and governmental transparency.

In part (d) the response did not earn a point for explaining a factor other than elections that contributes to democracy as “to serve the peoples needs through the powers of the government.” Acceptable explanations include increased political participation not related to voting, consideration of alternative viewpoints, increased protection of civil liberties, preventing the concentration of governmental power, increased accountability of government officials, and increased legitimacy or political efficacy.

Sample: 7C
Score: 1

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for describing one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections is “to make people feel like they have a choice in who leads the government.” The response describes creating the perception of representation as a reason why an authoritarian regime holds elections. Additional acceptable descriptions include building internal and external legitimacy, helping the regime maintain power, preventing unrest, building support for the system, shaping policies, and building a favorable reputation in the international community.

In part (b) the response did not earn a point for explaining how presidential elections since 2000 weakened democracy in Russia. The response refers to “mock elections” but does not explain how presidential elections since 2000 weakened democracy in Russia. Acceptable explanations include less competition, no alternation of party control or top leadership, reduced legitimacy or political efficacy due to voter fraud, and weakened liberal parties.

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Question 7 (continued)

In part (c) the response did not earn a point for stating “to cater and assist the common citizen and increase their political capital” as an explanation of how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Mexico. Acceptable explanations include more competition, alternation of parties in power, and the development of multiparty system, and increased legitimacy or political efficacy.

In part (d) the response did not earn a point for identifying a factor other than elections that strengthens or weakens democracy because it is not attempted in the response. Acceptable factors include civil rights; civil liberties; civil society; an independent judiciary; linkage institutions including media, political parties, or interest groups; the establishment of and adherence to rule of law; checks on power; and governmental transparency.

In part (d) the response did not earn a point for explaining a factor other than elections that strengthens or weakens democracy because it does not attempt an explanation. Acceptable explanations include increased political participation not related to voting, consideration of alternative viewpoints, increased protection of civil liberties, preventing concentration of governmental power, increased accountability of government officials, and increased legitimacy or political efficacy.