

Global interactions (HL extension: power/places/networks; development/diversity; risks/resilience)

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Geography · HL

Global interactions

IB Diploma Programme Geography HL (first assessment 2019; 2017 guide). This topic covers the **HL extension**, *Geographic perspectives – global interactions*. It has three units: power, places and networks; human development and diversity; and global risks and resilience. Paper 3 (HL only, 1 hour) asks one question from a choice of three, one per unit. Each question has a part (a) worth 12 marks and an essay part (b) worth 16 marks. Good answers use examples at more than one scale and show how places are connected.

In March 2021 the container ship *Ever Given* got stuck across the Suez Canal for six days. Hundreds of ships waited at both ends, and factories in Europe ran short of parts made in Asia. One ship in one canal showed how closely the world's places are linked, and how a problem in one place can spread everywhere. That is the idea behind this whole topic.

Must-know for this topic:

Unit	Key content
power, places and networks	global flows; superpowers and groups such as the G20; TNCs; core and periphery
human development and diversity	HDI and poverty; cultural diffusion and globalisation; local resistance
global risks and resilience	pandemics, financial crises, chokepoints, pollution; resilience and cooperation

Power, places and networks

■ Global flows

Globalisation is the growing connection between places through four kinds of flow :

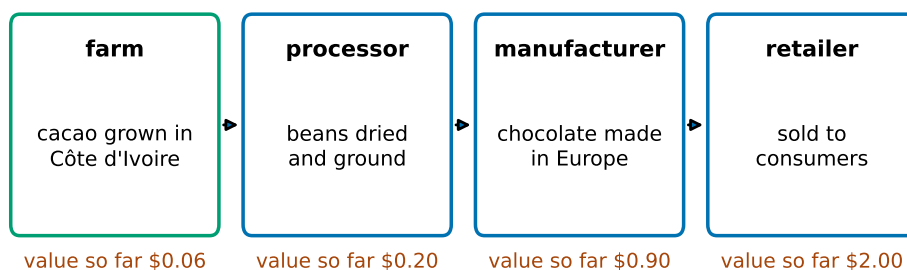
Flow	Example	Size
goods and services	phones from China, software from India	exports are about 30% of world GDP
money	foreign direct investment (FDI), aid, remittances	remittances to low- and middle-income countries were about US\$650 billion in 2023
people	migrants, students, tourists	about 280 million international migrants (UN, 2020)
information	the internet, films, social media	about two thirds of people use the internet

A **global network** has **nodes** (cities and ports) and **links** (shipping lanes, flight routes, undersea cables). A place with many links, such as Shanghai, Singapore or London, gains more trade, more investment and more power. A poorly connected place, such as a landlocked country with weak roads, finds it hard to join in.

■ Global power

A **superpower** has economic, military, political and cultural power that reaches the whole world; today the United States and China are usually named. Countries also act in groups. The **G20** produces about 85% of world GDP and 75% of world trade. International organisations set rules for everyone: the United Nations (193 member states), the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) operate in many countries. They usually keep research, design and headquarters in rich countries and place factories where costs are lower; this is **outsourcing** or **offshoring**. More of the money is made in design, branding and selling than in growing or making the product, so the **core** gains more than the **periphery**.



illustrative: most of the value is added far from the farm, in core countries

A global commodity chain: most value is added far from where the raw material is grown

Worked example. In the illustration, a bar of chocolate sells for 2.00 and the cacao farmer receives 0.06. The farmer's share is

$$\frac{0.06}{2.00} \times 100 = 3\%$$

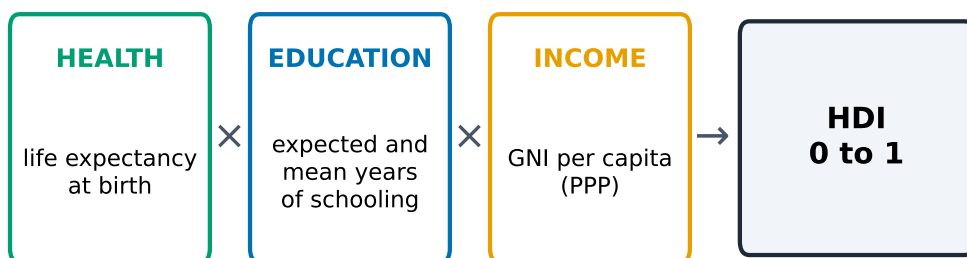
The other 97% is added by processing, manufacturing, branding and selling, mostly in core countries.

Power does not only flow one way. Chinese, Indian and Brazilian companies now invest abroad, and governments can tax and regulate TNCs or refuse them entry.

Human development and diversity

■ Measuring development

The **Human Development Index** (HDI) combines three dimensions: health, education and income. Each is scored from 0 to 1, and the HDI is a kind of average of the three. In 2022, Switzerland scored 0.967, China 0.788 and Somalia 0.380 (UNDP).



each dimension is scored 0 to 1; the HDI is the cube root of the three scores multiplied

The HDI combines health, education and income into one index from 0 to 1

The **Gender Inequality Index** (GII) measures gaps between women and men in health, education, work and politics. About 700 million people still live in **extreme poverty**, on less than \$2.15 a day (World Bank). Development is more than income: it is the freedom and ability to live the life you value.

■ Changing identities and cultures

Global flows carry culture as well as goods. **Cultural diffusion** spreads foods, music, brands and languages. Some people fear **cultural homogenisation** : every city with the same shops and films. But global brands often change to fit local tastes: **glocalisation** . KFC in China sells rice porridge (congee) and fried dough sticks (youtiao) for breakfast, and Shanghai Disneyland (2016) added Chinese designs and festivals. Cultures also mix to create new **hybrid** forms, such as K-pop, which mixes Korean and American music styles.

■ Local responses

Not everyone welcomes **global interactions** . Responses include:

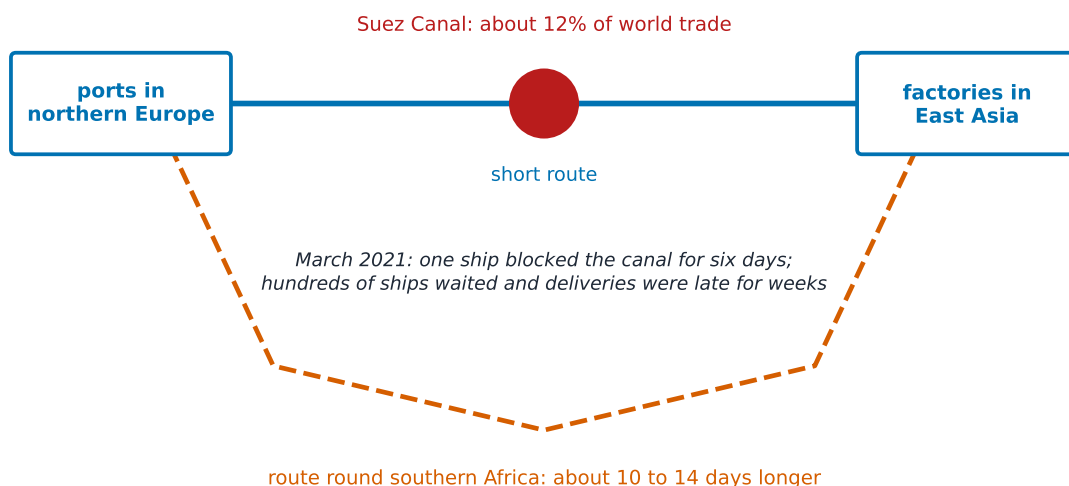
- **Protectionism** : tariffs and quotas to protect local jobs.
- **Fairtrade** : a guaranteed minimum price for about 2 million farmers and workers.
- **Civil society** campaigns, such as protests against factory working conditions.
- Indigenous groups protecting their land, language and knowledge.

Global risks and resilience

■ Risks that cross borders

Because places are linked, problems spread quickly. **Global risks** include:

Risk	Example
pandemic	COVID-19 cut world GDP by about 3% in 2020 (IMF)
financial crisis	the 2008 crisis began in the United States housing market and spread to banks everywhere
supply-chain chokepoint	the 2021 Suez Canal blockage
transboundary pollution	smoke from forest fires in Indonesia in 2015 covered Singapore and Malaysia
loss of sovereignty	global rules or companies limit what a government can decide



A chokepoint: when one link in the network fails, every connected place feels it

■ Building resilience

Resilience is the ability to absorb a shock and recover. It works at every scale:

Scale	Strategy	Example
global	international agreements	the Montreal Protocol (1987) banned the gases that damage the ozone layer; it is now slowly recovering
national	stockpiles, more than one supplier	car makers buying chips from several countries after 2021
local	early warnings, insurance, savings	text-message warnings before floods

New technology can reduce risk (early-warning satellites, vaccines developed in under a year), but it also creates new risks, such as cyber attacks on banks and power grids.

Answering Paper 3

Part (a), 12 marks. Usually “explain” or “examine” a link. Make two or three developed points, each with a named example and a number.

Part (b), 16 marks. An essay: “Discuss”, “Evaluate” or “To what extent”. Give both sides, use examples at different scales, and end with a clear judgement.

Worked plan. “To what extent are global interactions good for developing countries?”

1. For: FDI brings jobs and skills; remittances are about US\$650 billion a year to low- and middle-income countries.
2. Against: the periphery receives little of the value (the farmer's 3% share); dependence on one export or one buyer.
3. Scale: national GDP may rise while some local places lose out.
4. Risk: COVID-19 showed that connected economies also share shocks.
5. Judgement: global interactions help most when governments invest in skills and spread links across many partners.

Checklist

- The four flows with numbers; nodes and links; why connected places gain power.
- Superpowers, the G20, the UN, IMF, World Bank and WTO; TNCs and outsourcing; core and periphery; the 3% commodity-chain calculation.
- HDI (Switzerland 0.967, China 0.788, Somalia 0.380) and GII; extreme poverty.
- Cultural diffusion, homogenisation, glocalisation (KFC in China) and hybrid cultures; local responses including Fairtrade.
- The five risks with examples; chokepoints (Suez 2021); resilience at global, national and local scales (Montreal Protocol).
- Paper 3: part (a) 12 marks, part (b) 16 marks; examples at more than one scale and a clear judgement.