



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel A Level

In Politics (9PL0) 3B

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## Examiners Report Global Politics October 2021

### Introduction

The October Global Politics examination was attempted by a similarly small number of students as the 2020 examination and certainly far fewer than previous series, which was to be expected. There was, as usual, a real range of responses. There was some evidence that centres and students were recognising the importance of covering the relevant Assessment Objectives in each question and it was pleasing to note that a number of candidates were able, in the longer responses, to move beyond AO1 to significant coverage of AO2 and AO3. These candidates were, of course, well rewarded. This report moves to a concentration on the individual questions with extracts from scripts used to illustrate a number of points and concludes with a few pieces of advice for future examinations in order to help to raise achievement.

### Q1a

Question 1a was the less popular of the two questions that make up Section A but was still attempted by a decent proportion of the students who sat this examination. There was a range in performance with stronger responses tending to provide some brief background on the ICC and Special Tribunals before turning to criticism. Stronger responses provided both knowledge and analysis and discussed numerous criticisms. Criticism covered included the length of time taken to prosecute and the fact that states may well disagree with court decisions which is key in an anarchical society of states. There was reference to the fact that prosecutions have only taken place in certain states and circumstances and not in others and that any deterrent value may be questioned given the continued human rights violations that take place globally. A number of candidates highlighted the relatively low number of prosecutions and questioned the value for money of the ICC and Special Tribunals.

The following extract is from part of a stronger response which seeks to highlight criticism, with use of examples and some developed analysis in parts. There is a focus on state disagreement with court decisions and the impact of state sovereignty on effectiveness.

Another criticism of the ICC and tribunals are their ideologies that are western influenced. In the supposedly anarchic system, there is no explicit set of moral principles yet the very foundation of the ICC is built on the ~~west~~ many beliefs and ideas that stem from classical liberal thinkers

from the west. Thus many criticize the ICC as yet another form of the Western imperialism. However it should be noted that countries sign up to the ICC, it is completely optional and furthermore countries must cooperate with the tribunals and the ICC in order to get no ~~crimes~~ ~~convicted~~

Another criticism of the ICC and UN tribunals are  
there the effectiveness of their actions. Ultimately  
on the basis of a nation-state sovereignty,  
something acknowledged by the UN charter itself,  
nation states are only accountable to their own laws  
which begs the question of the effectiveness of the  
ICC and tribunals. Surely they are just talkshops  
if they have no real jurisdiction to enforce legal  
action. Furthermore while it is commendable to  
have a set of principles upheld by countries, ultimately  
those a country cannot be forced to join, and in  
fact the USA and China are both not a part of it.  
Considering these are two significant world  
players, this is emphasis of the issue of the  
ICC and UN tribunal effectiveness.

Weaker responses tended to provide only a brief outline of criticism with very little analysis in support.

Q1b

Question 1b was the more popular of the two questions that make up Section A.

Candidates tended to provide a background and explanation of each organisation, one at a time, rather than directly comparing and contrasting to make clear the difference in role and significance although the following extract is an example of a candidate directly

contrasting the two organisations.

The United Nations was formed in 1948 in order to facilitate diplomatic discussion between all nations of the world\* - this stands in stark contrast to NATO's military-focused agenda of self-protection and preparation for war. As a neutral organisation it faces no competition; it was designed to reflect the views of all nations of the globe. It is seen as the largest example of an IGO with 193 members, representing

A further example attempts to make clear one of the key differences between the United Nations and NATO with a focus on the difference in breadth of role.

However, in comparison to NATO, the United Nations (previously the League of Nations) was built under a range of principles under its founding Charter in 1945. This includes promoting global peace and stability, destigmatising and preventing the scourge of war; promoting a universal principle of human rights and in more recent years, humanitarian assistance and reducing global poverty through its Millennium Development Goals which ends in 2030. This means that the role of the UN is more wide ranging and more multi-layered than the NATO.

They also cover elements of difference in significance which many other scripts failed to cover.

global world wars. ~~Refer~~ Moreover, NATO's significance as a military actor has been waning, with the failure in Afghanistan, which led to the Taliban overthrowing the government, showing how its <sup>military</sup> significance has weakened significantly.

They later return to a further consideration of both role and significance.

Upon the interests of its members. Meanwhile, the UN focuses on issues such as climate change, through the UNFCCC, which established the groundwork for global climate change agreements to ~~be~~ take place. This shows that the UN has a more multifaceted role through its numerous organs, in comparison to NATO, whose role and significance as a military actor, seeking

Q2

Question 2 prompted some excellent examples with pleasing knowledge and analysis. Unfortunately, some responses missed the opportunity to make synoptic points and consequently failed to access Level 4 as is made clear in the mark scheme. A key differentiator with this question was the extent to which candidates were able to tackle both the significance of states and the impact of international organisations rather than just one of the two elements.

The following script is an example where a candidate makes clear the realist perspective on the importance of the state and uses an example to show where international organisations are weakened by perceived state interest.

Realists champion the importance of the nation-state and strongly contest the view that any other body in the international system is as significant. For the reason regarding the impact of 1605 a realist would see it as limited. As a result of their pessimistic view of human nature, realist thinker Morgenthau stressed the weak selfish nature of humanity, so as a result the effectiveness of any IGO would inevitably be limited by the selfishness of each state. This claim would be defended by pointing to the Brexit referendum of 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union as a result of the growing view that the EU was not compatible with the national interests of the country.

They go on to contrast the realist perspective with that of the Liberal perspective.



Contrastingly, Liberals do believe the impact of IGOs to be positive and effective. This view of its importance stemmed from Immanuel Kant's 1795 'Perpetual Peace' which was modernised to the Kantian triangle. ~~One of the two~~ This

theory maintains that the further interconnectedness of states, which IGOs such as the EU and UN encourage, peace can be sustained. A view supported by the long periods of peace enjoyed by Europe and America, arguably because of NATO (1949) and the EU.

They continue to remain relevant with a further focus on the significance of states based on the emergence and development of the globalisation phenomenon.

the significance of states  
Liberals also believe that ~~the states as the~~ <sup>is limited</sup> ~~main actors~~ in the <sup>global</sup> system, which directly informs their view of IGOs. They believe that instead these regional and global bodies are far more important in the global system, especially in the <sup>boom in globalisation</sup> which is forming a increasingly borderless society, referred to as a 'global village'. While of course state sovereignty is still a fundamental principle they do not equal that sovereignty to significance.

There is an interesting later development where they focus on the idea that international organisations can be used as an instrument of state power.

to leadership and many argue that both the World Bank and IMF have set up to spread American neo-liberal economic policies, thus benefiting them. This explains the realist belief in the diminished significance of the state, despite globalisation.

Q3a

Question 3a was the most popular of the questions tackled by students in Section C of the examination paper. Stronger responses tended to cover a range of criteria when evaluating whether the EU has become a superpower, comparable with the United States. Candidates discussed the size of the EU economy and the market of approx. 445 million people as well as the developing structural power of the United States. Candidates also discussed the Soft Power status of the EU and considered the military credentials of the organisation.

Those who supported the idea that the EU has become a superpower, comparable with the United States tended to assert that the most significant elements were economic, soft power and structural power. They compared the combined GDP of the EU with the United States. They also made clear the growth of EU structural power in bodies like the WTO and G20 and the role that the EU has played in environmental and other treaties. They also contrasted the growing soft power status of the EU with the loss of some US soft power in recent years and felt that a criteria of economic, structural, military etc power made clear that the EU was now comparable to the US in power status.

Those who opposed the idea that the EU had become a superpower, comparable with the United States tended to consider a similar criteria. They made the point that the EU is made of 27 sovereign states and that the EU lacks a single effective voice and effective decision maker and that there are often clashing interests between the member states. They also asserted that the United States is a key member of structural bodies including the Security Council, IMF, W Bank and the G7 which the EU lacks full membership of. They made the point that the US tends to be ranked towards the top end of tables of soft power status and whilst individual EU states may also rank highly, the EU lacks a single brand image. The clearest area of focus was military power and candidates made clear that, whilst the US has a huge military capability and global reach, the EU lacks control over member states capabilities which, even when taken collectively, are dwarfed by that of the United States.

It was useful to try to provide a definition or explanation of the key term in the question which the following script attempted to do.

A superpower is a power that is greater than a great power ~~independently~~ in all criteria. A ~~super~~ superpower has complete jurisdiction of internal affairs and soft power to influence agenda ~~in~~ regionally and culturally. A soft power has not only the military power to survive and protect its people, but also ~~to~~ to be able to enforce control regionally and even influence ~~other~~ other regions worldwide. A superpower also has economic sovereignty ~~in~~ within its region, generating enough wealth to be able to influence ~~foreign~~ ~~countries~~ ~~and~~ ~~enforce~~ economic ~~policies~~ ~~to~~ ~~enact~~ ~~policies~~ the global market and impose widespread economic policies.

Q3b

Question 3b was the joint second most popular question tackled by students in this section of the examination paper. There was a real variety in the quality of what was produced with a small number of students sticking closely to the specific question whilst numerous weaker responses tended to discuss either environmental or economic issues rather than comparing the attention focussed on both.

In discussion of environmental attention, better candidates usually had an awareness of the major conferences which have taken place to include Kyoto, Copenhagen and Paris and argued that the increase in the number and coverage of these global summits suggested that environmental issues were gaining more attention than other issues, including economic. Discussion on the significance of the IPCC and UNFCCC was useful where candidates argued that major powers were more willing to engage in processes relating to the environment and that an increased state willingness to abide by

decisions made in summits and conferences evidenced a greater attention for environmental issues. Stronger candidates often argued that the significant increase in the number of NGOs and social movements committed to tackling environmental concerns such as the global Schools' climate strike in early 2019 and Extinction Rebellion or Friends of the Earth provided further evidence of a shift in attitudes to the environment which makes clear the greater attention on environmental issues above other issues.

Stronger counter arguments tended to focus on the continued significance of the IMF, World Bank, WTO and G7 in easing the flow of trade and encouraging and supporting economic growth globally through support for free trade. It was felt that the fact that these economic institutions have been in place for an extended period and continue to operate, suggests that the global community is particularly concerned about economic issues rather than other issues such as the environment. Almost universal membership of these global governance bodies also suggests that states are particularly concerned about economic matters. The widespread state acceptance of these economic bodies is contrasted with environmental agreements which tend to be less strictly adhered to. Environmental agreements often include opt outs such as the controversial carbon sinks and carbon trading that are allowed as part of the Kyoto agreement and similar treaties such as Copenhagen and Paris where states can often avoid firm targets.

Q3c

Question 3b was the joint second most popular question tackled by students in this section of the examination paper. Those candidates who decided to tackle this question tended to focus on the impact of the European Union with other regional bodies used less frequently, or not at all. Other regional bodies, when used, tended to be used to support the view that sovereignty hasn't been eroded.

The arguments in support of the view that regional organisations have eroded sovereignty tended to focus on a few key areas. Candidates made the point that there has been an increase in regional bodies and an increase in the areas that they are involved in as support for the evaluation that states no longer represent the sole or most significant decision makers in global politics. They tended to focus on the EU and institutions which make decisions impacting on member states such as the European Court of Justice, Commission and Parliament. Supranational characteristics and the role of the ECJ in cases such as Factortame supported this view.

Candidates explained the increasing role of regional organisations in global bodies and included the European Union being authorised to make decisions for member states in the WTO as well as having representation in bodies like G20 and making decisions for member states in a series of other organisations and agreements including

environmental agreements which implies that states have lost a degree of control and sovereignty. The backlash against the pooling of sovereignty in states like the UK and Poland were used to evidence that sovereignty clearly is being eroded.

Counter arguments tended to focus on the continued exclusive state access to certain key decision-making bodies such as the Security Council as evidence that regional bodies are still excluded from high level decision making which indicates that sovereignty has not been eroded. Some candidates were able to articulate that regional bodies tend not to have supranational elements and that they often seek to preserve sovereignty. The African Union is a staunch defender of state sovereignty, territorial integrity and the independence of its member states and ASEAN was created primarily as a defence against superpower influence and with a protection of sovereignty and the ASEAN way at its core. Candidates made clear that most regional bodies have an economic focus and that states restrict them to this focus for purely selfish economic reasons. As expected, Brexit was a regular topic of discussion with some candidates arguing that it represented a re-asserting of state sovereignty with other anti-EU movements in Hungary, Poland, Austria, Netherlands and Italy suggesting a continued reluctance to accept any challenge to state sovereignty.

The following extract sets out how one particular candidate seeks to address the question.

Regional organisations are becoming more prevalent ~~at the moment~~ <sup>worldwide</sup>, with the growth of the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and others demonstrating this. However, the recent rise of Populism and Nationalism has questioned the impact that these regional organisations have on individual state sovereignty. This essay will evaluate the view that they have eroded national sovereignty.

They move to further consideration of potential erosion of sovereignty.

One way that regional organisations can be said to erode national sovereignty is through the regional regulation on key policy. This can be seen by the EU's mandatory Common Fishing Policy (CFP) and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). All member states were obliged to follow these policies to ensure equality across the regional block. ~~This is also demonstrated by attempts of~~ Nations can choose to deny certain

They then move to a counter argument.

policies and regulatory systems of their regional bloc however. An example of this is the EU's Euro currency. Some members - for example the United Kingdom - chose to 'opt out' of adopting the regional currency. By doing so, they retained <sup>some</sup> economic sovereignty and preserved the need to self regulate. Whilst some regional policy is not enforced, the key policies (such as issues of human rights and equality) are most often enforced. Denying member states the sovereignty to self self-regulate on such issues.

This consideration of arguments for and against the key element of the question can be effective where AO2 and AO3 are sustained.

There is a later interesting point about regional organisations acting in support of states and, in fact, strengthening their sovereignty.

Regional organisations can serve as a way of enhancing a state's sovereignty in international relations. An example of this is the African Union's threat to leave the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC). In a proposal initiated by member state South Africa, the regional organisation claims that there is evidence; <sup>namely</sup> that all 8 cases before 2016 were Africa focused and that 15 of the 22 currently active today also are; to suggest that the ICC's ~~focus~~ focus is Africa-biased. This regional voice enhancing an individual state's sovereign concern for the safety and equal treatment of its citizens. ~~With~~ the option of not only retaining a state's <sup>sovereign</sup> sovereignty, regional voice but applying it on the global stage is clearly a benefit of regional organisations that bolsters their member state's sovereignty.

## Conclusion

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Many of the stronger Section C, 30-mark responses tended to provide a clear sense of direction in introductions which can include definitions/explanations of key terms and key points for discussion that are likely to follow.

It is always pleasing to note the use of contemporary examples to support analysis in Sections A and B and in support of analysis and evaluation in Section C of the paper

Quotes can be very useful but not in isolation. Make clear the relevance of a quote.

A regular reference back to the title usually ensures that a response is on target and avoids drifting to irrelevance.

Linked to the above point, beware the temptation to explain all that you know rather than what is actually relevant to the specific question being asked.