

Markscheme

May 2026

Global Politics

Higher level and standard level

Paper 1

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Interdependence in global politics: Achievements and limitations of the UN

Bulleted lists in this markscheme indicate likely points that students may include in their answer: they are not exhaustive, and examiners should credit other valid points not listed.

1. Outline what Source A says about the achievements of the United Nations (UN). [3]

Points from the source may include:

- Source A states that, in general, at least moderate to significant progress has been made on essential items (example) to ensure development.
- Source A states that the most significant impact has been done on peace, justice and strengthening institutions.
- Source A states that ensuring economic wellbeing is one of the main areas of progress, as significant changes have been made regarding economic growth and ensuring there is no poverty.
- Source A states that more could be done on certain environmental areas, such as ensuring life on land and clean water and sanitation.
- While the source identifies many positive areas and accomplishments, it also highlights that only moderate progress has been achieved in partnering on achieving the SDGs.

*Award **[1 mark]** for each relevant point up to a maximum of **[3 marks]**.*

Other relevant points not listed can also be rewarded.

2. With explicit reference to Source B **and one** example you have studied, explain the impact of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) on inequality.

[4]

Answers from source B may include, but are not limited to:

- Source B states that intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the UN may promote and amplify the importance of inequality issues, thus reaching a broader audience.
- Source B mentions that states are still the primary actor in determining the outcome of resolving inequality, as it states that the UN needed to lobby states in order to ensure that a favourable outcome is reached regarding inequality.
- Source B discusses some mechanisms how the UN could have an impact on other actors, e.g., mentioning how the UN can influence businesses to tackle the issue of inequality.
- Source B states that inequality is a major barrier in achieving the policy goals of the UN. As a result, it seems to imply inequality is impacting the UN more than the UN can achieve policy outcomes related to inequality.

Answers from own knowledge may include, but are not limited to:

- The EU is one of the organizations that has placed inequality, including economic and social inequality, at the heart of its actions. An example of this is the EU Minimum Wage Directive (2023) so that EU countries ensure adequate minimum wages to reduce inequality.
- Regional IGOs more broadly promote economic growth. For example, ASEAN and similar organizations promote economic activity, trade, and cooperation, leading to increased economic activity that can help diminish inequality.
- There are numerous specialized international agencies and entities within the UN, such as ECOSOC, World Bank, etc., that attempt to tackle the issue of economic inequality.
- While multinational organizations have a significant impact on reducing inequality, NGOs have strongly advocated for this issue and welfare NGOs such as Oxfam have done a lot to make this issue more visible.

*Other relevant points not listed can also be rewarded. Students are not expected to make four separate points in order to achieve full marks. For each relevant point a maximum of **[2 marks]** may be awarded, up to a total of **[4 marks]**. If only accurate source detail is used or only accurate own-knowledge points are provided, award a maximum of **[3 marks]**.*

3. Compare and contrast the views of Source C **and** Source D on the effectiveness of the UN.

[6]

Potential points of contrast include:

- Sources C and D disagree about the progress of the UN. While Source C outlines how the scope of the responsibilities the UN has tackled has increased, Source D points out the lack of transparency and accountability in how the UN Security Council operates.
- Source C and D disagree about the role of the Security Council. While Source C emphasizes that the UN Security Council is the only body that should authorize the legal use of force, Source D believes it is outdated and that it requires significant reform to address contemporary concerns.
- Source C focuses on a more holistic view of the role of the UN, including that of combating poverty and climate change, while Source D primarily focuses on how the UN is meant to prevent global conflict.

Potential points of comparison include:

- Sources C and D both suggest that the main goal of the UN is maintaining international peace and security. Source C states that the UN is a global leader in achieving peace and similarly Source D states that the UN was designed to ensure peace.
- Both sources stress the importance of states to the functioning of the UN. Source C emphasizes that the key to the UNSC operating is cooperation between states and Source D highlights conflicting interests of states as the key reason why the UNSC does not function.
- Both sources stress that the responsibilities of the UN have grown beyond traditional peacekeeping. Source C states that the UN's responsibilities are constantly growing and, similarly, Source D implies that by mentioning that the UN is "slow in the way it deals with many issues".

Award [2] per relevant point of comparison or contrast up to a maximum of [6]. For a [6] mark response expect detailed comparison and contrast but do not expect all of the points above and allow other relevant points. For responses that do not attempt to compare or contrast the relevant sources at all or fail to meet the standard described award [0] as the command term was not addressed.

4. With reference to at least three sources and your own knowledge, evaluate the limitations of the UN.

[12]

Question 4 is assessed according to the markbands that follow, in conjunction with these marking notes.

Source material may include, but is not limited to:

Source A

- The UN has brought a holistic and broad discussion of development through the SDGs. Therefore, the UN has more achievements than limitations.
- The UN has still not achieved all the necessary targets to meet the SDGs and there is some lag on progress on key areas e.g., environmental factors.
- While the UN may have some limitations, it has managed to make the number of accomplishments in providing a higher living standard, raising people up from poverty, thus highlighting the influence of the UN.

Source B

- Despite its limitations, the UN has done a lot to bring some core issues such as inequality to the forefront of political debates.
- Even when the UN does have specific goals and targets, it sometimes lacks planning or precise implementation mechanisms. Source B specifically states that there is lacking measures for how to measure the progress for this goal.
- The UN is still beholden to the power of member states and can do little meaningful action without their approval.

Source C

- While the UN has significant limitations, it has an expanding scope of responsibilities including climate change and other factors.
- While the UN is not always effective in achieving peace and security, the UN security council is the only body that can authorize the legal use of source.
- The UN also has many achievements, such as expanding the Climate Promise to more than 120 countries.

Source D

- The UN is very expensive and is not using its budget effectively to resolve international issues.
- The UN lacks transparency and democracy in its decision-making, particularly in regards to the UN Security Council.
- The UN is not effective in achieving its core task of achieving international peace and security nor has it prevented new conflicts taking place and international laws have been violated in these conflicts as a result of the UN's inaction.
- The UN is still significantly influenced by the power of the permanent member-states of the Security Council.

Own knowledge could include, but is not limited to:

- The UN has ignored major international crises and has ceded the role of mediator to other organizations or countries, for example taking little meaningful action to end the conflict between Israel and Hamas.
- The UN often has difficulties prioritizing new and fast-pacing challenges. New technologies such as the rise of AI are rarely discussed in conjunction with UN efforts and how they may aid or inhibit the UN in achieving such goals.
- In terms of both effective mechanisms to resolve new issues, the UN is lagging behind regional organizations such as ASEAN, the EU, and other organizations that have a far stronger capacity to deal with modern issues. They also have enforcement mechanisms to make sure member-states more readily work together on policy items.

- The UN has a long history of failing on climate objectives and targets, with the failure of many objectives such as the MDGs and numerous other initiatives not being successful.
- The UN is the most stable international actor despite its many limitations, still serving as a forum where member-states cooperate even during times of diplomatic or economic disputes. As such, it serves as a vital middle ground needed to achieve diplomatic efforts.

Do not expect all the above, and reward other relevant points not listed. These points need to be woven into well-organized arguments and counter-arguments.

If only source material or only own knowledge is used, the response can only be awarded a maximum of [8]. To achieve the maximum [12], responses must refer to at least three sources.

Responses may make use of sources C and D as supporting and countering claims and should synthesize these with relevant examples from own knowledge to support their arguments. An effective response should contain some conceptualization as to what a “limitation of the UN” is and link this to the relevant sources. Claims and alternative claims can be drawn from all sources.

Students should synthesize and evaluate evidence from the sources and from their study of the prescribed content and key concepts of the course.

Markbands for paper 1, question 4

Marks	Description
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	The response shows a limited understanding of the demands of the question. • Little relevant knowledge is demonstrated. • References to the sources are made, but they are mostly descriptive or no clear evidence is integrated in the response. • Different perspectives are not identified.
4–6	The response shows some understanding of the demands of the question. • Some knowledge is demonstrated, but this is not always relevant or accurate. • Evidence from the sources is partially integrated into the response. • Different perspectives are identified, but not explored.
7–9	The response shows adequate understanding of the demands of the question. • Relevant and accurate knowledge is demonstrated. • There is synthesis of own knowledge and source material. • Different perspectives are explored.
10–12	The response shows an in-depth understanding of the demands of the question. • Relevant and accurate knowledge is demonstrated throughout. • There is effective synthesis of own knowledge and source material, with appropriate examples integrated in the response. • Different perspectives are explored and evaluated.