
AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Free Response Question 2

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Question 2: Quantitative Analysis**5 points**

(a) Using the data in the graph, identify the country that was the most free in 2001. **1 point**

An identification includes the following:

- Mexico

(b) Using the data in the graph, describe a change in the data for Russia between 1991 and 2018. **1 point**

Acceptable descriptions include:

- Russia became less free over time.
- Russia became less free than Mexico.
- Russia moved toward the same level of freedom as China over time, reaching it in 2016.

Scoring Note: Indicating Russia went from a score of 3 to 6.5 with no further clarification is not sufficient for point.

(c) Describe one example of how a country consolidates democracy. **1 point**

Acceptable descriptions include:

- A country consolidates democracy by institutionalizing elements of democracy such as rule of law, free and fair elections, alternation in power, separation of power, protection of rights and liberties.
- All groups within society accept democracy and do not attempt to undermine its institutions.

Scoring Note: A response can discuss any of the elements listed in the first bullet and does NOT have to discuss them all.

(d) Using the data in the graph and your knowledge of AP Comparative Government and Politics, draw a conclusion about democratic consolidation in Russia between 1995 and 2000. **1 point**

Acceptable explanations include:

- From 1995 to 2000 Russia was unable to consolidate democracy. It became an illiberal democracy with censorship, electoral fraud, and restrictions on civil society.
 - From 1995 to 2000 President Yeltsin fired multiple prime ministers and was accused of engaging in corrupt practices. These are all indications that democracy was not consolidating. Thus, Russia's freedom score demonstrates that it became less free.
 - The graph reveals that democracy weakened in Russia from 1995 to 2000. This can be partially explained by political elites reacting to a nostalgia for communism by indulging in their own increasingly authoritarian practices.
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- (e)** Explain one change in Russia that occurred under Putin that has led to Russia and China having the same Freedom House score. **1 point**

Acceptable explanations include:

- Rule by a dominant person/party means that there is a lack of alternation in power.
- Corruption in elections has led to less competition in those elections and less opportunity to hold the government accountable.
- State control of media and restrictions on the internet have prevented the opposition from being able to compete fairly in elections against Putin or United Russia.
- Suppression of opposition or journalists prevents them from challenging the government.
- Restrictions on civil society impedes it from impacting politics.
- Executive abuses of the judicial system discourage it from checking executive power.
- Changing certain governmental positions from being elected to appointed makes the system less democratic.
- A declining emphasis on the rule of law undermines democratic consolidation.

Total for question 2 5 points



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

- a. In 2001, the most free country was Mexico.
- b. Through repeated consistently free and fair elections taking place within a country with there typically being competition, a state can consolidate democracy through regularly utilizing and therefore institutionalizing it, making it harder to weaken and overthrow.
- c. Between 1991 and 2018, Russia became increasingly less free, going from a score of 7 to 6.5.
- d. Democratic consolidation weakened in Russia between 1995 and 2000 because of the growth of power of the oligarchs after the fall of the Soviet Union during the sudden privatization of the economy under Boris Yeltsin.
- e. Under Putin, suppression of protests against the government through jailing and assassination of opposition leaders has resulted in a restriction of freedom.



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

- a. In 2001, Mexico is the most free with a political freedom ranking of about 2.5 which is much lower than that of Russia at 5 and China around 6.5. Then since a lower score correlates to a country being more free then this means that Mexico is the most free in 2001.
- b. Between 1991 and 2018 Russia has become steadily less free, starting at a score of 3 in 1991 & going all the way up to a score of 6.5 in 2018.
- c. A country could consolidate democracy by creating a single party system where only one party is in power and there are no opposition parties to get in their way.
- d. Between 1995 and 2000 it seems that Russia began its process of consolidating democracy, we can determine this because we know that as a country's democracy is consolidated, its political freedom goes down. Then looking at the graph we see a massive jump in Russia's political freedom ranking from 4 to 5. This means that their political freedom drastically went down meaning they must have started consolidating their democracy during this time frame.
- e. One major change under Putin is that he took over control of the media and put it in the hands of the government. This led to their freedom house score moving up closer to China's because it led to the people being forced to see one idea through the media so they lost their freedom to see other points of view and to make a choice.



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

- a.) According to the graph, the country most free in 2001 is China.
- d.) In the early 90s, Russia started the process of democratization from their former authoritarian regime. With this, people in Russia started to gain more political freedom, accounting for the upward trend in the graph for Russia from 1995 to 2000.
- c.) One example of how a country consolidates democracy is by establishing checks for those in power, such as guaranteed free and fair elections.
- b.) Between 1991 and 2018, Russia gained political freedom, according to the graph.
- e.) One change that has occurred under Putin that led to Russia and China having the same Freedom House score is the access that citizens have to elections.

Question 2

Quantitative Analysis

Overview

The intent of this question was to assess students' ability to interpret, describe, and draw conclusions from quantitative data presented in a graph. The intent, furthermore, was to assess students' ability to draw conclusions about democratic consolidation generally, and in Russia, one of the countries studied in the AP Comparative Government and Politics course, in particular. The chart presented data from the Freedom House Freedom Index for Mexico, Russia, and China for the time period 1991–2018. Students were expected to be able to correctly interpret data presented to them (in this case the Freedom House index in which a higher score corresponds to less freedom) and also to be able to recognize how that data is changing for a particular country (Russia) over time. Then students were expected to demonstrate their understanding of the process of democratic consolidation by describing one way that a country could consolidate its democracy. Students were also expected to be able to draw a connection between the data in the chart (which indicated a decline in freedom score for Russia) and the process of democratic consolidation, and the failure of that process, in Russia, by explaining why Russia did NOT consolidate its democracy between 1995 and 2000. Finally, students were expected to demonstrate their understanding of the political changes that have occurred in Russia under President Putin, which have resulted in Russia having the same level of freedom as China, as measured by Freedom House, by explaining how one change had that impact.

Sample: 2A

Score: 5

The response earned 1 point in part (a) for correctly identifying “Mexico” as the country that was most free in 2001.

The response earned 1 point in part (b) for describing a change in the data for Russia between 1991 and 2018 by stating, “Between 1991 and 2018, Russia became increasingly less free.”

The response earned 1 point in part (c) for describing an example of how a country consolidates democracy by stating, “Through ... free and fair elections ... a state can consolidate democracy.”

The response earned 1 point in part (d) for drawing a conclusion about democratic consolidation in Russia between 1995 and 2000. The response states, “Democratic consolidation weakened in Russia between 1995 and 2000 because of the growth of power of the oligarchs.”

The response earned 1 point in part (e) for accurately explaining one change in Russia that occurred under Putin that has led to Russia and China having the same Freedom House score. The response states, “Under Putin, suppression of protests against the government through jailing and assassination of opposition leaders has resulted in a restriction of freedom.”

Sample: B

Score: 3

The response earned 1 point in part (a) for correctly identifying “Mexico” as the country that was most free in 2001.

The response earned 1 point in part (b) for describing a change in the data for Russia between 1991 and 2018 by stating, “Between 1991 and 2018 Russia has become steadily less free.”

Question 2 (continued)

The response did not earn a point in part (c) for describing an example of how a country consolidates democracy. The response describes consolidation of political power rather than consolidation of democracy.

The response did not earn a point in part (d) for drawing a conclusion about democratic consolidation in Russia between 1995 and 2000. The response concludes that Russia consolidated democracy between 1995 and 2000, whereas the data show that Russia became less politically free during that time period.

The response earned 1 point in part (e) for accurately explaining one change in Russia that occurred under Putin that has led to Russia and China having the same Freedom House score. The response states, “One major change under Putin is that he took over control of the media and put it in the hands of the government. This led to their freedom house score moving up closer to China’s ... so they lost their freedom to see other points of view.”

Sample: 2C

Score: 1

The response did not earn a point in part (a) for correctly identifying Mexico as the country that was most free in 2001. The response incorrectly identifies “China” as the most free.

The response did not earn a point in part (b) for describing a change in the data for Russia between 1991 and 2018. The response incorrectly describes political freedom as increasing in Russia during this period.

The response earned 1 point in part (c) for describing an example of how a country consolidates democracy. The response states, “One example of how a country consolidates democracy is by establishing ... free and fair elections.”

The response did not earn a point in part (d) for drawing a conclusion about democratic consolidation in Russia between 1995 and 2000. The response incorrectly states that political freedom increased between 1995 and 2000.

The response did not earn a point in part (e) for accurately explaining one change in Russia that occurred under Putin that has led to Russia and China having the same Freedom House score. The response does not explain a political change under Putin that has resulted in less political freedom in Russia.