

# Markscheme

May 2025

Global Politics

Higher level and standard level

Paper 2

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The paper is marked using the generic markbands on the following page, and the paper specific markscheme that follows. The markscheme for this paper is the same for HL and SL.

Markbands for paper two

Marks	Level descriptor
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.</li> </ul>
1–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The response reveals limited understanding of the demands of the question.</li> <li>• The response is poorly structured, or where there is a recognizable essay structure there is minimal focus on the task.</li> <li>• There is little relevant knowledge, and examples are either lacking or not relevant.</li> <li>• The response is mostly descriptive.</li> </ul>
6–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The response indicates some understanding of the demands of the question.</li> <li>• There is some evidence of an attempt to structure the response.</li> <li>• Some relevant knowledge is present, and some examples are mentioned but they are not developed or their relevance to arguments is not clear.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates limited understanding of the key concepts of the course.</li> <li>• There is limited justification of main points.</li> <li>• Counterclaims, or different views on the question are not considered.</li> </ul>
11–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The demands of the question are understood and mostly addressed but the implications are not considered.</li> <li>• There is a clear attempt to structure the response.</li> <li>• The response is mostly based on relevant and accurate knowledge of global politics, and relevant examples are given and support arguments.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates some understanding of the key concepts of the course.</li> <li>• Many of the main points are justified and arguments are largely coherent.</li> <li>• Some counterclaims, or different views on the question are considered.</li> </ul>
16–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The demands of the questions are understood and addressed, and most implications are considered.</li> <li>• The response is well-structured.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates relevant and accurate knowledge and understanding of global politics, and relevant examples are used in a way that strengthens arguments.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates a good grasp of the key concepts of the course.</li> <li>• All or nearly all of the main points are justified and arguments are coherent.</li> <li>• Counterclaims, or different views on the question are explored.</li> </ul>
21–25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very well structured and balanced response that addresses the demands and implications of the question.</li> <li>• Comprehensive knowledge and in-depth understanding of global politics is applied in the response consistently and effectively, with examples integrated.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates a very good grasp of the key concepts of the course.</li> <li>• All of the main points are justified. Arguments are clear, coherent and compelling.</li> <li>• Counterclaims, or different views on the question are explored and evaluated.</li> </ul>

The content listed indicates possible areas candidates might cover in their answers. They are **not** compulsory points. They are only a framework to help examiners in their assessment. Candidates 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.

## Power, sovereignty and international relations

1. Evaluate the claim that non-state actors pose the greatest challenge to state power.

Responses are likely to include a definition of power and non-state actors. Students could explain power as the ability of political actors to shape outcomes in the international system or “the ability to act effectively over people and things using means ranging from persuasion to coercion.” They may define non-state actors as individuals or groups that are not funded by or linked to any sovereign state but can exercise power by wielding considerable political influence. Examples of non-state actors could include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), trade unions (TUs), media, social movements, terror groups, and, potentially, some international organizations (IGOs). Students could discuss how these non-state actors pose a challenge to state power. These challenges may include the ability to impact policy making, the maintenance of rule of law, and smooth governance through disruptions such as strikes and (un)civil disobedience.

*Arguments in favour of the claim that non-state actors pose the greatest challenge to state power could include:*

- Non-state actors such as MNCs are economically powerful - sometimes even more than states. MNCs such as Apple, Nestle, Huawei, Aramco, Petro China, Google and Walmart can compete with states in terms of their revenues. Their operations are spread across countries, and they actively engage with states and governments making them active political actors as well. For instance, in his first term US President Donald Trump met Apple chief executive Tim Cook to discuss how a trade war with China would affect Apple’s interests. Additionally, MNCs can threaten to exit countries if their demands are not met.
- NSAs like NGOs can prove to be a significant challenge to state power. They can spread awareness, influence state policies and interests. Besides, they can provide information, exert pressure, set agendas, and can set norms. NGOs such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International have considerable reach even at the United Nations and can hold governments accountable on a range of issues including environment and human rights. This could impact a state’s power with respect to policy agendas and decision making processes.
- NSAs such as terror groups undermine state power. They can polarize civil society, negatively impact rule of law, raise questions on the ability of the state to govern, and lead to diversion of funds to tackle the menace. Terrorism indirectly affects the economy by creating market uncertainty and loss of tourism and FDI. For example, according to the Global Terrorism Index 2020, Afghanistan was the country with the highest economic impact, equivalent to 16.7 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- IGOs can challenge state power. In an interconnected and globalized world, states want to be a part of IGOs. Yet, the membership of IGOs also means that states have to follow certain norms and procedures. This in turn impacts their sovereignty and power in terms of policy making and implementation. E.g., in 2023 the United Nations General Assembly voted to pass a resolution asking the ICJ to define the obligations of states to

combat climate change, a legal opinion that could drive countries to take stronger measures with respect to emissions and the environment.

- NSAs such as trade unions, civil society organisations, and political parties can call for and carry out strikes, demonstrations, and organize social and resistance movements – all of which could impact the operation of a state's economic and political power. E.g., the protests in Poland against the government's decision to ban abortions on grounds of foetal defects. These protests demanding a repeal of the ban forced the Polish government to defer the abortion ban.

*Arguments against the claim that non-state actors pose the greatest challenge to state power could include:*

- The state continues to be the most powerful actor in global politics. It is sovereign and generally has the legitimacy to govern and take decisions. Despite globalization and the rise of non-state actors, it is only the state that has maximum power to make decisions that potentially affect all citizens.
- Non-state actors such as NGOs and trade unions do not always have enough financial strength to challenge the power of the state. This limits their ability to challenge the power of states. While they could raise issues and attempt to impact the power of states, they can only do so in a limited way. Besides, NSAs such as these cannot exist or function within a state without its approval. E.g., in 2021, Oxfam India's foreign funding was blocked when the government refused to renew its licence.
- NSAs such as terror groups cannot challenge the power of states beyond a certain point, because states have the financial, military, and institutional power to tackle them, e.g., Egypt's counterinsurgency operations against the ISIS affiliate Wilayat Sinai.
- Non-state actors do not have the power of decision making or implementation of policies. That power rests solely with the state. So, while they may attempt to alter the course of the discourse through pressure tactics, the state possesses the ultimate power of decision making.
- States have the legal standing to join or not join IGOs. They have the power to decide whether they want to join or to leave IGOs based on their national interests. E.g. UK withdrawal from the EU (Brexit) in 2016/2022. Furthermore, some IGOs, can be better seen as an extension of state power, which may be wielded against NSAs, like terror organisations. For example, since 2017, NATO has been a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

Arguments in favour of the claim could note that non-state actors have gained greater legitimacy and, therefore, power in today's more globalised world, and they are in many ways powerful enough to influence the operation of state power. In this sense, students may argue that due to globalization, the power of states is diminishing, while the profile and impact of non-state actors is rising. They could cite examples of how NGOs such as Greenpeace have been effective in impacting state's decision-making power. E.g., 85% of the forested area of the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia. was given protection from industrial logging after pressure from environmental NGOs. On the contrary, Students could argue that non-state actors are not a challenge to the operation of state power because the state continues to remain the sole primary actor in global politics with a degree of sovereignty, legitimacy, and power that NSAs do not possess. For instance, according to

Amnesty International, independent civil society groups may be forced to shut down in Egypt, further limiting the space for civic engagement and human rights activism in the country as the deadline for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to register under the repressive 2019 NGO law expires in 2023. Students may argue that while NSAs have made their presence felt on the global arena, they are still not powerful enough to pose a challenge to state power at the national or local levels. Finally, Students may conclude that other factors such as the climate crisis or social and economic inequalities are greater challenges to state power. This and any other valid approach or example should be evaluated positively.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees that non-state actors pose the greatest challenge to state power.

2. Examine the view that interstate war is no longer important in global politics.

Answers should include a clear definition of the concept of interstate war. They may define interstate war as the military conflict between separate states over resources or territory. Students may move on to explain the concept of conflict as the dynamic process of actual or perceived opposition between individuals or groups and what it involves in relation to interstate war and its different facets. Responses may make reference to ideas such as interstate war no longer being seen as important in global politics due to greater cooperation between states, global governance, and the spread of capitalist modes of production and consumption globally. Alternatively, responses may argue that interstate war remains important in the international system by pointing to specific contemporary real-world examples such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

*Arguments in favour of the view that interstate war is no longer important in global politics may include:*

- Interstate law offers alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, reducing reliance on interstate war in contemporary global politics. For instance, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in favour of Colombia in the 2012 maritime dispute with Nicaragua, a case peacefully resolved through legal arbitration rather than military force.
- Global governance institutions facilitate cooperation and prevent war through multilateral engagement. For example, The African Union successfully mediated peace talks in Sudan (2019), leading to a power-sharing agreement without interstate warfare.
- Modern diplomacy increasingly addresses disputes over territory and resources without war, e.g., ASEAN member states continue diplomatic negotiations over the South China Sea despite overlapping claims and rising tensions.
- Economic interdependence discourages war by making military conflict too costly for states. For example, despite strategic rivalry, China and the U.S. have maintained over \$600 billion in annual bilateral trade, creating mutual disincentives for interstate war.
- The threat of nuclear devastation and advanced military technology deters states from engaging in full-scale war, e.g., the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) continues to prevent direct conflict between nuclear-armed rivals like India and Pakistan

*Arguments against of the view that interstate war is no longer important in global politics may include:*

- Interstate war remains important as powerful states continue to engage in military action to assert dominance, e.g., Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 aimed to reassert influence over a former Soviet republic and challenge NATO's eastern expansion.
- Interstate war is still used to contest and redraw international borders. For example, military clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh reflect the use of force to resolve territorial disputes.

- Authoritarian regimes often rely on military aggression to project power and distract from internal crises. For instance, North Korea’s missile tests and nuclear weapons program provoke regional tensions and assert military strength in the face of domestic isolation.
- Modern interstate wars often take the form of proxy conflicts backed by rival states, e.g., the Syrian civil war has featured direct involvement and support from the U.S., Russia, Iran, and Turkey—turning it into a broader interstate power struggle.
- Resource scarcity continues to trigger interstate tensions and the threat of war. For example, Ethiopia’s construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has led to rising interstate tensions with Egypt over Nile River water rights

Responses should contain references to specific contemporary real-world examples. Arguments in favour of the view may note that while the frequency of large-scale interstate wars has declined since the mid-20th century, they remain significant in global politics due to ongoing geopolitical rivalries, competition over resources, and questions of territorial sovereignty. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is a clear example of a major power using military force to pursue geopolitical objectives, challenge NATO’s influence, and reassert control over a neighbouring state. Similarly, the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan, particularly over the oil-rich Abyei region, illustrates how resource scarcity and contested borders can drive sustained interstate tensions and violence. In contrast, students may argue that interstate war is no longer central to global politics, citing the rise of globalization, interdependence, and international legal mechanisms. Furthermore, global governance institutions like the African Union and ASEAN have played important roles in mediating disputes and preventing escalation. Global economic interdependence also acts as a deterrent, as seen in U.S.–China relations, where extensive trade ties constrain the likelihood of open war despite strategic competition. Some students may also highlight the increasing prominence of non-traditional and hybrid forms of conflict, such as cyber warfare or proxy conflicts like the ongoing war in Yemen, where states exert influence without direct confrontation. Finally, some responses might even question whether the decline in declared interstate wars represents genuine normative change or a shift in tactics—toward covert operations, deniable interventions, and cyber aggression that blur the lines between war and peace, e.g., the actions of China’s maritime militia and ‘gray zone’ activities in the South China Sea. This and any other valid approach or example should be evaluated positively.

Responses should include a conclusion on the extent to which the student agrees with the view that interstate war is no longer important in global politics.

## Human rights

### 3. To what extent are definitions of human rights universally accepted?

Responses are likely to include a definition of human rights as the basic claims and entitlements that, many argue, one should be able to exercise simply by virtue of being a human being. Students should also offer some understanding of the term universal. In the context of human rights, this refers to the principle that human rights apply to all individuals, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or any other distinguishing characteristic. Students may approach this question by arguing that while the core principles of human rights are generally accepted in theory there is significant disagreement in practice. Alternatively, they may take a more critical approach by arguing that many states or communities challenge universal definitions of human rights on the grounds of cultural relativism, national sovereignty, or ideological opposition.

*Arguments in favour of the claim that definitions of human rights are universally accepted may include:*

- The widespread ratification of core international human rights treaties reflects broad global consensus on fundamental rights. For example, as of 2024, over 170 UN member states have ratified the ICCPR and ICESCR, showing near-universal formal endorsement of civil, political, economic, and social rights.
- Core human rights values such as education, free expression, and gender equality are widely embraced across diverse societies, e.g., the inclusion of the right to education and gender equality in the constitutions of countries as different as South Africa and Indonesia reflects shared global norms.
- Global digital activism has amplified cross-border support for human rights, reinforcing their perceived universality. For instance, the #MeToo movement sparked legal and policy reforms in countries ranging from the U.S. to South Korea, underscoring a global consensus on gender-based rights.
- Multinational corporations increasingly adopt international human rights standards to maintain legitimacy and avoid reputational risk. For example, major tech firms like Microsoft and Apple have adopted the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, aligning their operations with global human rights expectations.
- Global human rights NGOs receive cross-cultural support and operate transnationally, reflecting shared understandings of rights, e.g., Amnesty International campaigns on issues like freedom of expression and the abolition of the death penalty in countries as varied as Iran, the U.S., and the Philippines.

*Arguments against the claim that a definitions of human rights are universally accepted may include:*

- Cultural relativism challenges the universality of human rights, as definitions vary across historical, religious, and social contexts. For example, in some Indigenous and Asian societies, collective rights and

community obligations are prioritized over the Western liberal focus on individual autonomy.

- Some states use human rights selectively, promoting certain rights abroad while violating them domestically, e.g., China supports development rights globally while maintaining mass surveillance and internet censorship at home, undermining freedom of expression and privacy.
- The ongoing use of the death penalty contradicts the supposed universality of the right to life. For instance, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Iran continue to carry out executions, despite growing international calls for abolition led by bodies like the UN Human Rights Council.
- There is significant divergence in the protection of women's rights, undermining claims of universal agreement, e.g., Afghanistan under Taliban rule severely restricts female education and employment, while even in the U.S., reproductive rights are increasingly contested after the 2022 overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.
- Migration and asylum policies vary widely, exposing disagreement over the duty to protect vulnerable populations. For example, the EU remains divided over how to handle migrant rescues in the Mediterranean, with countries like Italy and Hungary opposing shared asylum responsibilities

Responses should contain references to specific contemporary real-world examples. Arguments in favour of the claim could note that over time, there has been a gradual convergence of human rights values across cultures, driven in part by increased communication, globalization, and awareness through digital media. Furthermore, students may argue that certain rights, such as the prohibition of torture or slavery, are increasingly seen as non-negotiable across different cultures, suggesting a growing consensus on their universal acceptance. Finally, students may note that in the face of humanitarian crises, such as the Venezuelan migrant crisis or the COVID-19 pandemic, governments and international actors often rally behind human rights principles to provide aid, protection, and relief to affected populations, indicating a shared understanding of fundamental rights. Arguments against the claim may reference how national interests and power dynamics can influence acceptance of human rights definitions as countries may prioritize economic or political considerations over the recognition of certain rights. For instance, the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) reliance on migrant labour for economic development has led to concerns about labour rights abuses and inadequate living conditions for migrant workers, highlighting the balance between economic interests and human rights. Students may also note how differing interpretations of the hierarchy and importance of rights can lead to disagreements over universally accepted definitions. For example, debates between civil and political rights versus economic, social, and cultural rights. Students may argue that advances in technology, such as artificial intelligence and biotechnology, raise new ethical questions that may challenge traditional human rights definitions and prompt diverse perspectives on their universality. Finally, students may problematise the concept of 'universality' noting that it may be difficult to determine exactly where this threshold lies in the real world. This and any other valid approach or example should be evaluated positively.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the claim that a common interpretation of human rights is universally accepted.

4. “The most important human right is the right to development.” Discuss this view.

Responses are likely to include a definition of human rights as basic claims and entitlements that, many argue, one should be able to exercise simply by virtue of being a human being. Students should also provide a definition of development recognising that this is a multidimensional and contested concept. Students may note that the right to development was proclaimed in the Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted in 1986 by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 41/128. This declaration defines development as “a comprehensive economic, social, cultural, and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free, and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom.” This definition emphasizes not only economic growth but also the broader aspects of well-being, participation, and equitable distribution of benefits. Students may provide benchmarks by which the importance of any specific human right can be determined.

*Arguments in favour of the claim that the most important human right is the right to development may include:*

- The right to development is the most important human right as it emphasizes individuals' and communities' ability to shape their own destinies by having access to resources, education, and opportunities, thereby empowering them to lead better lives. For example, non-profit organizations like Kiva provide microloans globally empowering individuals to shape their destinies by gaining economic independence and contributing to their communities.
- Focusing on the right to development can help address structural and systemic inequalities that hinder progress, particularly in marginalized or economically disadvantaged regions. For example, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the right to development by addressing various dimensions of inequality and disadvantage and aim to create environments where all individuals can fulfil their potential regardless of their background.
- The right to development takes a comprehensive and holistic approach, encompassing not only economic aspects but also social, cultural, and political dimensions. This approach ensures a more well-rounded and sustainable improvement in people's lives. For instance, both Brazil and Kenya have decentralised governance which has increased political participation and representation of diverse, often marginalised, groups and a more equitable distribution of resources.
- The right to development promotes global peace and stability. By promoting equitable development, societies are less likely to experience conflicts stemming from economic disparities, which can contribute to global stability and peace. For instance, addressing economic disparities within countries could reduce the risk of social unrest and migration.
- Prioritizing the right to development can lead to long-term economic growth and human capital accumulation, ultimately benefiting societies as a whole. Investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure can result in more prosperous and resilient communities. For example, countries like Sweden, Denmark, and Norway have extensive social welfare programs that have

led to high levels of human capital accumulation, low poverty rates, and strong societal well-being.

*Arguments against the claim that the most important human right is the right to development may include:*

- Different cultures and societies may prioritize different rights based on their unique circumstances and values. Forcing a specific right, such as development, as the most important could overlook these variations. For example, Indigenous communities in Canada and Australia often seek recognition of their ancestral lands and the right to control and manage their resources.
- Basic human rights need to be prioritised ahead of the right to development. For example, basic human rights like the right to life, freedom from torture, and freedom of expression are considered fundamental prerequisites for any development to take place. Neglecting these basic human rights could lead to systemic abuses.
- Placing excessive emphasis on the right to development could lead to exploitative practices, such as environmental degradation, disregard for labour rights, or forced evictions. For example, the pursuit of economic growth has led to extensive deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia so that large-scale palm oil plantations could be established whereas the fast-fashion industry's relentless pursuit of low-cost production has often resulted in exploitative labour practices in countries like Bangladesh.
- Overemphasizing development might lead to a situation where economic advancement is pursued at the expense of individual freedoms and rights. This could result in oppressive regimes that prioritize economic progress over citizens' well-being. For instance, wealthy Gulf states like Qatar and the UAE have achieved significant economic growth on the back of migrant labourers, who often face exploitative working conditions, lack of legal protects, and limited freedoms, highlighting a trade-off between economic advancement and individual rights.
- Development is generally seen as a goal or objective by states rather than a right in its own regard. For instance, governments in authoritarian states like China or Kazakhstan maintain their grip on power by delivering rapid economic growth, infrastructure development, poverty reduction, and increased living standards.

Responses should contain references to specific contemporary real-world examples. Arguments in favour of the claim could note that a balanced approach to development considers environmental preservation and sustainability. Efforts like Costa Rica's renewable energy transition and circular economy initiatives in the Netherlands, highlight how the right to development can lead to sustainable practices by focusing on human well-being with the context of a healthy planet and ensure a better future for generations to come. Students may also argue that the right to development recognizes the interconnectedness of the world's populations and their shared responsibilities. International agreements such as the Paris Agreement on climate change demonstrate how prioritizing development can lead to collaborative efforts to address shared challenges that threaten human rights globally. Arguments against the claim may reference how focusing solely on development could reinforce existing power imbalances, enabling dominant groups to define and control the development agenda. This could result in the

marginalization of vulnerable populations and a lack of inclusivity in decision-making processes. Students may also note that an exclusive focus on development, particularly economic development, might prioritise short-term gains over long-term well-being. Pursuing economic growth without considering social, cultural, and environmental factors could lead to unsustainable practices and compromised future prospects. For example, in some parts of India rapid industrialisation and urbanisation have resulted in overexploitation of water resources and pollution of water bodies. Students may acknowledge the complex interplay of human rights; that they are interconnected and interdependent. While development is crucial, prioritizing it over other rights, such as freedom of expression or protection against torture, could undermine the overall human rights framework. As such, it may be counterproductive, if not impossible, to identify any one human right as the most important. Finally, students may argue that development is generally measured in an aggregate sense whereas human rights are experienced by individuals or communities and are usually expressed in terms of well-being. These and any other valid approach or example should be evaluated positively.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees that the most important human right is the right to development.

## Development

### 5. Examine the view that development depends only on economic factors.

Responses are likely to include definitions of development and economic factors. Development can be defined as a process which raises the level of well-being, standard of living and quality of life for a country. Economic factors can be defined as relating to several of the following: resources, infrastructure, debt, capital accumulation, credit, trade, investment (including FDI), income distribution, etc. Responses may note that economic factors comprise only one of five sets of factors suggested in the syllabus, the others being political, social, environmental and institutional. It might be argued that most of the non-economic features and benefits of development such as healthcare and education depend on tax revenues or incomes high enough to pay for them, and, therefore, the level of economic activity is fundamental to development.

*Arguments in favour of the view that development depends only on economic factors may include:*

- Economic factors underlie development by determining a country's capacity to produce, innovate, invest and trade. Economic factors are the engine that drives economic growth and improvements in living standards. Only a well-functioning economy with its macroeconomic environment can provide the economic resources for improvements in, for example public health (e.g., South Korea).
- Development involves acceptance of new technologies. Economic factors such as research and development, innovation and access to technology drive progress which can lead to sustained economic growth and further development. For instance, Estonia, Canada, and South Korea have reaped the economic benefits of increased internet connectedness.
- Many of the most commonly used measurement indicators of development are economic in nature which shows the significance of economic factors, for example, growth rates, productivity, GDP per head, etc. These economic indicators are the best proxy for wider aspects of development: in general, the higher GDP per head, the better will be social indicators such as education and healthcare (e.g., Denmark or Sweden).
- Models of development sometimes take a linear approach, and the early stages of development tend to be heavily economic in nature. For example, Rostow argues that "take-off" involves capital accumulation and a leading industrial sector, Lewis argues for labour transition to a modern sector, and Wallerstein favours core and periphery linked by capitalism.
- Development depends to a large degree on international economic factors and participation in international organisations such as trade blocs and financial markets. Lack of co-operation or deliberate isolationism can inhibit development, for example North Korea and Western sanctions on Iran. On the other hand, countries which have developed more quickly since joining trade blocs include Ireland (EU) and Vietnam (ASEAN).

*Arguments against the view that development depends only on economic factors may include:*

- Economic factors can be defined as single set of determinants among several other sets of factors including political, social, institutional and environmental factors, all of which contribute to and are essential for development, which is a holistic and multidimensional concept. While economic factors are necessary, they are not the only factor required for development to occur and it is the interplay of all these factors which leads to development.
- Political stability, effective government and the rule of law are all essential for development to take place. They provide the certainty and stability which is needed for investment and growth to take place, so development does not depend entirely on economic factors. Politically stable countries like New Zealand, Ireland, and Denmark tend to be more developed than politically instable states like Somalia, Yemen, and South Sudan.
- Strong institutional structures such as a legal system, a system for the protection of property rights, and clear regulatory frameworks also contribute to a stable environment in which development can take place. Highly developed countries like Switzerland and Singapore are often cited as having the strongest regulatory and property rights systems, while the weakest are associated with the Central African Republic and Afghanistan.
- Social factors such as social cohesion and trust, cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship and risk-taking also need to be present for development to take place. Examples of countries with a strong business start-up culture include Sweden, South Korea, and Finland, while a country like Costa Rica, with strong levels of trust and social infrastructure, tops the Happy Planet Index with its commitment to health, education and environment.
- Historical norms and cultural legacies may explain why economic factors may have less of an effect on development. Adherence to strict interpretations of Muslim law and conservative cultural values have limited women's participation in the workforce in Saudi Arabia, while in Nepal, the caste system had led to rigid social stratification, discrimination and limited social mobility, inhibiting economic development.

Responses should contain references to specific examples. In arguing in favour of the view, students could note how economic factors such as trade, investment, infrastructure, and access to credit are central to the development process. Economic factors increase economic growth, which, in turn, can expand government revenues and support better education, healthcare, and living standards, as seen in Bangladesh, where textile exports and remittance-driven GDP growth have supported significant gains in poverty reduction and literacy. Moreover, digital connectivity and fintech innovation are now emerging as distinct economic drivers of development, with Kenya's M-PESA system offering mobile financial services that have lifted millions out of extreme poverty. Arguments against the view, could note that the idea that development depends only on economic factors is increasingly difficult to defend, especially if development is multidimensional and, therefore, requires more than economic inputs. For example, widespread gender-based violence and political instability in Haiti have impeded development despite international economic aid. In addition, environmental degradation can actively reverse development gains—rapid deforestation in Indonesia, for instance, has created health crises, displaced communities, and jeopardized long-term ecological sustainability. Strong institutional frameworks and legal

protections also matter: Estonia’s transformation into a digital society has depended as much on secure governance and rule of law as on market reforms. Finally, responses might also explore whether the dominance of economic factors and measures reflects a Western bias that overlooks other conceptions of well-being and models of development, such as Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness index. Others might examine how climate vulnerability, conflict, and forced migration—conditions often beyond economic control—can disrupt development, as seen in Venezuela or Mozambique. This and any other valid approach or example should be evaluated positively.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees that development depends only on economic factors.

6. Discuss the view that for development to occur at the national level, inequality must be reduced.

Responses are likely to include definitions of inequality and development. Development should be seen as not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganisation and reorientation of entire economic and social systems, improving the general quality of life or well-being. Inequality could be defined as an unequal access to resources or opportunities. It can be considered in a variety of social, economic or political contexts, such as income, wealth, education, healthcare, social status, opportunity, gender or ethnic and racial dimensions. Inequality can be examined as a phenomenon both within and between societies. The question implies a linear relationship: that inequality needs to be reduced first to facilitate development. It might be argued that a country is not truly developed unless a measure of equality has been achieved.

*Arguments in favour of the view that for development to occur at the national level, inequality must be reduced may include:*

- High rural inequality limits participation in economic activity, stifling national development. For example, in Papua New Guinea, where a majority rely on subsistence farming and lack infrastructure, regional disparities have contributed to persistently low GDP per capita and uneven development.
- Severe income inequality can fuel social unrest, deterring investment and destabilizing development, e.g., Niger's 2023 coup, partly rooted in economic disenfranchisement and inequality, led to sanctions, capital flight, and political isolation, disrupting national development efforts.
- Educational inequality limits human capital development and delays national progress.  
For example, under Taliban rule in Afghanistan, widespread restrictions on girls' education have severely constrained the country's long-term development prospects by excluding half the population from formal learning and employment.
- Health inequality weakens workforce productivity and limits global competitiveness.  
For instance, in Eswatini, where HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects the poor, health-related absenteeism and reduced life expectancy hinder economic growth and strain public services.
- Widespread poverty and limited purchasing power reduce market size and inhibit private sector investment. For example, in Cuba, ongoing inequality and low consumer income have discouraged MNCs from entering the domestic market, slowing innovation and the diversification of goods and services.

*Arguments against the view that for development to occur at the national level, inequality must be reduced may include:*

- Wealth inequality can support capital accumulation and investment, fuelling national development. For example, in China, significant wealth concentration during early reform years allowed rapid investment in infrastructure and industry, driving sustained national development despite wide income disparities.
- National development can occur through foreign investment and expertise, regardless of internal inequality, e.g., in 2022, China pledged \$3.3 billion in infrastructure investment to the Philippines, facilitating national development projects without requiring internal redistribution beforehand.
- Inequality may incentivize productivity, innovation, and remittances that contribute to national development. For instance, in 2022, India and Mexico received \$100 billion and \$60 billion respectively in remittances—largely sent by migrant workers seeking better opportunities abroad, illustrating how inequality can drive personal ambition and external income flows.
- National development can originate from a modern, export-oriented sector while inequality persists elsewhere, e.g., Qatar has achieved high levels of national development through oil and gas exports, even as migrant workers face significant inequality in rights and wages.
- National development can advance even where social and cultural inequalities remain unresolved. For example, despite ongoing gender inequality, including a male guardianship system, Saudi Arabia has made significant strides in infrastructure, education, and digital transformation through Vision 2030 initiatives.

Responses should contain references to specific examples. Arguments in favour of the view that inequality must be reduced point to the role of inclusive human capital in sustaining long-term progress. In countries like Nepal, caste-based and gender inequality continue to limit access to education and employment, slowing national development and exacerbating social fragmentation. Inequality in health and education weakens workforce productivity and undermines the ability of large segments of the population to contribute to economic growth. Moreover, extreme inequality is often linked to political instability, as seen in Ecuador’s 2023 protests, which were triggered by rising costs and perceived injustices in resource distribution. Conversely, students may argue that inequality may coexist with development if targeted economic gains are strategically reinvested. For example, Vietnam has achieved rapid development over the past two decades while maintaining income inequality levels above the regional average, in part due to export-led growth and investment in infrastructure. Additionally, development driven by elite-led innovation or foreign direct investment can occur despite gaps in wealth distribution, particularly in emerging economies with strong central governance. Finally, responses might explore the tension between relative and absolute poverty—arguing that reducing absolute deprivation may be more critical than narrowing income gaps. Others may reference dependency theory or zero-sum perspectives that frame inequality as a structural barrier imposed by global economic systems. Ultimately, while some inequality may incentivize growth or reflect early-stage development, excessive or entrenched inequality often obstructs sustainable, inclusive progress. Whether inequality must be reduced depends heavily on national context, governance

structures, and the broader developmental model pursued. This and any other valid approach or example should be evaluated positively.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the view that for development to occur at the national level, inequality must be reduced.

## Peace and conflict

7. Using two 21st century conflicts you have studied, discuss the view that some types of conflicts are more difficult to resolve than others.

Responses should provide a clear understanding of what constitutes a conflict. Responses should demonstrate a clear understanding of conflict, defined as a dynamic process involving actual or perceived opposition between individuals or groups, which may relate to political positions, interests, or values. Students should identify and clearly state two specific 21st-century conflicts for analysis. These may include territorial, interest-based, ideological, or identity-based conflicts. Both intrastate and interstate conflicts are acceptable, as are those involving state and non-state actors. Responses may also distinguish between violent conflict—characterized by physical or psychological harm—and non-violent conflict, which may involve civil disobedience, protests, boycotts, or other forms of resistance to perceived injustice. Responses may also include a clear analytical benchmark for assessing why some conflicts are more difficult to resolve. Relevant benchmarks may include duration, intensity, number of actors involved, and geographical or geopolitical complexity. In addition, responses should demonstrate a sound understanding of conflict resolution, defined as the process that leads to the peaceful ending of conflict, and evaluate how or whether this has been achieved in the chosen examples.

*Arguments in favor of the view that some types of conflicts are more difficult to resolve than others may include:*

- Ideological and religious conflicts are harder to resolve due to deep-rooted beliefs, historical grievances, and identity-based divisions. For example, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict remains unresolved after decades, as competing national, religious, and ideological narratives fuel distrust and obstruct compromise.
- Conflicts driven by extremist ideologies are difficult to resolve because they require the dismantling of deeply entrenched and often transnational belief systems, e.g., the persistence of ISIS-affiliated groups in Syria and Iraq illustrates how eradicating extremist ideologies extends beyond military defeat and demands long-term deradicalization efforts.
- Territorial and resource-based conflicts are prolonged when multiple parties assert competing claims tied to sovereignty and national interest. For instance, the South China Sea dispute involves overlapping maritime claims by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and others, making resolution complex due to nationalist rhetoric and strategic interests.
- Asymmetric conflicts involving non-state actors are more difficult to resolve because these actors are not bound by international norms and may resort to irregular or extreme violence, e.g., Al-Shabaab in Somalia continues to destabilize the region through guerrilla warfare and terror attacks, resisting state-centric peace efforts and international mediation.
- Intrastate conflicts with external state involvement are harder to resolve due to proxy dynamics and competing geopolitical agendas. For example, the Syrian civil war remained unresolved for so long in part because of the involvement of Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the U.S., each backing different factions with divergent interests.

*Arguments against the view that some types of conflicts are more difficult to resolve than others may include:*

- Both violent and non-violent conflicts present different but equally challenging obstacles to resolution. For example, negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program with the P5+1 illustrate the fragility of trust in non-violent diplomacy, while Sudan’s violent civil conflict has generated mass displacement and trauma, complicating peacebuilding efforts.
- The difficulty of resolving a conflict often depends more on the actors involved than the type of conflict itself, e.g., Boko Haram’s decentralized and extremist structure in Nigeria has made dialogue and demobilization difficult, regardless of whether the conflict is classified as religious, ideological, or insurgent.
- Resource limitations—such as lack of funding, expertise, or political will—can hinder resolution regardless of conflict type. For example, prolonged local land disputes in rural South Sudan persist largely due to the absence of mediators, legal frameworks, and institutional support, not because of the nature of the conflict itself.
- Complexity of interests and stakeholder dynamics, not conflict type, is often the key barrier to resolution, e.g., the Israeli–Palestinian conflict involves overlapping claims, security concerns, diaspora influence, and contested historical narratives—factors that complicate resolution far beyond simple categorization as a territorial or religious conflict.
- The perceived difficulty of resolving a conflict is often subjective and shaped by cultural, political, or psychological context. For instance, while some view the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan as intractable, others argue that renewed bilateral diplomacy and confidence-building measures could create openings for peaceful negotiation.

Responses should contain references to specific contemporary real-world examples. Arguments in favour of the view may emphasize that certain types of conflict—such as ideological, religious, or identity-based conflicts—are inherently more difficult to resolve due to their emotional intensity, historical grievances, and perceived existential stakes. For instance, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict demonstrates how overlapping ideological, religious, and territorial claims contribute to a cycle of violence and mistrust that has resisted decades of peace efforts. Similarly, the enduring persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar reveals how ethno-religious identity conflicts can be deeply entrenched in state structures and societal narratives, making reconciliation more elusive. Students may also argue that asymmetric conflicts involving non-state actors, like the presence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, complicate resolution as such actors reject international norms and cannot be engaged through traditional diplomatic frameworks. Arguments against the view may focus on the idea that difficulty in resolution is not determined by the type of conflict, but by contextual factors such as the number of actors involved, resource availability, or external interference. For example, the conflict in Western Sahara—essentially a territorial dispute—has persisted due to geopolitical inaction rather than the inherent complexity of its type. Some may also argue that non-violent ideological disputes, such as internal divisions during Brexit, can prove just as difficult to resolve due to domestic fragmentation. Finally students may note that most conflicts are multi-layered and resist clear typologies; many contain both territorial and ideological elements, and both violent and non-violent strategies may be used by

different actors. Ultimately, students may conclude that while some conflict types tend to be more complex, resolution difficulty is shaped by a combination of structural, political, and historical factors.. This and any other valid approach or example should be evaluated positively.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the view that some types of conflict are more difficult to resolve than others.

8. To what extent do you agree with the claim that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play the key role in peacebuilding?

Responses are likely to include a definition of the key concept of peace, in particular in its positive conception. Positive peace can be defined as the presence of attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. As such, the idea of positive peace is closely related to the concept of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding can be understood as a concept and a set of activities that are closely related to post-conflict transformation, but it extends beyond the immediate aftermath of a conflict. Peacebuilding encompasses a range of efforts, including reconciliation and work of justice institutions, aimed at preventing the reoccurrence of violence, promoting sustainable peace, and addressing the underlying causes of conflicts in societies that have experienced protracted or violent conflicts. Students are expected to consider the merits or otherwise of the view that NGOs play the key role in peacebuilding. In doing so, they should establish some kind of standard for determining what makes the role 'key' in this context. They also need to demonstrate an understanding of the key term 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.

*Arguments in favour of the claim that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play the key role in peacebuilding may include:*

- NGOs are often perceived as neutral and impartial actors, which can facilitate trust-building between conflicting parties (e.g. the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provides humanitarian assistance and protection in conflict zones, maintaining its neutrality to gain access to all parties).
- Many NGOs engage directly with local communities to address underlying causes of conflict and promote social cohesion. In this way they empower civil society organizations and individuals to participate in peacebuilding, promoting bottom-up approaches to conflict resolution (e.g. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) supports civil society organizations in developing democracies to engage in peacebuilding and democratic processes).
- NGOs play a crucial role in raising awareness about conflicts and advocating for peaceful solutions on the global stage. They also monitor peace agreements, human rights violations, and the behavior of armed actors, holding them accountable for their actions (e.g. Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International).
- NGOs often have specialized expertise and experience in conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. They bring valuable knowledge and skills to peacebuilding efforts (e.g. International Crisis Group).
- NGOs can quickly adapt to changing circumstances and emerging conflicts, allowing for timely responses and innovation in peacebuilding strategies. For example, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) adjusts its operations rapidly to provide medical care in conflict zones as new crises arise.

*Arguments against the claim that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play the key role in peacebuilding may include:*

- NGOs may have limited resources and capacity compared to governments and international organizations, making it challenging to address complex and large-scale conflicts (e.g. Syrian civil war).
- NGOs often rely on project-based funding, which can lead to short-term, project-oriented approaches rather than sustained, long-term peacebuilding efforts. This might also result in the inability to coordinate peacebuilding efforts with governments and international organization, leading to duplication of efforts and inefficiencies in peacebuilding.
- Some NGOs operate without strict oversight, leading to concerns about transparency, accountability, and potential mismanagement of resources. Allegations of corruption within certain humanitarian NGOs have raised questions about the effectiveness of aid distribution in conflict zones (e.g. Oxfam in Haiti and Chad).
- The proliferation of NGOs in some conflict areas can lead to fragmentation and competition for resources, potentially undermining coordinated peacebuilding efforts (e.g. South Sudan).
- NGOs may be perceived as having political biases, which can hinder their ability to gain trust and engage with all parties in a conflict (e.g. Guatemala 2018).

Responses should include the candidate's conclusion regarding whether NGOs play the key role in peacebuilding. Responses should contain references to specific examples of NGOs and their role in peacebuilding efforts. In arguing for the claim, Students might provide examples of the important results obtained by NGOs such as Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders. Further arguments against the claim that NGOs play a key role in peacebuilding might refer to the structural weakness of NGOs compared to states and IGOs, as demonstrated by their inability to successfully operate in cases such as the Syrian civil war. Students might suggest that peacebuilding is a long-term, multifaceted approach to building and maintaining peace, and no actor alone can play the key role. Finally, they might also highlight that there are often multiple causes to a conflict, which require equally important peacebuilding efforts to be taken by a multiplicity of actors. This and any other valid approach or example should be evaluated positively.

Responses should include a conclusion on the degree to which the student agrees with the claim that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play the key role in peacebuilding.