



## AP<sup>®</sup> Government and Politics: Comparative 2001 Sample Student Responses

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a) Two characteristics that promote civil liberties or political freedom are: affirmative action and the right to protest

b) Affirmative action contributes to an increased level of civil liberties and political freedom in France and India by making the government more representative of its constituents. France, ~~in~~ in early 2001, passed legislation ~~that~~ that ~~also~~ requires parties to put a certain amount of women on the ballot at election time. This allows for people to have the freedom to choose from a broader selection of candidates. In India, the constitution and recent laws call for similar actions. The constitution allocates a certain number of seats in parliament to the "untouchables" or the lowest caste in the Hindu religion. While nearly 10% of the Indian population belongs to this caste, it is likely that without such action the untouchables would not have the means to get elected. Recently another law expanded this affirmative action by setting aside  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the seats in village elections for this same caste. This <sup>too</sup> influences civil liberties by making the gov't more representative of its constituents.

c) The right to freely associate and protest is also consistent with political systems that promote civil liberties and freedom. In India

2

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and France such rights exist, yet India's is not absolute. The student ~~protests~~ and labor protests of 1968, clearly illustrate the French citizen's right to protest. Protests give common citizens the ability to influence gov't and let their voices be heard. When the National Assembly wanted to lower the youth minimum wage their was such an outcry that the matter was dropped from the policy agenda. It has been an effective tool for people to exercise their civil liberties. In India, as it is a developing nation still, with clear ethnic divisions, protests aren't as tolerated. This can be seen in the Sikh protest at the Golden Temple, in which Sikh students had been protesting the banning of their student group. Indira Gandhi ordered ~~the~~ Indian troops to storm the temple, which resulted in a blood bath. India ~~was~~ is a nation that was founded on protest and civil disobedience, going back to Mohandas Gandhi's fight for independence. Yet with its highly diverse population and developing status it has not fully achieved status as a political system that promotes civil liberties or political freedom.

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The characteristics of a nation's political system determine the amount of political freedom in that country. Two characteristics that influence the promotion of civil liberties are a lack of religious conflict as an important factor in politics and the political power of the military. France and Nigeria are sharply contrasted in both of these factors.

Religious conflict has always been an important aspect of a nation's political culture. France, like much of Europe, is an almost postreligious nation. Although its citizens do have religion, France's politics are not significantly influenced by religious beliefs or conflicts. This means that a particular religion's limitations on civil liberties do not limit ~~at~~ the scope of religious freedom for France's citizens. This is not the case in Nigeria. Nigeria is a country suffering from sharp religious divisions. About 50 percent of the population is Muslim, 30 percent is Christian, and 20 percent follow traditional religions. As well, the Muslims live mostly in the poorer, ~~the~~ northern region, while the Christians live mainly in the south. In the past year, sharia, Muslim holy law, has been adopted in the northern part of Nigeria. In years past Muslims have even tried to have Nigeria declared an Islamic republic like Egypt. Violence has resulted from the religious divisions within Nigeria. Taken together, this has caused a lower level of political freedom. Sharia law is notable for its disregard of civil liberties, and the violence caused by this division does not grant a high <sup>level</sup> ~~rate~~ of political freedom.

Another factor that determines the amount of political freedom in a country is the political importance of the military in that nation. The military has little political significance in France. France has not been involved in a major military conflict in decades, and status in the military does not grant one political power. Again, this is not the case in Nigeria. For most of the time since independence, Nigeria has been ruled by the military. There have been several military coups disposing the civilian governments. The military has always said it will return power to the citizens, but it only has once. The political importance of the military is important in whether civil liberties are promoted. In a great like France where the military lacks much political significance, civil liberties are generally more readily promoted. In a

2

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country like Nigeria, civil liberties are not given such a high status. The military will often claim that civil liberties must be suppressed for the military to effectively rule.

2

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Two characteristics of political systems that typically promote civil liberties or political freedom are a Constitution with a bill of rights (like the United States has), and a democratic system. These characteristics contribute to the level of civil liberties and political freedom in France and Mexico in that the bill of rights grants the citizens certain civil liberties and a democratic system grants them the freedom to choose their leaders. In France, the people generally have more freedom than the people in Mexico because the country is older and better established and the government is more stable. Mexico is a newer country, with a less stable government that places more restrictions on its citizens in an attempt to compensate for its instability. However, Mexicans can also gain some freedom by trading with neighboring countries such as the United States.