Global political challenges

IB DP Global Politics HL extension: global political challenges and Paper 3

Global political challenges

- explain why some problems are global political challenges that no state can solve alone;
- analyse a challenge in five steps: define, levels, actors and interests, governance, evaluation;
- use researched cases on climate change, pandemics, forced **migration** and artificial intelligence;
- explain the links between challenges and answer Paper 3.

How to analyse a challenge

- A global political challenge crosses borders, affects many actors and causes political disagreement about who should act and who should pay.
- Analyse each case in five steps.
- 1. **Define** the challenge in one sentence. 2. **Levels** : how it appears locally, nationally and globally, and how the levels affect each other. 3. **Actors** and their **interests** : states, IGOs, NGOs, companies, movements, and the people affected. 4. **Governance** : which institutions and rules deal with it, and whether they can enforce decisions. 5. **Evaluate** the responses, using the key concepts: power, **sovereignty**, legitimacy and interdependence.

Four challenges and their cases

- **Climate change** is a global problem, but emissions are controlled by sovereign states.
- Paris has almost universal membership because no target is forced on anyone.
- The same design is its weakness: there is no punishment for missing a target, and the total of all NDCs is not enough to meet the goal.
- Each state has a reason to let others pay, a **collective action problem** .

Links between challenges

- Paper 3 often asks how challenges connect.
- Use a chain:
- **Worked plan.** A sample question from the IB: *"With reference to two of the cases you have researched, examine the links between multiple global political challenges."*
- 1.

Sources for this lesson

- International Baccalaureate, *Global Politics guide* (first assessment 2026), the **HL extension** and Paper 3.
- Government of Pakistan and others, *Pakistan Floods 2022: Post-Disaster Needs Assessment* (October 2022).
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015).

Sources for this lesson (2)

- **World Health Organization** and Gavi, COVAX reports (2021–2023).
- UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951 and 1967).
- European Union, *Artificial Intelligence Act* (Regulation 2024/1689).

Common errors

- Describing a challenge without asking which actors gain, lose and decide.
- Treating "the international community" as one **actor**; states, IGOs, companies and NGOs have different interests.
- Writing about one **level** only; good answers move between local, national and global.

Common errors (2)

- Calling the Paris Agreement a failure or a success without evidence; NDCs are national pledges, and the gap between pledges and targets is the issue.
- Using the word "**refugee**" for every migrant; under the 1951 Convention a refugee has crossed a border and fears persecution.
- Ignoring the links between challenges, which Paper 3 rewards.

Key terms

- **Global political challenge**: a problem that crosses borders and cannot be solved by one state alone.
- **Collective action problem**: a situation in which all would gain from **cooperation**, but each **actor** has a reason to let others bear the cost.
- **Nationally determined contribution (NDC)**: a country's own pledge under the Paris Agreement to cut emissions.

Key terms (2)

- **Refugee**: a person outside their country who cannot return because of a well-founded fear of persecution.
- **Global governance**: the rules, institutions and agreements through which actors try to manage shared problems.

Check yourself

- 1.
- Give three reasons why the 2022 Pakistan floods are a global political challenge, not only a natural disaster. 2.
- What is the **collective action problem** in climate change? 3.
- What is the difference between the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement in how targets are set? 4.