

Markscheme

May 2026

Global Politics

Higher level and standard level

Paper 2

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General marking guidance

Expect a range of approaches in student responses

Examination questions encourage independent thinking on the part of students. Expect a range of appropriate responses. Examiners should be aware that in some cases, students may take a different approach that, if appropriate, should be rewarded.

The content listed indicates possible areas students might cover in their answers. They are **not** compulsory points. They are only a framework to help examiners in their assessment. Students may take a different approach, which if appropriate, should be rewarded. Examiners should not expect all of the points listed and should allow other valid points.

An understanding of, and an ability to work with, the key concepts of the course are particularly important in this paper. Whether or not the key concepts are explicitly mentioned in a question, students are expected to draw on their conceptual understanding of global politics and are invited to draw on any political concepts that are relevant to the arguments they put forward.

Marking accurate and relevant knowledge and examples

For some questions, there is no single “correct” answer. Examiners must be prepared to award full marks to answers which demonstrate accurate and relevant knowledge.

For example, 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.

Unless demanded by the question, explicit stand-alone definitions are not required: understanding of terms may sometimes be conveyed as effectively through the way they are woven into the response.

About extended responses

It should be recognized that, given time constraints, answers are not intended to reflect a fully polished extended response that addresses the full range of possible examples, issues and topics possible. Use the provided markbands in conjunction with the marking notes to award marks.

Markbands for paper 2

Marks	Description
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	The response shows limited understanding of the demands of the question. • The arguments are poorly structured and unclear. • There is little relevant knowledge present. • The response is descriptive or is based in unsupported generalizations.
4–6	The response shows some understanding of the demands of the question. • The response is structured to an extent, but the organization lacks clarity or coherence. • There is limited justification of the claims presented. • Some relevant knowledge is present. • Some examples are mentioned but they are not developed or their relevance is unclear. • Diverse perspectives are not identified.
7–9	The response indicates an understanding of the demands of the question, but these are only partially addressed. • The response presents an adequate structure and organization. Arguments are clear and coherent. • Most of the main claims are justified. • Relevant and accurate knowledge is present. • Supporting examples are partly developed. • Diverse perspectives are identified, but not explored.
10–12	The demands of the question are understood and addressed. • The response is well structured and organized. Arguments are clear, coherent and well supported. • All of the main claims are justified. • The response demonstrates relevant and accurate knowledge. • Supporting examples are adequately developed. • Diverse perspectives are explored.
13–15	The demands of the question are understood and addressed, and possible implications are considered. • The response is well structured, balanced and effectively organized. Arguments are clear, coherent and compelling. • All of the main claims are justified and evaluated. • Relevant and accurate knowledge is used effectively throughout the response. • Supporting examples are effectively developed. • Diverse perspectives are explored and evaluated.

Section A

1. To what extent do you agree with the claim that justice is achievable in global politics?

Responses are likely to begin with definitions of key term justice. Justice could be explained as the principle of fairness and equity in the treatment of individuals, groups, and states, often associated with international legal standards and ethical considerations. Students may discuss political and social aspects of justice. Social justice is the fair and equitable status of all individuals and groups within a society and includes social, political, environmental and economic institutions, laws, movements or policies that provide such fairness. Political justice links with the concept of justice within the sphere of politics and governance. It involves challenging political inequalities that hinder the well-being of individuals and communities. Students may also identify forms of justice such as distributive (determining who gets what), procedural (determining how fairly people are treated), retributive (based on punishment for wrongdoing) and restorative (which tries to restore relationships to “rightness”). Responses may consider what it means for something to be ‘achievable’ in the context of global politics, e.g., achievement of justice may be linked to people’s independence and equality, humanitarian intervention, right to self-determination, human rights for all, appropriate conduct as in warfare, etc. Students should be able to explain to what extent they agree with the claim that justice is achievable in global politics.

Arguments in favour of the claim that justice is achievable in global politics may include:

- As justice is an integral ingredient for legitimacy and acceptance in global politics states and other actors strive to ensure its existence. Global networks of states and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and regional coalitions such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) generally work to pursue justice for human rights abuses in an increasingly interconnected world, e.g., In 2019, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) agreed to hear a case brought by The Gambia accusing Myanmar of genocide.
- Non-state actors, intergovernmental organizations and other actors in the global arena are actively working towards ensuring justice for all. They help formulate laws and bolster the voice of vulnerable groups who are facing injustice, e.g., In 2010, Costa Rica, a state without a military since 1949, challenged Nicaragua at the ICJ, when Nicaraguan military forces entered the disputed territory of Isla Portillos between their countries. The Court sided with Costa Rica. Nicaragua withdrew their troops and paid compensation to Costa Rica for environmental harm.
- Marginalized and vulnerable groups can achieve justice because they feel empowered and exercise their right to resistance with support and assistance from other global actors. For example, the Arab Spring revolution, which started in 2011, spread across borders and was symbolic of peoples fight against injustice as well as their ability to achieve justice.
- States come together to tackle issues such as poverty, racial discrimination and the climate crisis, that are potential sources of injustice and, in doing so, try to ensure everyone is fairly treated. For example, this

can be seen in the loss and damages fund that came out of the 2015 Paris Agreement under the notion of “common but differentiated responsibilities”.

- Justice is achievable in global politics because actors such as Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) are also championing it. For instance, after the Rana Plaza incident, pressure from actors such as NGOs and consumers for workers rights and justice for those killed in the fires, saw the signing of the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety in 2013.

Arguments against the claim that justice is achievable in global politics may include:

- The term justice has contested meanings and its implications may vary. It may thus be seen as a utopian idea or a normative challenge to the self-interest of actors and not fully achievable. Depending on how one defines justice, it may be easier to achieve in some contexts than in others, e.g., Humanitarian intervention occurred in Libya but not in Syria pointing to the selective enforcement of ‘justice’.
- Justice presumes a universality or commonality of values, interests, needs, and perspectives. But this is not always true or possible. Justice is a matter of perception and justice for one could mean injustice to another. For example, according to “universal” human rights instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), discrimination against women in Afghanistan and Pakistan is unjust. However, some may claim it is justified based on cultural relativism. Furthermore, even within cultures there may be differing opinions on what is “just”.
- At the global level, justice is not achievable for everyone, rather only for more powerful actors. Powerful countries political, economic and strategic interests often lead to injustice for the smaller and weaker states. For instance, the exploitation of resources from some African states, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by countries such as China due to economic interests is unjust because the former is not able to reap economic benefits but suffers from unsustainable practices. Since the bulk of processing of raw materials happens in China, African states miss out on the extra revenue and expertise they could gain from processing such materials themselves.
- Global institutions aimed at ensuring justice are often biased themselves and/or face structural issues and constraints. Furthermore, they often lack the ability to enforce laws/rules. For example, due to allegations of an inherent bias against African states some African states such as The Gambia and South Africa have threatened to withdraw from the court.
- Justice spans many different dimensions and it is possible that one form of justice may be achieved while others may not, making it very difficult for justice to be ‘fully’ achieved. Sometimes, this may even involve trade-offs between different forms of justice, i.e., Achieving restorative justice may mean forgoing retributive justice.

Responses should demonstrate a clear understanding of the extent to which students think justice can or cannot be achieved in global politics. Responses should contain references to specific contemporary real-world examples. Arguments in favour of the claim could highlight the fact that justice is achievable in global politics because states are functioning in a globalized and interdependent world and would aim to help other states tide over issues such as poverty, climate change and migration through aid and assistance that lead to injustices of varied kinds if left unresolved. For instance, European countries such as Poland and Hungary accepted immigrants from Ukraine in the aftermath of the conflict with Russia and took steps to help them. In addition, Singapore provides technical assistance and human resource capacity building to climate-related areas through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP). The program caters to the specific

needs of small island developing states, including climate-related issues and challenges such as water management and emissions reduction. Arguments against the claim could note that justice is not achievable, and the lack of justice is visible in every sphere of global politics ranging from imbalances in international institutions or states and the failure to treat people equitably. They could argue that the number of active interstate and intrastate conflicts such as Russia–Ukraine and Israel– Hamas are symptomatic and reflective of injustices more broadly. Others could highlight how justice is achievable for some groups not for others.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the claim that justice can be achieved in global politics.

2. Discuss the view that development always causes inequality.

Responses are likely to include definitions of inequality and development. Development can be defined as a process which raises the level of well-being, standard of living and quality of life for a country or social organization. Varying perspectives and interpretations of development may be discussed, including political development, social and human development, institutional development and economic development, but clear links to inequality must be established. Inequality can be defined as differences in wealth, income and consumption from an economic perspective, and more broadly as differences in opportunity, freedom of expression, political status and well-being. It may be argued that the relationship between development and inequality can be seen from several perspectives such as government policies and institutions, social hierarchies, outcomes of technical change and international factors. Students are likely to discuss whether in development, economic inequality can be increased or decreased depending on the distribution of benefits from growth; social inequality can emerge or worsen if certain groups are excluded from benefits, but development can also foster social inclusion; political inequality can result if power becomes concentrated, but development can also empower marginalized groups. In each case it depends on how development is managed. Responses may consider the nature of causality in global politics and the degree to which one variable can be said to 'always' result in a change in another. Students should be able to explain to what extent they agree with the view that development always causes inequality.

Arguments in favour of the view that development always causes inequality may include:

- Urbanization is often an outcome of development, leading to inequalities between rural and urban areas. Towns and cities attract higher paid jobs leaving the countryside in relative poverty. In India, rapid development has made cities like Bangalore and Mumbai wealthy through hi-tech industries such as IT and communications, widening socio-economic inequalities between them and nearby rural areas where poverty and the caste system still prevail.
- Social development may lead to uneven access to education, healthcare and training, allowing some to benefit more than others in the skills necessary for socio-economic mobility. North-eastern Brazil has seen little improvement in education despite the rapid development since 2000 of southern cities such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, leaving the country as one of the most unequal in the world.
- Development may lead to greater integration with global markets. As a result, some "modern" sectors, areas or regions benefit more than others and can take advantage of globalization, which often leads to further inequality. For example, inequality has widened in China since 2000 as Shanghai and Shenzhen took full advantage of the opportunities of globalization, while inland and rural areas fell ever further behind.
- Political equality can be damaged by development if wealthy elites capture political power and use it for their benefit. This may also facilitate corruption where elites take resources without regard for the wider population, and greater authoritarianism in an effort to maintain power over development, increasing political inequality further. Democracy, accountability, transparency and human rights are likely to suffer as a

result. Mexico, Russia and Nigeria have provided examples of these types of political inequality.

- Development is often associated with technological advancements which can advantage some people over others. Those with the skills to participate, either as owners of businesses or advanced understanding can benefit, while demand for low-skilled labour may fall, widening inequalities further. Owners of capital may accumulate wealth faster than the income growth of workers, especially those lacking skills.

Arguments against the view that that development always causes inequality may include:

- States generally have the ability to reduce economic inequality as development proceeds in several ways, e.g., through progressive taxation, investment in meritocratic education, social welfare programmes, universal healthcare, etc. This means that inequality is avoidable. Finland is an example with its egalitarian and welfarist approach. Social development has also advanced alongside economic development in Costa Rica.
- States have the power to promote future development, which is socially inclusive by encouraging, for example, small businesses, regional development policies and strong institutions which can ensure equal rights on contracts, property and social mobility. In this way people from all socioeconomic backgrounds can fully participate in the benefits of development.
- Some states have social values and cultural norms which favour equality through social cohesion. States with strong labour rights, unions, and co-operative business models leading to consensual advances in development often have lower levels of inequality. Examples are Norway and Finland, where equality and social cohesion has accompanied development throughout the process.
- Social inequality in the forms of gender and/or race generally declines as the processes associated with development undermine or alter the political and religious institutions responsible rendering them anachronistic and obsolete. An example is the gender quota change made to favour seats for women in the Indian parliament.
- Political inequality can be reduced by development through democratization as citizens seek a voice in governance. An emerging middle class may push for more transparent and democratic governance through civic engagement and strengthening of institutions. Stronger institutions, including legal frameworks can help ensure that the benefits of development are broadly shared. Taiwan, Chile and Spain all provide examples of states which have moved from authoritarian dictatorship to democratization and greatly improved governance as a consequence of increased development.

Responses should contain references to specific examples. Arguments in favour of the claim may point to states where inequality has increased with development such as India, where 10% of the population holds 70% of wealth and social exclusion persists among Dalits and Adivasis despite broader economic progress. In Mexico, while rapid development resulted from NAFTA membership and integration into global markets, rural areas such as Oaxaca and Chiapas continue to struggle with poverty and lack of access to basic services. Widespread and rampant corruption and oligarchic influence has helped perpetuate inequality as the political system was captured by elites. Arguments against the claim could identify states that democratized and become more equal as a result of increased development. For example, following rapid economic development based on mining in the 2000s and 2010s, Mongolia's growing middle class pushed for accountability, better governance and expanded political participation through active civil society. Finally, some responses may refer to the Kuznets Curve which suggests that

inequality increases at first then decreases as development progresses. This long-run historical approach can be valid although real-world examples would still need to be contemporary.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees that development always causes inequality.

3. To what extent do third party involvements help to resolve conflict?

Responses should include a definition and relevant examples of third party involvements; as an actor's use of resources to affect the course of a conflict in which they were not initially involved. Third party involvements can include but are not limited to: mediation processes, negotiation processes and/or interventions. Actors found in third party involvements can include states, intrastate groups, protest groups and/or individuals. Responses should demonstrate an understanding of conflict, and/or the different types of conflicts. Conflict is defined as the dynamic process of actual or perceived opposition between individuals or groups; this could be opposition over positions, interests or values. A discussion of either violent and/or nonviolent conflict is acceptable. Violence is often defined as physical or psychological force afflicted upon another. Non-violence is the practice of advocating one's own or others' rights without physically or psychologically harming the opponent. Responses may consider what it means to 'help' in the context of conflict resolution. Students should be able to explain to what extent they agree that third party involvements help to resolve conflict.

Arguments in favour of the claim that third party involvements help to resolve conflict may include:

- Third party involvements may help to resolve conflict by fostering dialogue and trust if they are perceived to be neutral and impartial towards the conflicting parties, e.g., the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), whereby the TRC investigated experiences of Indigenous/native students and documented testimonies of cultural loss and abuse and then offered recommendations leading to government actions as a means of achieving resolution.
- Third party involvements in the form of interventions help resolve conflicts as they can prevent large-scale civilian massacres, restore democracy, and lead to long-term stability. One of the most successful humanitarian interventions of the 21st century occurred in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011, when the international community, led by the United Nations (UN), France, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), intervened to prevent mass atrocities and restore stability after a disputed presidential election.
- Third party involvements by individuals can be used to help facilitate communication between conflicting parties when there is no clear and/or existent line of communication. Here, third party involvements can help communicate and articulate the concerns of both sides to the conflict, e.g., Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's mediation in the Kenyan post-election violence (2007–2008) led to a successful power-sharing agreement, ending the violence and paving the way for political reform.
- Third party involvements by two or more states acting as mediators towards a conflict may help to resolve differences between the conflicting parties by increasing the visibility of the conflict internationally. For example, Norway's and Cuba's involvement in the Colombian conflict increased pressure on both FARC and the

government to negotiate, leading to a negotiated settlement between the parties.

- Third party involvements by non-state actors such as International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) can help solve conflicts by providing the forums necessary to bring the conflicting parties together to negotiate a resolution. For instance, in 2015 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered a judgment concerning the border dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, successfully resolving the conflict focused on the area surrounding the San Juan River and Isla Portillo.

Arguments against the claim that third party involvements help to resolve conflict may include:

- Third party states intervening in conflict are often unsuccessful when the conflicting parties have no interest in reaching a resolution, or the terms laid out by the intervening states are unacceptable to the competing parties. For instance, the work done by Egypt, Jordan and Qatar from 2023 to 2024 to help reach a ceasefire agreement in the Israel-Palestine conflict (2024) has not succeeded for this reason.
- Third party involvements are not helpful in leading to conflict resolution if they do not understand the cultural dynamics of a conflict. Cultural misunderstandings and/or contextual misunderstandings on the part of third party mediators can lead to ineffective conflict resolution and can sometimes exacerbate the conflict. For example, international negotiations with the Taliban in 2020 facilitated by the US, sidelined the Afghan government and civil society organizations; contributing to the eventual collapse of the peace process and the return of the Taliban to power.
- Third party involvements in cases where there is a significant power imbalance between the conflicting parties, may not be able to address or rectify these disparities, which can hinder a lasting conflict resolution process. For instance, in the Israel-Palestine conflict, US and regional attempts to help resolve the conflict have been unable to counter the power imbalance between both sides and thus bring about a resolution
- Challenges in implementing the terms even if an agreement is reached between the different conflicting parties can be derailed if there is no effective follow-up and support exercised by the third party. For example, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (2015) was established to prosecute those responsible for the Rwandan genocide, but due to its structural detachment from Rwanda and failure to address a broader spectrum of crimes it has only left an enduring legacy of localized dissatisfaction.
- Third party involvements may not help resolve a conflict if the third party is biased towards one side in the conflict, e.g., both Russia and the US supported opposite sides in the Syrian civil war (2011–2025) further fuelling rather than resolving the conflict.

Responses should include a solid understanding of what third party involvements entail. Examples of successful third party involvements could include peace treaties facilitated by international organizations, mediation, and forums established on global level. Responses should illustrate how each case is unique; and while third party involvements can be highly effective, they are not a guaranteed solution and often require a combination of factors to be successful. Students may discuss how conflicts (regardless if violent and/or non-violent) can be resolved in different ways, and that could involve either a formal and/or an informal process. Students can also discuss how some conflicts were resolved successfully without the need for third party involvements, e.g. Bangladesh and India solving their border dispute in 2015. Students may also discuss how some conflicts once resolved can move to neighboring

countries, e.g. French involvement in Mali in 2013 resolved the conflict with the Islamic forces within the country, but the threat has moved to neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso. Responses can allude to different types of conflict, whether they be violent and/or non-violent. Finally, responses may consider how some types of conflict are more suited (or not) to being resolved by third party involvements.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the claim that third party involvements help to resolve conflict.

Section B

4. Evaluate the claim that the rights of vulnerable groups are best protected by state power.

Responses are likely to begin with explanations of key terms. Students may define rights as legally recognized entitlements and freedoms, often protected by international agreements, laws, and norms, that individuals and groups possess and are entitled to enjoy. They may then explain the meaning of vulnerable groups as individuals or groups at higher risk of harm due to specific circumstances or conditions. Vulnerability can be situational and temporary, stemming from health, poverty, displacement or disaster. These could include racial or ethnic minorities, the homeless, and the elderly, migrants, refugees, LGBTQI+, children, etc. Their vulnerability could be due to negative, discriminatory, and stereotypical perception about these individuals or groups. Power can be seen as an ability to effect change. Rather than being viewed as a unitary or independent force, it can also be seen as an aspect of relations among people functioning within a social organization. Students may also identify different types of power—hard, soft, smart, structural and relational—and explain some of these terms. State power could refer to state actions using different types of power. Responses may consider what ‘best’ means in the context of rights protection. Students should be able to explain to what extent they agree with the claim that the rights of vulnerable groups are best protected by state power.

Arguments in favour of the claim that the rights of vulnerable groups are best protected by state power may include:

- The state has the power to take steps to ensure inclusive economic growth that can empower vulnerable groups and provide them with avenues to have access to food, shelter and clothing, all basic human rights. For example, in 2024, the Philippines introduced a programme for Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) that provides temporary employment to marginalized workers in the informal sector who have lost their jobs.
- The state has the power to formulate policies to protect the rights of vulnerable groups by providing them with access to health, education, water and sanitation along with social security and protection, thus protecting their second generation rights. For instance, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act launched in 2005, is a social security and labor law aimed at enhancing the livelihood and security of vulnerable rural households.
- States can use power beyond their borders to help protect the human rights of vulnerable groups—such as through sanctions, trade barriers, asset freezes, travel bans, arms embargoes or military interventions. For example, in 2021, the EU Council decided to impose restrictive measures on eleven Chinese individuals and four entities responsible for serious human rights violations and abuses in Xinjiang.
- In a realist world, states are the most powerful actors and by virtue of their sovereignty automatically become the best protectors of the rights of marginalized groups. For instance, Ghana has a commission that combines the functions of a public service ombudsman, an anti-corruption agency, and a quasi-judicial human rights commission to respond to

complaints of human rights violations, injustices, corruption or abuse of power by the state.

- Sovereign states best protect the rights of vulnerable groups because they can ratify international human rights agreements and turn them into law at the national level. For instance, after ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Singapore amended its existing Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) to enhance the protection and rehabilitation of children while other similar legislative steps were taken to better enshrine the CRC's guiding principles into domestic law.

Arguments against the claim that the rights of vulnerable groups are best protected by state power may include:

- IGOs are better placed to protect the rights of vulnerable groups as they have global reach and expertise that enables them to make recommendations. Through its Surge Initiative, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights supports countries in expanding social protection coverage to include the most vulnerable including women, LGBTQI+ and minorities through collaborating with key stakeholders at the national level.
- States can be the prime violators of the rights of vulnerable groups and state power is often exercised against such groups, e.g., Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro where the government's focus was on economic growth over the rights of vulnerable Indigenous groups.
- Non-state actors such as Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) best protect the rights of vulnerable groups because they operate at the grassroots level and possess the necessary expertise on human rights protection. For example, in Sierra Leone, Amnesty International works with local communities as part of the Human Rights Education Programme, which focuses on a number of human rights issues including female genital mutilation (FGM).
- The use of hard power (such as sanctions) by one state to protect the rights of vulnerable groups in another state has often led to increased levels of political repression by the target government. For example, the increased repression of LGBTQI+ groups in Uganda after the US and UK implemented targeted travel bans and visa restrictions on Ugandan government officials.
- Civil society organizations can best protect the rights of vulnerable groups through protests, pressure groups, etc. For instance, social movements such as the Black Lives Matter movement and Fridays For Future best highlight the concerns of vulnerable groups in ways other actors cannot.

Responses should demonstrate a clear understanding of to what extent students think that the rights of vulnerable affected groups are best protected by the use of state power. Responses should contain references to specific contemporary real-world examples. Arguments in favour of the claim could note that states may use soft power (including cultural influence, ideology, economic aid) to protect human rights. One example of this is the federally-run Canadian Museum of Immigration, which hosted the “Refuge Canada” exhibition, bringing to light some of the challenges faced by refugees. Arguments against the claim could highlight the fact that some states—especially failed ones or those with non-democratic regimes—may not necessarily focus on the rights of vulnerable groups, e.g., the Myanmar government's treatment of the Rohingya. Additionally, students may argue that supranational courts are best equipped to protect the human rights of vulnerable groups in that they are able to hear and rule on rights challenges to states. Finally, students may note that the answer to this question depends very much on which state is under consideration and that the capacity for a state to protect the rights of all those within its borders may be limited by its capacity to do so as well as by external factors beyond its control, e.g., the climate crisis or war.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the claim that the rights of vulnerable groups are best protected by state power.

5. Discuss the view that multinational corporations (MNCs) are the greatest challenge to state sovereignty.

Responses are likely to include definitions of MNCs and state sovereignty. A multinational corporation (MNC) is a large business entity that operates in more than one country. State sovereignty can be defined as the supreme and independent authority of a state to govern itself and make decisions within its own territory without external interference. Responses are likely to consider what 'greatest' means in the context of challenges to a state's sovereignty. Students should be able to explain to what extent they agree with the view that MNCs are the greatest challenge to state sovereignty.

Arguments in favour of the view that MNCs are the greatest challenge to state sovereignty may include:

- Labour exploitation by MNCs, particularly in developing countries, has raised questions about the independent authority of these countries in terms of protecting workers and enforcing labour laws. For instance, Adidas has been in conflict with the Cambodian government and unions over unpaid wages during COVID-19, while Nike was similarly accused of owing USD 2.2m in unpaid wages to workers in Asia in 2023.
- State sovereignty depends on the ability of governments to raise revenue through taxation, but some MNCs, such as Apple, Google and Amazon have been accused of minimising their tax bills through complex structures, thus depriving some states of revenue posing the greatest challenge to the ability of a state to govern itself.
- The footloose nature of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) means that MNCs can be the greatest challenge to state sovereignty through threat of departure and encouraging a "race to the bottom", where states compete to lower their labour or environmental standards to attract or keep them. This highlights the unequal power balance between large powerful MNCs, and smaller less powerful states who are forced to adopt policies favourable to the MNC. MNCs accused of acting in this way include Apple (via Foxconn in China), Walmart and H&M in Bangladesh, and Nestle in Ivory Coast.
- The global nature of the internet and digital communications has eroded state control over information and data flows, thereby undermining sovereignty. MNCs such as Google, Facebook and Amazon pose the greatest challenge to state sovereignty due to their holding vast amounts of data on citizens beyond the regulatory reach of sovereign states, which are losing digital sovereignty to MNCs. The same can be said of social media companies such as WeChat in China and Line in Japan.
- MNCs pose a significant challenge to a state's efforts to protect their environment. For example, Coca-Cola was accused in 2004 and 2014 of using too much water in its production process, depleting aquifers in two Indian states to the extent that farmers lacked the water needed to irrigate crops. In such ways, MNCs can be the greatest challenge to the supreme nature of state authority.

Arguments against the view that MNCs are the greatest challenge to state sovereignty may include:

- State sovereignty is challenged more by the presence of other states, meaning that MNCs may not offer the greatest challenge. These include powerful countries such as the USA and China. Both have sought to limit the sovereignty of less powerful state, such as small strategic island states in the Pacific and South China Sea.
- State sovereignty is limited more by huge intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the World Bank and IMF. Indebtedness has allowed both organizations to impose policies on states thereby posing the greatest challenge to their sovereignty. Examples include IMF Structural Adjustment Programs imposed on Nigeria, Pakistan, Colombia and Mexico, which challenge state sovereignty by forcing the privatization of state assets, reductions in government spending on welfare, etc.
- The greatest challenge to state sovereignty is globalization. While MNCs are a part of this, globalization as a broader phenomenon creates complex patterns of interdependence which limit the actions of individual states in controlling their economies fully. In order to secure trade and capital, states have to align their policies with global trade agreements and the expectations of international markets. For example, a dispute between the WTO, EU and Jamaica and Costa Rica over bananas took from 1991 to 2009 to resolve.
- Supranational entities can pose the greatest challenge to state sovereignty. For example, the EU requires members to exchange some degree of sovereignty for benefits such as trade access and collective security. EU laws can supersede national laws and member states must comply, and this brought the EU into conflict with Greece and Portugal over sovereign debt in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.
- International law may also pose the greatest challenge to state sovereignty as it may supersede national laws and thus challenge the supreme authority of the state. For example, human rights standards are upheld by the African Court on Human and People's Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights.

Responses should contain references to specific examples. Examples which support the view include Philip Morris, a tobacco multinational, which in 2010 used international trade arbitration channels to sue the government of Uruguay for lost profits when it sought to require larger health warnings and fewer brands of cigarettes. This challenged Uruguay's right to regulate in the public interest. Another example might be how MNCs can undermine the sovereignty of state and local laws designed to protect communities and the environment, e.g., in 2012 Walmart was accused of bribing Mexican government officials with millions of dollars to bypass planning and zoning laws for rapid construction of stores. Arguments against the claim may focus on other greater challenges to state sovereignty. For example, transnational issues such as the climate crisis, pollution, and resource depletion do not respect national boundaries and will require global agreements beyond the ability of states to pursue independent policies, both of which are a great challenge to state sovereignty. Additionally, global health crises such as COVID-19 highlighted the limits of state sovereignty in managing public health. Further transnational issues that may pose the greatest challenge to state sovereignty include migration and refugee flows in terms of how they put pressure on a state's control of borders, and cyber-attacks that threaten a state's ability to provide infrastructure and maintain the privacy of their citizen's data. Finally, students may note that not all states are equal in terms of what might be the greatest challenge to any specific state's sovereignty.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the view that MNCs are the greatest challenge to state sovereignty.

6. Evaluate the view that conflict is often the result of interdependence in global politics.

Responses are likely to include a definition of the key concept of conflict, which could be broadly defined as the dynamic process of actual or perceived opposition between individuals or groups. This could be opposition over positions, interests or values. In answering the question, students may refer to both latent and overt conflicts, demonstrating an understanding of the difference between violent and non-violent conflicts. Students are expected to consider the merits or otherwise of the view that conflict is promoted by interdependence in global politics. In doing so, they should also demonstrate an understanding of the concept of interdependence, which in global politics refers to the mutual reliance between and among groups, organizations, geographic areas and/or states for access to resources that sustain living arrangements. Often, this mutual reliance is economic (such as trade) but can also have a security dimension (such as defense arrangements) and, increasingly, a sustainability dimension (such as environmental treaties). Interdependence can thus create shared interests but also shared vulnerabilities in the international system. Responses may consider what it means for something to 'often' be caused by another variable. Students should be able to explain to what extent they agree with the view that conflict is often the result of interdependence in global politics.

Arguments in favour of the claim that conflict is often the result of interdependence in global politics may include:

- Economic interdependence often leads to trade conflicts to establish dominant positions over competitors. A clear example of how deep economic interdependence can lead to conflict is the US–China trade war. As the two global powers became increasingly linked through trade, disputes over tariffs, market access, and intellectual property escalated into a significant, but largely non-violent, international conflict.
- The interdependence created by security alliances can be perceived as a threat by other states, triggering conflicts in response to perceived encroachments on spheres of influence. NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe has been cited by Moscow as a key source of tension, ostensibly leading to conflicts like the ongoing war in Ukraine.
- Interdependence often produces increased migration flows that may lead to conflicts over immigration policies and aggressive postures against immigrants, e.g. the rise of the AFD in Germany post 2015.
- Reliance on other states' natural resources and critical infrastructures create dependencies and vulnerabilities that can create and/or exacerbate international conflicts. For instance, Europe's reliance on Russian natural gas has led to significant geopolitical tensions, especially highlighted during the 2022 Ukraine crisis, with Russia's control over vital energy supplies used as leverage in the conflict.
- The interconnectedness of global financial markets has the potential to turn national crises into global ones, sparking conflicts over economic policy responses. The 2008 global financial crisis, which originated in the US, quickly spread across the world due to financial interdependence, leading to economic instability and social unrest, e.g., Golden Dawn in Greece; Indignados in Spain).

Arguments against the view that conflict is often the results of interdependence in global politics may include:

- Economic interdependence often acts as a deterrent to violent conflicts such as wars. The European Union (EU) exemplifies how economic interdependence can act as a deterrent to conflict. The deep economic integration of EU member states has contributed to lasting peace in a region that was once the epicenter of global wars.
- Despite varying national interests, countries have collaborated to address the shared challenge of climate change, demonstrating how interdependence based on shared vulnerabilities can lead to collective action rather than conflict. The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change shows how global interdependence can foster international cooperation.
- The increased interdependence in education and culture helps bridge differences, fostering peace and stability. Programs like the Erasmus initiative in Europe promote cultural exchange and understanding, reducing the likelihood of conflict between states.
- Security interdependence often enhances regional stability. Partnerships built on mutual defense and economic cooperation have prevented conflicts in a region with historical rivalries and tensions. The US–Japan security alliance has contributed to maintaining stability in East Asia.
- Global health interdependence can promote cooperation and prevent conflicts by mitigating some of their root causes. For instance, states and global organizations worked together to contain the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014, providing resources and expertise to prevent its spread, thereby minimizing the chances of related conflict breaking out.

Responses should contain references to specific examples. As arguments in favour of the claim, students may argue that increased interdependence produces more opportunities for conflicts to arise. They might refer to the recent territorial disputes emerged in the Arctic where countries like the US, Russia, and Canada are increasingly in conflict over territorial claims, driven by the environmental interdependence in the region. Another example in favour of the claim is the emergence of cyber-attacks as a significant source of international conflict (e.g. the alleged Russian cyber interference in the 2016 US presidential election). This shows how cyber interdependence can lead to geopolitical conflict, undermining trust between states. As arguments against the claim, responses might refer to the fact that interdependence often produces peaceful dynamics and relations, rather than conflict. Further, students might suggest that countries often leverage close networks of interdependence to work through their differences and preserve a peaceful relationship, e.g., the renegotiation of NAFTA into the US–Mexico–Canada Agreement).

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the view that conflict is promoted by interdependence in global politics.