

MSC NIC marking 10-11 core essays

12404015

A passionate essay, and many good points. I think the essay begins a little weak, gets strong towards the middle, and, while remaining strong, loses a bit of focus toward the end.

The essay needs to begin with a clearer structure. Tell us what you see as the debate, and lay out a brief paragraph in the intro as to how you will structure the essay before plunging in. One approach is to systematically go issue by issue, comparing the two sides. Another is to lay out one side of the debate (ie integration), then the opponents (multiculturalists), then move to conclude.

The distinction between multiculturalism as demographic reality (p 1) and as public policy is not rendered clearly enough: it is worth noting that there is a relationship between these two aspects.

The shift to British national identity is a bit abrupt and it is not so clear how it ties into the overall structure. Note too that Britain can be a nation - it's just that it may act as a state-nation in which reside several sub-nations. The author on assimilation is Milton Gordon and he did not mention 'symphony', that was Horace Kallen. Pages 4 and 5 are excellent and operate at a high level. Still, I would like to see a bit tighter structure, defining issues (perhaps with headings) rather than moving from author to author.

The distinction between communitarian and cosmopolitan multiculturalism, and between open-borders civic nationalists/integrationists (Kenan Malik, Trevor Philips, some in New Labour) and more controlled-border civic nationalists (Goodhart, Blunkett wing of New Labour, Cameron Tories) might be drawn.

Overall, a good deal of research and many fine points, but with room for improved structure and somewhat tighter conceptual argument.

Structure

Introduction good				x	No or weak introduction
Develops logically			x		Rambles
Conclusion sums up & answers		x			Drifts off
Legible/fluent		x			Unclear

Substance

Analytical		x			Descriptive
Accurate			x		Questionable
Transparent		x			Opaque
Independent	x				Uncritical
Relevant	x				Answers different question

12630142

This is a very good essay that shows wide reading of key texts and a good grasp of the ideas within them. The essay has a point to make rather than simply being a compendium of short reviews of different authors' works. Stylistically, it is solid. Structurally, it could be improved: it is fine to come down solidly on one side of the ledger, but better to do this in the conclusion. It is better to state at the outset that you are assessing the theory of consociationalism, and set out a one paragraph plan of how you will structure the essay. Typically this would begin with a definition of the concept (as you do) and of the arguments of the proponents, followed by the arguments of opponents and an assessment against cases like Lebanon or Iraq which result in a conclusion. Some mention of Dixon's criticisms would be worthwhile, so too a bit more meat on the alternatives, ie vote pooling. Related to this is that you seem to frame US-style assimilation/multiculturalism as the alternative to consociationalism. However, this contains two problems: 1) you don't distinguish between assimilation and multiculturalism. Yet multiculturalism is a quasi-consociational method of managing, not eliminating, differences. You might think of it as consociationalism-lite. Hence the fierce opposition between assimilationists and multiculturalists in all western societies; 2) you don't differentiate immigrant and primary ethnic groups. Yet this is critical. Consociationalism is typically used for primary, not immigrant, groups. Even in the US, Indian tribes like the Navaho have consociational-style autonomy, and African-Americans have received affirmative action. This is at least in part a recognition of their difference from immigrant groups and is one reason why immigrant Hispanics' attempt to slot into these programmes (designed for 'indigenous' African-Americans) has been so controversial. Finally, it is important to specify where you think consociationalism has exacerbated conflict and where it has merely accompanied it. In Lebanon or Iraq, for instance, it remains unclear from your essay exactly how the alternative might have avoided war. Overall, though, a passionate, well-researched essay that gets most things right.

Structure

Introduction good			x			No or weak introduction
Develops logically			x			Rambles
Conclusion sums up & answers			x			Drifts off
Legible/fluent		x				Unclear

Substance

Analytical	x					Descriptive
Accurate		x				Questionable
Transparent		x				Opaque
Independent	x					Uncritical
Relevant	x					Answers different question

12604454

A convincing and well-written essay that nicely blends case study and theoretical readings. The essay draws on a fairly broad literature and extensive case knowledge to sketch out a case that leans toward the partition option. It is arguably the case that the structure might be improved by discussing the partitionist and integrationist alternatives in detail in separate sections, then moving to the Yugoslav case to draw the conclusion in favour of partition. Also, the conclusion seems to be a bit unclear in places. You favour partition in some statements, but in other places seem to equivocate - i.e. that many in Bosnia were non-nationalist but that ethno-history mattered; or that federalism could have worked in ex-Yugoslavia but that partition was more realistic; or that elites drove the conflict (with soldiers less keen) but that there was also a substratum of 'ancient hatreds' based on memories of previous atrocities. A cleaner recognition of the tensions inherent in these statements would help: also a sense that the modernist position aligns more with the integrationist argument in that if elites construct the conflict, such a conflict can be deconstructed by elites (though I take your point that if elites are at the bargaining table and favour division, they cannot be ignored). Overall, an engaging essay that does a good job of applying concepts to this important case.

Structure

Introduction good		x				No or weak introduction
Develops logically			x			Rambles
Conclusion sums up & answers		x				Drifts off
Legible/fluent		x				Unclear

Substance

Analytical		x				Descriptive
Accurate		x				Questionable
Transparent		x				Opaque
Independent	x					Uncritical
Relevant	x					Answers different question

12704161

This is a good essay that benefits from quite wide reading and a good use of case studies to illustrate the conceptual points. Some excellent paragraphs show you have a good conceptual grasp of many of the dynamics at work, viz. 'Diaspora groups can be mobilized to influence the political environment of their homelands as well as the political environment of their host nation. Governments may attempt to use their diaspora communities to promote their own interest; at the same time host governments may use diaspora communities to legitimate their own foreign policy

actions. Diaspora communities are often also often used as a political pawn to send messages between country of origin and the host country. '

Structurally, however, the essay could be improved: better to state at the outset that you are assessing the competing arguments that diasporas do/do not matter for foreign policy and set out a one paragraph plan of how you will structure the essay. Then treat each side in isolation before assessing the theories in light of the cases. Conceptually you might have said a bit more about the Shain framework, and treated the impact of diasporas on both homeland and hostland. Some reading on globalization and diaspora would also have added weight. More importantly, the essay seems to move too serially from author to author rather than being structured by concepts. In some cases (p 5 for Ambrosio, or Bordes-Benayoun quote), no reference is provided. Stylistically, numerous spelling and usage errors suggest sloppiness: ie 'Saideman not Saidmann, Allon Gal not Allan Gal; 'fro' instead of for, Serbain instead of Serbian, 'explination', 'can been', etc. So here we have a lot of strong insights and reading, but structure and style could be improved.

Structure

Introduction good				x		No or weak introduction
Develops logically				x		Rambles
Conclusion sums up & answers			x			Drifts off
Legible/fluent			x			Unclear

Substance

Analytical	x					Descriptive
Accurate		x				Questionable
Transparent		x				Opaque
Independent	x					Uncritical
Relevant	x					Answers different question

63

12606471

This essay is generally well-written (though please use indented paragraphs!) and draws on a nice range of authors to support its points. It does a commendable job of setting out an introduction and structure that makes sense: Arraying proponents of multiculturalism against opponents and carving out a separate section for each before engaging the two sides. However, analytically, the piece needs to be stronger. Too often what appears are a somewhat breezy set of reviews of successive authors (albeit within a good overarching structure of opponents v proponents). It would be better to let concepts, not authors, take the lead in shaping the essay. More seriously, treatment of authors' work is often superficial and so glides over the hard issues which divide proponents from opponents. To begin with, you need to distinguish between the demographic fact of multiple ethnic groups (do not use 'cultures') in a territory, and the public policy question of how to manage this

diversity. Multiculturalists and integrationists differ on several counts which were not raised here: institutions - should there be a single set of schools, legal institutions, hospitals, media or autonomous ones for each group; laws: one set of rules for all citizens, or recognition of difference?; identity - should national or ethnic identity take precedence?; political economy: jobs and power proportional to group numbers (through quotas and affirmative action) or not?.

Behind all of these questions lie several key axes of debate: 1) whether politics should recognise groups and group rights, or only individuals and individual rights. What to do if - as with shari'a law or affirmative action - these clash with free speech or equality of individuals?; 2) the extent to which ethnic minorities are expected to integrate into the nation. Can one have several official languages? Passports? loyalties? histories? moralities? Does toleration enhance diversity and wellbeing, or does it weaken common civic bonds that are needed to support a welfare state, keep crime in check, maintain an effective democracy and ensure the equality of gender, lifestyle, disability and individuals as well as ethnic groups.

These real conflicts are too often glossed over here because of inadequate conceptualisation of multiculturalism and its alternatives. The subtle differences between communitarian and cosmopolitan multiculturalists, civic and ethnic nationalists, are also lost and should be brought out more.

Structure

Introduction good		x			No or weak introduction
Develops logically		x			Rambles
Conclusion sums up & answers				x	Drifts off
Legible/fluent			x		Unclear

Substance

Analytical				x	Descriptive
Accurate				x	Questionable
Transparent				x	Opaque
Independent				x	Uncritical
Relevant			x		Answers different question

58

12700940

This essay is a true tour de force in terms of the range of readings and the wealth of different arguments and cases it treats within the space of 3000 words. The analysis is fine-grained and shows an appreciation for the causes, composition and detail of Islamist movements in several important contexts. The essay, however, could be better organised, with an introduction that sets out the plan to be followed in the essay, and with competing categories that pertain to the essay question.

The 'who's who' categorisation which appears early on is useful, but is not directly related to the essay question. It would be better to organise the essay around competing views on whether Islam will/will not collide with the state, then assess these competing perspectives against the evidence in a third section to determine who is right. In this essay, you largely compare three categories of Islamist as identified by Zubaida. This might work if you identified early on that two of the categories (jihadism, conservative revolutionary) collide with the state while one (reformist democratic political Islam) does not, then proceeded to examine these views to see which best fits the evidence. As it stands, the essay question seems to get lost in the detail.

The other aspect that is missing is a reference to the interplay between the idea of the nation-state and that of umma. After all, for Qutb and Qutbist Islamism, nations are western imports and divide the Umma/Caliphate. On the other hand, Zubaida and Roy both mention that aspects of political Islam are nationalist rather than spiritual, and so more attention could be paid to this. Many Islamist movements have been nationalist, or have become nationalist (ie Iranian Mullahs, Hamas, AKP), and so this should have merited more commentary in answering the question of whether Islamism collides with the nation-state.

All told, much good analysis and wide reading, though structure needs to be improved and more discussion of the nation/nationalism could be brought in.

Structure

Introduction good				x		No or weak introduction
Develops logically			x			Rambles
Conclusion sums up & answers			x			Drifts off
Legible/fluent			x			Unclear

Substance

Analytical		x				Descriptive
Accurate		x				Questionable
Transparent			x			Opaque
Independent		x				Uncritical
Relevant			x			Answers different question

62

12602282

An excellent, comprehensive, sweeping account on a difficult topic. The essay nicely identifies the major approaches within both multiculturalism and integrationism, as well as the complex interplay between English and British national identity. It identifies the conflict between individual liberty and pluralism as a major axis of conflict. Also that between national solidarity/democratic legitimacy and multiculturalism. The note on the monoculturalism of hybridity is interesting and original. One possible aspect to consider is whether English national or even ethnic identity may in fact be compatible with multiculturalism: not multiculturalism as currently practiced, but a more

non-judgmental multiculturalism. This highlights the fact that both multiculturalism and English nationalism may be viewed as communal expressions that might be in conflict with neutral-state cosmopolitan liberalism. But in any event, this is an excellent essay which gets to the heart of a tricky question, and a major issue of our time.

Structure

Introduction good	x					No or weak introduction
Develops logically	x					Rambles
Conclusion sums up & answers	x					Drifts off
Legible/fluent	x					Unclear

Substance

Analytical	x					Descriptive
Accurate	x					Questionable
Transparent	x					Opaque
Independent	x					Uncritical
Relevant	x					Answers different question

72

12614943

This is a very good essay on a complex topic. It identifies the link between constructivism and the idea that national identity affects foreign policy (and vice-versa). It covers a wide range of readings and has solid analysis while demonstrating the ability to apply theory to cases past and present. The big area for improvement is structural. The essay does begin with a plan, which sets out part I as an interrogation of the effect of national identity on foreign policy and part II as the reverse. The actual essay however contains numerous headings, without a hierarchy that culminates in these two major sections. There is a degree of serial treatment of cases and authors rather than conceptual ordering. The conclusion is excellent and more of what we are after: your own synthesis of texts, in the shape of the major ideas.

More importantly, this does not lead to a clash of ideas. A better strategy would be to set out competing arguments: constructivism vs realism or liberalism. Then consider this contrast within your two modalities of national identity→foreign policy and foreign policy→national identity. Throughout, there needs more theoretical input, notably from Bloom, Prizel, Snyder and others. Be more specific about how national identities can either override 'rational' state policies (see Snyder in particular on this) or shape the content of state interests - notably in terms of furthering ideas as in the Iranian or American case; cultural links - as in Greece-Serbia (mention Huntington's civilizations theory here) or with the Muslim world re Israel; or defense of the symbolic sacred links between ethnicity and territory as in irridentist cases like Ireland, Somalia. Throughout the

discussion, you should always be weighing the view that state power/material interests were paramount with identity either ignored or treated as a post-hoc form of legitimation (the realist position) vs the more constructivist position that myths and symbols counted. In this way, you are assessing competing ideas against evidence. As it stands, you are fleshing out ideas with cases, but the discussion comes across as somewhat of an unstructured series of vignettes than a tightly-argued discussion which repeatedly returns to the theoretical problem stated at the beginning (i.e. does national identity matter?) On the flipside, too, the question might be phrased as to whether foreign policy shapes identity or whether identity simply selects the best (or worst) from a menu of foreign policy realities. A final aspect: you could mention that there are different variants of national identity operating within countries, such that competing visions of the nation clash and the result of this can be to steer 'THE' national identity in one direction or another over time, so that we don't actually have countries with singular identities, but with meandering ones, which may account for shifts in the content of identity and foreign policy over time in a particular case, i.e. Iran, Russia, USA. So what we have here is a good deal of reading and sound grasp of the material, written up well. But it needs to be put together with more of an eye towards the theoretical question at hand.

Structure

Introduction good		x				No or weak introduction
Develops logically				x		Rambles
Conclusion sums up & answers	x					Drifts off
Legible/fluent			x			Unclear

Substance

Analytical		x				Descriptive
Accurate		x				Questionable
Transparent		x				Opaque
Independent		x				Uncritical
Relevant			x			Answers different question