

Document Based Question

Writing Guide and Sample Answers

Evaluate whether it was economic or political factors that led to the rise of fascist and totalitarian regimes in the years 1919-1939.

Preliminaries:

It is recommended that you spend 15 minutes reading the documents and planning your essay. As this question is asking you to make a judgment on economic or political factors in the rise of totalitarian or fascist governments, you will want to determine if the documents refer to economic or political matters.

In this essay you will want to make a clear statement regarding the causes of the rise of fascism or totalitarian governments in Europe after World War I. You may want to consider using two examples in your thesis that support your claim and in the third you can refer to a counterexample in order to set the response for the analysis point of the essay. In general, you should try for three historical examples that you can base the body of the essay on, each example will be approximately a paragraph in length.

Structuring your essay:

Begin the essay with a description of the broader historical context. Very simply: Ask yourself, what events led to the rise of fascist and totalitarian governments? If you can, in a paragraph, discuss the factors that led to events of the 1920's and 30's and then connect it to your thesis. You can also begin your essay with the thesis and then discuss the events leading to the rise of these governments, but both of these requirements should be in the beginning of the essay.

Once you have completed the **Thesis** and **Contextualization**, begin the "body" of your essay using the three examples you stated in your thesis. Using your knowledge of the period, and **specific facts** that you can recall, explain **WHY and HOW** these examples are significant. It is not enough to describe them, you must explain the **WHY and HOW**.

During your reading time you should also determine where in your essay the documents will be best used. You can group them first into political and economic categories and then determine which documents will support the points in the thesis. For example, if you claim economic factors are most significant you can group documents 1, 2 and 6 into the economic part of your response. Documents 3 and 7 are clearly political in nature, and Document 5 could be used in either category.

For at **least 3** of the documents you need to describe evidence that relates to your topic. DO NOT simply quote the document. Explain **WHAT** the document is saying and **HOW** it relates to your thesis. For at **least 3** other documents you will need to 'source'; meaning discuss the Point of View, Purpose, Historical Situation and or Audience. This is the **WHY** part of your response.

You will also need one additional piece of specific historical information beyond what is found in the documents that is relevant to your argument. This is evidence beyond the documents. It should be in general, a couple of sentences long and you can certainly reference as evidence beyond the documents. (Examples Below)

The last paragraph of your essay you should try to demonstrate complex understanding. Complex Understanding refers to a modification or qualification of your argument. It may be as simple as saying “On the other hand some argue that it was political factors rather than economic...” and then discuss your argument.

You do not need to write a **conclusion**, but if you have time to rewrite your thesis, using different words, it is another opportunity to make sure you get the thesis point, in case you do not get it the first time.

Thesis Examples that would earn a point:

Although political factors played a part in the rise of fascist and totalitarian governments such as the ineffectiveness of the Weimer government, it was in fact economic factors including the war reparations forced upon Germany, and the effects of the Great Depression that had the greatest impact in giving rise to fascist governments.

It was mostly political factors that led to the rise of fascist and totalitarian states after WWI due to the ineffectiveness of the newly created democratic governments, the consolidation of the Soviet Union by Stalin and the Nazi appeal to nationalism and rejection of the Treaty of Versailles.

The rise of fascist and totalitarian governments had both political and economic factors being involved. For example, in the Soviet Union Stalin used terror to gain political control of the the soviet republics, Mussolini's fascists marched on Rome to take over the government and Hitler gained power due to the crippling effects of the Depression on Germany.

Thesis Examples that would not earn a point:

It was mainly economic factors rather than political factors that led to the rise of Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy and Stalin in Russia.

While some may argue that it was economic factors that led to the rise of fascist and totalitarian governments, I would say it was primarily economic factors.

Contextualization:

Descriptions of the events leading up to the rise of fascist and totalitarian governments may include:

- Defeat of the Central Powers in World War I and the subsequent effects of the Treaty of Versailles. Including the German loss of territory, colonies, reductions in the armed forces, reparations and the war-guilt clause. The breakup of the Austrian-

Hungarian Empire and the establishment of democratic governments, for example Czechoslovakia.

- The Bolshevik Revolution and Russian Civil War which led to massive casualties and destruction in the former Russian Empire. Then the rise of the Soviet Union under the leadership of Lenin.
- The disillusionment of many on both sides after the war. The German feeling of betrayal, the Italian feeling that they did not get their share of the spoils, the French and British, mourning the tremendous losses as a result of the war.
- Failure of the United States to join the League of Nations and that organization's inability to function as an arbiter of peace.
- The weakness of the Weimar Republic and other newly formed democratic states to deal with the variety of social, political and economic problems of the 1920's.

Evidence from the Documents:

- In order to get 1 point, you will need to accurately describe the content of at least **three** documents to address the rise of fascist and totalitarian governments
 - (Document 2) The graph displays the sudden spike in the unemployment rate that was associated with the Great Depression in the years 1930-1933.
 - (Document 5) The document written by Stalin shows that the kulaks are enemies of the collectivization process and will be eliminated by the Soviet government.
- In order to earn 2 points, you will need to accurately support your argument using at least **six** documents.
 - (Document 1) Keynes claims that by inflicting harsh economic punishment on Germany will lead to radical actions. (supporting economic factors)
 - (Document 7) Mussolini's argument is that democracy is weak and needs to be replaced, through violence if necessary. (supporting political factors)

Evidence beyond the Documents:

To earn this point you need to include **one additional piece of specific historical evidence** (beyond what is found in the documents) relevant to the prompt. This needs to be evidence different from your contextualization paragraph and it must be more than a phrase, reference or simply a name drop. (Examples)

- Another event supports the argument that political factors were the cause of the rise of fascist states. In Spain in the 1930's, Franco led conservative and fascist forces to defeat the republican forces in the Spanish Civil War. After his victory, Franco established a fascist government that while close with Germany and Italy remained neutral during the war. In many respects this was a preview of the conflict that was to come during World War II.
- In France, assisted by the reparation payments from Germany, began construction of the Maginot line as well as other public works projects. The Maginot line was designed to defend France from a German attack. This government spending eased to some degree the pain and suffering of the Great Depression.
- Another economic factor that affected Germany was hyperinflation which took place in the 1920's. The German mark became almost worthless as shown in pictures of

people using the currency to wall paper their homes, use the currency as a fire starter or as toys for kids to play with.

Sourcing:

For at least three documents, you must explain how or why the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and or audience is relevant to your argument.

- Examples that **DO NOT** earn the point.
 - The audience of Goebbels speech is the German People.
 - The purpose of document 2 is to show the rate Germans were unemployed in the 1920's and 1930's.
- Examples that **DO** earn this point.
 - As an economist, Keynes in document 1 is primarily concerned with the economic decisions made at the Versailles conference. His essay is a warning to the Allied powers not to inflict harsh punishment on Germany because it may backfire on them and create conditions hostile to the Allied nations. (**Point of View**)
 - Document 2 which shows the drastic increase in unemployment in Germany starting in 1930 was due to the spreading of the Great Depression from the United States. Factors that affected Germany in were the Dawes Plan which was the reparation payment plan to the allies and the period of hyperinflation in the 1920's (**Historical situation**)
 - Goebbels essay sends a message to the German people, many of whom are frustrated with the weakness of the Weimar government. Many of those receptive to this message were German patriots embarrassed by the state of Germany and many wanted to restore German power and prestige. They would support a party that was willing to do anything to make Germany great again. (**Audience**)
 - Stalin's purpose in writing about the Kulaks was to motivate the Soviet officials in charge of implementing collectivization to be ruthless in dealing with a group of people who could possibly resist the movement. He implies that these Kulaks were to be eliminated from the Soviet system, violently if necessary. (**Purpose**)

Complexity:

To earn this point you will need to demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development in the prompt, using evidence to corroborate (confirm or support), qualify or modify an argument.

Examples that may earn this point:

Explaining nuance of an issue by examining **multiple variables**:

- As referenced in Document 5, in some cases it was both economic and political as well as social factors that caused the rise of totalitarian governments. In this case Stalin is pressuring the Soviet Union for the forced establishment of collective farms. From an economic point of view this is the farmers taking control of the means of production, from a political point of view, Stalin is trying to eliminate a group of people who may resist his political control. Socially, many of these Kulaks were

Ukrainian and there was bias against the Ukrainian people from the Russian perspective.

Explaining **multiple causes**:

- Despite the emphasis on political or economic factors in the rise of fascist governments, it was in fact social issues that were really responsible for the rise of Hitler. Hitler's anti-semitism, as shown in his book *Mein Kampf*, places the blame for all of Germany's troubles squarely at the feet of the Jewish people. His argument that the Jewish bankers conspired to economically weaken Germany, Jewish influence in the arts, and according to Hitler, their polluting of German culture. These were key factors told and retold by the Nazi's in their rise to power.

Explaining relevant or **insightful connections**:

- Despite often being grouped together, Fascist Italy, Germany and Spain were arch enemies of communism and the Soviet Union. The Spanish Civil War evolved into a fight between the forces of communism (the Republic) supported by the Soviet Union and the Nationalists supported by Germany and Italy. Throughout his rise to power Hitler raged against the evils of communism and gained a great deal of support from industry leaders due to his opposition to communist Russia. On the other hand the Soviet Union also used the fascists as a convenient enemy stating that the fascists were going to take away the rights of the workers and end the revolution.