Politics

VCE Units 3 and 4

ROSEANNE TIZIANI (ed.)

JOSIE GORMAN

RASHAD SEEDEEN

TIM WRIGHT

ALEISHA VAN SUMMEREN

GLENN MORRIS

ALEXANDER WRIGHT

NICHOLAS BAFF

YVETTE RADAS

ED HARRIS

SEV

Social Education Victoria

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Please note that this publication includes the images and words of people who have died.

Preface and acknowledgements

On behalf of Social Education Victoria, we are so pleased to share our textbook for students and teachers of VCE Politics (Units 3 and 4) with you.

This text was produced and printed on the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Wadawurrung, Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and express our gratitude for the continuing cultures and knowledge of First Nations peoples and their enduring connection to Country, including lands, waters and animals.

Our outstanding team of authors, editors and designers have endeavoured to make every decision regarding this text with students and teachers in mind — striking a balance between accessibility, structure, academic rigour, the study design and assessment standards.

Our team of dedicated authors, editors and designers, having brought with them a wealth of diverse knowledge and experiences, have worked diligently to develop a user-friendly text for both students and teachers. Translating the often highly conceptual and abstract ideas associated with the study of politics into content that is engaging and accessible for students, supported with relevant contextualised examples, is no mean feat — this is a rewarding challenge we have been able to take on together.

The production of any textbook is a complex task subject to very tight timeframes. We congratulate the authors, researchers, design team, editors, proofreaders and printers for their commitment, diligence, patience and deftness of skill exhibited over the course of this journey. This team also includes those who, like us, have the privilege of working within and on behalf of Social Education Victoria on an ongoing basis; their unwavering commitment to delivering this textbook has been truly incredible. We are also grateful for the support of our executive, our management committee and our textbook and resource subcommittee.

We consider that we have an ongoing commitment to you when you purchase this text. We strongly encourage you to check in regularly with the online library of supplementary resources we provide using the URL below. This link also takes you to the best spot to provide feedback or suggest improvements to the textbook — we're always keen to know how we can improve.

We trust that this text and its accompanying online resources will play a part in your enjoyment and understanding of this subject, and we wish you all the best with your studies.

sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/pol34

Roseanne Tiziani
Content editor
Social Education Victoria

Laura Newman
Executive Officer
Social Education Victoria

Colin Aslin
Publishing coordinator
Social Education Victoria

(1) Global issues, global responses

② Power and the national interest

Introduction

Credit: David Pope, 2023.

> Thirty years is a ripple. But this ripple in world politics was the drama of our time. … The drama… is about one part of the world that missed an opportunity to reinvent its strength, another part of the world that seized the opportunity to gain strength with both hands, and a third part of the world that did not get much of a chance to grow stronger. It consisted of three acts.
>
> The first act was the charade of liberal humanitarianism. … The second act was a travesty of globalization. … The third act can be titled 'retribution and retreat'. Between 2010 and 2020, the West faced the consequences of 20 years of hubris and complacency. …
>
> Thirty years is a ripple, but as the flow of political events has become restless, we wonder what comes around the next bend.
>
> Jonathan Holslag, 2022. *World Politics Since 1989*. Polity Books.

As the VCE Politics Study Design states, VCE Politics is 'the study of contemporary power, conflict and cooperation in a world that is characterised by unpredictability and constant change'. As we move further into the third decade of the 21st century, never has it been more apparent that the only thing we *can* predict in domestic and global politics worldwide is that change will always be a feature of the ongoing contest of ideas and the tussle for power that 'politics' encapsulates.

So, we always wonder what comes around the next bend. David Pope's (2023) illustration reflects what many of us suspect might be the case: liberal democracy continuing to be on the retreat, and global populations facing growing challenges, particularly those posed by climate change, economic instability, poverty and violence. These dynamics may be mutually reinforcing, with dysfunctional political systems and volatile decision-makers collectively failing to formulate effective strategies to address challenges.

This year you will be looking closely at one specific issue and one specific crisis, including their causes and consequences. You will then investigate the characteristics and behaviour of several states in Australia's geopolitical 'neighbourhood': the Indo-Pacific. These investigations will provide you with an excellent opportunity to apply and build on the knowledge and skills cultivated in the Year 11 course, and to add greater depth and breadth to your broader understanding of how power operates and shapes our collective reality. In developing your ability to think politically in the context of a highly interconnected world, you will see that conflicting interests and perspectives are a recurring feature and that those conflicts are often the primary driver of political change.

Developing an understanding of politics encompasses more than a single textbook or even our study design. We want you to get your hands dirty: make sure you're (critically) reading and engaging with the news, getting your information from reliable sources, listening to podcasts, and chatting to your teacher and peers about contemporary issues. Be sure to follow your interests, explore things that pique your curiosity, and don't be constrained by the study options you're taking this year — who knows what will pop up over the course of the next 12 months?

Controversial issues

This text contains a variety of representations and perspectives on some sensitive and contentious issues. Our writing team doesn't pretend to be apolitical. Rather, we celebrate the diversity of our experiences and perspectives and think it makes for a more robust and interesting way to engage with the material contained in the VCE Politics course. The study design itself reflects a set of conclusions about the nature of politics, and we have worked very hard to engage with it constructively.

We have tried to include a variety of reliable and accessible recommendations for further investigation for each topic being discussed. Students are encouraged to follow their own interests, read widely, reflect critically and talk to each other.

Overview

This textbook is designed to provide students and teachers with a comprehensive understanding of the key concepts, knowledge and skills associated with VCE Politics Unit 3: Global cooperation and conflict, and Unit 4: Power in the Indo-Pacific. In turn, both units contain two 'areas of study'.

Each chapter corresponds with an area of study and follows roughly the same format:

- a general overview of the area of study
- at least two* in-depth and **mutually exclusive** study options, each of which includes:
  - an introduction to the topic
  - an in-depth exploration of the topic through the lens of the relevant key knowledge, supplemented by definitions, examples, quotations, external source recommendations and activities designed to help students check and develop their understanding.
- revision questions designed to help students consolidate their knowledge (framed to be generally relevant to the requirements of the area of study, regardless of which study option has been selected).

The final chapter includes one compulsory component (Australia) followed by relationship studies relating to three other states. This covers the requirement that students must study three relationships within the Indo-Pacific, but students and teachers may opt to select different states to fulfil this requirement.

VCE Politics has been designed as a course with sequential units and knowledge that build on each other. **Many of the key concepts covered in the VCE Units 1 and 2 course** – such as power, authority, legitimacy, political interests, political perspectives, sovereignty and global governance – recur in the Units 3 and 4 course and in many instances **are assumed knowledge** in this textbook. We suggest that if you haven't studied Units 1 and 2, you should work with your teacher to help develop your understanding of these core concepts, as well as the political thinking concepts outlined in this section, as soon as possible, to give you the best starting point for the content to come.

Advice to get you started

Key knowledge and key skills

Each chapter of this text covers the four areas of study in the study design and outlines the relevant key knowledge and key skills, before getting into an in-depth exploration of content. It is crucial that you keep your eye on your acquisition of **key knowledge** (what you are learning *about*) alongside the **key skills** (what you need to *do* with that knowledge, and how you need to display your understanding) throughout the year. This will help you manage the amount of content you need to master and will improve your confidence in tackling your school-assessed coursework and the end-of-year examination. It will also allow you to begin to identify the conceptual links across the different areas of study and case studies you cover during the year and, in turn, help you work as 'smartly' and efficiently as you can. This will, at least to some extent, minimise the amount of information you need to know overall.

You don't need to wait for your teacher to check whether you are doing this: right now, you can **print off or save a copy of the study design**, which you can keep handy as a reference and annotate as you go. We recommend using this as a checklist to track your degree of comfort and familiarity with each key knowledge and key skill dot point as you encounter it throughout the year.

Thinking politically

VCE Politics is organised into political thinking concepts, which are referred to as the characteristics of the study. These characteristics outline the central concepts and skills that underpin the study of politics as stipulated by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

There are **eight political thinking concepts** referred to throughout Units 1—4. These are:

1 undertaking political inquiry

2 applying political concepts

3 analysing causes and consequences

4 identifying and analysing differing political interests

5 identifying and analysing political perspectives

6 discussing political stability and change

7 evaluating political significance

8 constructing reasoned and evidence-informed arguments.

These political thinking concepts are as important as the key knowledge and the key skills, and you will have been introduced to them in Units 1 and 2. We suggest you refer back to the relevant pages of the study design, particularly pages 12—14, which provide a detailed explanation of each political thinking concept. When reviewing the concepts, think about how you can apply them across the year.

Key skills and command terms

All key skills include a **command term** (sometimes referred to as an 'action verb' or 'task word'). These key skills guide your learning by indicating the level of complexity with which you should think about and demonstrate your understanding of specific key knowledge points.

Page 16 of the study design provides a table that organises key skills and maps them to the characteristics of the study. This is a really useful resource to help you visualise the command terms that will drive how you learn and display your knowledge and understanding in Units 3 and 4. From this table, we can see that a great deal of your learning into Units 3 and 4 will be focused on higher-order thinking, including:

- analyse
- interpret
- discuss
- evaluate.

We suggest that you also investigate the following resources for more detailed guidance on understanding and responding to command terms in your work:

- VCAA. 'Glossary of command terms'. vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx
- University of Melbourne. 'Task analysis: Direction words'. bit.ly/47cWdWp
- Monash University. 'Understand your assessment'. monash.edu/student-academic-success/understand-assessments/understand-your-assessment

Guide for analysing sources in VCE Politics

We've provided this framework called 'OPCVL' (origin, purpose, context, value, limitations) to help you structure your thinking and pose questions that will help you to analyse sources you'll encounter in your study of politics. It might seem like there's a lot here, so remember this: **you don't need to answer every question**. The ones you choose to answer will generally be guided by the type of source you're examining, along with your perspective on it.

The VCE Politics Study Design

Students should **critically *evaluate*** the **reliability and usefulness** of various sources of information.

Analyse the **origin, purpose, value**, and **limitations** of different political sources.

Develop critical thinking skills to *assess* **the credibility and bias** of political information.

Compare and contrast different sources to **identify differing perspectives** on political issues.

Understand the **historical** and **contemporary context** of sources to evaluate their **relevance and accuracy**.

1. Origin – who, what, when

Before we start, we need to know the basics of what we're dealing with.

a   What type of source is it?
  — Is it an official document, speech, report, opinion piece, 'straight' news reporting, or other type of source?

b   Who created the source?
  — Identify the author(s) and/or organisation(s) that had a hand in producing it.
  — Investigate the author's background for things that might be important to our evaluation — their profession, place of work, socio-economic status, political affiliations, country of origin, areas of expertise, and other material they may have produced.
  — What might the interests of the author and/or their organisation be?

c   When was the source created?
  — What historical context (factors from more than 10 years ago) is relevant to the content?
  — What contemporary context (within the last 10 years) is relevant to the content?

2. Purpose – audience, intention, motivation

Here we need to use what we've learnt to try to get inside the author's head and attempt to work out why they've made the choices they have — which has made the source what it is. This includes looking out for what the source can tell us *beyond* what's on the 'surface'.

a   Who is the intended audience?   Analyse who the source was aimed at (e.g. general public, specific or elite groups, policymakers).

b   What *effect* might the creator be trying to achieve on their intended audience?
  — Identify the key messages and themes of the source.
  — Determine its intended purpose — is it to inform, persuade, justify, document, entertain, confuse or something else?

c   Can you identify any underlying *motives*?
  — Examine if there might be any hidden agendas that may have motivated the creator to present the information or construct the source in a particular way.

3. Content – information, perspectives, assumptions

Here you want to be able to summarise what the source *says* to demonstrate your ability to understand its meaning. This will be crucial in the next steps – assessing its value and limitations.

a What *relevant information* or data does the source include?

- Summarise the main points and details.
- Look at the structure, tone and style of the source.
- Identify and evaluate the accuracy and relevance of featured evidence, examples or statistics.

b What are the main *arguments* or *perspectives* being expressed?

- Analyse the relevant perspectives and arguments made in the source. (These may or may not go hand in hand with the *interests* of those voices.)

c What *assumptions* are made in the source?

- Consider any assumptions or premises underlying the arguments put forward by the creator (particularly any you think might be questionable).
- Consider how these assumptions reflect some of the perspectives identified in 3b.

4. Value – insight, comparison, reliability

This is where we start to make value judgements about usefulness, which involves demonstrating your understanding of the world *outside* the source, as well as thinking about it in comparison to other sources.

a What useful insights does the source offer?

Determine what information or perspective the source provides that:

- appears to be accurate and/or reliable
- may be significant or unique
- improves the reader's understanding or insight into any issue(s) of relevance.

b How does it *compare* and/or contrast with other sources?

- Identify similarities with other relevant sources, in terms of perspective and content.
- Identify meaningful differences with other relevant sources in terms of perspective and content.
- How does the source 'rate' in terms of usefulness compared to these other sources?

c What makes it a *reliable* source?

Assess the source's credibility based on:

- the author's expertise or methodology used
- the strength of the evidence presented
- the strength of the reasoning or logic underpinning its assumptions, claims, arguments and conclusions
- attempts by the author to acknowledge and/or 'correct for' their own bias or other contextual factors.

5. Limitations – constraints, omissions, biases

This isn't so much about identifying 'weaknesses' as it is about identifying the point at which the source stops being useful to us as people trying to think critically and accurately; no one source provides a complete picture of the world as a whole. Remember: biases and constraints do not necessarily limit the value of a source. Biased sources feature a range of perspectives (which is useful), and identifying the biases in sources also provides us with an opportunity to explain what we think is *really* going on.

a What are the *constraints of the source*?

- Analyse any limitations inherent in the source 'type'.
- Does the source feature anything that appears questionable, inaccurate or blatantly untrue?

b What is *missing* or *underrepresented*?

- Consider what information or perspectives may have been omitted or inadequately covered.
- Are there relevant parts of the story that the creator has *deliberately* left out?

c What *biases* are evident in the source?

- Identify any biases (whether hidden or overt) on the part of the creator.
- How might context – including the author's personal or professional background, and/or the interests of their profession or employing organisation – constrain or shape the source's content and perspective?
- How might other contextual factors – time, place, and other circumstances – influence the source's content and perspective?

Model source analysis

When we are reading, watching or listening to media texts in VCE Politics, we are doing a few different things. We might be learning about what is going on, trying to understand different viewpoints or just trying to 'get the facts'.

Being able to analyse and evaluate sources is an essential skill for political inquiry. Remember: we're using the OPCVL framework for source analysis.

Origin   **P**urpose   **C**ontext   **V**alue   **L**imitations

To help you remember these, you can use the mnemonic 'Our Cat Probably Votes Liberal' (or Labor, or Libertarian — it really depends on what cat you have in mind).

Our
Cat
Probably
Votes
L_____
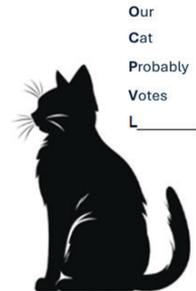
What might this look like in practice? Let's look at the following article from The Herald Sun. We've provided an excerpt below, but you should visit the URL (or just google the title) to read the article in full.

Poll shows majority of Aussies support nuclear power plan

Exclusive polling provides a detailed insight into how Aussies feel about nuclear energy, including communities which could host a reactor in their backyards.

Herald Sun

Clare Armstrong   X @ByClare   3 min read   June 24, 2024 - 5:00AM   1557 Comments

Six in 10 Australians say they support nuclear energy as a part of the nation's energy mix in a boost for Opposition Leader Peter Dutton's ambitious plan to build seven power plants by 2050.

Mr Dutton's plan was also bolstered by most of the nominated regions supporting having a reactor in their back yard, led by the Latrobe Valley with almost 60 per cent of those surveyed there comfortable with the idea.

A snapshot survey of 923 randomly selected people conducted across the weekend after the Coalition announced its energy plan found about 60 per cent of voters said nuclear power "has a place" in Australia's future energy mix.

Mr Dutton last week announced if elected he would pursue a plan to build seven nuclear plants at the sites of retiring coal-fired power stations, including the Latrobe Valley in Victoria, Hunter Valley in NSW, South Burnett and Gladstone region of Queensland, and Port Augusta in South Australia.

The survey included just over 100 people on average in each of these five regional areas, plus 100 people in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane.

In every location, except Melbourne, there was majority support for an Australian nuclear energy industry, but this backing fell away somewhat when respondents were specifically asked if they would be "comfortable with a nuclear reactor being built in your region"[...]

heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/poll-shows-majority-of-aussies-support-nuclear-power-plan/news-story/72e344f1aea990623d38b98f64787115

What follows is an example of how a student might analyse this as a source (in black text). This is supplemented by comments and explanations from us, your textbook authors, to help you understand and contextualise (in magenta).

Origin – who, what, when

The **publisher** of this article is The Herald Sun, the most popular tabloid newspaper in Melbourne, owned by Nationwide News, a subsidiary of News Limited (owned by News Corp).

Tabloid newspapers tend to have more images and shorter articles and are considered less formal than broadsheet newspapers. They are sometimes criticised for being **sensationalist** – that is, intending to provoke public interest or excitement at the expense of accuracy. This may limit its *usefulness and reliability*.

News Corp publications and articles generally tend to present *perspectives* that are more ideologically **conservative** rather than progressive, often featuring explicit support for policies and narratives that align with the *interests* of right-wing politicians and business interests (including mining companies). This extends across its international network of media outlets and is thought to be at least (in part) a result of the political leanings of its owner and former executive chairman, Rupert Murdoch.

The article itself is a **news report**. These are intended to report what's happening in a way that is primarily factual, often supplemented by quotations or commentary from people other than the author. This differs from other forms of news articles, such as opinion, editorial, analysis or commentary, which typically include the author openly taking on and promoting particular perspectives on the issue(s) being reported.

The article was **published in mid-2024**, which is shortly after a plan to build seven nuclear power stations was unveiled and being vigorously promoted by Liberal opposition leader Peter Dutton.

You can learn more about the ownership of media broadcasters in Australia by looking at the Australian Communication and Media Authority 'Media Interests Snapshot'. Most newspapers in Australia are owned by either News Corp Australia or Nine Holdings. Internationally, Murdoch has significant media holdings overseas, including Fox News in the United States.

↳ acma.gov.au/media-interests-snapshot

↳ acma.gov.au/publications/2019-11/infographic/rupert-murdoch-media-interests

News reports can be particularly helpful for students of politics to analyse, as they can show how an issue is being **framed**. It can sometimes be difficult to analyse a news report for *bias* or framing, but it is important – as people may be more susceptible to changing their thinking about a topic when they don't realise they are being guided to a particular *perspective*. You can undertake your own research into ideas such as media framing, agenda-setting and/or semiotics if you're really interested in delving into these elements of media analysis.

Purpose – audience, intention, motivation

The primary *purpose* of this article is to **share results of a poll** testing the extent of popular support for the plan recently released by the federal Liberal−National Coalition opposition to build seven nuclear power plants in Australia.

STATE BY STATE SURVEY RESULTS		VIC		QLD		NSW		SA	
923 people across Australia were asked three questions:		urban	regional	urban	regional	urban	regional	urban	regional
Q1 'Do you believe nuclear power has a place in Australia's future energy mix?'	Yes	39	71	64	58	62	53	54	72
	No	61	29	36	42	38	47	46	28
Q2 'Would you be comfortable with a nuclear reactor being built in your state/region?'	Yes	29	59	48	52	48	34	44	59
	No	71	41	52	48	52	66	56	41
Q3 'Does this make you more or less likely to vote for the Coalition at the next federal election?'	More likely	23	58	41	32	48	43	40	31
	Less likely	65	42	59	50	52	57	60	69
	No impact	11	0	0	18	0	0	0	0

The survey showed that **60 per cent** of respondents **supported** nuclear power overall (Q1), seeing a place for it in Australia's future energy mix. Nonetheless, the response data also indicated that a majority were uncomfortable with nuclear reactors being built in their state or region. It also showed generally stronger support in regional areas and stronger opposition in cities, with the most extreme difference being between Victorian respondents (from the La Trobe Valley and Melbourne, respectively).

The intended audience of this article would be a **broad section of Victorians**, with the typical reader likely earning an average income, being middle-aged and right-of-centre politically. The Herald Sun is the most widely read newspaper in Victoria, with an overall monthly readership of almost one million people. Compared to other publications, it doesn't tend to focus on in-depth reporting.

Thinking more critically about the origin and purpose, the article could be seeking to promote the *perspective* that even though public opinion in Australia has long opposed nuclear power by a significant margin, **this opposition was giving way to a more 'mixed' view**. As such, the article creates a counternarrative that opposes 'conventional wisdom' − this creates a tension that may be more engaging for readers, leading to more readers, more clicks and, thus, more revenue from advertising for the publisher.

It could be worth exploring other sources of polling, such as this one, to help contextualise the issues discussed in the article.

'Voters split on nuclear but most see renewables as way forward'. The Sydney Morning Herald, 2024. smh.com.au/politics/federal/voters-split-on-nuclear-but-most-see-renewables-as-way-forward-20240623-p5jnz0.html

Context – information, perspectives, assumptions

This article was published in a *contemporary context* of **increasing public concern** about climate change, as well as significant and ongoing disagreement among major parties with different *perspectives* on appropriate policy responses.

Both parties have been under increasing **public and political pressure to set and meet more ambitious targets** to cut emissions, while also preventing higher energy costs from flowing through to households and businesses. Historically, the federal Liberal Party had broadly (but with some exceptions) been opposed to measures such as carbon pricing or large-scale investment in renewable energy since climate change became a prominent political issue in the early 2000s.

The fossil fuel industry has been an important source of institutional and financial support for both the Coalition and conservative news media organisations such as News Limited (this is not to say that certain elements of the fossil fuel industry have not also provided significant support to the Labor Party). This has seen strong opposition from all three towards public and private investment in renewable energy, which threatens their shared **economic and political interests** by reducing the profitability and viability of using fossil fuels for energy generation.

The Coalition's plan for nuclear power in Australia was released in June 2024. While it included no estimates of costs to the taxpayer (which detracted from its *credibility*), it did include **details about where the plants would be built**, a timeline for the first reactor to become operational (in 2035), and an acknowledgement that these would be funded and operated by government rather than private investors.

A more in-depth analysis might also discuss the fact that other reputable sources, such as the Climate Council and CSIRO, had been critical of the plan, with their perspective being that nuclear power in Australia would be a very costly option, take an unacceptably long time to build, and carry serious risks to the environment and human health – with renewable alternatives like wind and solar power being superior in each of these respects. This perspective was broadly shared by Labor, the Greens, and other key members of the parliamentary crossbench.

Some suggestions for further reading are provided below:

- 'Nuclear power stations are not appropriate for Australia – and never will be'. Climate Council, 2024. climatecouncil.org.au/
  nuclear-power-stations-are-not-appropriate-for-australia-and-probably-never-will-be

- 'CSIRO stands by nuclear power costings that contradict Coalition claims'. The Guardian, 2024.
  theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/may/29/
  csiro-nuclear-power-plant-australia-cost-peter-dutton-liberal-coalition

- 'Why has the Coalition gone nuclear? The facts you need to navigate the energy debate'.
  ABC News, 2024. abc.net.au/news/2024-06-19/
  why-has-coalition-gone-nuclear-explainer/103997572

Value – insight, comparison, reliability

The value of this article, and the polling it reports, lies primarily in the design features of the poll in question. We can conclude that those surveyed had mixed views about the prospect of nuclear power being added to Australia's energy landscape. This article and the polling it discusses help us understand the political landscape in which the Coalition embarked on this policy proposal. It can be read alongside other polls on the issue (which may have framed the issue differently or used different methodology) and other perspectives, including from those with knowledge or expertise in energy policy, economics and the environment.

- Polls can be an excellent way of gauging public opinion on various issues and gaining a better understanding of the perspectives of voters. Polling is one of the key ways that public preferences are 'given weight', sometimes counterbalanced against or lending legitimacy to the actions and perspectives of governments, political parties and other powerful interest groups.

- Polls can also be misleading. This depends on the merits of the methods used to conduct them (over which even the experts disagree), including the format of questions and the individuals surveyed. Key elements of this include the de-creasing use of landline telephones, which fail to capture many younger people and tend to exclude non-English speakers. For example, in the 2019 Australian federal election, almost every poll leading up to the election pointed to the strong likelihood of a Labor victory — but this is not what eventuated. Read more here:

  'How did pollsters get the Australian election result so wrong?' New Scientist, 2019. newscientist.com/ article/2203837-how-did-pollsters-get-the-australian-election-result-so-wrong

Limitations – constraints, omissions, biases

This article may be a deliberate attempt to provide some positive coverage for the Coalition's nuclear plan in a context otherwise dominated by criticism, particularly over the absence of significant details (such as costings), alongside opposition from many experts in the area.

Like any opinion poll, this one records the perspectives of those who responded to the survey. Without further information it may be hard to gauge how representative a cross-section is of their local community, or the broader Australian community. It also does not include the opinions of relevant policy or subject matter experts.

Activity – Analyse the source

1 Do you disagree with any of the conclusions we've drawn in our analysis? If so, why?

2 What other information or analysis would you add to what we have provided here?

3 In your opinion, how valuable is the information gathered in the poll?

4 How are the poll results expressed in the article? What is emphasised, and what is downplayed?

Global issues, global responses

"Unit 3, Area of Study 1: Global issues, global responses

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the causes and consequences of a global issue and evaluate the effectiveness of global actors' responses in resolving the issue.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

1 the short-term causes (within the last 10 years) of one global issue

2 the impact of global interconnectedness on one issue

3 the responses of global actors to the issue, including

   3.1   states

   3.2   at least one institution of global governance

   3.3   at least one non-state actor.

4 the effectiveness of international laws in addressing the issue

   4.1   the extent to which global actors effectively respond to those laws

5 the ability of global actors to respond effectively to one issue

6 the challenges to the resolution of one issue

7 the consequences of the issue for political stability and/or change.

Key skills

i   ask and analyse a range of political questions to investigate one global issue

ii   analyse and interpret a range of sources of information on one global issue

iii assess the impact of global interconnectedness on one global issue

iv   analyse the causes and consequences of one global issue

v   analyse how the interests of different global actors may contribute to the causes and consequences of one global issue

vi   analyse the different perspectives of global political actors on one global issue and the reasons for those different perspectives

vii discuss how responses by global actors and challenges to resolution have contributed to political stability and/or change

viii evaluate the political significance of one global issue

ix   construct an argument to evaluate the ability of global actors to respond effectively to one issue, using evidence from sources.

Key questions

What makes an issue global?

Why are global issues significant for global actors?

What are the causes of global issues?

How can global issues be resolved?

What are the key challenges to the resolution of global issues?

Preface

In this area of study, students examine the causes, consequences and significance of a global issue that by its very nature transcends national and regional boundaries. Students consider the range of factors that may cause conflict, such as social, political, economic, environmental, ideological, cultural and/or technological factors. Global actors may involve themselves in a cooperative effort with other actors to attempt a resolution of the issue or they may pursue their own objectives in a way that brings them into conflict with other global actors.

Students investigate the effectiveness of the institutions available to address these issues, including international laws and the global institutions that facilitate cooperation between global actors. For the purpose of this study, international law encompasses a wide range of rules and norms that are designed to govern the actions of states in international relations, such as treaties, declarations, bilateral and multilateral agreements and even decisions made by bodies such as the United Nations Security Council. Students analyse the challenges to resolving these issues, including the different perspectives of global actors, their often-competing interests and the impact of global interconnectedness on the chosen issue.

In developing a course, teachers must select one of the following global issues to be studied in depth.

1 climate change

2 global economic instability

3 development

4 weapons of mass destruction. 99

Global issues, global responses

Issues have become increasingly global in nature, and global issues require global responses. An unprecedented level of cooperation is required from global actors in the international community. However, their responses may be framed through different political theories, which may ultimately impact their effectiveness. **Realism** and **cosmopolitanism** are the two most prominent theories that guide the behaviour of global actors. Realism, in particular, may explain why cooperation from global actors is flawed: the anarchical structure of the international community prompts states to abide by international norms only when those norms do not pose a threat to themselves. In addition, there are a range of other factors that may further impact the effectiveness of global actors, such as social, political, economic, environmental, ideological, cultural and technological factors.

Realism is the idea that global actors prioritise their own interests over the needs of others, often seeking to maximise their power to safeguard their own survival.

Cosmopolitanism is the idea that all human beings are members of a single moral community that transcends national boundaries; this leads them to prioritise cooperation to reach common goals and meet challenges faced by the global community.

One global issue that is becoming increasingly more pertinent in the international community is that of **climate change**. Climate change presents global actors with significant difficulties because Earth is warming faster than scientists predicted. Global greenhouse gas emissions have reached their highest recorded level, and although greenhouse gas emissions have peaked in many developed states, emissions from many developing states continue to grow exponentially. This in itself raises ethical questions about the extent to which states should be held responsible for their contributions to climate change and, even more importantly, the extent to which states should be allowed to continue releasing greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.

There are also more tangible effects of climate change. The ice within the Arctic Ocean and the Southern Ocean (where Antarctica is located) has dropped to alarmingly low levels. This exacerbates global warming because it enables more sunlight to be absorbed into the ocean, land and atmosphere, rather than be reflected into space. This has contributed to rising sea levels, which have inundated small island states. In addition, there has been an increase in the frequency of natural disasters such as cyclones, hurricanes, heatwaves, wildfires and droughts. Climate change is, and will continue to be, a significant issue for the international community.

Another issue is that of **weapons of mass destruction** (WMDs), which have the potential to cause mass death and environmental destruction. There are generally three categories of WMDs: nuclear arms, chemical weapons and biological weapons. This chapter includes a case study which will focus exclusively on nuclear arms and chemical weapons.

The leading military powers of the world hold stockpiles of nuclear arms that could end all life on Earth. We are living through a renewed arms race where the United States, Russia and China have collectively invested well over one trillion dollars (USD) in modernising and expanding their nuclear capabilities. Meanwhile, North Korea has made significant advances in the geographical reach of its

intercontinental ballistic missiles, and the possibility of Iran manufacturing its own nuclear arms is an ever-present concern.

Similarly, chemical weapons have been used repeatedly by the Syrian government against oppositional forces and their civilian populations. ISIS has also begun stockpiling chemical weapons and has carried out chemical weapons attacks in Syria. Russia has used chemical weapons in Ukraine despite officially declaring itself free of them. International bodies such as the **United Nations** (UN), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists have worked to reduce the threat of WMDs, with limited success. Advancements in technology, the increasing interconnectedness of our globalised society and the fluid movement of people and goods across the world means that we are all vulnerable to an attack from a WMD anywhere in the world, by either a state or a violent non-state actor.

> The **United Nations** is the world's largest international organisation and institution of global governance, founded in 1945 and consisting of 193 member states; its stated goals (as set out by the UN Charter) are to maintain peace, cooperation and friendly relations between states.

As students examine their chosen global issue and the corresponding global responses, they should consider and start formulating their own interpretations and judgements. Students should cast a critical eye over the responses of global actors to the global issue and form judgements about how well these actors have performed, including to what extent they contributed to the increased threat of the global issue, or to what extent they have attempted to provide a constructive resolution to the issue. Students should also consider competing or differing interpretations of the issue and how interests such as economic motivations or security concerns can prompt an actor to behave in a way that may be detrimental to the future survival of humanity. As such, by the end of this study, students should be able to form an evaluative judgement on:

- the responses and challenges to the stability of and/or change to their chosen global issue
- the political significance of the global issue
- the effectiveness of global actors in responding to the global issue, noting that 'effectiveness' may fulfil the narrow interests of an actor while simultaneously acting as a force for destabilisation in relation to the global issue.

Issue study: Climate change

Climate change presents an unprecedented challenge to global actors in the political arena. Its ability to transcend nations and regions makes it an **intrinsically global issue** – one that requires a significant level of cooperation from global actors such as states, regional groupings, institutions of global governance and non-state actors. However, it has also been a contentious issue, and one that is often mired in disagreements regarding its causes, significance and potential resolutions. Much

of the disagreement has been caused by the deliberate spread of disinformation, which has sought to sow division about the issue.
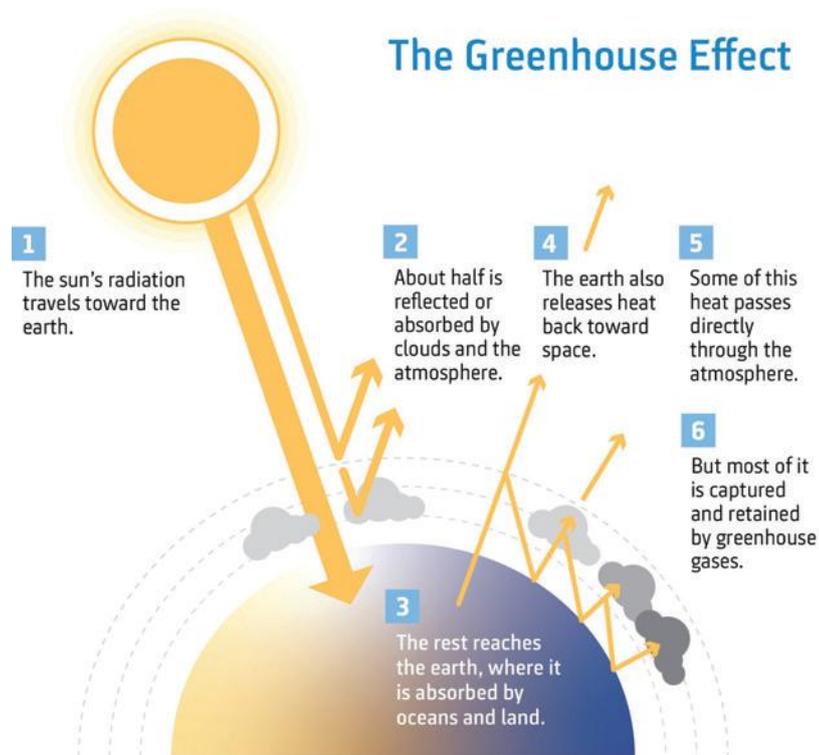
Climate change refers to long-term shifts in the Earth's temperature and weather patterns over many decades. Since its formation more than 4.5 billion years ago, changes in the planet's temperature and weather patterns have been triggered largely by natural phenomena. However, scientists argue that a new period of rapid climate change, which cannot be attributed to natural phenomena alone, began during the Industrial Revolution. Scientists point to human activity as the main contributing factor of this climate change. This is summed up in the term **anthropogenic** (*anthrop-* meaning 'relating to humans', *-genic* meaning 'being produced by'), in recognition of evidence that suggests humans have increasingly created and *accelerat*ed processes that shape the natural environment (Heywood and Whitham, 2023).

> **Anthropogenic** refers to things made by people or resulting from human activity

Since the Industrial Revolution, humans have burnt fossil fuels that have released greenhouse gases into Earth's atmosphere. The four main greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane, nitrous oxide and chlorofluorocarbons. These greenhouse gases act like a blanket in the atmosphere, trapping the Sun's heat close to Earth's surface, causing Earth's average temperature to rise. This is known as the greenhouse effect, illustrated in the diagram provided.

The Greenhouse Effect

1 The sun's radiation travels toward the earth.

2 About half is reflected or absorbed by clouds and the atmosphere.

3 The rest reaches the earth, where it is absorbed by oceans and land.

4 The earth also releases heat back toward space.

5 Some of this heat passes directly through the atmosphere.

6 But most of it is captured and retained by greenhouse gases.

The greenhouse effect.
Source: National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research.
niwa.co.nz/climate-change-information-climate-solvers/
climate-change-science

A common theory used to explain the root causes of anthropogenic climate change is that of Garrett Hardin's '**tragedy of the commons**', which refers to a situation in which individuals have access to a common pool of resources and ultimately overuse and deplete them. Many academics draw parallels between Hardin's 'tragedy of the commons' and the causes of climate change, whereby individuals act in their own interests and degrade the environment by burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas. As Hardin (1968) states, we are locked into a system of 'fouling our own nest, so long as we behave only as independent, rational, free-enterprises'. These causes will be discussed in detail in this section.

Short-term causes

Burning fossil fuels

Fossil fuels are formed from the fossilised remains of organic materials (such as plants and animals) that lived billions of years ago, and include coal, oil and gas. Since the Industrial Revolution, the burning of fossil fuels has been a significant source of power, essential for industrialisation and development. However, when burnt, fossil fuels also produce CO_2, a greenhouse gas that has been identified by scientists as the main driver of climate change.
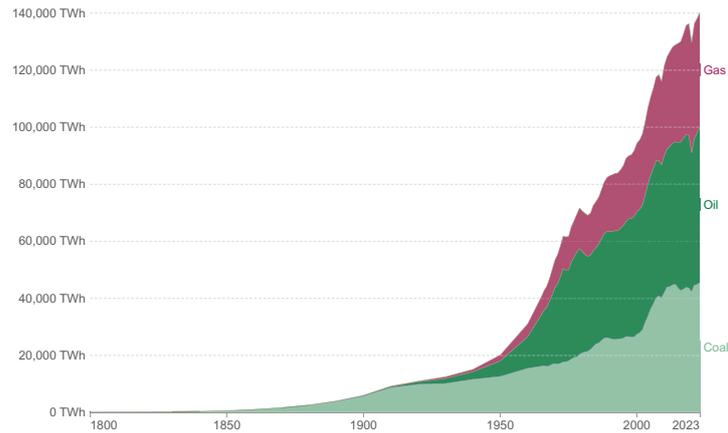
Global fossil fuel consumption. Source: Energy Institute – Statistical Review of World Energy (2023), Smil (2017) – with major processing by Our World in Data. ourworldindata.org/fossil-fuels

Deforestation

Trees absorb CO_2 from the atmosphere through the process of photosynthesis. Deforestation, whereby trees are purposely cleared from a forest, results in the release of stored CO_2 into the atmosphere, which ultimately contributes to climate change. The main driver of deforestation is agriculture. Although deforestation rates have reduced in states which have adopted policies to reinvigorate forests, *global* deforestation rates are still considered by scientists to be worryingly high.
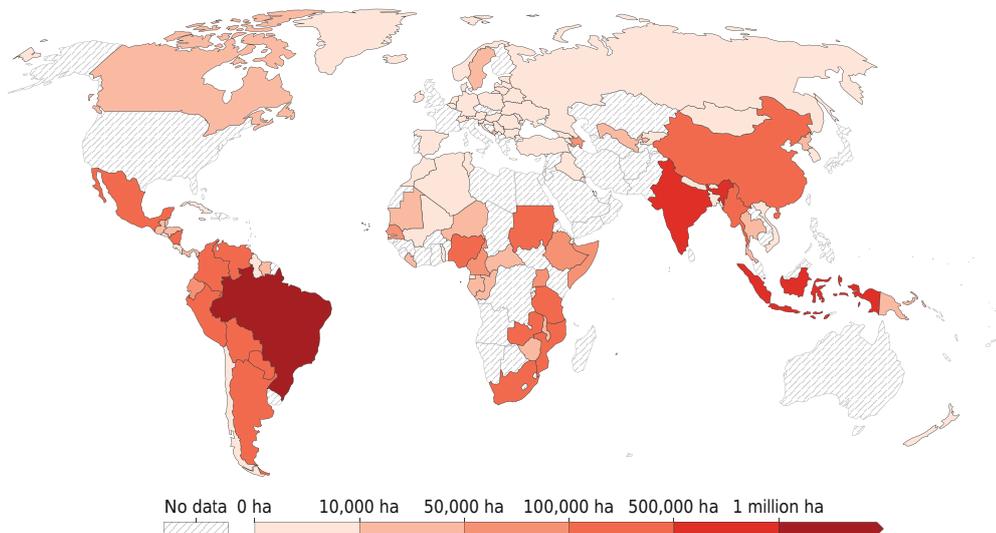

Annual deforestation, 2015.
Source: UN Food and Agriculture Organization. ourworldindata.org/deforestation

Transportation

Many modes of transportation are powered by fossil fuels, and therefore transportation is a major contributor to climate change. According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), transportation is responsible for one-quarter of all energy-related greenhouse gas emissions (UNEP, 2023). Transportation-related emissions are a particularly prominent issue for higher-income states with high rates of car ownership and use. For instance, in 2024 the US Environmental Protection Agency noted that the transportation sector accounted for 29 per cent of the total greenhouse gas emissions released by the United States, making it the largest contributing sector to greenhouse gas emissions in the country. Among developing states, the transportation sector is also seeing the fastest rate of growth, as more people are able to afford cars, trains and flights as modes of transportation (UNEP, 2023).
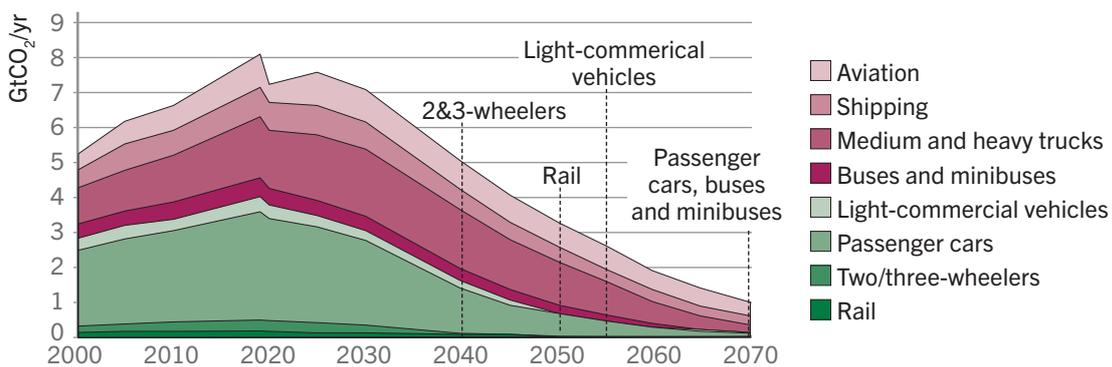
Global emissions in transportation – the dotted lines indicate when modes of transport are predicted to largely stop consuming fossil fuels. Source: International Energy Agency (2020). 'Cars, planes, trains: Where do CO_2 emissions from transport come from?' ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions-from-transport

Consumption

Some reports indicate that household consumption – that is, goods and services used to produce consumer goods, rather than for industrial needs – accounts for 60 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions (Worland, 2023). As such, the 2020 UNEP Emissions Gap Report suggested that consumers must commit to making **significant lifestyle changes**. This includes reducing their carbon footprint from a global average of approximately 6 tons of CO_2 per person to 2–2.5 tons of CO_2 by 2030, and to 0.7 tons of CO_2 by 2050 (Kharas, 2021). Despite such a high figure, household consumption is rarely on the agenda of governments.
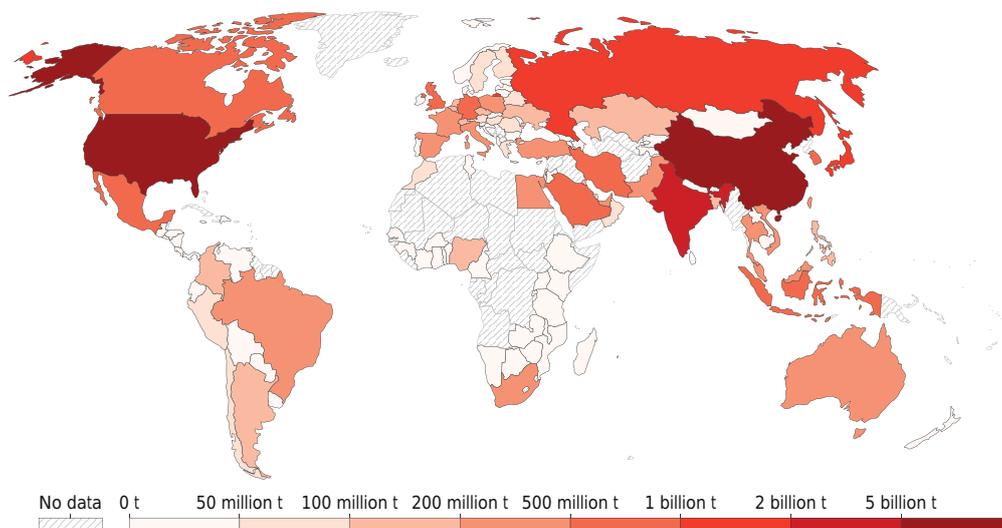
Consumption-based CO_2 emissions, 2021.
Source: Global Carbon Budget, 2023. ourworldindata.org/grapher/consumption-co2-emissions

🎯 Not all sources are created equal – analysing and interpreting sources

The spread of **disinformation** and **misinformation** is becoming more prevalent. As such, it is important that you are able to discern credible sources from those lacking credibility. One way to analyse the credibility of sources in VCE Politics is using our framework: OPCVL (origin, purpose, content, value and limitations). The following example demonstrates how you might use this tool to critically engage with and evaluate a source.

> **Disinformation** involves deliberate attempts to mislead, such as hoaxes, phishing and propaganda.

> **Misinformation** is false or inaccurate information, such as rumours, insults and pranks.

Read the following excerpt from an opinion piece by columnist Andrew Bolt, published in 2024 and then review the OPCVL breakdown that follows.

> " That's because so many trusting Australians still don't ask the right question about this global warming 'crisis' that these green schemes are supposed to stop. The question is not: 'Is climate change real?' The climate always changes. Nor is the question: 'But aren't our emissions changing the climate?' They probably are, a bit. So? No, the real question is this: 'Is the warming so bad for us that we should spend trillions to try to stop it, or is it actually good? What's the gain for all this pain?' The science is in — the world is becoming greener. That's why the latest science and data suggest Bowen's schemes are almost literally insane — even if we ignore that Australia can't actually change the world's temperature by anything we can measure, because we're too small.
>
> Just look around you. Australia's dams over the past two years have never held so much water. Australia has had fewer cyclones over the past 50 years, and our farmers have had record grain harvests in the past decade. If this is global warming, why on earth are we trying to stop it? Even more startling, a new study, published in the peer-reviewed *Global Ecology and Conservation* journal, says the world is actually getting greener — as in more leaves and plants. Isn't that great? The study, by scientists at top Chinese universities, plus a catchment modeller at Queensland's Department of Environment and Science, says this 'global greening is an indisputable fact', and it's not just because China is planting more trees and India is using more irrigation. Large parts of the US, Canada, Europe and Australia are also greening — faster than ever, on the whole — and these scientists say it's in part from 'CO_2 fertilisation'.
>
> Yes, the carbon dioxide in our emissions is a plant food, as every Year 10 biology student should know, and it's helping to give us a greener world. Or would you really prefer more deserts and dust? So is this the global warming we should be trying to stop? Is this what the lies about 'cheaper electricity' and 'cheaper cars' are really for? "

Andrew Bolt, 2024. 'Climate cultists need to be asked if the pain of tackling global warming is worth any gain'. Herald Sun. heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/andrew-bolt/andrew-bolt-climate-cultists-need-to-be-asked-if-the-pain-of-tackling-global-warming-is-worth-any-gain/news-story/5d584faf984ae43879aacc4718833058

Origin – who, what, when

The source is an opinion piece by Andrew Bolt from early 2024. Bolt's columns are published in a variety of right-leaning publications, such as the Herald Sun, The Daily Telegraph and The Advertiser. He also hosts The Bolt Report on Sky News.

Purpose – audience, intention, motivation

Bolt intends to persuade the general public that the Australian government should not pursue policies to address climate change. Bolt may also intend to confuse the general public, as he puts forth several arguments that contradict more mainstream narratives on climate change.

Content – information, perspectives, assumptions

Bolt argues that climate change is having a positive impact on the environment. He states that there has been an increase in the level of water in dams, a reduction in cyclones and record grain harvests in Australia. He also says that the global environment has become 'greener'. Bolt uses several sources to support his claims, including the Global Ecology and Conservation journal and Queensland's Department of Environment and Science. Throughout the article Bolt uses a variety of persuasive language techniques that contribute to a dismissive, sceptical and provocative tone.

Value – insight, comparison, reliability

The source offers a unique perspective on climate change, highlighting several positive impacts that increased CO_2 emissions are having on the environment. It differs from other views on climate change, including that of the UN (2024a), which argues that climate change is 'one of the major challenges of our time' and a 'global emergency'.

Limitations – constraints, omissions, biases

One of the main limitations of this source is inherent in its source 'type'; it is an opinion piece. It solely reflects Bolt's opinion and does not offer any alternative views on the issue of climate change (other than in the course of dismissing them). Bolt has deliberately omitted information about the negative impacts of climate change. His employment at the Herald Sun, a right-leaning publication, may constrain his ability to put forth a more balanced argument.

Activity A – Understanding the origins of climate change

1 What makes climate change a global issue?

2 Why are global issues, such as climate change, significant for global actors?

3 What role do natural phenomena play in causing climate change?

4 What evidence is there to suggest that human activity has contributed to climate change?

5 Analyse and interpret the sources provided in the preceding pages by answering the following questions:

    a To what extent has energy consumption shifted from coal other sources of fuel in recent times?

    b What could explain the recent shift from coal to other sources of fuel?

6 With reference to the deforestation map provided in this section, answer the following questions:

    a What states experience a high rate of deforestation?

    b Based on your general knowledge, what could explain the high rates of deforestation in some states as opposed to other states?

7 With reference to the graph showing global emissions in transportation provided in this section, answer the following questions:

    a What modes of transport currently consume the most fossil fuels?

    b What predictions can be made about the future of transportation and its impact on climate change?

8 With reference to the consumption-based CO_2 emissions map provided in this section, answer the following questions:

    a How does household consumption differ between developed and developing states?

    b In your opinion, why do you think household consumption is rarely on the agenda of governments?

Our study design requires you to consider a range of factors that cause climate change. Conduct your own research into this question and use it to complete a table like the one modelled here. You could return to this activity as a revision task, *after* you've worked through the rest of this area of study.

Factors causing climate change	Evidence
Social	
Political	
Economic	
Environmental	
Ideological	
Cultural	
Technological	

Impact of global interconnectedness 3.1.2

The relationship between **global interconnectedness** and climate change can at times be contradictory. Although global interconnectedness has many positive effects on reducing the impacts of climate change, it has also produced many negative effects that have directly and indirectly contributed to climate change. However, it should be noted that there is little evidence to suggest that reducing global interconnectedness would lead to a decline in emissions and, therefore, reduce the impact of climate change.

Global interconnectedness refers to the intricate web of interactions and interdependencies that link countries, societies and individuals across the world.

Positive impacts

One positive impact of global interconnectedness is that it has facilitated international cooperation within global governance regimes. Global governance regimes have attempted to address the issue of climate change through **enabling sovereign states to collaborate and interact constructively with each other**. For example, in early 2023 the UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed a resolution (77/276) that was supported by more than 130 states. The resolution enables the UNGA to seek the opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on states' obligations to address climate change and the legal consequences states may bear if 'their acts and omissions' damage the climate in such a way that affects others.

Global interconnectedness has also promoted knowledge sharing and the influence of **non-government organisations** (NGOs). For example, Extinction Rebellion claims to have 1022 groups across 87 countries. The organisation is able to coordinate its non-violent, disruptive civil disobedience tactics across states to raise awareness about climate change. In 2019, Extinction Rebellion coordinated a series of 'die-in' protests across the globe, whereby protestors laid across the ground to highlight the risk of the human race becoming extinct as a result of climate change (Busby, 2019).

Non-government organisations are non-profit or charitable groups whose purpose is to address a social or political issue, and who are independent of government.

Global interconnectedness has enabled different climate change NGOs to connect with one another. The diagram provided illustrates how individuals are often connected to multiple climate change NGOs.
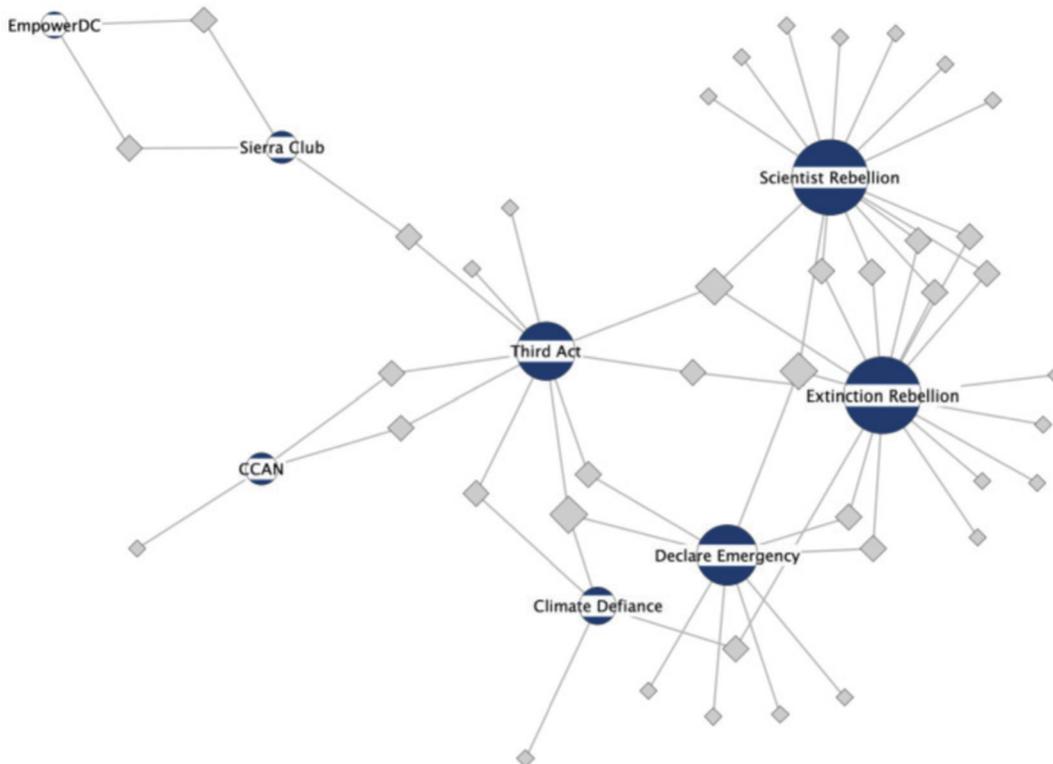
Affiliation network of climate activists. Source: Dana R. Fisher and Quinn Renaghan. 2023. 'Understanding the growing radical flank of the climate movement as the world burns'. Brookings. brookings.edu/articles/understanding-the-growing-radical-flank-of-the-climate-movement-as-the-world-burns

Negative impacts

Global interconnectedness has also had many negative impacts on climate change — one being an increase in the transportation of goods and services. In the past, goods and services were mostly produced, sold and consumed locally (Stobierski, 2021). However, global interconnectedness has led to the proliferation of **free trade agreements** and the expansion of trade routes between states. The further goods and services travel, usually via aircrafts and sea vessels, the greater the emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. According to the International Transport Forum (2021), greenhouse gas emissions from freight transport will increase 2.3-fold from 2015 to 2050.

> A **free trade agreement** is one that significantly reduces the barriers or disincentives to trade between two or more countries; they often include complex conditions that are a result of negotiating and balancing the interests of various producers, consumers and businesses across those countries.

Global interconnectedness has also accelerated the economic model of **comparative advantage**, whereby states specialise in producing those particular types of goods and services that they can produce most efficiently, relative to their trading partners. As a result, developed states usually move their production of goods and services to developing states that have weaker environmental protections. This is called the 'pollution haven' effect, where industries are moved from developed to developing states. This, too, increases greenhouse gas emissions.

Activity B – Assessing the impact of global interconnectedness

1   Discuss the following statements:

    a   'Global interconnectedness has eroded the power of states.'

    b   'The benefits of global interconnectedness outweigh the costs in relation to climate change.'

2   Explain one positive impact of global interconnectedness on climate change.

Remember: the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) publishes a glossary of command terms that explains exactly what you should try to do when presented with any command term. For example:

Explain	Give a detailed account of why and/or how with reference to causes, effects, continuity, change, reasons or mechanisms; make the relationships between things evident.

vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx

3   Explain one negative impact of global interconnectedness on climate change.

4   Analyse the impact of global interconnectedness on international cooperation.

5   Using the diagram of the affiliation network of climate activists provided in this section, complete a 'See/Think/Wonder' thinking routine task:

    —   What do you **see**?

    —   What do you **think** about that?

    —   What does it make you **wonder**?

6   Using the diagram of the affiliation network of climate activists provided in this section, explain how global interconnectedness may have contributed to the growth of non-state actors.

7   Use the table modelled below to summarise how global interconnectedness has impacted global actors. Ensure you provide evidence, such as examples, to support your assertions. We've filled in 'states' for you and provided some suggested resources to help you complete the other parts of your table.

US Environmental Protection Agency information on international climate partnerships: epa.gov/climate-change/international-climate-partnerships-0

Australian government information on international cooperation on climate change: dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/climate-change/international-cooperation-on-climate-change

Global actor	Impact of global interconnectedness
States	The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (The Montreal Protocol) is an international treaty designed to reduce ozone-depleting substances. Although it was signed in 1987, it has undergone nine revisions, most recently in 2016, when parties adopted the Kigali Amendment, which aims to phase out the use of hydrofluorocarbons, which is a powerful greenhouse gas. Global interconnectedness has enabled 197 states to sign the treaty. It has also enabled states to collaborate with one another to contribute to the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, whereby states provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries.
Regional grouping	
Institution of global governance	
Non-state actor	

Responses of global actors 3.1.3

The United Nations

The UN describes climate change as 'one of the major challenges of our time' and accordingly has implemented a range of strategies to combat this challenge. This includes the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change** (UNFCCC), which entered into force on 21 March 1994 and has near-universal membership, with 198 states parties to the Convention. The UNFCCC (2024b) ultimately aims to **mitigate** climate change by stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will **prevent** dangerous human interference with the climate system, in a time frame that allows ecosystems to **adapt** naturally and enables sustainable development. Most importantly, the UNFCCC led to the Conference of Parties (COPs), a continuing series of annual conferences attended by representatives of all states that are Parties to the Convention. COPs take measures to promote and oversee the effective implementation of the Convention.

The most significant COP conference was COP 21, which took place in **Paris in 2015**. COP 21 saw 196 Parties adopt the **Paris Agreement**, a landmark international treaty that aims to hold the increase in the global average temperature to 'well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels' and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to '1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels' (UN, 2024b).

At the time of writing, the most recent COP was COP 28, which took place in **Dubai in 2023**. This was a particularly momentous COP because the first ever global stocktake took place. The global stocktake was an important step in evaluating the world's current stance on climate action and enabled states to strengthen their climate policies and commitments through their **nationally determined contributions** (NDCs). COP 28 closed with an agreement that signalled the 'beginning of the end of the fossil fuels era by laying the ground for a swift, just and equitable transition, underpinned by deep emissions cuts and scaled-up finance' (UNFCCC, 2024a).

An important intergovernmental body within the UN is the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (IPCC). The IPCC is a body of scientists and researchers who are responsible for assessing the science associated with climate change. Although they do not conduct research themselves, they assess the latest scientific, technical and socio-economic literature associated with climate change and publish reports that provide decision-makers with objective information. It is widely accepted that the IPCC has significant influence within the realm of global politics because it shapes how the international community understands and responds to climate change.

UNITED NATIONS

Mitigation refers to reducing the flow of greenhouse gases and/or finding ways to remove them from the atmosphere

Prevention, in this context, refers to stopping the release of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere 'in the first instance'.

Adaptation refers to adjusting to, and developing protections from, the current and anticipated future effects of climate change

The **Paris Agreement** is an international treaty on climate change adopted in 2015, which notionally committed its 195 signatory states to take measures to mitigate climate change (to prevent more than 2 degrees Celsius warming compared to pre-industrial levels), as well as commit to climate change adaptation and financing.

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are commitments that states have made to particular policies and measures that reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

The UN has also adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals that aim to address the global challenges we face today. Goal 13 urges the international community to take action to combat climate change and its impacts. It does this through providing five targets:

> 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related disasters.
>
> 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into policies and planning.
>
> 13.3 Build knowledge and capacity to meet climate change.
>
> 13.4 Implement the UN framework convention on climate change.
>
> 13.5 Promote mechanisms to raise capacity for planning and management.
>
> The Global Goals. 'Goal 13: Climate action'. globalgoals.org/goals/13-climate-action

Brazil

Brazil ratified the **Paris Agreement** in 2016 and adjusted its NDCs in November 2023. Brazil stated that its adjustments highlighted its full commitment to the Paris Agreement and further reiterated its ambition to lead by example, particularly because its adjusted NDCs exceeded the level of ambition the UNFCCC expected from a developing state. Brazil belongs to the non-Annex 1 group of developing states, whereby states are recognised by the UNFCCC as being especially vulnerable to the effects of climate. This includes states that are reliant on fossil fuel production and commerce.

> Brazil confirms its absolute net greenhouse gas emission target in 2025 of 1.32 $GtCO_2e$, consistent with a reduction of 48.4% in comparison with 2005, according to the latest inventory data. Additionally, Brazil commits to an absolute net greenhouse gas emission target in 2030 of 1.20 $GtCO_2e$, consistent with a reduction of 53.1% in comparison with 2005, according to the latest inventory data. The Government of Brazil further reiterates its long-term objective to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.
>
> Federative Republic of Brazil, 2023. 'Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC'. unfccc.int/documents/633022

Brazil is a significant state in relation to climate change because two-thirds of the Amazon rainforest lies within its borders. **Trees in the Amazon rainforest absorb more greenhouse gas emissions than any other rainforest in the world**, capturing and storing 48 billion tons of carbon emissions (The Nature Conservancy, 2024). However, Brazil has lost 20 per cent of its rainforests to deforestation, which is the equivalent of losing 11 soccer fields of trees every minute (Sharp, 2023). The destruction of the Amazon rainforest releases a dangerous amount of carbon emissions into the atmosphere and, therefore, significantly contributes to climate change. At one point in time, the Amazon rainforest was considered the world's largest carbon sink; however, scientific research now suggests that parts of the Amazon rainforest emit more CO_2 than it absorbs (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

From its peak in 2004—12, Brazil reduced its **rates of deforestation** by 80 per cent (Silva-Junior et al, 2021). However, rates subsequently rebounded significantly between 2012 and 2020, erasing half of the progress achieved in that previous reduction — with a significant re-acceleration brought on by the policies implemented by Jair Bolsonaro (who served as the 38th president of Brazil from 2019 to 2022). During his four years in power, Bolsonaro eroded many of the environmental protections implemented by his predecessor, often under the guise of increasing economic growth.

One of the contributors to climate change in Brazil is its **agricultural sector** — while it accounted for just 4.2 per cent of Brazil's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019, it was responsible for 48 per cent of its emissions (Simões and Delivorias, 2022). The chart provided illustrates the total greenhouse gas emissions of each sector of Brazil's economy.
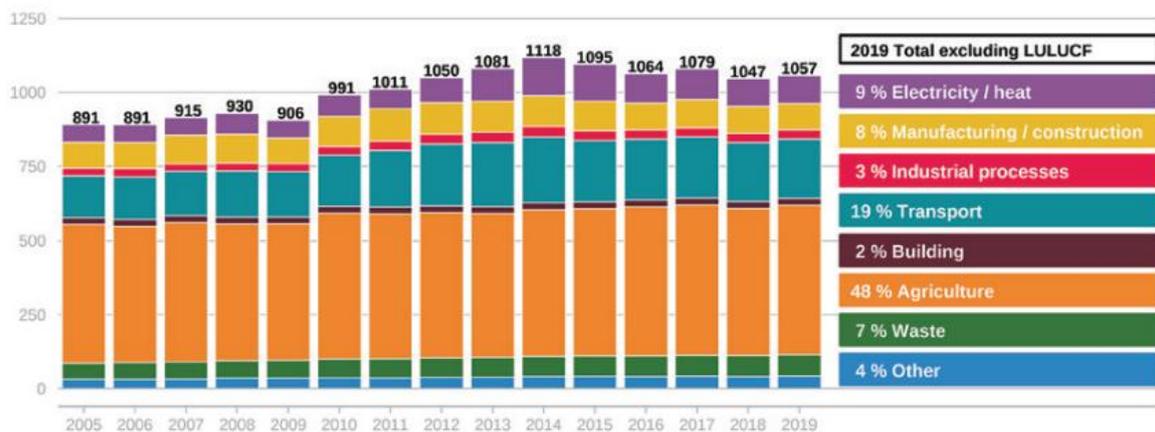
Total greenhouse gas emissions by sector in Brazil. Source: European Parliament, 2022. 'Brazil's climate change policies: State of play ahead of COP 27'. europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2022)738185

International cooperation, whereby global actors collaborate and interact with one another in pursuit of reciprocal goals, has increased in prominence when addressing deforestation. Deforestation was a prominent issue at the 2021 UN Climate Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, known as COP 26, where **145 states pledged to reverse deforestation** by 2030. Similarly, in 2023, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) met to further regional cooperation on deforestation between Amazon rainforest states such as Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela.

> " It has never been so urgent to resume and expand that cooperation. The challenge of our era and the opportunities that arise will demand joint action. "
>
> President of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, 2023, quoted in 'Brazil hosts 'landmark' Amazon summit: What you need to know'. Al Jazeera. aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/7/brazil-hosting-amazon-summit-what-you-need-to-know

A persistent challenge is that there is a correlation between states with high levels of deforestation and those with high levels of poverty and financial instability, which is an evident issue within Brazil. Laura González Mantecón, a climate adaptation and reforestation fellow at the US Forest Service, asserted that this is what 'leaves a lot of people with no other recourse but to clear land, to have a farm and be able to feed their family' (Sharp, 2023). This was described as a significant challenge to resolving climate change by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva at the ACTO meeting in 2023, who stated:

> We are going to COP 28 with the objective of telling the rich world that, if they do want to effectively preserve the remaining rainforest, it is necessary to allocate money not only to take care of the forest canopy, but of the people who live down below, and who want to work, study, eat, walk around, and live decent lives. It is by taking care of these people that we are going to take care of the forest.
>
> Government of Brazil. 2023. 'Lula: To value the rainforest is to give dignity to those who live in it'. gov.br/planalto/en/latest-news/2023/08/lula-to-value-the-rainforest-is-to-give-dignity-to-those-who-live-in-it

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva with other foreign dignitaries at the ACTO meeting in 2023.
Source: Ricardo Stuckert.

India

India ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016 and adjusted its NDCs in mid-2022. In its updated NDCs, India pledged to reduce the 'emissions intensity' of its GDP to 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, which is a significant improvement from its previous NDCs, which aimed to cut emissions by 33−35 per cent. In addition, at the COP 26 in late 2021, India announced that it planned to reach net zero emissions by 2070. To achieve such targets, India has implemented a range of policies domestically.
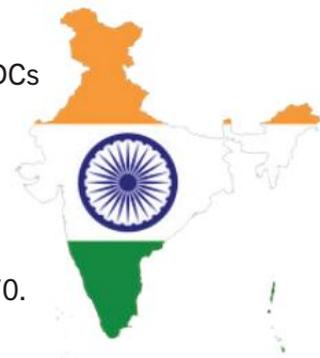
Within its transition to clean energy, India has implemented the Ujjwala (or 'bright') scheme, which aims to **replace unclean cooking fuels** used in rural parts of India with the cleaner liquified petroleum gas. This has limited CO_2 emissions from the burning of wood and other plant materials generally used by most Indian households

when cooking. Other strategies include producing 368 million LED light bulbs, which abate 38.7 million tons of carbon each year, and ordering 5450 electric buses, abating 60 million tons of carbon each year (Ghosh, 2023).

Addressing climate change is important, because India is facing severe risks from its impacts. The Indian government predicts that malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress caused by climate change will lead to 250 000 additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050 (Chateau et al., 2023). However, there are many points of tension for India when taking steps to address climate change.

One is that of economic development. India is considered a lower-middle-income economy by the World Bank. However, it is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and is expected to reach higher-middle-income status by 2047, the centenary of Indian independence (World Bank Group, 2023). Traditionally, states cannot develop at such rates while simultaneously reducing carbon emissions. For instance, industries such as steel, cement, fertiliser and petrochemicals are India's most significant sources of emissions, accounting for one-fifth of India's total emissions and three-quarters of its industrial emissions. Such industries play a crucial role in India's development, making it **difficult to decouple carbon emissions and development**.

Another point of tension is that of human rights. To improve the **quality of life of its poorest citizens**, India must increase its consumption of energy. India regularly endures temperatures above 50 degrees Celsius within certain regions, and such temperatures are predicted to triple in the next 30 years (Shih et al., 2022). Because of the extreme temperatures, cooling systems, such as air conditioners and fridges, are imperative for health and are considered by some academics to be a basic human right. In 2023 the average Indian consumed one-third of the electricity that the average person did, and one-twelfth of the electricity of the average American. As the average income rises, it is expected that the demand for cooling systems will also rise, which will inevitably lead to more emissions (even if *some* of that additional demand is met by renewable energy sources). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts there will be a 41 per cent increase in emissions by 2030 (Chateau et al. 2023).

Extinction Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion is a non-state actor that was established by a group of 15 researchers in the United Kingdom in 2018. Despite beginning in the United Kingdom, it has now spread to many states, including Australia, the United States, Chile and Ghana. The organisation advocates for climate change mitigation, nature conservation and environmental protection through **non-violent and disruptive civil disobedience** (Hirst et al., 2023). Extinction Rebellion campaigners believe that traditional strategies have failed due to the rooted interests of economic and political forces. Therefore, the organisation uses strategies such as demonstrations, occupying government buildings and disrupting transport links to achieve its aims. For example, members of Extinction Rebellion blocked Melbourne's West Gate Bridge in early 2024, leading to major traffic disruptions. One of the members, Deanna 'Violet' Coco, later justified her actions by stating, 'what is coming is so dangerous that we need to sound the alarm and make sure that people understand the threat that we face' (Silva, 2024). As Berglund and Schmidt (2020) explain, Extinction Rebellion proposes a 'people's assembly' that intends to reclaim decision-making amid a decline in the faith in democracy.

Members of Extinction Rebellion block the West Gate Bridge in Melbourne in 2024.
Source: Extinction Rebellion and Matt Hrkac. greenagenda.org.au/2024/06/no-regrets

Aims of Extinction Rebellion

1 Tell the truth
Governments must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change.

2 Act now
Governments must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.

3 Go beyond politics
Governments must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice.

Source: Extinction Rebellion. 2024. 'Our Demands'. rebellion.global/about-us

The Alliance of Small Island States

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is a regional grouping consisting of 39 small island developing states, including Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu and Tuvalu. Although these states contribute the least to climate change, they are among those that suffer the most; they are **low-lying, and so are most vulnerable to sea level rises**. As such, the AOSIS plays a disproportionately large role in advocating for climate change mitigation. This was particularly evident at COP 27, when the AOSIS played a significant role in establishing a loss and damage fund that would pay developing states for the unavoidable and extreme consequences of climate change (Lancaster, 2023). However, the AOSIS showed less effectiveness at COP 28, where the final agreement was approved without representatives from the AOSIS present. AOSIS lead negotiator Anne Rasmussen (2023) expressed confusion, stating, 'we did not want to interrupt you, but we are a little confused about what just happened. It seems that you gavelled the decisions, and the small island developing states were not in the room.'

The Maldives government has adapted infrastructure in the capital city Malé to address the threats of climate change, including beginning to build a wall around the city. Source: Shahee Ilyas. w.wiki/AZwv

Activity C – Understanding the responses of global actors

1   Discuss the following questions as a class:

   a   Should states prioritise their economic development and human rights over climate change?

   b   Do you think that 'newer' challenges, such as climate change, are making the UN less relevant?

   c   How can the UN be reformed to better address climate change?

   d   Are non-state actors, such as Extinction Rebellion, justified in their attempts to address climate change?

   e   Can NGOs, such as Extinction Rebellion, be held accountable for their actions?

   f   Are NGOs, such as Extinction Rebellion, indicative of a global civil society?

2   Discuss the response of one state to climate change.

3   Evaluate the response of one institution of global governance to climate change.

4   Critically compare the responses of two global actors to climate change.

5   Discuss the degree to which global actors can effectively resolve climate change.

6   Analyse how the interests of global actors may contribute to the causes of climate change.

7   Our study design requires you to know the responses of global actors, including states, at least one institution of global governance and at least one non-state actor, to the issue.

   Conduct further research and explain the strengths and weaknesses of these global actors in their responses to climate change. You may choose to research other global actors not discussed in this chapter, and/or use a table like the one modelled below to help organise your findings.

   Here are some suggested resources to help get you started:

   ▷   Australia's climate change strategies: dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/strategies

   ▷   US President Joe Biden's historic climate agenda: whitehouse.gov/climate

   ▷   The IMF and climate change: imf.org/en/Topics/climate-change

   ▷   Climate Action Network: climatenetwork.org

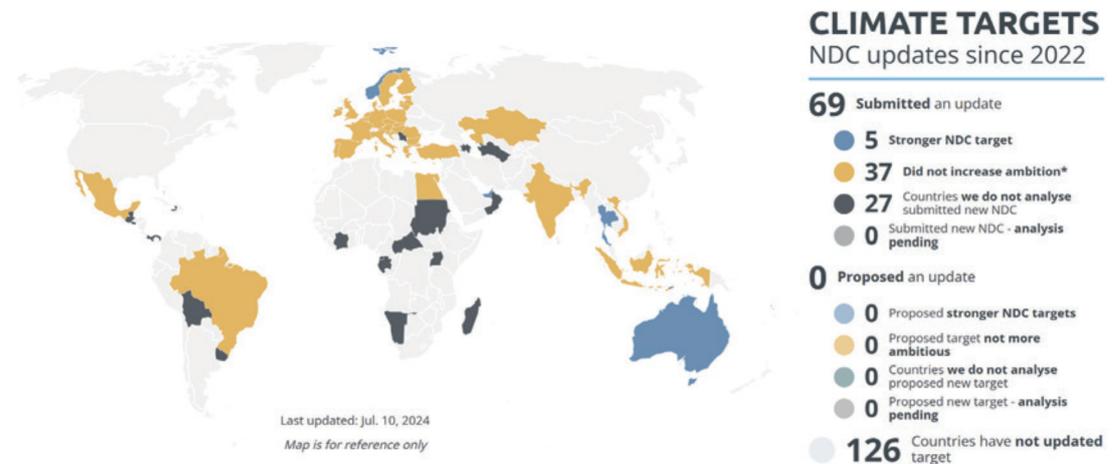| Global actors	Strengths	Weaknesses
State 1		
State 2		
Institution of global governance		
Non-state actor		

Effectiveness of international laws 3.1.4

The Paris Agreement

In 1992, states met at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit and, for the first time, recognised that climate change was a serious issue. Since then, states have debated how to address climate change and have produced a series of accords. As we've seen, the most notable of these was the 2015 Paris Agreement (which entered into force in 2016), which required states to pledge (via NDCs) how they will contribute global goals, and came with an expectation that they be updated every five years to verify progress is being made (i.e. from 2020, 2025 and 2030).

Although the Paris Agreement is a significant international treaty, its effectiveness in addressing climate change is limited, in particular because:

- States are able to **choose their own NDCs** – this is considered a weakness because some states have chosen, and will continue choose, relatively low NDCs.

- There are **no enforcement mechanisms** available to ensure states meet their NDCs. As such, many states have not cut their emissions enough to meet their targets, and there is no incentive for them to do so.

As illustrated here, very few states submit stronger NDC targets. From 2022 to 2024, states that submitted 'updates' included Australia, Norway, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Thailand. States that did not increase the ambition of their NDCs over this period included Brazil, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, Egypt and Turkey.

CLIMATE TARGETS
NDC updates since 2022

69 Submitted an update

- **5** Stronger NDC target
- **37** Did not increase ambition*
- **27** Countries we do not analyse submitted new NDC
- **0** Submitted new NDC - analysis pending

0 Proposed an update

- **0** Proposed stronger NDC targets
- **0** Proposed target not more ambitious
- **0** Countries we do not analyse proposed new target
- **0** Proposed new target - analysis pending

126 Countries have not updated target

Last updated: Jul. 10, 2024

Map is for reference only

NCD updates since 2022.
Source: Climate Action Tracker, 2024. climateactiontracker.org/climate-target-update-tracker-2022

The COP 28 in Dubai in 2023 concluded that **states needed to be doing more** to prevent the global average temperature from rising by at least 1.5 degrees Celsius. Also, the leaders of the world's two largest emitters – President of China Xi Jinping, and US President Joe Biden – did not attend the COP 28 summit in Dubai, casting doubts over their commitment to the Paris Agreement.

These and other factors have contributed to a growing sense that there is little if any prospect of Earth actually being able to prevent an increase in average temperatures of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (The Economist, 2022).

Effectiveness of responses to those laws 3.1.4.1

The United States

The effectiveness of the US response to the Paris Agreement has been somewhat dependent on its sitting president and the policy platforms on which they were elected. The United States initially signed and entered into the Paris Agreement under President Barack Obama. This was a significant achievement, as there was broad agreement that the Kyoto Protocol had been critically weakened by the US's refusal to participate. However, President Donald Trump **withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement** in late 2019 and formally left the accord the following year. Trump was elected president in 2016 and was formally inaugurated in 2017. He was elected on a broad policy platform, but one that included a commitment to withdraw from the accord.

> " As President, I have one obligation, and that obligation is to the American people. The Paris Accord would undermine our economy, hamstring our workers, weaken our sovereignty, impose unacceptable legal risks, and put us at a permanent disadvantage to the other countries of the world. It is time to exit the Paris Accord and time to pursue a new deal that protects the environment, our companies, our citizens, and our country. It is time to put Youngstown, Ohio, Detroit, Michigan, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania — along with many, many other locations within our great country — before Paris, France. It is time to make America great again. "
>
> <div align="right">Donald Trump, 2017. 'Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord'.
trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord</div>

In campaigning to replace Trump in 2020, Joe Biden pledged to rejoin the Paris Agreement — having declared that climate change was the 'number one issue facing humanity'. As such, one of his first executive orders after coming to office in early 2021 was to **formally rejoin the accord**. The Biden administration later set a target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 52 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Although this target was higher than the Obama-era target of 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025, Climate Action Tracker (2023b) claimed that such a target would not be sufficient to assist with meeting the ultimate aim of limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

> " On my very first day in office, I took action to return the United States to the Paris Agreement, restoring America's global climate leadership. Since then, my Administration has set the United States on an unprecedented course to tackle the climate crisis at home and abroad — securing the largest climate investment in the history of the world, unlocking clean energy breakthroughs that will power a clean economy and create thousands of jobs, and rallying leaders around the world to raise our collective ambition. "
>
> <div align="right">Joe Biden, 2023. 'Statement from President Joe Biden on agreement reached at COP28'.
whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/12/13/
statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-agreement-reached-at-cop28</div>

U.S. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS
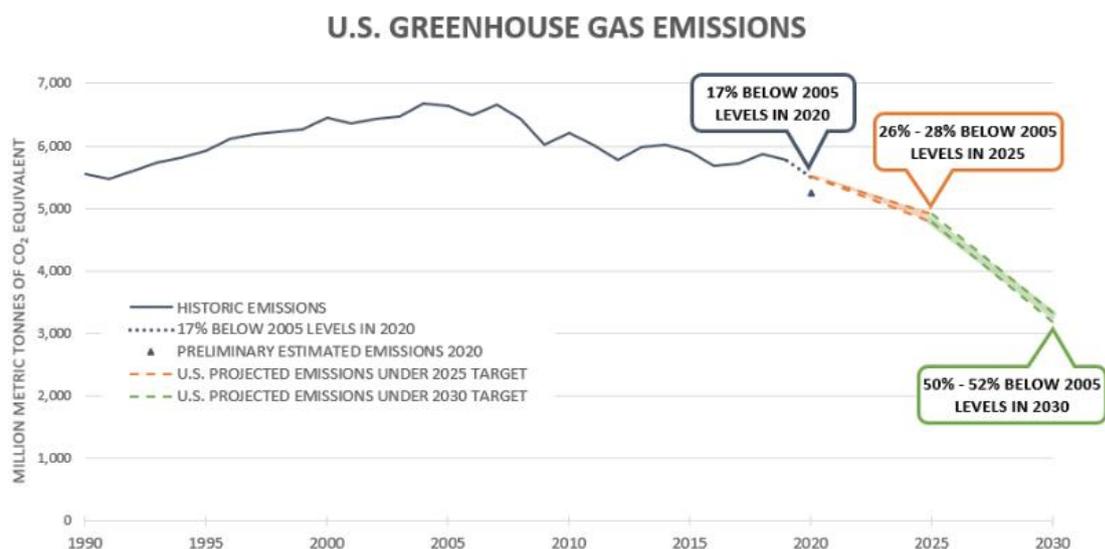
United States historic emissions and projected emissions under 2030 target. Source: UNFCCC. unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/United%20States%20NDC%20April%202021%202021%20Final.pdf

1. Is international law effective at addressing climate change?
2. If international law is ineffective, why do states participate in its creation?
3. Using evidence from the graph showing US greenhouse gas emissions, how effective has the United States been in responding to climate change?
4. Explain one international law that relates to climate change.
5. Discuss the effectiveness of one global actor in response to one international law.
6. Explain how state sovereignty challenges the effectiveness of international laws.

Effectiveness of actors' responses to climate change 3.1.5

Afghanistan

Based on scores for 2021, in 2024 Afghanistan was ranked 179th on the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index, which measures a state's ability to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change. Although Afghanistan is considered one of the states most vulnerable to the effects of climate change — particularly drought — it also faces several challenges that inhibit its ability to adequately address climate change.

The Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021 after waging an insurgency against the US-backed government. Since then, they have implemented a range of policies targeted at girls and women that have been globally condemned. Such policies have led to **political isolation**. As of 2024, Afghanistan had been left out of the last three COP conferences. As such, the state was unable to engage in conversations surrounding climate change, and, more importantly, important decisions were made at the conferences without the input of representatives from Afghanistan. In addition, since the Taliban's takeover, the state has been **unable to gain access to the UN climate funds**, including the Green Climate Fund. Before the Taliban's takeover, the Green Climate Fund had approved nearly US$18 million in sustainable energy projects for Afghanistan; however, such projects have now been postponed (Dickie and Greenfield, 2023). The UN has also imposed a series of sanctions on Afghanistan, including Resolution 2716 in 2023, which supports a prior resolution that designates sanctions on individuals, groups, undertakings and entities found to be part of or linked to the Taliban that threaten Afghanistan's peace, security and stability. Such sanctions have impeded Afghanistan's ability to invest in climate change mitigation strategies, leaving Afghanistan ill-equipped to deal with the effects of climate change (Smith and Bahiss, 2023).

Even prior to the Taliban's takeover, climate change and environmental policies received little attention in Afghanistan, as government policies and budgets were predominantly focused on combating security challenges (Sayed and Sadat, 2022).

Number of ecological threats faced by countries in 2020
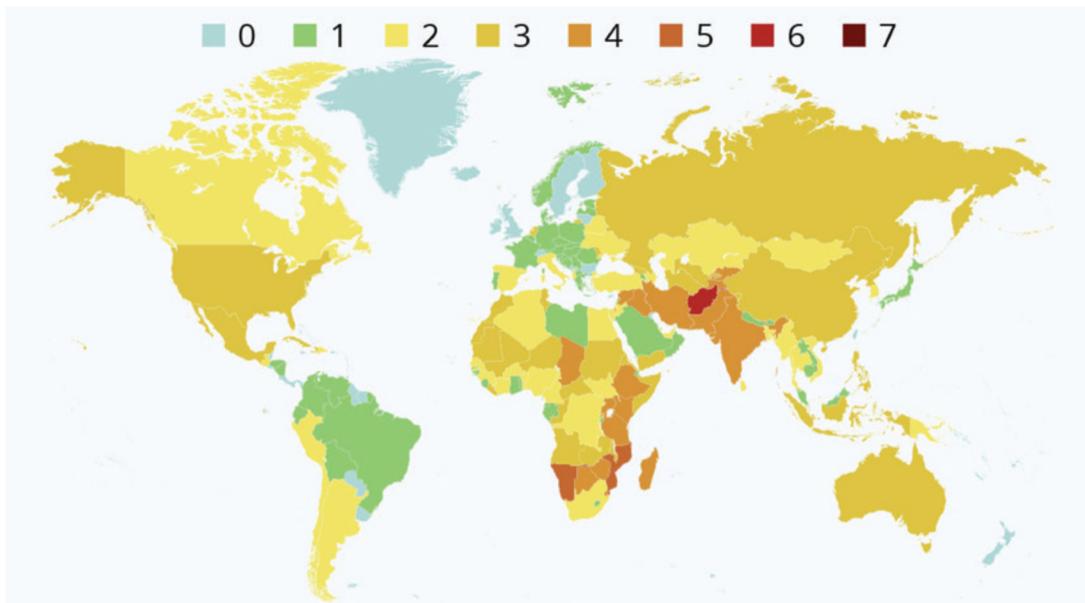
Countries facing the most ecological threats, based on population growth, water stress, food insecurity, droughts, floods, cyclones, rising temperatures and sea levels (note Afghanistan, marked in red). Source: Statista and Ecological Threat Register, 2020.

Australia

Australia is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In recent times, Australia has experienced catastrophic natural disasters such as droughts, fires and floods. There has been considerable desire among the majority of the population to address climate change for decades; however, political parties and the formal political system more generally have shown themselves to be either incapable or unwilling to translate this into effective and sustained action in state policy. Several strategies have been put forward:

- The **Rudd** (Labor) government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) was proposed as part of its 2007 election platform, but legislation was withdrawn in 2010.

- The **Gillard** (Labor) government's Carbon Tax in 2012, which was technically an emissions trading scheme, was implemented with the support of the Greens but repealed by the incoming Abbott government in 2014.

- The **Abbott** (Coalition) government's Direct Action policy in 2014 provided financial incentives for polluters to reduce emissions.

- The **Turnbull** (Coalition) government's National Energy Guarantee (NEG) scheme in 2016 obliged power companies to reduce emissions and prices in return for investment certainty.

- The **Morrison** (Coalition) government's Technology Investment Roadmap in 2021 directed government investment into specific low-carbon technologies.

- The **Albanese** (Labor) government's Climate Change Bill in 2022 committed Australia to a 43 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030 (from a 2005 base).

Cumulatively, these have constituted repeated failures by governments to formulate and implement consistent and effective policy responses to climate change. There appears to have been a broad trend from pursuing *relatively* ambitious structural changes to the Australian economy (through attaching a 'price' to emitting carbon) to narrower and more targeted initiatives.

When the Albanese government came to power in 2022, the new prime minister declared that Australia would be leaving the climate 'naughty corner' (Turnbull, 2023). One of the first bills he put forth in Parliament was the Climate Change (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2022, which outlined Australia's target of a **43 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2005** levels by 2030, and net zero by 2050 (Parliament of Australia, 2022). This was a significant improvement on prior targets set under previous Coalition governments, which had committed Australia to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by just 26–28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Nonetheless, the new government's revised target was still considered insufficient by the Climate Action Tracker (2023a).

## Activity E – Understanding the ability of global actors to respond effectively

1. Consider and discuss the following questions:
   a. Are the sanctions placed on Afghanistan imposed by the UN justified?
   b. Does the international community have a moral imperative to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts in Afghanistan?
   c. What domestic obstacles exist in relation to Australia's efforts to tackle climate change?
2. With reference to the table showing the 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events (2019) provided in this section, answer the following questions:
   a. What states are the most affected by climate change?
   b. Why might these states be affected by climate change more than others?
   c. What challenges could these states face in addressing the impacts of climate change?
3. With reference to the map of the global climate risk index (2019) provided in this section, what patterns can be identified in relation to the risk states face in relation to climate change?
4. Compare the response of two global actors to climate change.
5. Analyse the effectiveness of global actors' responses to climate change.

Challenges to resolution 3.1.6

Economic interests

Burning fossil fuels through coal, oil and natural gas has been the basis for **industrialisation and economic growth**. Therefore, addressing the issue of climate change will require states to accept lower levels of economic growth. This poses a greater challenge for states that are more economically developed than others, because they will incur a greater cost when implementing mitigation and adaptation strategies. As a result, we often see such states setting insufficient targets when addressing the issue of climate change.

For example, Australia's overall approach to climate change has been described as insufficient (Climate Action Tracker, 2023a). Although many factors have contributed to failures in policy formulation and implementation surrounding climate change, an ongoing factor is Australia's **economic dependence on coal**. According to Geoscience Australia (2023), Australia has the third-largest reserves of coal in the world and is the second-largest exporter of coal, which resulted in $39.2 billion worth of exports in 2020−21. This coal results in 1.1 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and presents a significant challenge to addressing climate change (The Australia Institute, 2024). Despite Australia's recent commitment to reach net zero by 2050, there are 127 coalmines currently operating within Australia, four of which were approved from mid-2022 (Mining Technology, 2024).
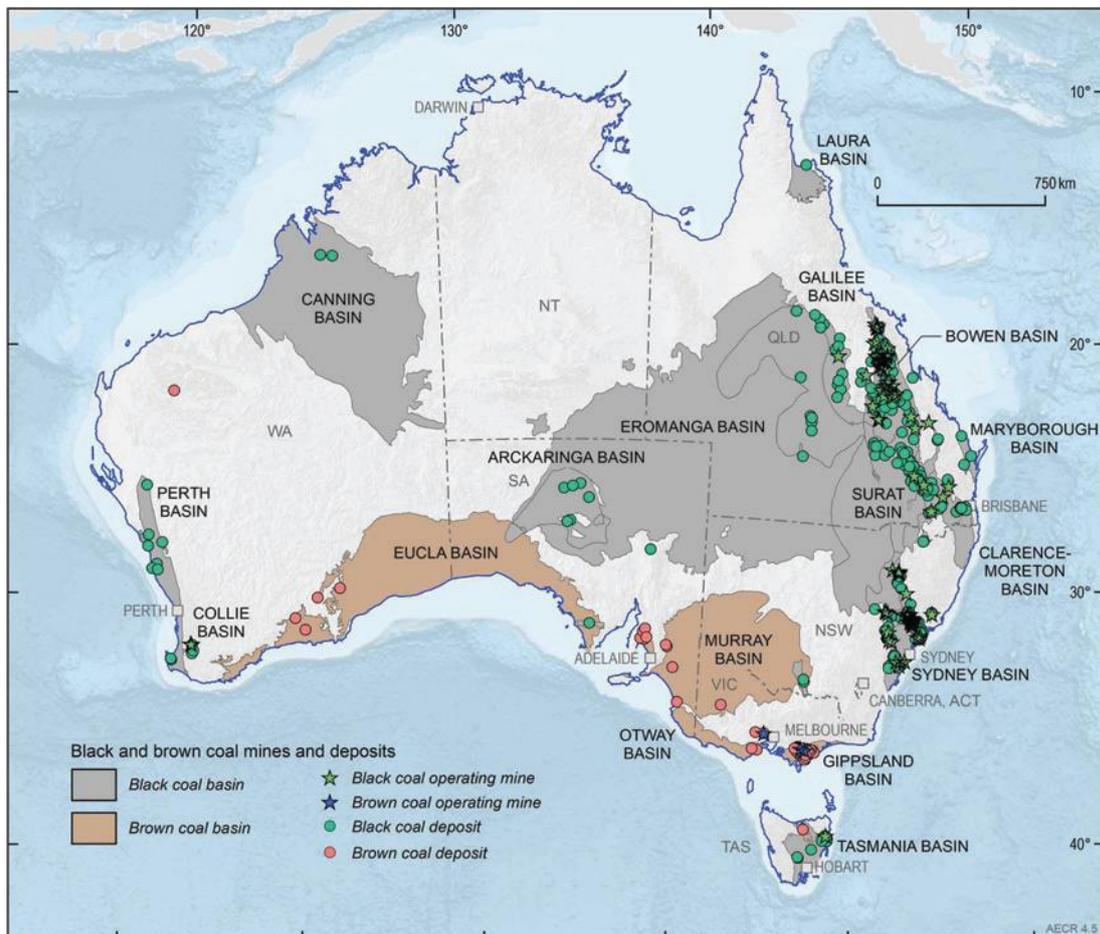
Australia's black and brown coal mines and deposits, as at the end of 2021.
Source: Geoscience Australia. ga.gov.au/digital-publication/aecr2023/coal

As Australia demonstrates, the **economic interests** of states pose an ongoing challenge in responding to climate change. This challenge is compounded in those states that are more economically developed. As Heywood and Whitham (2023) note, 'any serious attempt to address the problem of climate change must therefore either recast the nature of industrial society, providing an alternative to 'carbon industrialization', or make significant sacrifices in terms of economic growth and therefore material prosperity'.

Inequality

Rival approaches to addressing climate change are often exacerbated by **the divide between higher- and lower-income countries** and people, complicating global efforts to address the issue effectively. This distinction is referred to variously as 'north–south',
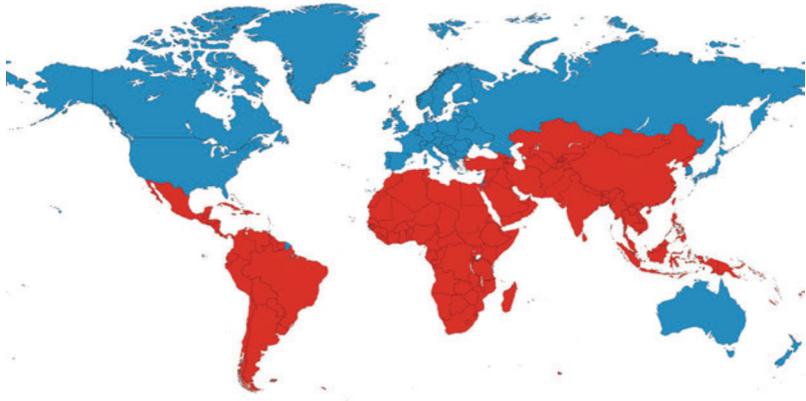

UN Trade and Development's classification of economies as either 'developed' (blue) and 'developing' (red).

'developed–developing', 'first world–third world', or even 'east–west'. Higher-income countries are characterised by high levels of industrialisation, while lower-income countries tend to face more intense levels of poverty, disadvantage and poor-quality infrastructure. In the context of climate change, the most significant tension between the two hemispheres (however they are divided) is that of burden sharing.

Lower-income states tend to believe that their richer counterparts, who have already achieved high levels of industrialisation, have a **historic responsibility** for their release of carbon emissions. They believe they carry a heavier burden because they have not reached high levels of development and living standards and, therefore, have both a reduced ability and reduced obligation to lower their emissions. They also tend to have higher per-person (sometimes referred to as 'per capita') emissions – calculated by dividing a country's total emissions by its population. This is complicated by the fact that people with low incomes face potentially greater risks and less ability to protect themselves from the consequences of climate change.

Research suggests that the total cumulative emissions released since the Industrial Revolution have significantly contributed to the rate of warming being experienced in the 2020s (Chandrasekhar, 2022). This is because **emissions remain in the atmosphere** for hundreds of years. As such, developed states should bear a greater burden when tackling climate change . For example, the US has released more emissions than any other state to date (400 billion tons since 1751, making it responsible for around 25 per cent of historic emissions) (Ritchie, 2019).

Higher-income countries tend to argue that targets should be set in alignment with the current rate of emissions, rather than historical emissions. In this view, many developing states have **rapidly increased their total and per-person emissions in recent decades** in comparison with developed states – and, thus, they should be doing more to blunt and reverse these increased emissions to actually bring about global emissions reductions. For example, China is the world's current largest emitter, contributing more than one-quarter of all global emissions (11 336 million tons) in 2021 (Blokhin, 2023).
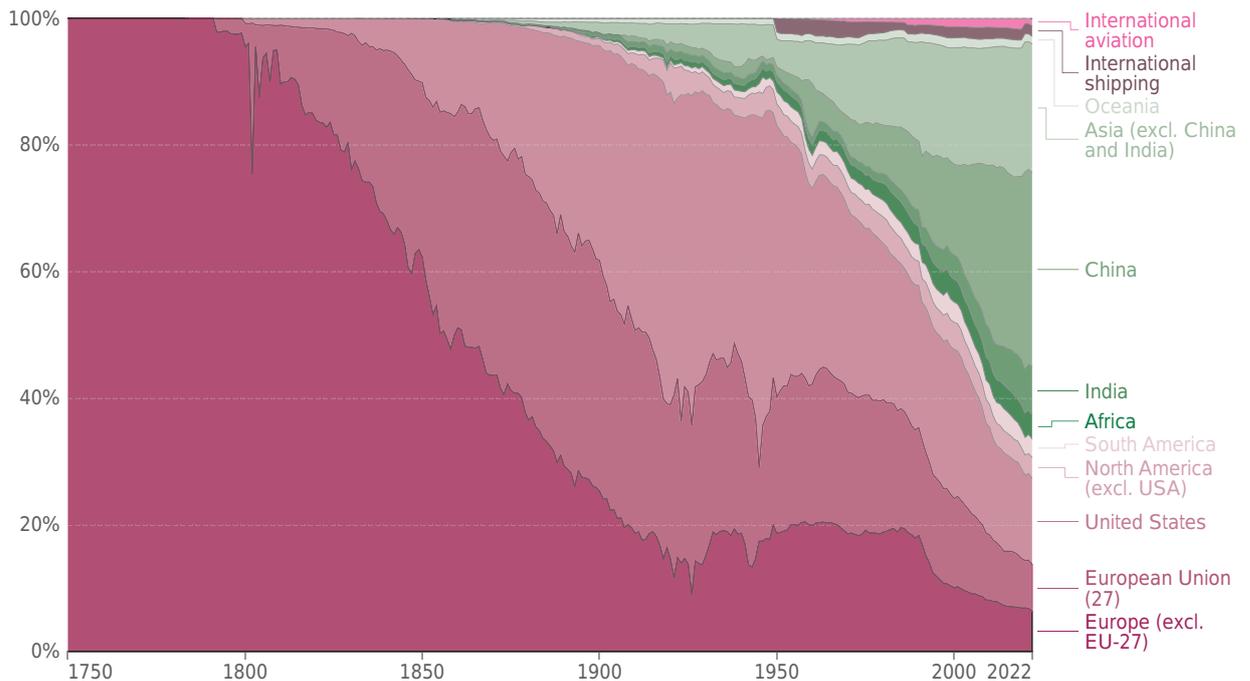
Annual emission rates of various countries, regions and industry, 1750–2022.
Source: Global Carbon Budget (2023). ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions

There are many other relevant factors to consider:

- **Traded goods** – Higher-income states import a large proportion of manufactured and consumer goods from lower-income states; this means that more than one-third of emissions associated with the consumption of goods in the former are actually *emitted* in the latter.

- **Emissions per person** – Although China is the world's current largest emitter, the United States emits more than double that of China when calculated per capita, with Australia having an even higher per-person figure due to its lower population.
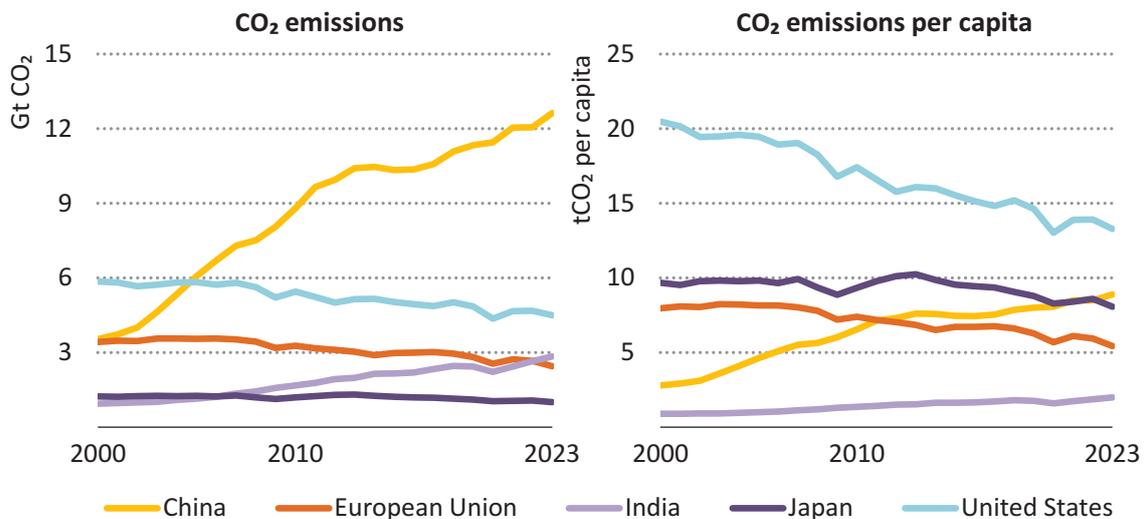
'CO2 emissions in 2023'. International Energy Agency, 2024.
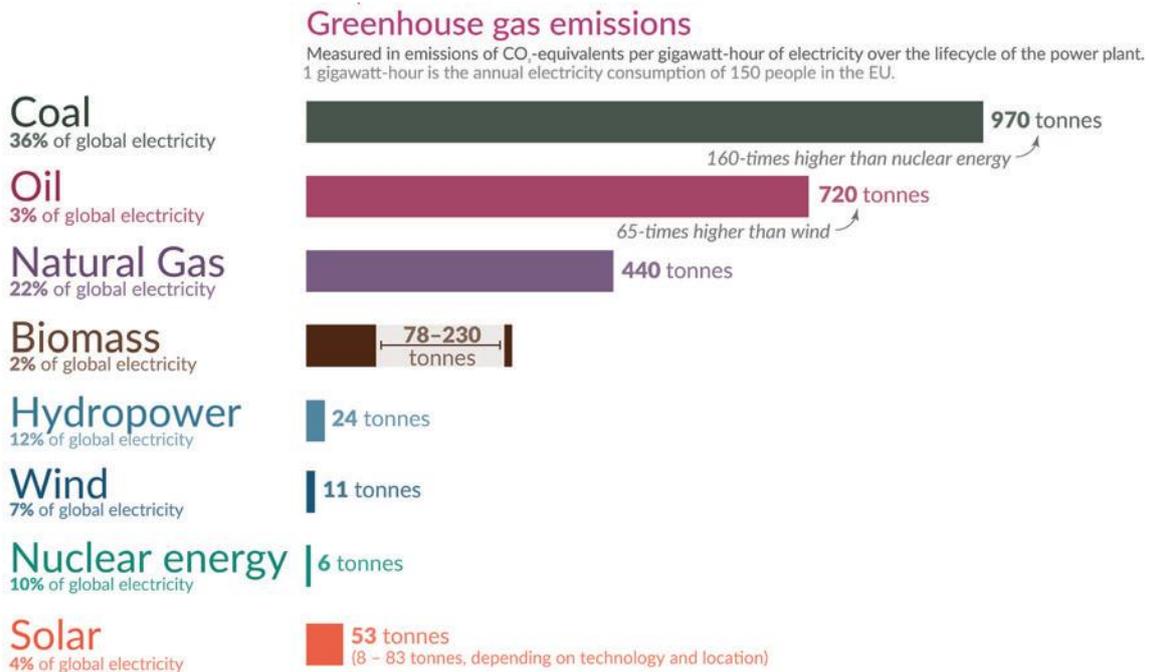iea.org/reports/co2-emissions-in-2023/the-changing-landscape-of-global-emissions
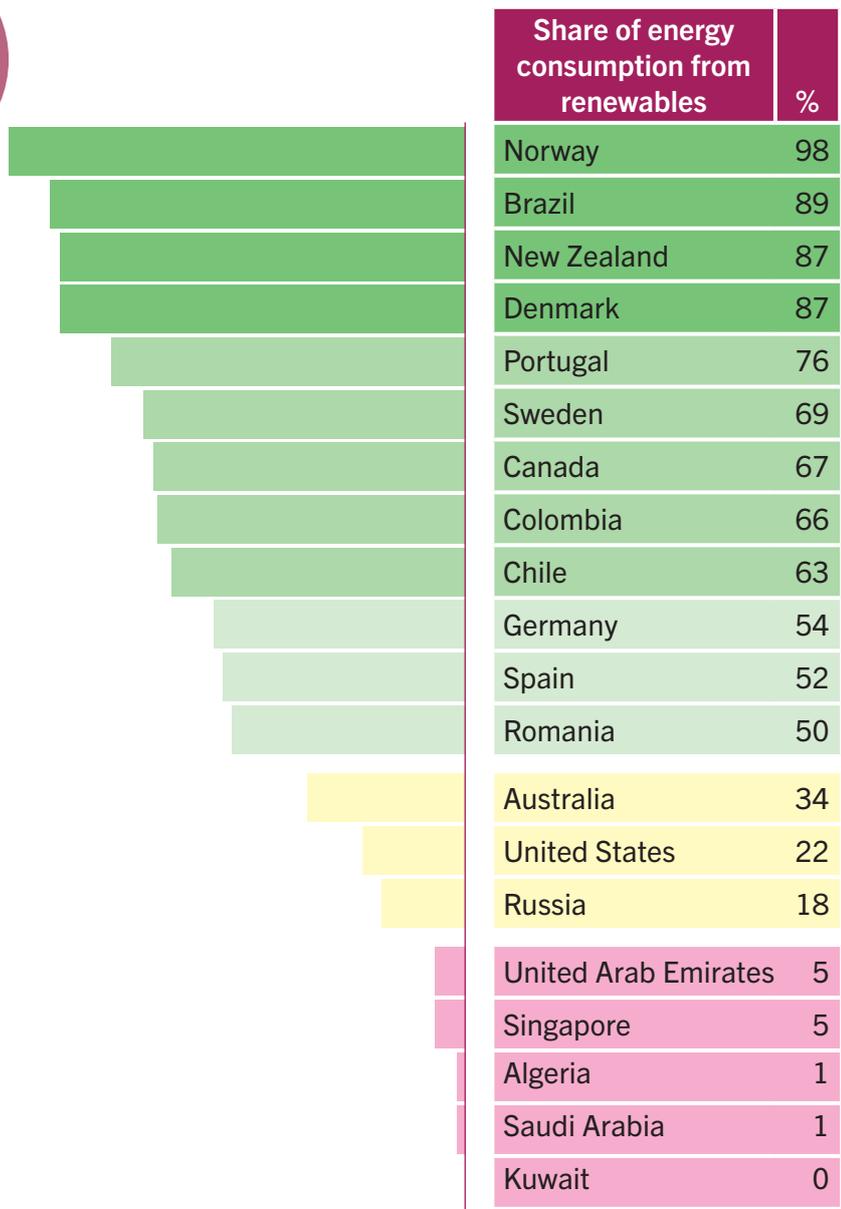
Energy needs

Since the Industrial Revolution, fossil fuels have been the major source of energy for many states. However, states must **transition to renewable energy** to mitigate the effects of climate change. Renewable energy is derived from natural resources and is replenished at a higher rate than it is consumed. Renewable energy sources are plentiful and include solar energy, wind energy, geothermal energy, hydropower, ocean energy and bioenergy. The challenge in transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy is the significant cost.

As of 2022, global **investment in renewable energy** stood at approximately US$1 trillion a year; that figure would need to triple to have a real effect on mitigating climate change (The Economist, 2022). Closing this gap poses a challenge for many states, particularly those that are developing. For example, India currently spends US$13−14 billion a year on renewable energy infrastructure; however, they need to spend $214 billion a year between 2023 and 2070 − cumulatively $10 *trillion* − to meet their climate change targets (Ghosh, 2023). India's government and private sector simply lack the financial resources to achieve this. To address this issue, both higher- and lower-income states will need to compromise. The former need to provide concessionary lending and aid to developing states, while the latter need to mobilise private investment, which may see them effectively cede some control over their energy policies (The Economist, 2022).

Share of energy consumption from renewables	%
Norway	98
Brazil	89
New Zealand	87
Denmark	87
Portugal	76
Sweden	69
Canada	67
Colombia	66
Chile	63
Germany	54
Spain	52
Romania	50
Australia	34
United States	22
Russia	18
United Arab Emirates	5
Singapore	5
Algeria	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Kuwait	0

Proportion of energy consumption from renewable sources by country, 2023. Source: Enerdata. yearbook.enerdata.net/renewables/renewable-in-electricity-production-share.html

Greenhouse gas emissions

Measured in emissions of CO₂-equivalents per gigawatt-hour of electricity over the lifecycle of the power plant.
1 gigawatt-hour is the annual electricity consumption of 150 people in the EU.

Coal
36% of global electricity
970 tonnes
160-times higher than nuclear energy

Oil
3% of global electricity
720 tonnes
65-times higher than wind

Natural Gas
22% of global electricity
440 tonnes

Biomass
2% of global electricity
78–230 tonnes

Hydropower
12% of global electricity
24 tonnes

Wind
7% of global electricity
11 tonnes

Nuclear energy
10% of global electricity
6 tonnes

Solar
4% of global electricity
53 tonnes
(8 – 83 tonnes, depending on technology and location)

Greenhouse gas emissions from different sources of energy. Source: Hannah Ritchie, 2020.
'What are the safest and cleanest sources of energy?' Our World in Data.
ourworldindata.org/safest-sources-of-energy

Activity F – Understanding the challenges to resolutions

1 What challenge poses the greatest threat to resolving climate change?

2 What solutions can be formulated in order to combat these challenges?

3 Which energy sources produce the most greenhouse gas emissions?

4 Research and define the following sources of renewable energy:

   a solar energy

   b wind energy

   c geothermal energy

   d hydropower

   e ocean energy

   f bioenergy.

5 Explain one challenge that limits the effectiveness of states in responding to climate change.

6 Discuss the extent to which challenges impede the resolution of climate change.

Consequences, stability and change 3.1.7

Academics often debate the consequences of climate change, but many have concluded that climate change not only exacerbates current crises but also contributes to the emergence of entirely new crises. This has led to many, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres, calling climate change a '**crisis multiplier**'.

There are several risk factors that make states more susceptible to the consequences of climate change, including:

- a high-level dependence on agriculture

- a recent history of conflict

- discriminatory political institutions (Busby and von Uexkull, 2018).

States that exhibit any of these risk factors are **likely to experience instability** from migration, conflict and food insecurity.

Migration

Climate change migration can be understood as people leaving their homes due to extreme weather events and other conditions caused by climate change. Most climate-related migration occurs internally, within a state's borders; however, external cross-border migration is increasing (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021). We have recently seen a rise in climate-related migration because of the increasing number of climate-related disasters, such as heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, floods, rising sea levels and more. However, it must be noted that there are a range of other social, economic and political factors that contribute to patterns of migration, and it is difficult to isolate climate change from those other push factors (Daoudy, 2022).

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 21.5 million people have been **forcibly displaced by weather events caused by climate change** each year since 2008. Although it is difficult to predict how many people will be displaced by climate change in the future, the World Bank estimates that internal climate migrants could increase to 143 million by 2050 (Prange, 2022). One area that is particularly prone to climate-related migration is the South Pacific.

States in the South Pacific region tend to be low-lying, often only reaching a few feet above sea level, and are, therefore, most susceptible to the impacts of climate change. These impacts include coastal erosion, flooding and a general rise in sea levels (Yee et al., 2023). Experts predict that several Pacific Island states will become uninhabitable, forcing residents to migrate elsewhere. There are estimates that states like Tuvalu could have as little as 2—3 decades before they are submerged in water (Natano, 2022).

Currently, **climate change migrants have no explicit protections under international law**. Although the Paris Agreement asks parties to respect, promote and consider their respective obligations towards migrants when taking action to address climate change, it does not compel states to protect climate change migrants. Similarly, the 1951 Refugee Convention does not extend to those seeking refuge due to climate change.

Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who:

> " owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. "
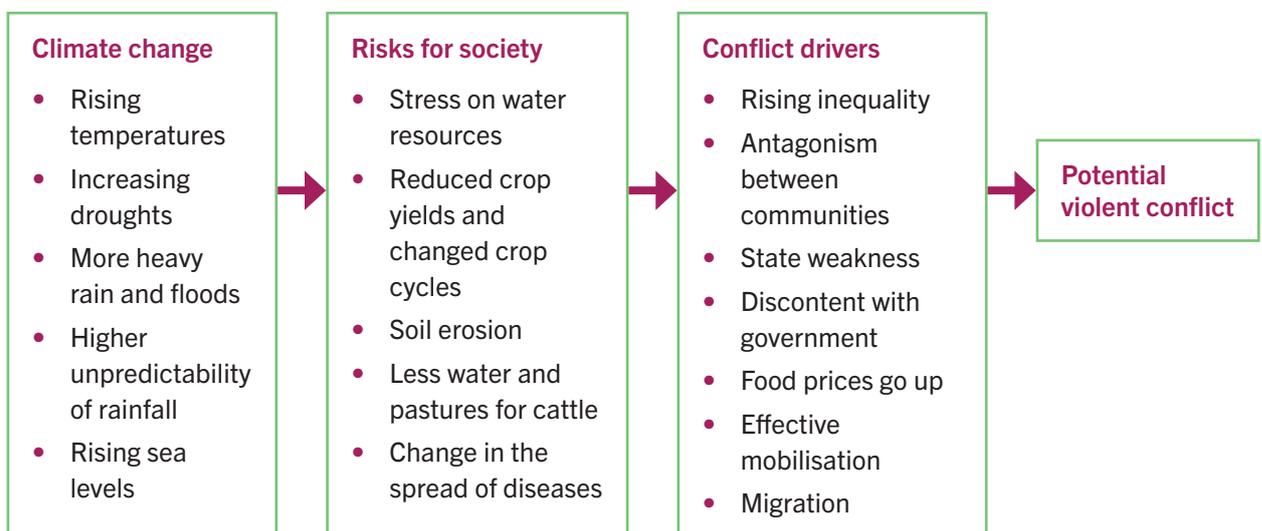>
> UNHCR. 'The 1951 Refugee Convention'.
> unhcr.org/au/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention

Conflict

The relationship between climate change and conflict is contested. While some academics argue that there is a direct and 'positive' correlation between the two (in other words, an increase in one leads to an increase in the other), others disagree. One study demonstrates strong **historical links between an increase in temperature and the incidence of civil war** in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. This study estimates that by 2030 there will be a 54 per cent increase in civil conflicts in the region, or resulting in approximately 393 000 battle deaths (Burke et al., 2009). The case of Nigeria supports this finding.

Lake Chad was once Africa's largest freshwater body, which provided a source of livelihood to about 30 million people (Usigbe, 2019). However, since the 1960s this freshwater body has diminished by 90 per cent due to overuse and climate change. The reduction in the lake has contributed to poverty, which has made people more susceptible to recruitment by paramilitary groups such as Boko Haram. In addition, the reduction in the lake has led to competition over land, water and pastures, which, in turn, has led to conflict between farmers and fishermen as they compete for access to the water (The Economist, 2019). Amnesty International found that more than 3600 people died as part of conflicts between farmers and herders from the beginning of 2016 to late 2018 (von Soest, 2020).

Some academics have argued that the correlation between climate change and conflict is not entirely substantiated. In this view, climate change is not the primary *cause* of conflict, but it often exacerbates other political, social and economic factors that do lead to conflict. Further research is required to better understand the relationship between the two (Popovski, 2017).

Climate change	Risks for society	Conflict drivers	
• Rising temperatures • Increasing droughts • More heavy rain and floods • Higher unpredictability of rainfall • Rising sea levels	• Stress on water resources • Reduced crop yields and changed crop cycles • Soil erosion • Less water and pastures for cattle • Change in the spread of diseases	• Rising inequality • Antagonism between communities • State weakness • Discontent with government • Food prices go up • Effective mobilisation • Migration	**Potential violent conflict**

The different ways in which climate change may contribute to the risk and incidence of conflict. Source: Global Institute for Global and Area Studies, 2020. giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/a-heated-debate-climate-change-and-conflict-in-africa

Food insecurity

Food insecurity can be understood as a severe shortage of food accompanied by a significant increase in the local or regional death rate. Climate change has led to heatwaves, heavy rainfall and droughts, therefore reducing crop yields and leading to food insecurity. This is particularly an issue in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and South-East Asia, the most at-risk regions for crop failures and hunger. It is predicted that, within the next 30 years, food insecurity from climate change will increase if little to no action is taken to address climate change.

> " If we continue on our current path, we will face the collapse of everything that gives us our security: food production, access to fresh water, habitable ambient temperature and ocean food chains. And if the natural world can no longer support the most basic of our needs, then much of the rest of civilization will quickly break down. "
>
> Sir David Attenborough, quoted in Michelle Nichols, 2021. 'David Attenborough to U.N.: 'Climate change a threat to global security, I don't envy you''. Reuters.
> reuters.com/article/climate-security-un/david-attenborough-to-u-n-climate-change-a-threat-to-global-security-i-dont-envy-you-idINKBN2AN1NA

Activity G – The consequences of climate change

1. 'Climate change migrants should be granted the same status as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention.' To what extent do you agree?

2. What implications would there be if the 1951 Refugee Convention were amended to offer protections to climate change migrants?

3. 'Climate change should be considered a crisis multiplier.' To what extent do you agree?

4. Consider the security implications of climate change.

5. Discuss how climate change may contribute to political instability.

6. Evaluate the political significance of climate change.

7. Analyse how climate change may contribute to change within the global community.

8. Using the information provided, supplemented by your own research, use a table like the one below to detail how migration, conflict and food insecurity contribute to stability and change.

	Stability	Change
Migration		
Conflict		
Food insecurity		

Skill building – planning an extended response

Let's see how we might break down and plan a response to the following extended response question.

Compare the responses of two different global actors to climate change.

Step one: Identifying the command term in the question

The command term in the question is 'compare'. This requires you to recognise similarities and differences and the significance of these similarities and differences.

Step two: Identify key terms and concepts

One key term is 'global actor'. Global actors include states, regional groupings, institutions of global governance and non-state actors. Another key term is 'climate change'. You do not have to explicitly define key terms, but you must demonstrate an understanding of them within your response.

Step three: Opening judgement statement

Extended responses should begin with an opening judgement statement. Your opening judgement statement should put forth the gist of your argument in one clear and concise statement.

Step four: Explain the similarities and differences between two global actors

Your response should now explain the similarities and differences between the two global actors. For a response worth 7 marks, you should aim to include at least three similarities and differences. Ensure you have evidence, such as examples, to support the assertions you make.

Step five: Closing judgement statement

Extended responses should conclude with a closing judgement statement. Your closing judgement statement should reiterate your argument in one clear and concise statement.

Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: www.sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/pol34

Podcasts

The Climate Question. BBC. bbc.co.uk/programmes/w13xtvb6

Drilled. drilled.media/podcasts/drilled

How to Save a Planet. Gimlet. gimletmedia.com/shows/howtosaveaplanet

Outrage and Optimism. outrageandoptimism.org/episodes

Videos

Foreign Correspondent. 'Fiji: The last resort – the villages in paradise being swallowed by the sea' (30 min). youtu.be/bcouH0iFrjI

Four Corners. 'Climate wars: How brutal politics derailed climate policy in Australia' (44 min). youtu.be/iTkRFK46UT0

Four Corners. 'Mining for a climate solution: Why going renewable means getting our hands dirty' (42 min). youtu.be/ZXA2ae46nWY

Four Corners. 'The escalating battle between climate activists and police' (45 min). youtu.be/6ZG1REfQey4

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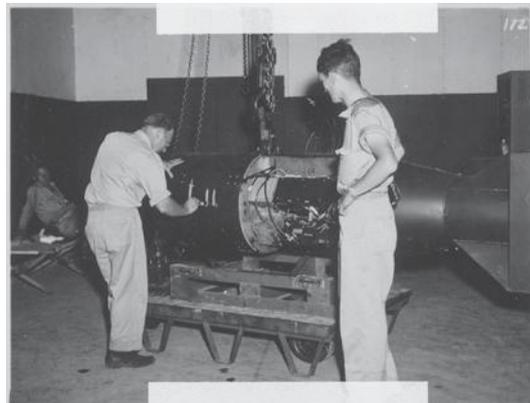# Issue study: Weapons of mass destruction

Content warning

This is a confronting topic. Some of the content in this case study may be difficult to read and/or discuss. It includes discussions of specific historical and contemporary events of violence, illness and mass death, targeted against particular groups to which readers may feel personal or cultural connections.

Since the United States first developed **nuclear arms** and used them against Japan on two occasions in 1945, certain currents in the international community have been deeply concerned about potential devastation from WMDs and have pursued a range of strategies and campaigns to minimise the risk of their use.

The nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima had the explosive equivalence of 15 000 tonnes of TNT, destroying 70 per cent of the city's buildings and killing approximately 140 000 people by the end of 1945, with more dying from cancer and other related causes years later. In a 6.7-kilometre radius, the other nuclear bomb, which completely levelled the city of Nagasaki, radiated temperatures of up to 4000°C.

American physicists assembling 'Little Boy', the first nuclear weapon used in warfare, detonated above the Japanese city of Hiroshima in August 1945. Credit: w.wiki/BKJ2

Many humanitarians, diplomats and scientists around the world have worked to limit the use of nuclear weapons or advocate for their complete abolition. Nonetheless, the Cold War arms race that ensued between the United States and the Soviet Union until the early 1990s produced a nuclear arsenal that could end all life on the planet. In 1986, nuclear arms reached a peak of 70 000. Today, the United States and the Russian Federation still hold thousands of nuclear arms, and there are now nine states with nuclear weapons.

Chemical weapons were first used on a mass scale in World War I, on both sides of the conflict. The most notable forms were phosgene (a gas that causes severe choking) and mustard gas (which causes painful burns to the skin). Deaths from chemical warfare in World War I topped 100 000, and since then, chemical weapons have killed approximately one million people. Following the war, the international community worked together to limit the use of chemical weapons, resulting in the **1925 Geneva Protocol**, which sought to prohibit the use of chemical weapons. However, it has not fully prevented states from producing, stockpiling and using them in various circumstances.

Between 1961 and 1971, the United States used almost 20 million gallons of the chemical pesticide Agent Orange against the people of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Decades later, civilians were still suffering from the effects of exposure, including ongoing illnesses and excess deaths, heritable birth defects, environmental devastation and contamination of the food supply.

Four US aircraft on a 'run' spraying Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

These historical examples demonstrate that the scale of potential destruction from WMDs is vast, in both human and environmental terms. By their nature, WMDs are **indiscriminate** — they kill, maim and/or injure civilians and soldiers alike.

The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA, 2024) explains that WMDs can:

- produce in a **single moment an enormous destructive effect** capable of killing millions of civilians, jeopardising the natural environment, and fundamentally altering the lives of future generations through its catastrophic effects
- cause **death or serious injury** of people through toxic or poisonous chemicals
- disseminate disease-causing organisms or toxins to harm or kill humans, animals or plants
- deliver nuclear explosive devices, or chemical, biological or toxin agents for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.

A 1977 UNGA resolution defined WMDs as 'atomic explosive weapons, radioactive material weapons, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any weapons developed in the future which might have the characteristics comparable in destructive effect'. As such, it is generally agreed that nuclear arms, chemical weapons and biological weapons are WMDs. In this chapter we primarily focus on nuclear arms and chemical weapons, as they have had a far greater impact than biological weapons.

This part of the textbook takes a holistic approach to the threat of WMDs by exploring multiple examples of threats and concerning acts of aggression, such as:

- the return of the arms race
- Russia in Ukraine
- the use of chemical weapons in Syria
- threats from North Korea
- Iran's nuclear program.

Such an approach allows students to understand thematically how WMDS continue to be an issue of global concern.

Key ideas: Nuclear deterrence and mutually assured destruction

Why do states invest so heavily in nuclear weapons — don't they know the risks associated with their use are likely to blow back onto their own citizens?

This is the somewhat paradoxical world of nuclear **deterrence**. Ever since the Soviet Union raced to become the second nation (after the United States) to have nuclear weapons (succeeding in doing so in 1949), many large states have thought it prudent to have their own nuclear weapons, or to be allied to states who do — not because they want to be able to use them in a first strike against a rival, but because they want to discourage other states from making a first strike on *them*. As tensions between 'west' and 'east' grew from the 1950s, so did their nuclear arsenals. Soon, any nuclear exchange was almost guaranteed to involve so many detonations and so much deadly radioactive fallout that the planet would become largely uninhabitable — a scenario referred to as **nuclear apocalypse**. This coalesced into the strategic doctrine of **mutually assured destruction** (MAD) — with many policymakers concluding that the only way to maintain peace was by guaranteeing that any initial nuclear attack would be met with massive retaliation — making launching a first strike self-defeating.

While the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, much of the logic behind nuclear deterrence and MAD continues to inform contemporary understandings and approaches to nuclear weapons and diplomacy in the 2020s.

Deterrence, in a military context, refers to the ability of one actor to convince another actor to refrain from initiating some form of provocative action, using real or implicit threats to respond through means.

Nuclear apocalypse, also known as nuclear *holocaust*, refers to a theoretical scenario in which the mass detonation of nuclear weapons causes widespread destruction and radioactive fallout that leads to the death of most life on Earth.

Mutually assured destruction refers to two or more actors being deterred from using their nuclear weapons against each other because of the high likelihood that doing so would lead to the total annihilation of *all* actors.
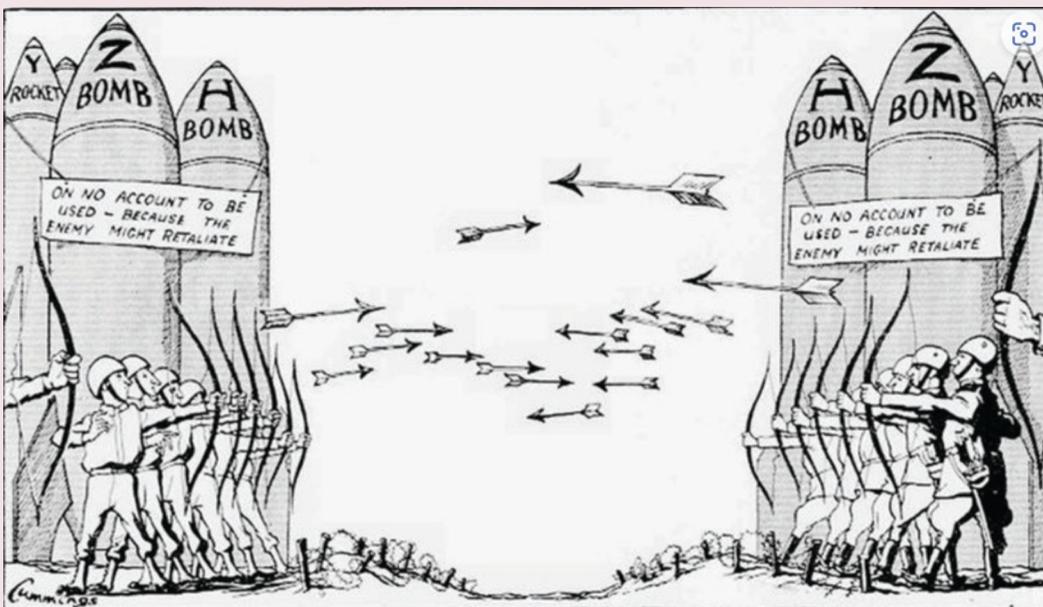
Credit: Michael Cummings, 'Back to Where It All Started', 1953.

Short-term causes 3.1.1

When considering the causes of the global crisis of WMDs, keep in mind that nuclear arms and (to a lesser extent) chemical weapons are by nature likely to have effects beyond national borders and/or specific warzones.

Militarism

Investment in security is a common practice in most states; however, **militarism** indicates that a state has chosen to make armed responses a key plank of its foreign policy, therefore, taking on a more aggressive posture in the world. When a state pursues militarism, it typically triggers counter-responses from rival states concerned with their own security, leading to a feedback

Militarism is the substantial investment in military arms and personnel to bolster national security and project power through military means.

loop of increasing regional tensions and paranoia. The map provided illustrates the current nuclear arms club. It may soon include Iran, and Israel is widely believed to have a stockpile of nuclear arms, but this has never been officially verified.

Estimated inventories of global nuclear warheads in 2024.
Credit: armscontrol.org/factsheets/nuclear-weapons-who-has-what-glance

The major military powers of the world are investing heavily in nuclear arms and still consider nuclear war an option for defence.

- The **Russian** parliament legislated to **withdraw Russia's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 2023** – opening the door for nuclear arms expansion.

- **China** announced in 2019 its plans to stockpile 1000 nuclear arms by 2030, and by 2024 was well on its way to achieving this goal.

- The **United States** has a US$1.5-trillion plan to renew and upgrade its nuclear arsenal. This is a substantial investment and a clear indication that the United States seeks to remain the world's dominant military power with the capacity to launch nuclear attacks in any location it desires.

Smaller nuclear powers are also advancing in their militarism. Most notorious is **North Korea**, who in 2024 announced that it had tested a hypersonic intermediate-range missile powered by solid propellants, making possible nuclear strikes deep into Asia and the United States. According to leader Kim Jong-un, this means that North Korea has the capacity to develop a solid-fuel nuclear system with missiles of all ranges. While he may be exaggerating, this does indicate a long-term commitment to advancing their nuclear arsenal.

Meanwhile, **India** and **Pakistan** are engaged in an arms race that saw a peak of 26 missile tests in 2021 (16 by India and 10 by Pakistan). India's missile tests included 'Agni-P', a ballistic missile that has a range of 1000−2000 kilometres, while Pakistan's 'Shaheen III' surface-to-surface ballistic missile test demonstrated a range of 2750 kilometres. Tests have continued, with Pakistan investing in advanced technologies including the 'Ababeel', a medium-range ballistic missile with the capability of carrying multiple warheads. Due to India and Pakistan's long and fraught history, an arms race is highly concerning and indicative of the potential for future nuclear conflict.

Nuclear state	Stockpile (2024)	Ambitions
Russia	5580	Technologically update existing nuclear arms systems and maintain numerical superiority
United States	5044	Technologically update existing nuclear arms systems and maintain parity with Russia
China	500	Reach a stockpile of 1000 by 2030
France	290	Extend nuclear deterrence and defence across Europe
United Kingdom	225	Update nuclear arms systems and maintain use for national security
India	172	Update sea-based delivery systems to have land-, air- and sea-based nuclear arms systems (nuclear triad)
Pakistan	170	Expand range of nuclear arms including tactical and air-based weapons
North Korea	50	Technologically advance in ballistic weapons to reach a range of targets in Asia and North America

Credit: SIPRI Yearbook, 2024. sipri.org/yearbook/2024

Armed conflict

When states and other global actors engage in warfare, the possibility of WMDs being used escalates sharply. Despite there being a long and layered legal history of preventing WMDs in combat, many of these laws may be disregarded — especially if an actor sees no other way to achieve specific strategic objectives, seeks to gain an advantage in otherwise difficult circumstances, or intends to punish a population that supports opposition forces.

Of most concern has been the possibility of the Russian Federation using nuclear arms in the Russo-Ukrainian War. In 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin suspended negotiations with the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty ('New START', formally known as Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic

Offensive Arms). A month later, Russia announced that it would place **tactical** (as opposed to **strategic**) **nuclear weapons** in Belarus, pointing to the fact that the United States had similar arrangements with several European states, such as Italy and Turkey. Some members of Putin's inner circle have advocated for nuclear strikes; for instance, adviser Sergey Karaganov encouraged the use of a first strike against Western Europe (Cimbala and Korb, 2024). Putin himself openly suggested that Russia would consider the use of nuclear arms in a national address in late 2022:

> "When the territorial integrity of our country is threatened, we will certainly use all the means at our disposal to protect Russia and our people. This is not a bluff."

Tactical nuclear weapons are usually smaller and more 'targeted' nuclear weapons that are designed for use on a battlefield against opposing 'frontline' military forces; these include aerial bombs, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery munitions.

Strategic nuclear weapons are designed to be used against the 'interior' of an opposing force, such as cities or major production centres, to reduce their ability to wage war; generally, they are larger and less targeted.

Observers such as the Lowy Institute (Freedman, 2023) have described the Russian government's approach to the conflict as 'total war' – warfare where the armed forces and the civilian population are legitimate targets. In this case, it would be unsurprising if Putin and his generals had considered nuclear options.

When Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2022, Putin expected to secure a comprehensive victory within two weeks, but the war quickly became protracted. In these circumstances, the risk of WMDs being used is likely to grow.

In 2024, the **United States accused Russian forces of using a chemical weapon against Ukrainian troops**. The use of chloropicrin (a gas and herbicide that can cause lung damage) was in direct violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The US Department of State (2024) declared that Russia's use of chemical weapons was 'not an isolated incident, and is probably driven by Russian forces' desire to dislodge Ukrainian forces from fortified positions and achieve tactical gains on the battlefield'. As a result, the United States imposed a new round of sanctions on Russia generally and specifically on set branches of the Russian government, while also targeting several key individuals associated with the chemical attacks.

In other ongoing conflicts and unresolved tensions around the world there is still a prospect of WMDs being used. For instance, **the Assad regime in Syria has repeatedly used chemical weapons on Syrians** in key opposition strongholds. The first use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime was in late 2012. This was followed by sanctions from the UN Security Council (UNSC) – which ultimately failed to prevent the production and use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Assad regime had never fully cooperated with UN inspectors for the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Their 2023 report to the UNSC concluded that there remained a high likelihood that Syria retained a large stockpile of chemical weapons, meaning that the government still considered the use of chemical weapons a viable option if anti-Assad forces gained an upper hand in the future (UN, 2023d).
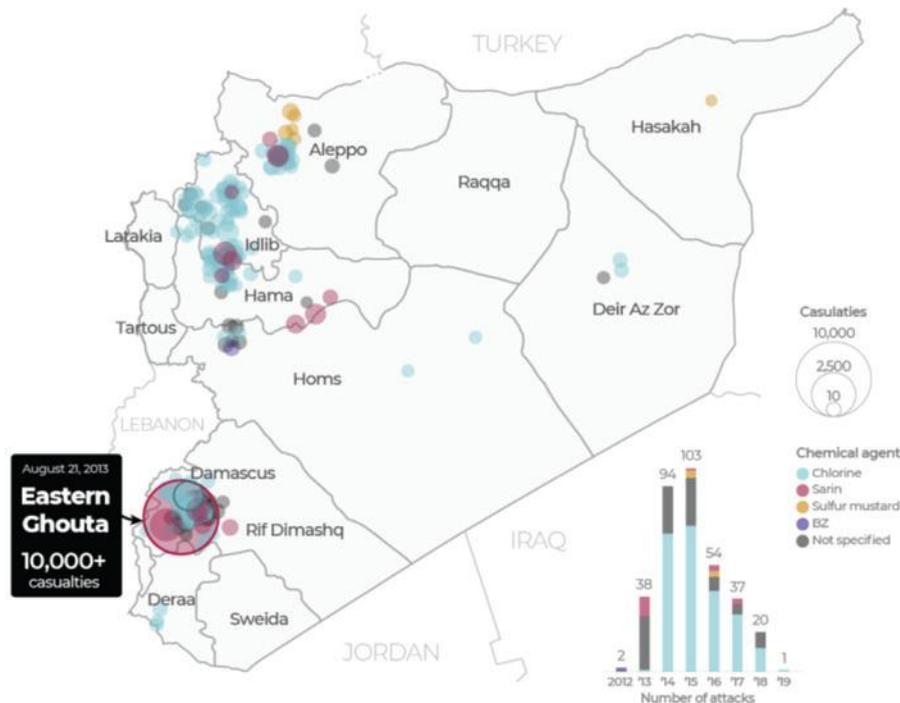
Between 2012 and 2023, nearly 350 chemical weapons attacks were recorded in Syria, resulting in at least 1,900 deaths and 18,000 injuries. Credit: Al Jazeera, Global Public Policy Institute, 2023.

An armistice between **North and South Korea** was agreed to in 1953, but no formal agreement to end the war was ever signed. The war mentality is particularly ingrained in the North Korean government and finds expression in a highly militarised society that has regularly tested ballistic missiles, conscripts all men into military service, and between 2018 and 2022 dedicated as much as a quarter of its GDP towards military spending (Statista, 2023). Meanwhile, South Korea also maintains a policy of conscription for adult males and runs annual military exercises with the United States called Freedom Shield, practising mostly naval responses to potential North Korean attacks, including nuclear strikes. North Korea's government has regularly voiced its opposition to these exercises, labelling them 'provocative'. Kim Jong-un responded to the 2024 drills by ending North Korea's commitment to eventual reunification of Korea and instructing the constitution to be rewritten to eliminate any reference to a future shared statehood between the two countries. Such steps indicate that escalation to a war involving the use of nuclear weapons is entirely plausible.

Read more here:

- 'North Korea will no longer pursue reconciliation with South because of hostility, Kim Jong Un says'. ABC News, 2024. abc.net.au/news/2024-01-17/north-korea-no-longer-pursue-reconciliation-with-south/103349672

Evidently, armed conflict and global tensions heighten the risks posed by WMDs; in this context, they can be understood as constituting a global *crisis*.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un walking in front of an intercontinental ballistic missile in 2022.

Global interconnectedness and advancements in technology

Global interconnectedness — particularly the internet — has enabled easier access to the information various actors need to produce chemical weapons. Technological advancements have resulted in chemicals for commercial and agricultural use being mass produced, and this means they can be more easily converted into WMDs. The Syrian government was found to have been acquiring large commercial quantities of chemicals that can then be used for weapons manufacturing. The Assad regime has a long history of domestically developing its own chemical weapons — especially sarin, mustard and VX gas —with assistance from allied states. Further, the Assad regime has developed some of its own arms (notably the barrel bomb) and gained access to arms from allied states, such as Iran's 'Golan' rocket. In turn, the gas-making technology has fallen into the hands of groups the UNSC has designated as terrorist organisations, such as **al-Qaeda** and **ISIS**, who have experimented with the development of their own chemical weapons (UN, 2023a).

A 2023 UN report found that **ISIS had been involved in chemical weapons attacks in both Iraq and Syria**. It found that ISIS's operations were quite sophisticated; it had a special department devoted to chemical weapons manufacturing, with a US$1 million monthly budget (with an additional budget for procuring raw materials), involving over 1000 ISIS staff. A recruitment campaign had successfully attracted scientists and technical experts from the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Belgium. The report found that ISIS was able to produce at least eight chemical weapons: aluminium phosphide, botulinum toxin, chlorine, cyanide ion, nicotine, ricin, thallium sulphate and sulphur mustard (mustard gas). ISIS was also the first non-state actor to develop the technology to combine a chemical weapon with a projectile delivery system, meaning it could launch a missile armed with a chemical weapon (UN, 2023d).

Advancements in the technology needed to enrich uranium for nuclear purposes has meant that **states can develop the capacity to have nuclear arms relatively quickly**. Once a state can enrich uranium, it takes only months before it can build an arsenal of nuclear weapons (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). David Albright (2024) of the Institute for Science and International Security reported that Iran already had the capacity to enrich weapons-grade uranium and could do so within a week (however, creating a suitable missile delivery system would likely take longer, as Iran had not yet demonstrated the technology to do so).

Ultimately, global interconnectedness and technological advancement have led to increased concerns that WMDs threaten the stability and peace of civilian populations around the world. Such concerns are only becoming more acute, particularly with developments in artificial intelligence and in the ease with which state and non-state actors alike can access the knowledge and materials necessary to construct nuclear, chemical and biological arms.

Global interconnectedness refers to the intricate web of interactions and interdependencies that link countries, societies and individuals across the world.

Al-Qaeda is a transnational Sunni Islamist militant group that orchestrated the September 11 attacks in the United States, among others; it seeks to establish a global caliphate through force, operating through decentralised networks of affiliated groups worldwide.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (**ISIS**), also known as the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or by its Arabic acronym *Daesh*, is a transnational Salafi Muslim militant group and an unrecognised quasi-state that began as a branch of al-Qaeda; at times it has exercised control over significant parts of Iraq and Syria.

Activity A – Short-term causes

1 As a class, discuss the following: if only a handful of states hold a stockpile of nuclear arms and/or chemical weapons, why is it a 'global issue'?

2 Visit the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists website and click on 'Doomsday Clock', then 'Current Time'. Then, answer the questions that follow.

↘ thebulletin.org

a According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, how close is the world to midnight and what does this mean?

b List three reasons for the time the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists have set on the Doomsday Clock and provide a short summary for each reason.

c In your opinion, which reason provided by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists is most concerning? Why?

3 Describe how militarism and military rivalries may accelerate the advancements and stockpiling of nuclear arms.

4 Undertake some of your own research into at least two of the current conflicts taking place around the world. In your opinion:

a which conflict has the highest likelihood of chemical weapons being used in combat – either against enemy combatants or a civilian population? Use evidence to justify your response.

b which conflict has the highest likelihood of nuclear arms being considered or threatened in combat? Use evidence to justify your response.

5 Explain how globalisation and advancements in technology pose a threat to the spread or proliferation of WMDs.

Impact of global interconnectedness 3.1.2

As discussed, global interconnectedness is an ongoing process by which people and systems are all significantly interlinked. These linkages form complex networks and mean that global actors and global processes are interdependent and influence each other in various ways. **How actors *use* this interconnectedness** is our primary concern here. For example:

- actors can be connected through international agreements where they work together to achieve common goals

- actors can exploit the speed and volume of international trade to gain access to important materials

- non-state actors can build movements through global forms of communication and shared values

- violent non-state actors can utilise new and accessible forms of technology to build deadly weapons and cheap forms of travel to carry out attacks in a variety of locations.

For the purposes of our discussion, we have distinguished between 'positive' and 'negative' impacts – this refers to the ways various elements of global interconnectedness may have helped reduce, or make worse, the global risks posed by WMDs.

Positive impacts

Institutions of global governance, and the instruments of international law they help to create, have played a significant role in countering the spread of nuclear weapons. Most states and intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) are in favour of limiting nuclear arms and completely eliminating chemical weapons. A growing number of states support complete global nuclear disarmament, with 93 states being signatories to the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (as of 2024). International agreements on nuclear non-proliferation (the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT) and nuclear testing (the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty) continue to act as a means of limiting the dangers of nuclear arms and the environmental and human consequences of nuclear testing.

Speaking to the UNSC in 2024, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, 'There is one path — and one path only — that will vanquish this senseless and suicidal shadow, once and for all. We need disarmament now.' He further highlighted the need for nuclear states to make pledges to not use nuclear weapons and 'agree that none of them will be the first to use nuclear weapons'.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres (centre right) attending a UNSC meeting on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Credit: UN Photo/Evan Schneider, 2024.

The multiple **sanctions** placed on North Korea for developing a nuclear program and testing ballistic missiles in Japanese and South Korean airspace has further acted as a **deterrent to other states considering nuclear arms as a security measure**. Since 2006, the UNSC has placed sanctions on North Korea, including trade sanctions on luxury goods and military equipment, scientific sanctions on cooperation in sharing knowledge, and freezing the assets of those associated with the nuclear program. Such sanctions require active measures from member states to be effective. For instance, Australia has complied with the sanctions program by not providing things such as helicopters, aviation fuel, luxury items including alcohol and cosmetics, and raw materials required for nuclear arms (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2024).

Ongoing pressure from state actors such as Sweden, institutions of global governance like the UNODA, and NGOs such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament have been a significant contributing factor in the absence of any nuclear arms being used in combat since World War II. The broad abhorrence of nuclear arms means that states with the capacity to use them are very reluctant to consider such an option.

The international community, primarily through the vehicle of the UN, condemned and acted against the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Civil War. Following the chemical attacks on the district of Ghouta in 2013, a coalition led by the United States and France considered joint airstrikes against Syrian targets associated with the manufacturing of chemical weapons. Diplomatic condemnation from other

states such as Canada, Australia and the Netherlands, followed by diplomatic pressure behind the scenes from Russia and China, resulted in the unanimous UNSC Resolution 2118, which condemned in the 'strongest terms any use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic', without directly accusing the Assad regime of the attack. The resolution also bound Syria to several chemical weapons disarmament treaties and to surrendering a significant stockpile of materials used in the manufacture of chemical arms. Nonetheless, the Syrian government continued to use chemical weapons with no regard to its international obligations (Abboud, 2023).

Negative impacts

The **ease with which technology and materials can be transported** around the world has translated, in some ways, to greater access by various actors to the components needed to develop nuclear arms. Politico reported in 2023 that Iran was in secret talks with China and Russia to obtain ammonium perchlorate, one of the main ingredients needed to propel ballistic missiles. While Iran's public stance was that its nuclear program was for energy generation, the procurement of ammonium perchlorate indicated the intention of developing nuclear arms (Karnitschnig, 2023). However, such propellants can also be used in the production of *non*-nuclear missiles, such as Iran's 'Zolfaghar' missile, which has been sold to Russia in mass quantities along with single-use kamikaze drones: both forms of arsenal have been used by the Russians in Ukraine. As such, the secret ammonium perchlorate deal has been mutually beneficial for Russia and Iran — a contributing factor in the secret development of nuclear arms in Iran and in the bolstering of Russian armaments while under intense sanctions (Stroul, 2024).

The fluid nature by which 'illegal' non-state actors such as ISIS operate, including the recruitment of scientists through social media, has allowed them to build WMDs by developing chemical weapons. ISIS hired Salih al-Sabawi, the engineer responsible for manufacturing chemical weapons for the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq in the 1990s to build chemical weapons for the terrorist group. Through Sabawi's expertise, along with scientists recruited from around the world, ISIS was able to amass chemical weapons such as mustard gas and create bombs and missiles filled with chlorine. According

Ammonium perchlorate, when combined with a fuel, works as a powerful rocket propellant.

to an investigation by The Washington Post, Sabawi and ISIS had extensive plans to use innovative forms of chemical warfare across Western Europe, in densely populated cities and against US military bases across the world (Warrick, 2022). The ease by which people move and the ready access of raw materials needed to mass produce chemical weapons has meant that organisations like ISIS have the very real possibility of successfully executing such attacks.

Activity B – Global interconnectedness

1 Discuss the following statements in groups or as a class:

- — 'Through the globalisation of trade — especially in commercial chemical goods — the possibility of a chemical strike anywhere in the world is quite plausible.'

- — 'Global interconnectedness allows humanity to build a global peace movement to end the manufacturing and proliferation of nuclear arms.'

- — 'The strategic placement, range of intercontinental missiles, and mobility of nuclear-armed submarines means that a nuclear war has the capacity to end all life on Earth.'

- — 'Global interconnectedness has worsened the threat of WMDs yet will also provide the means by which we end this threat.'

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement?

2 Analyse the positive and negative effects of global interconnectedness in relation to WMDs. You can plan out your response by using a table like the one modelled here.

Effects (positive and negative)	Explain	Evidence
Multilateral opposition to nuclear arms	Institutions of global governance such as the UN have consistently opposed nuclear arms and advocated disarmament.	UN Secretary-General António Guterres: 'We need disarmament now' Sanctions against North Korea

Remember — the VCAA publishes a glossary of command terms, which shows exactly what you should be trying to do when presented with any command term. For example

Analyse	Identify components/elements and the significance of the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications; determine logic and reasonableness of information.

vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx

You can plan out your 'analyse' response as follows.

Introductory sentence	Briefly define global interconnectedness to frame your response.
	OR
	In one sentence, acknowledge that global interconnectedness contains both risks and opportunities.
Positives	Outline a positive (a benefit to the world that reduces the threat of WMDs).
	Provide supporting evidence.
	Explain how the evidence demonstrates your argument.
Negatives	Outline a negative (how global interconnectedness heightens the risks of WMDs).
	Provide supporting evidence.
	Explain how the evidence demonstrates your argument.

3 Read the following article on the impact of sanctions on North Korea:

🔖 eastasiaforum.org/2023/07/05/the-complicated-truth-about-sanctions-on-north-korea

    a   Describe the impact of sanctions on the North Korean people.

    b   Assess whether these sanctions have changed the behaviour of the North Korean regime.

4 Use the table modelled here to summarise how global interconnectedness has impacted global actors. Ensure you provide evidence to support your assertions. A sample response for one actor has been provided to help get you started.

Global actor	Impact of global interconnectedness
States	
Institution of global governance	
Violent non-state actor	ISIS has exploited the global interconnectedness of trade and the movement of people to develop its own stockpile of chemical weapons. ISIS hired Salih al-Sabawi, the engineer responsible for manufacturing chemical weapons in Iraq during the 1990s, to do the same for the terrorist group. Through Sabawi, supported by a team of scientists from around the world, ISIS now has a range of chemical weapons including mustard gas and missiles filled with chlorine. Global interconnectedness will also allow ISIS to easily travel to various targeted countries to execute plans of chemical warfare across Western Europe, the United States and other densely populated locations.
NGOs	

Responses of global actors 3.1.3

This section examines the responses of three key actors to the issue of nuclear and chemical weapons: the UN, Russia and the United States.

The United Nations

The UN has held a **firm stance against WMDs** from its inception. The UNGA's first resolution in 1946 was to establish a commission with the specific purpose of the 'elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons'. In 2018, UN Secretary-General António Guterres launched

The UNODA was established in 1982 upon the recommendation of the UNGA.

a new agenda for disarmament, which included an item 'towards the elimination of nuclear weapons'. The agenda included aims such as the facilitation of dialogue for nuclear disarmament, affirmation that a nuclear war must never be fought and reduction of the risk of any use of nuclear weapons (UNODA, 2021). In 2023, the UNGA's 78th session passed 'Steps to building a common roadmap towards a world without nuclear weapons', with 148 votes in favour, seven against and 29 abstentions. The opposition and abstentions were largely from nuclear states and their allies. As such, the UN leads the international community in what can be understood as a **cosmopolitan** perspective and response, prioritising the sanctity of all human life and arguing that actors have a moral obligation to rid the world of WMDs.

Cosmopolitanism is the idea that all human beings are members of a single moral community that transcends national boundaries; this leads them to prioritise cooperation to reach common goals and meet challenges faced by the global community.

The UN formally established a cooperation agreement with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in 2001, which resulted in the two organisations cooperating significantly in several actions. For instance, in late 2013, the UN undertook a joint mission with the OPCW to **investigate the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime** in Syria, with the goal of eliminating Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons. Due to the Syrian government's continued manufacture of chemical weapons and use against civilian populations, the UN continued to work with the OPCW to conduct inspections into stockpiles of chemical weapons until 2016. Since then, the UNODA has continued inspections of Syrian chemical weapon stockpiles. In 2023, Adedeji Ebo, the Deputy to the High Representative for UNODA (2023), reported that there had been over a two-year gap in inspections and meetings with the Syrian government, which had been intended to ascertain whether the Assad regime still held either chemical weapons or the means to manufacture them. This two-year gap implied that the Syrian government had not been cooperative with the UN inspectors and was stalling the investigation process.

This demonstrates that while the UN maintains a resolute stance against chemical weapons, it has been difficult to pursue disarmament, as the UNGA and its various branches do not hold compliance mechanisms without the support of binding resolutions from the UNSC. Such resolutions do not appear likely, especially considering that each permanent member is a nuclear armed state and that Russia continues to provide diplomatic cover for the Assad regime. This included blocking the continuation of the OPCW–UN Joint Investigative Mission in 2017, as well as criticising and delegitimising the OPCW's 2017 report into the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons.

Russia

In recent decades the government of the Russian Federation has taken what can be understood as a broadly **realist** (or 'offensive realist') perspective regarding foreign policy, which finds expression in its approach to WMDs (Smith and Dawson, 2022). This is most evident in how nuclear arms are seen as a means to coerce and shape the behaviour of actors perceived as a threat to Russia's security. Russia's stockpile of nuclear weapons (5580, according to the Arms Control Association, 2023) is the largest in the world. Under Putin's leadership, Russia has undertaken a modernisation program

> **Realism** is the idea that global actors prioritise their own interests over the needs of others, often seeking to maximise their own power to safeguard their own survival.

to be technologically capable in a nuclear war — specifically with the United States, its most significant nuclear rival. According to the Federation of American Scientists, modernisations include the introduction of the 'Yars-M' intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which can launch multiple warheads mid-flight with its own propulsion systems. Such a missile would be more dynamic in warfare and has a much higher probability of penetrating a nuclear defence system. Russia has also worked to upgrade a wide variety of nuclear weapons, including cruise missiles, hypersonic missiles and underwater torpedoes (Johns and Knight, 2024). However, due to sanctions placed on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, it has become increasingly difficult for the Russian government to continue with these upgrades; this is further compounded by technical challenges in delivering the desired upgrades to schedule. As such, Russia has been significantly delayed in modernising its nuclear arsenal.

A Russian 'transport-erector-launcher' vehicle used to transport, erect and launch ICBMs, such as the nuclear-capable 'Yars-M' missile. Credit: Vitaly Kuzmin, 2014.

When Russia first launched its 'special mission' into Ukraine in early 2022, Putin issued a warning to the West and the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (**NATO**):

> " Whoever tries to hinder us, or threaten our country or our people, should know that Russia's response will be immediate and will lead you to consequences that you have never faced in your history. "

Just days later he ordered that Russia's nuclear forces be on high alert. By the end of 2022, Putin threatened that Russia would 'wipe off the planet' any state that carried out a nuclear strike on Russian territory. In 2023, Russia suspended participation in the New START treaty, which had sought to limit nuclear warhead deployment, and moved nuclear weapons into Belarus.

By late 2023, Russia had withdrawn its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (1996), clearing the way for Russia to test new nuclear weapons. Russia says it would use them if NATO members intervened in its war with Ukraine.

> " There has been no significant change in Russia's nuclear strategy, which has largely remained relatively consistent for decades. Russia has frequently used nuclear threats in the past to try to affect geopolitics. … There is no public indication that these signals necessarily portend a lowering of Russia's nuclear threshold. "
>
> Federation of American Scientists, 2024. fas.org/publication/details-russia-modernization-expansion

When it comes to chemical weapons, Russia is a signatory to the CWC, and the OPCW verified that it officially destroyed its stockpile. Nonetheless, the Russian army has manufactured and used chemical weapons, including chloropicrin, in the Ukrainian war on multiple occasions. According to the US Department of State, a Russian chemical research organisation, the Scientific Research Institute of Applied Acoustics, has been used to procure and stock 'dual use' chemicals – those that can be used for either commercial or chemical weapons production (Ellyatt, 2024). Russia is willing to use chemical weapons, unlike nuclear arms, in combat for different purposes, particularly to disrupt and disorient Ukrainian troops. As these chemicals are 'milder' and do not cause widespread death, there is less public outrage over their use.

The United States

The US government takes a broadly **defensive** and **realist** stance in its approach to WMDs. This can be seen through the different methods by which it seeks to maintain the status quo and stability in global security. The United States **seeks nuclear parity** with its security rival, Russia, while tolerating its rival having a more comprehensive nuclear stockpile. Conversely, new entrants to the 'WMD club' are seen as intolerable; the United States has used diplomacy and military threats to deter and punish unfriendly states seeking to join.

The United States maintains one of the largest nuclear arsenals in the world, with a stockpile of 5044 warheads. Of these, 1700 are attached to ICBMs, 100 'tactical' nuclear weapons are hosted in five European countries and the rest remain in storage. The United States committed to a 20-year program of modernisation in the early 2020s, with every single nuclear arsenal and supporting infrastructure earmarked for an upgrade (costing trillions of dollars over that period). The editors of *Scientific American* warned in late 2023 that modernisation of the United States' nuclear arsenal was dangerous and 'threaten[s] life on Earth for the century to come'– largely due to the likelihood that it would trigger a new arms race with Russia and China. They further warned that the upgrade of 450 nuclear missiles situated in silos in five inland US states was particularly concerning, as these missiles could be the target of a future nuclear attack, posing additional risks to residents of those areas (Scoles, 2023; Streep, 2023).

'Hundreds of scientists ask Biden to cut the US nuclear arsenal'. The New York Times, 2021. nytimes.com/2021/12/16/us/politics/scientists-letter-nuclear-arsenal.html

The United States has not ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and has opposed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Such positions indicate that the United States is committed to continue developing nuclear arms, disregarding the concerns of scientists and humanitarian organisations.

The United States has maintained some **bilateral treaties with Russia on nuclear arms reduction and control**, such as New START, which placed limits on deployed and non-deployed nuclear arsenal systems. This included aggregate limits on:

- deployed ICBMs, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and deployed heavy bombers (700)
- nuclear warheads on these various missile systems (1550)
- deployed and non-deployed launchers of ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers (800).

While New START helped stabilise the arms race between the two states, it still permitted them both a substantial nuclear arsenal. As mentioned, Russia suspended its official commitment to New START in 2023.

The United States has led efforts in curbing the behaviour of so-called 'rogue states' that have either used or threatened the use of WMDs. It has **repeatedly sanctioned North Korea** for its development of nuclear arms and its repeated ballistic missile tests, which have been perceived as threatening by neighbouring states, notably South Korea, Japan and the United States itself. Further, the United States banned the export of arms, aviation and rocket fuel, gold, diamonds and precious metals to North Korea. It also sanctioned individuals and organisations from other countries that funnel money to the North Korean weapons program. The United States subsequently led the charge in the UNSC to sanction North Korea over the global risks it poses through nuclear arms and ballistic missiles testing.

The United States has also placed sanctions on Syria in response to its use of chemical weapons. These include bans on the export of arms and general goods (unless for humanitarian purposes) and on imports of Syrian oil, a freeze on Syrian government assets in the United States, and targeted sanctions on about 300 Syrian individuals associated with the chemical weapons program. A UNSC resolution for the implementation of sanctions against Syria has not been forthcoming, largely due to the diplomatic cover that Russia provides to the Assad regime, as it can use its veto power to block any such measure. In 2021, Russia used its position on the UNSC to continue its longstanding efforts to criticise and delegitimise the aforementioned 2017 report from the OPCW — which had accused the Assad regime of carrying out chemical weapons attacks in 2017, and of maintaining stockpiles of chemical weapons.

Even though US-led sanctions have been quite comprehensive, they have not prevented North Korea from developing nuclear weapons technology and making advancements in its ICBMs program. Likewise, the US-led sanctions against Syria have not stopped the stockpiling of chemical weapons there. This is largely due to the degree of economic and diplomatic support North Korea receives from its neighbours, China and Russia. Similarly, Syria has close ties with Russia and China, meaning that Western and US sanctions are not as effective as they might otherwise be.

International Atomic Energy Agency

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the premier intergovernmental forum for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and limiting the use of nuclear weapons. This IGO has 178 members, with a board of governors from 35 different states. The IAEA is the formal body that reports to the UNGA and the UNSC on the nuclear activity of states. Through the NPT, the IAEA has been entrusted with **inspecting different states with nuclear power or nuclear arms** – to guarantee that they are fulfilling their obligations of the treaty and to report back any concerns they may have to the UNSC and the UNGA. These measures are called 'safeguards', and the IAEA has regularly updated its processes to be vigilant in the unsafe use of nuclear materials. Currently, the IAEA 'safeguards' nuclear material and activities of 140 different states (Albright, Burkhard and Stricker, 2024).

For instance, the IAEA has been involved in the **inspections of Iran's nuclear capabilities**, especially in relation to the development of nuclear arms. IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi noted that there are unresolved safeguard issues in Iran and that 'problems will not disappear'. The IAEA's (2024) report on Iran raised concerns about Iran's violations of its safeguard measures, including undeclared nuclear materials and/or activities at four different sites, the building of an undeclared new nuclear reactor and Iran's complete lack of cooperation with the IGO. This has been further compounded by a former Iran official publicly announcing that the regime had the capacity to build nuclear arms.

In 2023, Iran and the IAEA released a joint statement in which Iran pledged to cooperate with the IAEA, allow inspections to take place and make increased efforts to fulfil its safeguard measures when using nuclear materials. However, in 2024, the Institute for Science and International Security argued that Iran had consistently violated its obligations according to the NPT and called for international actions to curb this behaviour (Albright, Burkhard and Stricker, 2024).

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was formed in 2007 as a global NGO dedicated to the eradication of nuclear arms. In practical terms, ICAN is a coalition of hundreds of NGOs that are involved in peace-building and nuclear abolishment, led by a central steering committee with staff focused on directing and managing campaigns. ICAN helps organise rallies and public awareness campaigns, and further lobbies governments, IGOs and even corporations for complete nuclear abolition. ICAN was pivotal in pressuring the **UNGA** to introduce a resolution in 2016 to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons; this **led to the introduction of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017**, which ICAN helped to draft. The treaty was ratified when the 50th member joined in 2020.

ICAN demonstrators in front on the UN Office in Geneva. Credit: ICAN.

By 2023, ICAN (2023) had grown to have over 600 partner organisations across the world and 119 financial institutions and investors (representing US$4.9 trillion in asset management) and explicitly supported the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This meant that they would not work with corporations that were involved in the manufacture, research or development of any materials associated with the production of nuclear weapons.

ICAN has enjoyed considerable success in lobbying politicians across the world to support efforts to promote the prohibition treaty. Thousands of sitting parliamentarians have pledged their support to the treaty due to the lobbying efforts of ICAN, and each year new states have either signed or acceded to the treaty. However, so far ICAN has not been successful in swaying nuclear armed states or most of their allies.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group

The Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG) is a financial firm and a Japanese bank holding (a corporation that owns one or more banks) worth about US$1.8 trillion. It is the largest bank holding firm in Japan and the second largest in the world. In 2020, it updated its policies to ban financing of weapons manufacturing, including anti-personnel mines, nuclear weapons, biological weapons and chemical weapons (MUFG, 2023). Considering its size and significance, this has meaningfully made it more difficult for manufacturers of WMDs to secure financing. This use of its economic power has discouraged businesses and governments from investing in these types of weapons. MUFG's stance may be related to Japan being the only country to have endured two nuclear bombs.

Activity C – Understanding the responses of global actors

1 Our study design requires you to know the responses of global actors, including states, at least one institution of global governance, and at least one non-state actor to the issue. Conduct your own research into the strengths and weaknesses of these global actors in response to WMDs. When examining these responses, consider whether these actors have brought greater stability to the world or have triggered different forms of change. You may choose to conduct research on other global actors not discussed in this chapter.

Some good places to start your research might be:

- Council on Foreign Relations: cfr.org
- Center for Arms Control and Disarmament: armscontrolcenter.org
- UNODA: disarmament.unoda.org

Global actor	Strengths	Weaknesses	Stability or change? Explain
State 1			
State 2			
Institution of global governance			
Non-state actor			
Transnational corporation or Second IGO or Second non-state actor			

2 Describe how Russia has 'used' nuclear weapons in its war with Ukraine.

3 Compare the responses to WMDs by the Russian and US governments.

4 Analyse the role of the IAEA in its pursuit of arms control.

5 Which of the following two actors has had a greater impact on nuclear disarmament? Why?

   – ICAN

   – MUFG.

6 Evaluate the role of the UN in addressing the global crisis of WMDs. For this response, undertake your own supplementary research. Make sure you cite at least four pieces of evidence in your response.

Evaluate	Ascertain the value or amount of; make a judgement using the information supplied, criteria and/or own knowledge and understanding to consider a logical argument and/or supporting evidence for and against different points, arguments, concepts, processes, opinions or other information.

vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx

Structuring an 'evaluate' response

1 In one sentence, clearly outline your judgement as an introduction.

2 Write a short paragraph that explores one side of the argument (e.g. in this case it would be the United States' ability to introduce laws and other measures to shape the behaviour of rogue states). Provide a range of evidence to support your argument.

3 Write a short paragraph that explores the other side of the argument (for this response it would be how these rogue states have resisted US actions against them). Provide a range of evidence to support your argument.

4 Write a short conclusion that reiterates your judgement and support that judgement by referring to one of the above paragraphs and rejecting the other argument.

Effectiveness of international laws 3.1.4

In this section we consider how effective two international specific laws have been in addressing the issues and risks associated with WMDs: the NPT (for nuclear arms), and the CWC.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Arms (commonly referred to as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, or NPT) was first introduced in 1968, with the express aim of limiting the spread of nuclear arms – ultimately to achieve the goal of full nuclear disarmament. The NPT is the largest disarmament treaty, with 190 party states; as of 2024, only India, Pakistan, Israel, South Sudan and North Korea were non-parties (North Korea exited the treaty in 2003). The NPT is driven by three core pillars:

1 non-proliferation

2 disarmament

3 the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The three pillars of the NPT:

1 Non-proliferation (Articles I–III):

- 'Nuclear' states pledge not to assist other states in acquiring nuclear weapons.
- 'Non-nuclear' states pledge not to acquire nuclear weapons.

2 Disarmament (Article VI):

- All parties of the NPT will pursue negotiations to bring about complete nuclear disarmament.

3 All peaceful uses (Article IV):

- All states have the right to develop nuclear technology, but only for peaceful purposes (energy). States can work together to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

The NPT has succeeded in allowing states to peacefully develop nuclear energy. However, it has had **limited success regarding non-proliferation and, of late, has stalled regarding disarmament**. Nine states are currently considered nuclear-armed states, which is four greater than the original five, and Iran may join the club in the near future. As discussed, the New START negotiations stalled in 2023, with Russia also withdrawing from the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 2023.

Nonetheless, the NPT has significant merit as an all-encompassing agreement to limit nuclear arms proliferation, particularly via its compliance mechanisms. The treaty facilitates **legally binding sanctions through UNSC resolutions** if a party member has violated one of the articles, namely acquiring or sharing intellectual property or materials to assist a non-nuclear state with the making of nuclear arms. This is facilitated through the IAEA (as an independent IGO) conducting inspections of party members, including routine checks of nuclear facilities to ensure compliance with the NPT. The IAEA has the power to refer party members to the UNSC; it would provide an extensive report and evidence to support any allegations of a party member's violation of the NPT. If the UNSC agrees with the IAEA's findings, it can choose to pass resolutions that include sanctions against the violating state, or even invoke Chapter VII of the UN Charter to use force to 'maintain or restore international peace and security'.

Chemical Weapons Convention

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (commonly referred to as the Chemical Weapons Convention, or CWC) came into effect in 1997 and has 193 party states, with just Egypt, North Korea, South Sudan and Israel being non-members.

The convention **seeks to be a comprehensive measure to eliminate chemical weapons**. The 24 articles of the convention include provisions on the prohibition of development, manufacturing, procurement, stockpiling and distribution of chemical weapons, with state parties needing to act proactively to ensure that individuals within their sovereign borders do not engage in such activities as well.

State parties to the convention have agreed to a **verification regime** that ensures chemicals are manufactured only for purposes allowed by the CWC. Before the convention, states were under the jurisdiction of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibited the use of chemical weapons but tolerated the stockpiling of chemical weapons for counterstrike purposes. By banning the stockpiling, procurement and distribution of chemical weapons, it effectively sought to comprehensively ban the weapon in any circumstance. Further, the convention includes a 'challenge inspection' clause that allows other state parties to formally raise concerns on suspicions of a state party violating the CWC, which will trigger a surprise inspection. This 'challenge inspection' *theoretically* includes the 'anytime, anywhere' principle, where an inspection can take place at any time in any location with no right of refusal from the recipient state. However, in practice, state members *can* stall and block the efforts of inspectors in several ways.

> **Article I**
>
> **General Obligations**
>
> 1   Each State Party to this Convention undertakes never under any circumstances:
>
> >   a   To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone;
> >
> >   b   To use chemical weapons;
> >
> >   c   To engage in any military preparations to use chemical weapons;
> >
> >   d   To assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.
>
> 2   Each State Party undertakes to destroy chemical weapons it owns or possesses, or that are located in any place under its jurisdiction or control, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.
>
>   …
>
> 5   Each State Party undertakes not to use riot control agents as a method of warfare.
>
> **Article XII**
>
> **Measures to Ensure Compliance**
>
> 4   The Conference shall, in cases of particular gravity, bring the issue, including relevant information and conclusions, to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council.

The CWC mandate is carried out by an **intergovernmental disarmament regime, the OPCW**. The verification regime includes thousands of inspections across sites known to process chemicals (plants and laboratories), as well as other sites suspected of chemical weapons production. These teams collect and interpret data, which is then presented to the state parties and sometimes to other bodies such as the UNSC. The work of the OPCW across the world and its capacity to limit the use of chemical weapons led to it being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.

According to the OPCW, as of March 2024, 74 of the 97 declared chemical weapons facilities had been destroyed and 23 had been converted into chemical facilities for peaceful means; **100 per cent of *declared* chemical weapons had been destroyed**, translating to over 72 000 metric tonnes (OPCW, 2024). The United States had one of the largest stockpiles of chemical weapons, second only to Russia, peaking at around 30 000 in the 1990s. But it destroyed the last of its stockpile and officially declared itself free of chemical weapons in 2023.

Logo of the OPCW.

You can read more about the recent history of other states' use of chemical attacks, particularly as tools for *assassination*, here:

☞   'The implications of the poisoning of Alexey Navalny'. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020. csis.org/analysis/implications-poisoning-alexey-navalny

Ultimately, the CWC and the OPCW have been quite effective in eliminating chemical weapons in warfare in most countries and have reinforced this as a norm in the international community.

Effectiveness of responses to those laws 3.1.4.1

North Korea's response to the Non-Proliferation Treaty

In 2003, North Korea announced that it would be **withdrawing from the NPT**. This was followed by negotiations and talks with other states through the 'six-party talks' (which included North and South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the United States). Nonetheless, North Korea proceeded with its nuclear weapons program and tested its first nuclear bomb in 2006. This was followed by the UNSC Resolution 1718 (2006), which stated that North Korea 'cannot have the status of a nuclear-weapon state in accordance with the NPT' and demanded that it 'immediately retract its announcement of withdrawal from the [NPT]'. The sanctions regime was further expanded in 2009 with UNSC Resolution 1874, including an embargo on fuel and supplies for North Korean vessels. Even though the IAEA was expelled from the country, the organisation continues to detail North Korea's activities in its annual reports.

North Korea's exit from the treaty did not prevent the UNSC and the IAEA from invoking the articles of the NPT in their response to these actions. The actions of the UNSC appeared to demonstrate that **a state member could not expect to be able to simply withdraw from the NPT to pursue a nuclear arms program without repercussions**, with parties noting the risk of allowing a dangerous precedent to develop. Emeritus Professor Ramesh Thakur noted in 2019 that 'any acceptance of the DPRK as a de facto nuclear-armed state would tear an irreparable hole at the very centre of the NPT regime and put it on life support. This could also trigger a cascade of proliferation throughout the sub-region.' North Korea has continued with its nuclear arms program, making significant strides in technological capability and geostrategic reach.

Find out more here:

- Arms Control Association fact sheet on North Korea:
  armscontrol.org/factsheets/arms-control-and-proliferation-profile-north-korea
- Council on Foreign Relations timeline on North Korean nuclear negotiations:
  cfr.org/timeline/north-korean-nuclear-negotiations
- Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation on North Korea:
  armscontrolcenter.org/countries/north-korea

Syria's response to the Chemical Weapons Convention

Between 2013 and 2019 there were **336 instances of chemical weapon attacks in Syria**, largely carried out by the Assad government against civilians as well as ISIS. According to a report published by the Global Public Policy Institute, 98 per cent of chemical attacks have come from the Assad regime, while most of the remainder were executed by ISIS (Schneider and Lütkefend, 2019).

As discussed, the OPCW reported that **the Assad regime had not fully cooperated with the process of inspections** and had gone so far as to block inspectors from visiting chemical manufacturing facilities. In 2024, Adedeji Ebo (Deputy to the High Representative of the UNODA) repeated their concerns (this time to the UNSC) that Assad regime officials had continued to stall OPCW—UN inspections since mid-2021. This report noted that the scope of inspections had been constrained by the Syrian government, which resulted in the United Kingdom's representative criticising their non-compliance with the CWC and insisting that the inspection teams be provided with 'unfettered access to inspect all sites in Syria' (UN, 2023b).

Aug 2013	Assad-aligned forces launch rockets containing sarin gas into Ghouta (an opposition-controlled area on the outer edge of the capital, Damascus), killing between 500 and 1700 people (including children).
Sep 2013	The United States (under the Obama administration) threatens airstrikes against chemical weapons manufacturing facilities in Syria.
	The Assad government, under pressure and after a campaign of persuasion by Russia, agrees to join the CWC and allow its stockpiles to be destroyed under the supervision of the OPCW.
	The UNSC unanimously passes Resolution 2118, acknowledging and affirming Syria's adoption of the articles of the CWC and its willingness to destroy chemical weapons stockpiles.
Jun 2014	The last of Syria's declared chemical weapons are removed from the country and destroyed.
2014–21	A range of OPCW- and UN-led missions seek to investigate and determine whether secret facilities are continuing to manufacture chemical weapons in the country.
Apr 2018	A chemical attack in the city of Douma, suspected of being perpetrated by the Syrian Air Force, kills 40–50 people and injures hundreds more.

Find out more here:

- OPCW on Syria: opcw.org/media-centre/featured-topics/opcw-and-syria
- UN press release on Syria and chemical weapons: press.un.org/en/2024/sc15610.doc.htm
- Voice of America editorial on Syria and chemical weapons: editorials.voa.gov/a/syria-still-failing-to-cooperate-on-chemical-weapons/7524592.html

Activity D – Understanding the effectiveness of international laws

1 When considering compliance mechanisms (consequences for actors that violate conventions), contrast the NPT and the CWC.

Contrast	Show how things are different or opposite.

vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx

2 The NPT attempts to maintain the status quo on nuclear arms to limit their spread across the world.

3 In your opinion, what might be the fundamental problem with this approach?

4 According to the OPCW, 100 per cent of the 'declared' chemical weapons have been destroyed. What key weakness of international law does this point to?

5 Using a table based on the model provided, complete the following four tasks. Use evidence in your responses.

	Description of law and at least two articles	Global actor response to demonstrate the success of the law	Global actor response to demonstrate the weakness of the law	Evaluation of the effectiveness of the law
NPT				
CWC				

Effectiveness of actors' responses to weapons of mass destruction 3.1.5

Russia

Russia has achieved some of its key objectives through its use of WMDs, notably:

- preventing armed intervention in the Ukrainian conflict from NATO members, which has provided Russian forces with greater freedom to expand militarily into Ukraine (with mixed results)

- reasserting itself as a powerful military and geopolitical actor.

One of Russia's most provocative actions was its 2024 military exercises in the Southern Military District, where the army, navy and air force trained in the use of tactical nuclear arms. This area included regions that were formerly administered by Ukraine, such as Crimea and Donetsk. These training exercises and Russia's public threats of a potential nuclear war resulted in key NATO members refraining from providing direct on-the-ground military support for Ukraine. The ongoing possibility of Russia using nuclear arms as a defence has been a significant contributing factor in **preventing outright armed intervention in the war by any Western country**. As such, Russia has revealed what the red lines are when it comes to Western support for Ukraine. According to Heather Williams (2024), a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 'nuclear threats are one means of signaling its [Russia's] commitment to winning the war in the hopes of scaring off Western intervention'. As Williams notes, Russia's official nuclear doctrine has incorporated the logic that nuclear arms act as an effective deterrent to oppositional forces considering military intervention in conflicts involving Russia. Williams also reminds us that Russia's provocative threats of nuclear war have 'raised nuclear risks to the highest level since the end of the Cold War'.

In this way, **Russia's use of WMDs has effectively kept 'boots off the ground' through nuclear deterrence**. Nonetheless, Russia has also escalated tensions and spurred a renewed nuclear arms race that may undermine the state's long-term security. The United States holds tactical nuclear arms in multiple locations in Europe, and Russia's nuclear sabre-rattling appears to have added to the appeal of NATO membership, under the US military and nuclear umbrella.

Russian soldiers standing on an Iskander missile launching system during exercises in regions bordering Ukraine.

A renewed nuclear arms race may reveal that Russia does not have the economic might to keep pace with some of its wealthier and more populous rivals.

Find out more here:

- 'Russia starts 'tactical nuclear drills' near Ukraine border'. Al Jazeera, 2024. aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/22/russia-starts-tactical-nuclear-drills-near-ukraine-border

- Nuclear Threat Initiative country spotlight on Russia: nti.org/countries/russia

- Center for Strategic and International Studies on Russia: features.csis.org/deter-and-divide-russia-nuclear-rhetoric

The United States

Like Russia, the United States has contributed considerably to the crisis of WMDs, most recently through its **trillion-dollar commitment to a comprehensive nuclear arms modernisation program**. This includes the building of plutonium 'pits' (a term for the fissile materials at the core of nuclear weapons that make them explosive). Existing pits need to be 'updated', with a 2018 plan initially seeking to produce 80 pits per year by 2030, so as to fully replace all 4000 plutonium pits by 2080 (Streep, 2023).

This modernisation program has been criticised by security experts and arms control advocates, because it signals to rivals that the United States is engaging in a **renewed arms race**. Existing plutonium pit stocks were produced during the Cold War era, when the United States had far more nuclear weapons. As such, there is no need to replace every pit unless the United States also intends to expand its overall weapons stockpile.

As the dominant power globally, **the United States occupies a leading (albeit 'self-appointed') role in limiting the proliferation of WMDs**. This position — in which a dominant power maintains the right to intervene in other sovereign states' affairs — is often referred to informally as acting as the 'global policeman'. The United States has led the sanctions campaign against North Korea and was the most vocal critic of North Korea's nuclear and ICBM testing programs. However, effectiveness of these actions has been limited. Despite the diplomatic isolation and comprehensive sanctions, North Korea has continued its nuclear missiles program unabated.

HOW TO BUILD A NUKE

Plutonium pit — Primary
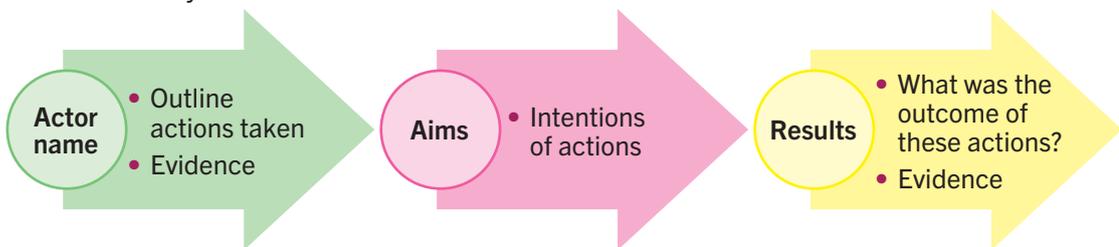Explosives
X-rays — Secondary

Modern nuclear warheads consist of two stages: the 'primary' and 'secondary'. For the bomb to work, explosives in the outer shell of the primary must detonate, squeezing a hollow sphere of nuclear material, usually plutonium-239, and triggering a runaway fission reaction. X-rays from the primary then cause atoms in the secondary's fuel to fuse and release still more energy. Credit: Geoff Brumfiel, 2006. 'The next nuke'. *Nature*, vol. 442. nature.com/articles/442018a

The United States appears headed towards a **renewed nuclear arms race** with its geostrategic rivals, China and Russia, which seems likely to increase the risk of such weapons being used. The relative decline in the United States' power may also mean it has less ability to discourage other states from pursuing their own WMD programs. North Korea enjoys the economic and strategic support of China, somewhat neutralising the effects of sanctions, while Syria is similarly protected by its alliance with Russia.

Find out more here:

- *Scientific American* on the US modernisation program: scientificamerican.com/article/behind-the-scenes-at-a-u-s-factory-building-new-nuclear-bombs
- US Department of Defense on the nuclear triad: defense.gov/Multimedia/Experience/Americas-Nuclear-Triad
- 'The complicated truth about sanctions on North Korea'. East Asia Forum, 2023. eastasiaforum.org/2023/07/05/the-complicated-truth-about-sanctions-on-north-korea
- *Undiplomatic* (podcast), episode 193. 'Nuclear disarmament vs nuclear abolition' (63 min). undiplomaticpodcast.com/episodes/193

1 Compare the responses of the United States and Russia to the global issue of WMDs.

2 Discuss Russia's response to the global issue of WMDs, with reference to its effectiveness in pursuing its goals and/or interests.

3 Evaluate the effectiveness of the United States' response to the global issue of WMDs, with reference to the idea of it being 'the world's policeman'.

4 Research one of the actors below, and assess to what extent they have made the world safer from WMDs. You can use the flowchart provided to help make your assessment.

   – UNSC

   – IAEA

   – ISIS

   – OPCW

   – Amnesty International.

Actor name
- Outline actions taken
- Evidence

Aims
- Intentions of actions

Results
- What was the outcome of these actions?
- Evidence

Challenges to resolution 3.1.6

The 'new arms race'

As discussed, the United States and Russia are both in the process of modernising their Cold War–era nuclear armaments and programs. The other seven nuclear-armed states are also undertaking modernisation programs, with some seeking to expand their nuclear arsenal. As of 2024:

- the government of **China** is on track to have 1000 armed-and-ready nuclear warheads by 2030, double its 2023 figure of 500

- the **French** government has committed to a long-term modernisation program

- the **British** are updating their naval delivery systems but maintain a smaller arsenal compared to other nuclear states

- **Pakistan** and **India** each holds around 170 nuclear warheads apiece with plans to advance in their holding of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and sea-based delivery systems

- the **North Korean** government continues to invest heavily in nuclear arms and missile technology

- **Israel** is considered the ninth nuclear-armed state, with the government neither denying nor confirming its nuclear capability.

As of 2023, the nine nuclear powers had a total of around 12 000 nuclear warheads. According to academic Zhang Tiankan (2023), it would take 400 nuclear bombs to wipe out all of humanity: this means that just the *current* nuclear stockpile could end all of humanity 31 times over.

Access to parts and technology

While access to nuclear arms is limited due to the cost, infrastructure and labour involved in both manufacture and delivery, there remains a **strong possibility that more states (such as Iran) will be able to access materials necessary to build nuclear warheads**. As discussed, Iran appears capable of building a functional nuclear weapon within six months. There is a very real possibility that Russia will encourage and support the Iranian government in its nuclear ambitions.

Read more here:

‘Russian–Iranian cooperation and threats to US interests’. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2024. washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/russian-iranian-cooperation-and-threats-us-interests

The means of producing chemical weapons can be accessed relatively easily — substances such as chlorine are readily available commercially. The OPCW has encouraged states to have stringent monitoring regimes to limit opportunities for these to be used to create weapons.

Some non-state actors have made significant headway in their chemical weapons production. Chemical weapons were used extensively by the Taliban in the lead-up to its takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. The accessibility of chemical weapons will continue to be a challenge to disarmament regimes like the CWC.

Armed conflicts

Ongoing conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and Syria (discussed in earlier sections), amplify the risk of WMDs being used. Wars encourage the use and spread of weaponry, including WMDs, because they create opportunities to justify their use in pursuit of military and security goals.

The Syrian Civil War saw **anti-government factions become relatively entrenched in their positions** in northern parts of Syria, with ongoing material support from state actors — notably Turkey and the United States. UN–OPCW weapons inspectors had reported their suspicions that the Assad regime had continued to stockpile chemical weapons, which could be used against opposition forces or civilians in future.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has devolved into a protracted conflict, with neither side able to either achieve victory or compel the other to negotiate peace. Meanwhile, Russia strategically threatens a nuclear war to limit the degree to which NATO members and others are willing to support the Ukrainian government. John Erath, senior policy director for the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, has warned that if Russia gains a lasting military victory in Ukraine, it will 'normalise nuclear blackmail as an instrument of statecraft', which would encourage other state actors to pursue nuclear weapons to deter intervention.

1 Using the information provided so far, supplemented by your own research, describe the actions of China, Russia, the United States and one other nuclear power in the new arms race. (You will need to read a variety of sections of this chapter to gain a range of evidence.) We suggest using the headings modelled in the table provided.

State	Nuclear modernisation efforts	Most recent developments
China		
Russia		
United States		
Other state		

2 Explain how an arms race might act as a challenge (in other words – *make it difficult*) to reduce and/or 'resolve' the threat posed by nuclear weapons.

3 Discuss how the relative ease of access to materials used to create WMDs – especially chemical weapons – means that threats from WMDs from a variety of global actors may persist into the future.

4 Analyse how armed conflict adds to the likelihood of chemical weapons being used.

5 This section has provided a thematic approach to the challenges to the resolution of WMDs as a global issue. States and other global actors (such as violent or 'illegal' non-state actors and/or transnational corporations) can act as a challenge to the successful and peaceful resolution to the threat posed by WMDs.

Research one actor that has posed such a threat and write a summary outlining how it acts to resist the resolution to the crisis of WMDs.

Consequences, stability and change 3.1.7

Stability: Nuclear deterrence

As discussed in the introduction to this issue study, the typical justification for a country having nuclear weapons is that they deter other states from attacking with their own weapons – whether conventional, nuclear or otherwise. In this way, having multiple nuclear-armed states may, paradoxically, promote stability because they discourage other states from becoming directly involved in regional or 'proxy' conflicts – which, in turn, stops them from becoming global ones (in the style of the world wars).

John Erath from the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation stated in an interview with Truthout that 'the possibility of nuclear war is very small' (Letman, 2024). How could this be if Russia and other rogue actors, like North Korea, publicly threaten or even just muse over the prospect of launching nuclear arms at their rivals? The simple truth is that **nuclear diplomacy is primarily characterised as empty threats and posturing to achieve various national interests**. In the case of Russia, it is to limit the West's involvement in Ukraine to manageable levels. Meanwhile, for North Korea, it is to deter any consideration of an armed intervention by other global political actors.

The prospect of MAD has been influenced by advances in **submarine technology**. Submarines can now travel well below radar detection while carrying a significant nuclear payload of ballistic missiles. This has meant that substantial nuclear powers such as the United States, China and Russia can patrol their rivals' coasts from a safe distance and, if instructed, launch nuclear strikes into coastal cities with the potential to kill millions. In early 2023, Russia announced that it had developed the first set of nuclear-powered, long-range, nuclear-armed drone torpedoes, called 'Poseidon', which could be launched from a submarine. Even lower-yield options have the potential to cause not only mass casualties but also floods and (radioactive) tsunami waves (Kaur, 2023).

Russia and the United States already have clear second-strike capabilities due to their extensive range of nuclear arms − their nuclear stockpile is so expansive that a first strike from either side could not take out all of them, meaning the other side would still have a chance of a retaliatory strike. These are supplemented by subtle reminders from countries about their nuclear capabilities, while also signalling what actions they would consider as meriting a nuclear response.

Given all this, the prospect of an all-out nuclear war seems unlikely, as the core components holding up the status quo −deterrence and fear of the consequences of escalation − continue to hold. Historically, this form of brinkmanship has at times brought the planet very close to nuclear war, which is why WMDs and nuclear weapons in particular are understood as posing a serious, but unlikely, threat to humanity.

Change: Proliferation

The proliferation of WMDs − particularly to actors who may be less reluctant to use them − is very concerning. Iran is a key actor in several contentious areas in the Middle East, including Yemen, Syria and Israel, and many consider the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran highly destabilising for the region and beyond. David Albright (2024), founder of the Institute for Science and International Security, has noted that Western intelligence in the Middle East is quite stretched and that a 'quiet, low-level effort to build nuclear weapons could slip through unobserved'. Thus, Iran could make significant advancements in the building of nuclear warheads before other states intervene.

It was also reported in The Independent that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had attempted to procure tactical nuclear weapons (Rai, 2023). Rahmatullah Nabil, the former head of Afghanistan's national security service, received multiple reports in 2023 that a faction within the Taliban sought to access tactical nuclear arms. The benefits to the Taliban are obvious − that is, deterrence from a future invasion carried out by the West and greater status as a nuclear power on the world stage. An unstable theocratic authoritarian regime armed with nuclear weapons may present a significant threat to the peace of that region.

The proliferation of chemical weapons is also concerning. Unlike nuclear arms, chemical weapons have been used in the 2010s and 2020s in numerous conflicts, including in Syria and Ukraine and by ISIS (as discussed earlier in this issue study). ISIS's advancements in developing chemical arms indicate that other motivated and well-funded violent or 'illegal' non-state actors may be able to follow the same path. This presents a significant challenge to political stability in the international community.

Activity G – Understanding the consequences of WMDs

1 In your own words, define 'nuclear deterrence' and 'mutually assured destruction'.

2 Explain how nuclear deterrence and MAD are used as a diplomatic measure to minimise the possibility of nuclear escalation or even nuclear war.

3 Using the information provided so far, supplemented by your own research, analyse Iran's nuclear program and the potential for Iran to develop nuclear weapons. What possible consequences might there be for other actors in the region?

4 Undertake your own research into a non-state actor other than ISIS that may either be making or have recently used chemical weapons.

  a Summarise recent developments regarding your chosen non-state actor's involvements with chemical weapons.

  b Do you think state or non-state actors pose a more immediate threat in terms of chemical weapons attacks? Why?

5 Compare and assess the degree of threat to human life posed by nuclear arms and chemical weapons in the world today.

6 As a class group, consider and discuss what is meant by the term 'political significance'. Consider the following elements.

  a Thinking beyond purely *global* actors, whose **interests** do you think are influenced by the existence of WMDs, and in what way? Who wins, and who loses?

  b Can you identify any changes in the **perspectives** various actors and observers might have on the effects, risks and opportunities presented by WMDs?

7 Plan and write a response to the following extended response—style question.

'Evaluate the political significance of WMDs as a global issue.'

Your finished response should include at least:

  — paragraphs that directly address the question in their first sentences

  — references to at least two state actors, one intergovernmental organisation and one non-state actor

  — detailed evidence from a variety of sources

  — explanations on the relevance of the evidence

  — a judgement that clearly outlines your opinion.

Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/pol34

Articles and websites

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Revision questions

Test your understanding of your selected issue by answering the following questions.

Short-answer questions

1 Outline one short-term cause of one global issue.

2 Describe the impact of global interconnectedness on one global issue.

3 Explain the response of one state to one global issue.

4 Explain the response of one non-state actor to one global issue.

5 Explain the reasoning behind the different perspectives of two states in relation to one global issue.

Extended response questions

1 Evaluate the political significance of one global issue.

2 Evaluate the response of one institution of global governance to one global issue.

3 Assess the impact of global interconnectedness on one global issue.

4 Discuss how states have contributed to political stability in relation to one global issue.

5 Discuss how the interests of states have impeded the resolution of one global issue.

6 Compare the perspectives of two global political actors in relation to one global issue.

7 Critically compare the effectiveness of two international laws in relation to one global issue.

8 Analyse the relationship between the causes and consequences of one global issue.

9 Analyse the challenges to the effective resolution of one global issue.

Sample response

Evaluate the effectiveness of one international law in responding to one global issue.

Our advice

In answering an extended response question, you must understand the key command terms within the question. The command term 'evaluate' requires you to ascertain the value or amount of; make a judgement using the information supplied, criteria and/or own knowledge and understanding to consider a logical argument and/or supporting evidence for and against different points, arguments, concepts, processes, opinions or other information.

For a question of this nature, we suggest you explain at least one strength of an international law that includes a supporting example, and at least one weakness of an international law that includes a supporting example. You should also convey your overall judgement, which you can do either at the beginning or conclusion of your response.

You should also ensure you demonstrate an understanding of the key concepts within the question. According to the VCAA Study Design, international law encompasses a wide range of rules and norms that are designed to govern the actions of states in international relations, such as treaties, declarations, bilateral and multilateral agreements, and even decisions made by bodies such as the UNSC.

For 'larger' extended response questions, you may choose to write in paragraphs. This will enable you to structure your response more logically.

Sample response

The Paris Agreement, which aims to address climate change by limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, has largely been ineffective in responding to climate change.

Of the 198 parties to the UNFCCC, 195 are parties to the Paris Agreement, illustrating its symbolic success in representing the world's commitment to addressing climate change. In addition, Article 4 of the Paris Agreement requires states to make nationally determined contributions (NDCs), which are submitted every five years to successively enhance a state's level of ambition. For example, by 2030, Australia aims to reduce its carbon emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels, which is an improvement from its first NDC of 26–28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

However, states can choose their own NDCs. Consequently, experts argue that states' NDCs are not ambitious enough. It is predicted that the current NDCs of states could result in a 2.7°C rise by 2100 (Climate Action Trackers). Ultimately, the Paris Agreement's inability to fulfil its aim of limiting a temperature increase to 1.5°C renders it ineffective, despite some of its aforementioned successes.

Contemporary crises: Conflict, stability and change

Unit 3, Area of Study 2: Contemporary crises: conflict, stability and change

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the causes and consequences of one contemporary crisis and discuss how global actors' responses have contributed to political stability and/or change.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

1 the short-term causes (within the last 10 years) of one contemporary crisis

2 the different perspectives of global actors in the crisis

3 the impact of political actors' interests on the crisis

4 the responses to the crisis by

    4.1 states

    4.2 an institution of global governance and/or a regional grouping

    4.3 a non-state actor

5 the processes used to attempt to address the crisis, including

    5.1 diplomacy

    5.2 international law

6 challenges to resolution of the crisis

7 the ability of actors to respond effectively to the crisis

8 the consequences of the crisis for political stability and/or change.

Key skills

i   ask and analyse a range of political questions to investigate one contemporary crisis

ii   analyse and interpret a range of sources of information on one contemporary crisis

iii   discuss the drivers of conflict and cooperation in the resolution of one contemporary crisis

iv   analyse the causes and consequences of one contemporary crisis

v   analyse the impact of political actors' interests on the causes, course and consequences of one contemporary crisis

vi   distinguish between different perspectives of global political actors on one contemporary crisis

vii   discuss how global actors' responses and their ability to resolve one contemporary crisis have contributed to creating political stability and/or change

viii   evaluate the political significance of one contemporary crisis

ix   construct an argument to evaluate the significance and effectiveness of global actors' ability to respond to and resolve one contemporary crisis, using evidence from sources.

Key questions

How can we understand the nature of contemporary humanitarian crises?

To what extent is it possible to identify and address the causes of humanitarian crises?

What are the key challenges to resolving these crises and what might be the drivers for change?

To what extent can global actors cooperate to manage conflicts?

Preface

In this area of study, students examine a contemporary humanitarian crisis from the area of human rights, armed conflict or the mass movement of people. These are events or series of events that threaten the safety and wellbeing of communities or large numbers of people. Although these crises typically originate from within state borders, they often have significant consequences for other states and their populations. In extreme cases, the world is faced with the necessity of responding, and global and regional actors must therefore find ways to cooperate in the search for solutions.

These humanitarian crises may be a result of ethnic, cultural or social discrimination, political challenges to the sovereignty of states or conflicts over resources, or be a consequence of global issues such as climate change or poverty. Students analyse the causes of their chosen crisis, the interests and perspectives of the actors involved, and evaluate the extent to which political stability and/or change is possible through the responses of political actors. Regional groupings may have a particular role to play in the resolution of these crises.

Examples and case studies of the chosen crisis must be of a significant scale, affect large numbers of people and be a concern for a number of states. 99

Contemporary crises

Global humanitarian crises are an ever-present feature of international politics. Armed conflict, the mass movement of people, and human rights violations not only threaten people's safety and well-being — they also necessitate global actors working together to respond. The way in which they respond can have a significant impacts (many of which can be unintended or difficult to predict), including tilting the balance between the continuation of the status quo and broader political change.

In this area of study, students must investigate **one contemporary humanitarian crisis** that has both a specific geographical focal point, involves large numbers of people, and is of concern to numerous state and non-state actors. Regional groupings therefore tend to have a prominent role in managing the response to crises of this scale.

This textbook provides in-depth crisis studies for two of the three options provided by our Study Design: armed conflict in Ukraine, and the mass movement of people towards Europe. In their own ways, both crises have placed significant pressure on the ability of states within Europe, and the European Union (EU), to cooperate in ways that allow them to respond effectively. They have also challenged European states' ability to maintain positive regional relationships, and presented a significant challenge to their broader faith in the rules-based international order.

Europe's collective response to **Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022** was motivated, at least in part, by a desire to protect Ukraine's sovereignty and broader right to self-determination. The country's geography (bordered to the west by the EU and NATO, and to the east by Russia) meant that incursions by the latter were also perceived as a challenge to the security of many European states. The provision of direct support to Ukraine — such as military equipment, financial aid, diplomatic support, and the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees — also placed additional social and economic strain on many European governments, with predictable political consequences.

Beyond just the movement of people from Ukraine, in the 2010s and 2020s Europe remained a key destination for people seeking better lives and safety from persecution. Responses to the **mass movement(s) of people to Europe** amongst European states and other actors have varied widely, and have served as a major source of tension and political disagreement between them. States and governments which have viewed refugees and asylum seekers as a risk to domestic security and as an economic burden have tended to favour forcibly returning migrants and pursuing other measures intended to discourage their arrival. Others, meanwhile, have tended towards closer observance of international law and cultivation of regional and international relationships, such as by offering greater support for those seeking asylum.

On a global scale, these twin shocks have in many ways challenged the primacy of the state as the most powerful global political actor. Many in 'the West' see liberal democracy — the dominant political tradition in Europe since World War II — as **increasingly challenged by illiberal and authoritarian geopolitical forces**, such as those manifesting in Russia, China and even the United States. On a local scale, state responses to these crises have exhausted the economic resources and political will of populations that are already feeling overburdened by global issues such as

climate change, poverty and economic instability. Debates over continuing support for Ukraine and offering refuge to migrants have become increasingly prominent in those states that have lent the most support and accepted the greatest numbers, such as Poland and Germany.

In this area of study, students begin by investigating the nature of their selected crisis, paying particular attention to the causes and consequences of contemporary crises, and how responses to crises can at times exacerbate the causes. Students should then consider the ways in which global actors have responded to crises; particularly, how effectively states have been able to balance competing national interests and demands from voters to address domestic issues, while also cooperating (including via international institutions) with other states. Finally, students should analyse the impact that these responses have had on political stability and change, and determine for themselves whether and to what extent these responses have served to slow or reverse the 'slow retreat' of liberal democracy and the rules-based international order.

Crisis study: Armed conflict

Armed conflicts pose a significant threat to human welfare and dignity, and to political stability and security more generally.

Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and the emergence of modern understandings of the state, **armed conflict has been one of the main ways in which states' sovereignty has been challenged**. While war has been part of human society for thousands of years, the ways in which it has been conducted and its impacts on states and populations have changed dramatically following decades of technological advancement — particularly throughout the 20th century. This includes the introduction of aeroplanes and aerial combat during World War I, to the whole-of-economy 'total war' in World War II, which culminated in the birth of nuclear weapons and the Cold War.

Despite widespread hopes (particularly following the Cold War) that greater interconnectedness could see the number, scale and severity of armed conflicts decrease, they have nonetheless continued to be a key feature of 2010s and 2020s geopolitics. Tactics and methods like guerrilla warfare, terrorism and cyber warfare have become increasingly common, and this, in many ways, has challenged conventional understandings of armed conflict.

While war has always affected more than just the military, many elements of modern armed conflict have **increasingly blurred the distinction between combatants and civilians**. Civilians in zones of armed conflict are often themselves impacted by violence, displacement and other humanitarian emergencies, thus, deepening their impact. The UN (2022) and other organisations have estimated that since the 1980s, approximately 90 per cent of modern wartime casualties have been civilians.

In examining this form of crisis, we will explore how an armed conflict and its participants can be impacted by the interests of other, often more *powerful* global actors. We will consider differing perspectives of this global crisis and how efforts to hold states accountable for breaches of international law can be hindered. In an armed conflict, diplomatic resolutions to a crisis often benefit more powerful states, meaning that more effective and just resolutions can be challenging to reach.

For this study, we will focus on the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which began in early 2022. This armed conflict can be understood as a continuation and expansion of the separatist movement that originated in Donetsk and Luhansk in 2014, along with the annexation of Crimea that same year. The wave of protests that began in Maidan Square in 2013 and resulted in the ousting of pro-Russian

president Viktor Yanukovych strengthened ties between the **European Union** (EU) and Ukraine, pushing concerns from Russian President Vladimir Putin over Ukraine's alliances. While this and other preceding factors that led to the conflict are important to understand, our study design requires us to focus on contemporary events (those within the last 10 years), which is why 2022 is taken as our 'starting point'.

> The **European Union** (EU) is a political and economic union with many unique features, made up of 27 member states, with a combined population of around 450 million people and 15 per cent of the world's GDP.

Speaking of contemporary...

At the time of writing, this conflict is still ongoing. Students should keep themselves apprised of the most recent developments in this conflict by reading widely.

Does this ring a bell?

Our Year 11 textbook includes instructions for accessing a case study which also focused on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but viewed through the lens of **sovereignty and the national interest as a global challenge to democracy**. Regardless of whether you embarked on that study option for Unit 2, Area of Study 2 last year, you might find that online supplement helpful as a source of additional information and background about this crisis.

Short-term causes 3.2.1

Culture and nationalism

Ukraine and Russia have a close and complex history. Ukraine's capital of Kyiv is widely considered the birthplace of both Russian and Ukrainian national identities in the 9th century. Over hundreds of years of Russian and later Soviet rule in Ukraine, there were various concerted efforts to 'Russify' the region, including through systematic suppression of Ukrainian culture and language, as well as migration of Russian speakers – particularly to the east of the country as it industrialised. In the modern context, this has resulted in a Ukraine where **large parts of the country speak Russian as a first language, consider themselves culturally Russian, or identify more closely with Moscow than they do with Kyiv**. Incidentally, the vast majority of native Ukrainian speakers also have good command of Russian, and even consume Russian-language media.
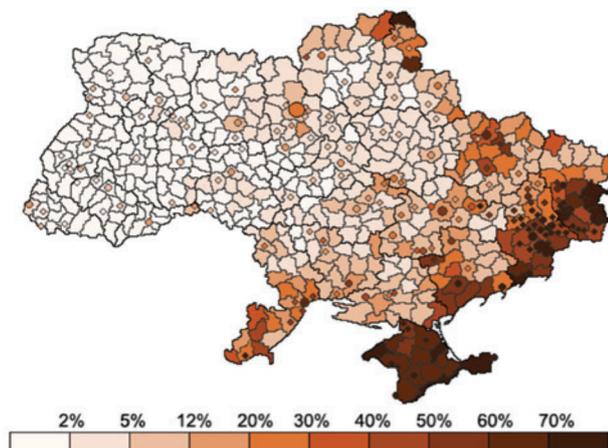
Map showing the percentage by area in Ukraine where Russian is the native language, 2001. Credit: w.wiki/6$rU

Back in the USSR

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), also referred to as the Soviet Union, was a state composed of 15 'autonomous' republics that existed between 1922 and 1991. It was a one-party state that was ruled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Russians formed a majority of the population (around 50 per cent), followed by Ukrainians (around 15 per cent). Ukraine's decision (made via referendum) to leave the Soviet Union and declare independence in 1991 effectively ensured the USSR's dissolution later that year.

Map of the Soviet Union (1922-1991) and its 15 constituent republics.
Credit: Encyclopedia Britannica.

According to the most recent comprehensive census in 2001, around 17 per cent of Ukraine's population identified as ethnically Russian and around 29 per cent spoke Russian as a first language — with this percentage being higher in regions bordering Russia. Those areas with the highest presence of Russian speakers have also tended to have the **strongest separatist movements, such as those in the Donbas and Luhansk oblasts, which have been a major factor in internal tensions in Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union**. In Russian President Vladimir Putin's speech in 2022 declaring war on Ukraine, he justified the military action by referring to the requests for support from these regions, while also claiming that a 'genocide' had been undertaken against Russian speakers in Ukraine.

> Russians and Ukrainians [are] one people — a single whole. ... It is what I have said on numerous occasions and what I firmly believe.
>
> Vladimir Putin, 2021. 'On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians'. Kremlin.
> en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181

Visit the resource below to learn more:

- ''No other option': Excerpts of Putin's speech declaring war'. Al Jazeera, 2022.
aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/24/putins-speech-declaring-war-on-ukraine-translated-excerpts

Alliances

A central point of tension between the governments of Russia and others in Europe is the expansion of NATO.

Key background – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

In the aftermath of World War II, NATO emerged as a collective security agreement between (initially) 12 liberal democratic nations, led by the United States, intended to counter the influence of the Soviet Union (and its corresponding 'Warsaw Pact') during the Cold War (1948–89). NATO endured after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, and in the 1990s and 2000s it was not immediately clear to the new Russian Federation (under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin) whether and why the alliance would continue to exist, if not to counter Russia (which was itself seemingly on the path towards liberal democracy). From 1999, NATO expanded into Eastern Europe, incorporating many countries that had previously been members of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. This contributed to tensions between NATO and Russia (itself fearing being 'encircled' by the West), particularly following NATO's intervention in conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. This contributed, in part, to Russia (under Yeltsin's successor, Vladmir Putin) seeking to expand security relationships with neighbouring states such as Belarus and Kazakhstan through its Collective Security Treaty Organization from 2002.

Map of Russian-allied states and NATO members (continental United States not shown). Credit: Adapted from The Seattle Times and The Washington Post, 2022. seattletimes.com/nation-world/russia-warns-finlands-membership-in-nato-would-be-a-threat

The **expansion of NATO closer to Russian borders** has long been a cause of concern for Russian leadership. As Russia built up its forces on the Ukrainian border in late 2021, the state demanded that NATO rule out the accession of Ukraine into the organisation. In Putin's speech declaring war on Ukraine on 22 February 2022, he spoke extensively about NATO's expansion closer to the Russian border, stating that 'further expansion of the NATO infrastructure and the beginning of military development in Ukraine's territories are unacceptable for us'. Along with the previous annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the eruption of armed separatist movements in Donetsk and Luhansk, understanding the ongoing contest over Ukraine between Russia and Western Europe is key to comprehending the basis of this armed conflict.

While Ukraine had been in discussions with NATO about membership to the organisation since 2017, relations between the state and NATO were first established when Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 (the year it declared independence from the Soviet Union) and the Partnership for Peace program in 1994. Ukraine formally applied for membership to NATO in 2022, six months after the war with Russia began.

In addition, **Ukraine applied for membership to the EU** on 28 February 2022, just days after Russia invaded. That June, the European Council (2022) declared that 'the future of [Ukraine] lies within the European Union'. Despite Putin claiming that he had 'nothing against [Ukraine] joining the EU' — due to the Union being an economic union and 'not a military bloc' — it had previously placed economic pressure on Ukraine to not join the EU.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and Parliament Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk with the application for fast-tracked NATO membership in Kyiv. Credit: Reuters, 2022.

Visit the resources below to learn more:

- 'Global Conflict Tracker'. Council on Foreign Relations, 2024. cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker
- 'Russia—Ukraine war'. Human Rights Watch, 2024. hrw.org/tag/russia-ukraine-war
- 'Today's armed conflicts'. Geneva Academy, 2024. geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts

Activity A – Causes of armed conflict in the 2020s

1   With reference to the map provided under the 'Alliances' heading, identify one cause of the armed conflict in Ukraine.

2   Investigate the following resource and answer the questions that follow.

- Global Conflict Tracker: cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker

   a   Identify three current armed conflicts and explain one cause of each of these conflicts.

   b   Consider the causes of each of your chosen armed conflicts. Are there any similarities between these causes?

   c   What might explain these similarities?

Different perspectives of global actors 3.2.2

Institutions of global governance

Since the 2022 invasion, the **UN** repeatedly condemned Russia's actions. However, due to conflicting interests among member states, along with the power held by permanent members of the UNSC, it has struggled to respond in line with the perspective and preferences of most of its member states.

Initially, the UNGA was strongly in favour of protecting Ukraine's sovereignty, passing a resolution in early 2022 that rejected the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and demanded that Russia immediately withdraw its forces and abide by international law. Of the 181 member states present for the vote, 141 voted for the resolution, 35 abstained, and five voted against. The resolution stated that 'no territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal' and **asserted that Russia's actions breached both the UN Charter international law**. This perspective remained dominant in the two years following the invasion, as noted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in 2024:

> "The ultimate path to peace in Ukraine lies in upholding the Charter of the United Nations and international law as guides to a world free of war, the Organization's top official told the Security Council today, declaring that the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of its neighbour — started two years ago — directly violated both. "
>
> UN Press Briefing, 2024. 'Marking two years since Russian federation's full-scale invasion, Secretary-General stresses Charter, international law guides to peace in Ukraine'. press.un.org/en/2024/sc15601.doc.htm

However, this contrasts the actions taken by the UNSC, which is considered the institution's main organ for responding to threats to international peace and security. Substantive proposals that sought to criticise or undermine Russia's actions in Ukraine were **blocked by Russia itself, who (as one of the five permanent members of the UNSC) has the power to veto proposals**. One such case was Russia's veto of a resolution seeking to condemn the referendums held in four Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine – Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Donetsk – as illegal and illegitimate.

While the UN and its key organs expressed broad opposition to Russia's actions in Ukraine, characterising them as violations of both international law and the UN Charter, they were limited in their ability to act effectively in response – primarily due to the power of Russia and its allies in the UNSC.

Regional groupings

The **EU's** perspective on the armed conflict in Ukraine can be measured by the sheer scale of the economic, humanitarian and military support it has provided to the nation, totalling over €88 billion in the first two years of the conflict (European Commission, 2024). The EU has consistently condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine, characterising them as 'blatant aggression'. This is reflected by the numerous sanctions the EU and various member states have placed on Russia. The EU also activated a temporary protection directive in early 2022 to support Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war soon after it began. This provided rights to Ukrainian refugees, such as residence permits, access to the labour market and housing, medical assistance, and access to education for children. As of November 2023, 4.2 million Ukrainians had been granted protection under the directive.

The EU itself does not have a well-developed military capacity beyond that of its member states (many of whom are also members of NATO), and so has not provided explicit military support (in the form of gifting equipment) to Ukraine.

> ❝We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprecedented military aggression against Ukraine. By its unprovoked and unjustified military actions, Russia is grossly violating international law and undermining European and global security and stability.❞
>
> European Council, 2022. consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/02/24/joint-statement-by-the-members-of-the-european-council-24022022

In contrast, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (**ASEAN**) had expressed a comparatively muted response to the armed conflict. While ASEAN did call for an immediate ceasefire or armistice in a statement in April 2022, it did not directly refer to Russia. This, in part, represented the diverse range of perspectives among members of ASEAN on the issue, with some member states expressing scepticism about European and US narratives surrounding the conflict, while others, such as Singapore and the Philippines, pushing for more vocal support for the Ukrainian cause.

You can read more about ASEAN's approach to the conflict here:

▷ 'The Russia–Ukraine war is ASEAN's latest political headache'. Australian Institute of International Affairs. internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-russia-ukraine-war-is-aseans-latest-political-headache

States

🔍 Opposing perspectives between the participants

As with most armed conflicts, this one has been preceded by demands by one actor that the other has refused. In this way, armed conflict and war can be understood as a **failure of diplomacy**, or (to quote 19th-century Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz) 'the continuation of policy by other means'. In the case of this conflict, Russian and Ukrainian demands of one another were not accepted; it certainly does seem that Ukraine and Western leaders did not expect Russia to escalate the smaller-scale conflict in the Donbas into an all-out invasion in early 2022 in attempt to force its demands. Since then, the lack of a definitive victory by either side meant that neither had the *leverage* to force the other to the negotiating table.

The Ukrainian position (supported by the US, Europe and others) insisted on a **return to Ukraine's pre-2014 borders** (including Crimea), as well as protections of its autonomy — particularly its right to join NATO and/or the European Union. Russia, meanwhile, seeks **formal recognition of its annexation of occupied border regions** — including Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia — as well as guarantees which prevent Ukraine from joining any bloc hostile to Russia's interests.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, other states have broadly fallen into three camps:

1 those supportive of Russia

2 those supportive of Ukraine

3 those who are impartial.

Often, these perspectives on the war are shaped by personal interests with the states involved.

Belarus, North Korea and Syria were the most steadfast supporters of Russia's position, having voted against all UNGA resolutions critical of its action in Ukraine. These states' perspectives on the war are influenced by various factors.

- **Belarus** – the state is heavily dependent on Russia both financially and militarily, with deep economic, cultural and historical ties between the two. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko (in power since 1994) benefited from Putin's support, including offers of security assistance during protests following disputed presidential elections in the country in 2020.

- **Syria** – Putin's support for the Assad regime throughout the Syrian civil war (2011–), including intervening with air strikes and ground operations since 2015, demonstrates the strong bilateral relationship between the two states.

- **North Korea** – North Korea's support for Russia has deepened throughout the conflict, with Russia turning to the state following sanctions imposed by several others. Between September 2023 and February 2024, North Korea sent 6700 containers carrying millions of munitions to Russia in exchange for food, parts and raw materials for weapons manufacturing (Al Jazeera, 2024).

Each of these states has important ties to Russia, which has informed their perspective of the war.

Credit: Al Jazeera, using UN data, 2023.

Certain states that neighbour Russia but are members of the EU, such as Finland and Sweden, have **shifted their perspective on NATO because of the conflict**. Finland, which shares a 1340-kilometre land border with Russia, abandoned the military neutrality it had maintained since World War II by joining NATO in early 2023. The war left the state feeling vulnerable, given Finland had fought with, and twice been defeated by, its larger neighbour, the Soviet Union, in the 1940s; this resulted in Finland ceding the provinces of Karelia and Petsamo to the USSR. As such, Finland interpreted Russia's actions in Ukraine as a threat to its own sovereignty. Becoming a NATO member — and, thus, gaining access to the security guarantees awarded to members under NATO's Article 5 — gave concrete realisation to this interpretation.

Sweden feels similarly geographically threatened by Russia. While it does not have a land border with the state, it has recently experienced threats to its maritime boundaries in the Baltic Sea. For example, in 2014, there were reports that a Russian submarine had entered Swedish waters. While Sweden's historical commitment to neutrality was built more from ideology than from Finnish pragmatism, Sweden used its position of neutrality to press for nuclear disarmament. There are some fears that with the state's accession into NATO, Sweden will lose its bargaining power regarding this issue. Despite this, Sweden still perceived the threat from Russian expansionism as significant enough to pursue NATO membership.

The impact of actors' interests 3.2.3

European Union member states

This conflict demonstrates how the **interests of a regional grouping such as the EU can differ, sometimes significantly, from the national interests of its individual member states**. In this crisis, a significant interest of the EU has been in protecting its access to key energy supplies such as natural gas (including liquefied natural gas [LNG]) and crude oil. Before the conflict, many EU member states were heavily reliant on energy imports from Russia, including:

Major pipelines used to transport natural gas from Russia to Europe in just prior to the conflict (with theoretical capacities measured in billions of cubic metres per annum).
Credit: Statista; JPMorgan 2021.

- 40 per cent of the natural gas used by EU members — most of it arriving via pipeline (both over land and underwater)

- 30 per cent (around 600 000 barrels per day) of the crude oil used by the EU, mostly transported by ship (Eurostat, 2023).

Levels of dependence were highly variable among member states, with **certain states such as Germany, Austria and Latvia being particularly reliant on Russian energy imports**. Prior to the conflict, Germany — the EU's largest economy — imported around half of its gas from Russia and more than one-third of its crude oil. Smaller states such as Austria and Latvia sourced more than 80 per cent of their natural gas supplies from Russia.

Revenue from oil and gas exports (and, to a lesser extent, coal exports) have constituted an enormously important source of funding for the Kremlin, accounting for between one-third and half of its total federal budget over the past decade (Reuters, 2024).

Soon after the conflict began, EU member states broadly sought to cut imports and impose sanctions on Russia, to:

- increase the 'cost' to Russia for its invasion of Ukraine

- constrain its capacity to continue or expand its military operations

- reduce the extent of Europe's interdependence on Russia.

European Union, 2022. 'EU sanctions against Russia to stop the war in Ukraine'. eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-sanctions-against-russia-stop-war-ukraine_en

The sanctions meant that member states had to surmise ways to dramatically reduce their reliance on Russian gas. These measures increased their dependence on imports from other sources such as the United States and Norway, leading to **significant hikes in energy prices across the continent**. The latter development had a strong influence on residents of those countries, particularly where domestic heating needs were much higher, leading to widespread frustration that influenced the domestic politics therein. Certain states such as Germany claimed it would take years to end its dependence on Russian gas due to such high demand.

Consequently, while EU leaders banned imports of oil and coal from Russia within months of the invasion, **passing and giving effect to sanctions on Russian gas took more than a year**, partly due to internal pressure from member states who greatly depended on it. It wasn't until the 14th package of sanctions implemented in mid-2024 that the EU banned ship-to-ship cargo transfers (i.e. transfers of Russian products to non-Russian ships to circumvent sanctions) off EU ports. The agreement also included a clause allowing Finland and Sweden to cancel some LNG contracts. Importantly, the EU decided not to impose a complete ban on Russian gas imports, contrasting with other supporters of Ukraine, such as the United Kingdom and United States, which implemented total bans on Russian natural gas and oil.

Meanwhile, Russia attempted to exploit European dependence on its gas supply, seemingly to discourage or stall European attempts to lend support to Ukraine's defensive efforts. Throughout 2022, Russia cut gas supplies to Europe, concerning some leaders about a winter energy shortage. **Some states responded to this by implementing domestic policies limiting energy consumption** – notably Italy, which set a maximum heating temperature of 18°C. As of late 2024, the EU was still importing gas from Russia, and the concerns about full-scale shortages of heating fuels over winter had yet to be realised.

Higher global energy prices (particularly higher oil prices since 2021) also helped Russia to fund its war effort. While it initially took a significant US$100-billion hit following the EU's import ban on Russian oil, Russia has been able to overcome these challenges by **diverting sales to buyers outside Europe and North America**. This has

Credit: Florian Gaul/greatif/Picture Alliance, 2023.

often been for well above the US$60 per-barrel cap imposed by the G7, as Russian distributors have increasingly made use of so-called 'ghost tankers' that effectively mask their ownership and country of origin. With prices of oil increasing overall, Russia was – somewhat paradoxically, considering the extent of these sanctions and restrictions – earning more per barrel sold in 2024 than it was before the war. This can be taken as evidence of the EU's failure to curb Russia's ability to finance its military operations in Ukraine through sanctions on oil and gas imports.

Various East African states

A large portion of the African continent is **dependent on Ukrainian and Russian grain exports**. Prior to the outbreak of war, the north-east African states of **Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya** each received between 40 and 80 per cent of its wheat imports from these two states. Some of these African states – particularly Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya – had for some time been experiencing food insecurity so acute that most of their wheat imports were under the auspices of the UN's World Food Programme (Glauber at al., 2023).

During the early stages of the Russo-Ukrainian war, there was significant concern around the impact that Russia's blockade on Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea would have on restricting the flow of food supplies. In ensuring trade continued, negotiations in 2022 between Turkey, Russia and the UN (the latter broadly acting on behalf of the dozens of states who had previously relied on Ukrainian grain imports) resulted in the Black Sea Grain Initiative. This ensured that grain could depart safely from three key Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea (Odesa, Chornomorsk, and Pivdennyi) and travel along an agreed maritime humanitarian corridor through the Bosphorus Strait (controlled by Turkey).

Map showing some of the flows of Ukrainian grain exports under the Black Sea Grain Initiative, 2022–3. Credit: US Embassy in Germany, 2023 (with data from United Nations and Humanitarian Data Exchange).

While this passage prevented Ukraine from resuming its full export capacity, it did **provide significant relief for those African states facing grain shortages**, with 33 million tonnes of grain leaving Ukraine's ports during the period the deal was in operation. British government sources claimed that 61 per cent of the grain exported under the Black Sea Grain Initiative went to low- and middle-income countries; however, grain exports to the least developing countries did not return to desired levels (Wintour, 2023).

Despite this success, Russia was concerned that the part of the plan that allowed for greater Russian agricultural exports was not being honoured, despite evidence that its food, grain and fertiliser exports had actually increased while the deal was in effect. Ultimately, Russia believed that Ukraine was benefitting far more from the deal and in July 2023 **ended its participation**, announcing that any ship leaving a Ukrainian port would be a legitimate military target – this made it impossible for grain exports via the Black Sea to continue. Notably, since the deal ended, the quantity of Russian wheat exported to these areas appears to have increased to at least partly offset the decline of wheat coming from Ukraine.

Read more here:

> 'End of the Black Sea Grain Initiative: Implications for sub-Saharan Africa'. International Food Policy Research Institute, 2023.
> ifpri.org/blog/end-black-sea-grain-initiative-implications-sub-saharan-africa

The United States

The domestic political climate in the United States has had a significant impact on Ukraine's capacity to respond to Russian attacks due to **Ukraine's reliance on various forms of US military aid**. This aid extends to the provision of weapons, equipment, ammunition, training, and logistical and financial support. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has stated multiple times that the Ukrainian war effort would crumble if it lost US support.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meeting with US President Joe Biden in 2023.

However, a **substantial number of US lawmakers have become increasingly critical of the extent of the Biden administration's support for Ukraine** (collectively amounting to more than US$170 billion by 2024). In the lead-up to the 2024 presidential election, funding for the Ukrainian war effort was a prominent feature of political debate, with Republicans increasingly opposing additional aid to Ukraine and (if only implicitly) in favour of Ukraine conceding defeat.

Deep partisan differences on U.S. responsibility to help Ukraine and how much support to provide

% who say the U.S. has a responsibility to help Ukraine defend itself from Russia's invasion

Total	48
Rep/Lean Rep	36
Dem/Lean Dem	63
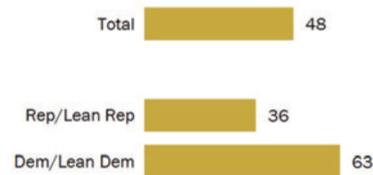
% who say that when it comes to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. is providing _____ support to Ukraine

	Not enough	About right	Too much	Not sure
Total	19	26	29	25
Rep/Lean Rep	12	18	47	22
Dem/Lean Dem	27	36	13	23

As the conflict entered its third year, political gridlock and uncertainty about the future of US assistance had a significant impact on Ukraine. Despite the US Senate approving US$60 billion in aid in early 2024, the House of Representatives under Republican Speaker Mike Johnson stalled a vote on the bill for months — during which **Russia was able to make significant territorial gains**, capturing around 360 square kilometres of territory between January and May 2024. Ammunition shortages in Ukraine were cited as a key factor enabling Russian forces to extend their territorial control (Yerushalmy, 2024).

The eventual re-election of former President Trump in late 2024 appeared likely to lead to an about-face in US policy, seemingly increasing pressure on Ukraine to make significant concessions to Russia in pursuit of peace.

Activity B – The impact of actors' interests on the war in Ukraine

Complete the following questions to consolidate your understanding of how other actors' interests can impact the war.

1 Given that fighting in Ukraine is isolated to one region and between two states, why has the impact of the war been so 'global'?

2 The EU borders both Ukraine and Russia, with member states Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania all bordering Ukraine, while Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland border Russia. What impact might this proximity have had on the EU's response to the war?

3 Using the resource recommended below, and what you've learnt so far, answer the questions that follow.

'How much US aid is going to Ukraine?' Council on Foreign Relations, 2024. cfr.org/article/how-much-us-aid-going-ukraine

 a Why has the United States had such a significant impact on Ukraine's capacity to fight throughout the war?

 b Why might US voters and lawmakers disagree on whether to continue funding and aiding Ukraine?

4 Create a table noting the positive and/or negative impacts of the armed conflict either *continuing* (i.e. Ukraine continuing to fight to expel Russian occupying forces) or *ending* (Ukraine offering territorial and/or other concessions to Russia as part of peace negotiations) for the actors listed below. Some suggestions have been provided.

	Ukraine keeps fighting	Ukraine concedes
United States		**Pro:** reduced costs of military aid to Ukraine. **Con:** Russia emboldened to violate the sovereignty of other countries.
Ukraine		
Russia		
East African states	**Con:** reduced grain imports from Ukraine and higher costs for wheat.	
EU member states		

Responses by global actors 3.2.4

States 3.2.4.1

The United States

As discussed, the United States has provided significant military assistance to Ukraine, including through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (set up in 2015, prior to full-scale invasion in 2022). The initial response from the United States was significant, as demonstrated by the US$350 million in military aid to Ukraine, authorised just one day after the initial invasion in February 2022.

The United States also **supplied Ukraine with cluster munitions** during its ammunition shortage – which proved controversial, as cluster munitions have been banned by more than 100 states. Cluster munitions are a class of weapon that contain multiple explosive bomblets called submunitions, which scatter over a wide area of similar size to a football field. This type of weapon also has a significant 'dud' rate, meaning that 2–6 per cent of submunitions do not initially explode; their use risks large areas of land being contaminated with unexploded ordinances, which may injure or kill civilians for years to come. The United States faced significant criticism for this move, with leaders from the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Canada, Human Rights Watch and the UN all speaking out against the decision.

You can read more about humanitarian concerns surrounding cluster munitions in Ukraine here:

⬚ 'US cluster munition transfers raise humanitarian concerns'. Human Rights Watch, 2024. hrw. org/news/2024/04/04/us-cluster-munition-transfers-raise-humanitarian-concerns

Article 1 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions states that no party to the international law should use, develop, produce or acquire cluster munitions. Neither the United States nor Ukraine are signatories to this international law; however. Russia, which has also used cluster munitions in this war (and whose own variants have significantly higher 'dud' rates), is also not a signatory.

As discussed, **the provision of this and other types of military assistance is highly dependent on political developments in the United States**, as shown by the challenges faced in passing relevant support packages since the Republican Party took majority control of the US House of Representatives in late 2022.
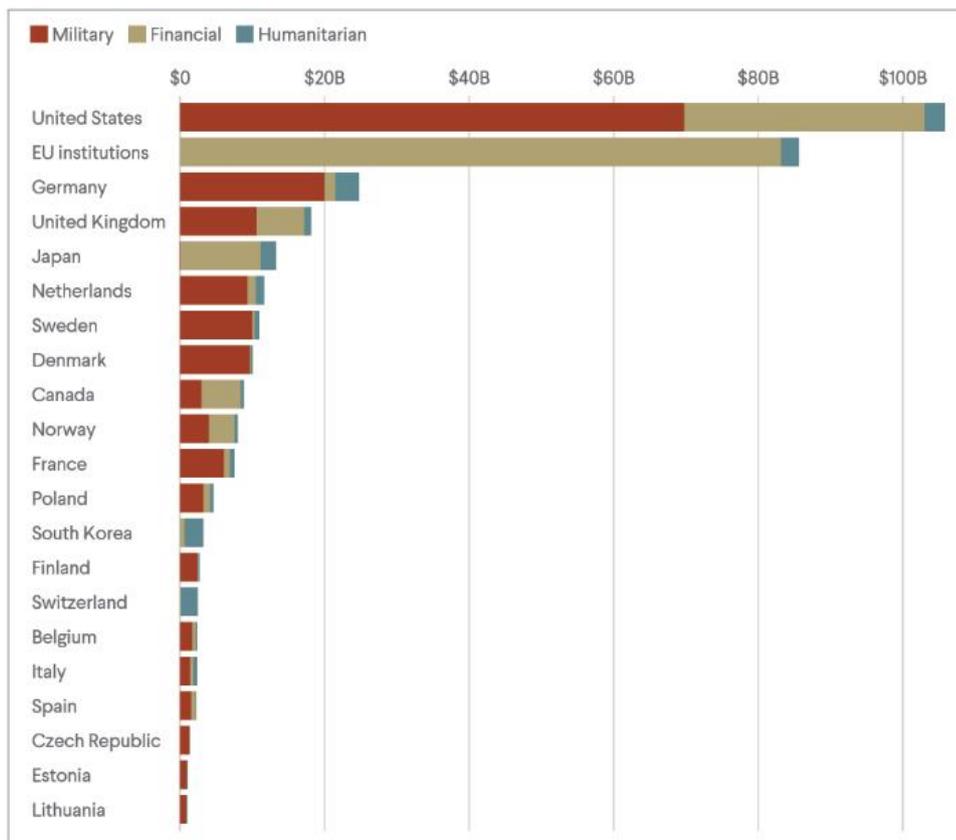
Bilateral aid commitments from the top 20 donor countries and EU institutions since the war started (as of June 2024). Credit: CFR, 2024.

The stalling of this aid was seen as a key factor in **allowing Russia to make significant gains in the war** and cripple Ukraine's second biggest city, Kharkiv, through missile attacks. In an effort to target key areas while Ukraine was weakened, Russian troops began to push at Ukraine's north-east border, and Ukrainian troops were forced to retreat from villages on the eastern front.

> " If the Americans don't give money and weapons, along with the Europeans, then the war is over. And if the Americans don't give money, the Europeans alone are unable to finance this war. And then the war is over. "
>
> Hungarian President Viktor Orbán in a television interview with Hungary's M1 TV, March 2024.
> bbc.com/news/world-europe-68533351

Germany

Relations between Germany and Russia in recent history have been complex. The two fought on opposing sides (causing mass devastation to both) in both World Wars. Following Nazi Germany's defeat by Soviet and Western forces in the latter (World War II), the country was divided into four occupation zones. Rising tensions between Western powers and the Soviets eventually led to the merger of the US, British and French zones into what was informally known as 'West' Germany, while Soviet zone became 'East' Germany. The latter was aligned with the USSR and a member of the Warsaw Pact from its founding in 1949 until 1990, when the Berlin Wall (which literally split the capital as well as serving as a broader symbol of Cold War divisions in Europe) 'fell', and the two Germanys united.

Given their history, and their proximity to Russia, many Germans – from across the political spectrum – baulk at the idea of sending tanks east ever again, with 80 per cent of Germans polled in 2023 preferring a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Ukraine (Pancevski, 2023). Germany's approach to Russia in the 21st century can be understood as a broad continuation of a 'balancing act' mentality that helped to prevent all-out war erupting *again* between the two during the Cold War period. In this view, the mutual caution and suspicion between the two (often exacerbated by ideological differences) are counterbalanced by their shared interest in maintaining peace and, more recently, cultivating mutually beneficial trade relationships.

This interdependence was exemplified by Germany's increasingly reliance on imports of natural gas from Russia since the 1980s, including via natural gas pipelines such as Nord Stream running directly between the two countries under the Baltic Sea. In late 2022, however, the pipelines were rendered inoperable by sabotage, with a serious of explosions allegedly being orchestrated by a small team of Ukrainian nationals (with investigations into the incident still ongoing as of late 2024).

Map of the Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 pipelines, highlighting the locations of the explosions which disabled their operations in September 2022. Credit: BBC, with data from Danish Maritime Authority and Gazprom, 2022. bbc.com/news/world-europe-63057966

This complexity of their relationship may to help explain why **Germany's initial response to the war in Ukraine was criticised as tepid**. The government under German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, was initially opposed to providing military aid to Ukraine. The head of the German navy resigned in early 2022 after being recorded saying in relation to Putin that 'it is easy to give him the respect he demands, and probably deserves', that Ukraine could never take back Crimea, and that relations with Russia should be prioritised to avoid it becoming more firmly aligned with China (quoted in Oltermann, 2022).

Once Ukraine had demonstrated its ability to resist and even push back against Russian forces, however, Scholz's position shifted, with Germany eventually becoming **one of Ukraine's most significant supporters by way of military aid**. In mid-2023, Scholz said during Ukrainian President Zelenskyy's first visit to Berlin

since Russia first invaded that Germany 'will support [Ukraine] for as long as it is necessary' and that 'Russia [needed] to be held to account for its misdeeds'. This came in conjunction with the German government announcing €2.7 billion of military aid to Ukraine.

Throughout 2022, Ukraine made significant diplomatic efforts to stress their need for battle tanks. While many tanks were being sent to Ukraine (many, ironically, being refurbished Soviet-era tanks sent by states which had previously been part of the Warsaw Pact), the Ukrainian government continued to insist on the need for more advanced technology, such as the German-produced Leopard 2 tank (pictured).

The Leopard 2 is the most common modern 'heavy' tank in Europe, with around 2000 in use in Germany and 13 other European countries. Germany owns all the export licences for the Leopard 2, meaning that other states, such as Poland, could not gift or sell their tanks to another country without approval from the German government.

A Leopard 2 tank in used during military exercises in Poland in 2020. Poland later gifted 14 of its Leopard 2s to Ukraine in 2023.

After weeks of intense pressure from allies, and continued assertion from Germany that it would not provide tanks unilaterally, **Germany agreed in early 2023 to donate at least 12 of its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine.** Hours after this announcement, President Biden also promised the US would send 31 M1Abrams (its main battle tank) to Ukraine. These moves — by the two largest economies *and* tank producers in NATO — were widely seen as opening the door for the other governments to supply tanks and other more advanced military equipment to Ukraine.

Institutions of global governance and regional groupings 3.2.4.2

International Criminal Court

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an institution of global governance that aims to prosecute individuals for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression.

Neither Russia nor Ukraine is, or has ever been, a *full* member of the ICC, although in 2000 both signed the **Rome Statute** and signalled their intent to cooperate with the ICC. In 2016, however, the ICC published a paper classifying the Russian annexation of Crimea as an occupation. In protest against the report, Russia announced its withdrawal as a non-ratifying signatory.

> The **Rome Statute** is the 1998 treaty that established the ICC, which came into force in 2002; as of 2024, the ICC had 124 member states.

Ukraine, meanwhile, remains a non-ratifying signatory to the Statute. Since 2013, it has used a **special procedure that allows for non-member states to 'accept the court's jurisdiction'** under certain circumstances, such as when the non-member state *invites* the ICC to investigate allegations of international crimes committed on their territory.

This procedure was used in attempt to prosecute the alleged war crimes committed by the states involved in this conflict when, in early 2023, **the ICC issued arrest warrants for both Vladimir Putin and Russia's children's rights commissioner Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova for overseeing the abduction of Ukrainian children.**

While the capacity for the ICC to arrest Putin is limited – due to Russia's non-participation in Rome Statute – this has limited his ability to travel to countries whose governments are members. In July 2023, it was announced that Putin would not travel to South Africa for the 2023 BRICS summit – with this being widely understood as being motivated by concerns about South Africa's technical obligation as an ICC member to arrange for his arrest. South Africa initially sought an official exemption from the ICC to permit Putin to travel to the state for the conference, claiming that the requirement to arrest him would be 'a declaration of war' to Russia. The ICC request was refused. Eventually, it was decided that Putin would attend the conference by video link, with all remaining heads of state of the BRICS economic bloc attending in person.

A sign at a rally for Ukraine held in Washington D.C. calling for Russian President Vladimir Putin to be charged and imprisoned by the International Criminal Court. Credit: Atlantic Council, 2023. atlanticcouncil. org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react/ experts-react-the-international-criminal- court-just-issued-an-arrest-warrant-for-putin- will-he-wind-up-behind-bars

While the ICC has been unable to successfully prosecute Putin for war crimes committed in Ukraine, it has been able to somewhat weaken his capacity to establish and strengthen relationships with other states through limiting his capacity to travel to ICC member states.

European Union

While the EU has lent significant support to Ukraine, particular member states have gone against this trend. The government of Hungary has been a particular critic of Western and European support for Ukraine, with Hungarian President Viktor Orbán seen as the European leader with the closest ties to Russia and President Putin. Orbán's taking over the European Council presidency during the latter half of 2024 provided his perspectives greater visibility and influence. In late 2023, Hungary was able to initially block an EU funding package of 54 billion euros aimed at supporting Ukraine, which was supported by the EU's 26 other member states. Despite passing after months of delay, this underscored the effect of internal political disagreements within the EU on its response to the conflict.

Read more here:

- 'Hungary ends opposition to giving Ukraine aid, freeing up $54 billion from the EU'. NPR, 2024. bbc.com/news/world-europe-67724357

Non-state actors 3.2.4.3

Amnesty International

Throughout the conflict, Amnesty International stressed its concerns about alleged human rights breaches by both Russian and Ukrainian sides of the conflict. The NGO highlighted **Russia's use of indiscriminate attacks that failed to distinguish between military targets and protected citizens, the treatment of prisoners of war in occupied areas, and the use of cluster munitions by both sides**. Through its on-the-ground research, Amnesty International released reports on human rights breaches throughout the war.

Amnesty obtained evidence in mid-2022 that Russia had been using cluster munitions, criticising this as a breach of international law. Through field interviews, the NGO also obtained evidence of unlawful indiscriminate attacks on civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure.

On the second anniversary of Russia's invasion, Amnesty stated that 'there can be no justice for Ukrainians without full accountability for all crimes committed by Russia since its military intervention in 2014'.

Amnesty has also been critical of Ukraine's actions throughout the invasion. In mid-2022, it released a report **criticising the Ukrainian army for stationing troops in residential areas,** which, in turn, endangered civilian lives. The report claimed that the army was using schools and hospitals as bases and sometimes living in residential flats, meaning Russian troops would then target these civilian areas. Amnesty received criticism for the report, and an internal review found that the conclusions regarding Ukraine's violations of international law were 'not sufficiently substantiated' by the evidence provided (Savage, 2023).

While it can be challenging to hold actors accountable for human rights breaches during an armed conflict, the collection of evidence and investigative reporting by Amnesty International were seen as vital in protecting civilians during the war, and in the possibility of pursuing justice following the war's eventual conclusion.

Visit the resource below to learn more about Amnesty's most recent responses in Ukraine:

amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/ukraine

Activity C – Linking perspectives, interests and responses

1 This graphic illustrates how the perspectives of a political actor shape their interests and, in turn, how these interests drive the responses of political actors.

Perspectives → Interests → Responses

Using the actors discussed in this section, complete a flow chart (using the model provided) to spell out these relationships (some suggestions for the EU have been provided as an example, but are far from being the only acceptable answers).

Actor	Perspectives	Interests	Responses
European Union	Russia's actions in Ukraine since 2014, and especially since 2022, are a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty.	Prevent Ukraine from being punished for (among other things) seeking a closer alignment with Europe.	Facilitating financial aid from member states to Ukraine and providing residency to displaced civilians.
Germany			
United States			
Amnesty International			

Processes used to address the crisis 3.2.5

Diplomacy 3.2.5.1

Since 2022 there were repeated efforts by various states to initiative negotiations for a ceasefire or peace agreement to address the crisis. These include attempts by the UN, France and China, along with Ukraine itself.

French President Emmanuel Macron tried to act as mediator between Russia and Ukraine on several occasions. With the retirement of former German chancellor Angela Merkel, along with the United Kingdom leaving the EU, Macron sought to establish himself as a 'leader' in this crisis through his position as Europe's most senior head of state. In early 2023, Macron proposed a peace summit in the course of conversations with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy. While the **Summit on Peace in Ukraine** eventually took place in June of 2024, with 92 states and 8 IGOs attending, Russia did not participate in any capacity, barring the possibility of meaningful progress towards peace.

In early 2023, meanwhile, **China proposed its own '12-point plan' for peace in Ukraine**, calling for:

1   Respect for sovereignty, guarantees of independence and territorial integrity for all countries, and the primacy of international law without double standards.

2   Rejection of a 'Cold War mentality', respect for the security interests of individual countries, rejection of the strengthening and expansion of military blocs.

3   A ceasefire.

4   The beginning of peace talks between the participant.

5   Resolution to the humanitarian crisis.

6   Protection for civilians and prisoners of war under international law.

7   Special protections for nuclear power plants.

8   The reduction of strategic risks, including prohibitions on the use of chemical, biological and/or nuclear weapons.

9   Guarantees for the export of grain within the Black Sea Grain Initiative framework.

10   A rollback of unilateral sanctions.

11   Measures to ensure the stability of production and supply chains to protect the global economy.

12   Economic assistance to aid in the post-conflict reconstruction of Ukraine.

While Putin expressed broad support for the proposal, Ukrainian and Western leaders broadly dismissed the Chinese proposal as a non-starter. It did demonstrate, however, that China was keen to portray itself as a global 'leader' in managing such a crisis, as a counterpoint to efforts being driven by the US and European states. The proposal itself was also broadly understood as an attempt by China to articulate a set of positions and principles which indirectly supported its interests in its *own* territorial disputes and treatment of minority groups, as well as lending support to, and further strengthening its relations with, the Russian Federation.

Visit the resource linked below to learn more:

🖎   'All you need to know about China's plan for Russia-Ukraine talks'. Al Jazeera, 2023. aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/24/all-you-need-to-know-about-chinas-plan-for-russia-ukraine-war

International law 3.2.5.2

> Just a reminder — the ICJ is the (only) international court that adjudicates disputes **between states**. As such, it differs from the ICC, which focuses on individuals (remember the ICC ruling against Putin which led him to avoid visiting South Africa discussed earlier).

	International Court of Justice	International Criminal Court
Established	1945	2022
UN relationship	Highest court of the UN	Not part of the UN
Location	The Hague (Netherlands)	The Hague (Netherlands)
Jurisdiction	**UN member states**	**Individuals**
Types of cases	Legal disputes between states and requests for advisory opinion on legal questions	Prosecutes individuals for the most serious crimes as per the Rome Statute
Appeals	No	Yes
Enforcement power	None — relies on the UN Security Council to uphold judgments, with permanent members having veto power	None — relies on cooperation form member states to enforce its decisions within their sovereign territory

Adapted from Al Jazeera, 2024. fb.com/photo.php?fbid=787811946726495

Just two days after Russia announced its 'special military operation' and incursion into Ukraine, **the Ukrainian government filed an application instituting proceedings against Russia at the ICJ**. This was the second case that Ukraine had launched against Russia, having also filed a case in 2017 against Russia's support for pro-Russian separatist groups in eastern Ukraine, alleging its illegal occupation of Crimea violated the rights of several minority groups.

In its application, Ukraine contended that 'the Russian Federation has falsely claimed that acts of genocide have occurred in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts of Ukraine, and on that basis … implemented a 'special military operation' against Ukraine' (ICJ, 2022). Ukraine also accused Russia of 'planning acts of genocide in Ukraine' and contended that Russia 'is intentionally killing and inflicting serious injury on members of the Ukrainian nationality'. **Over 40 states issued a joint statement in support of Ukraine's ICJ case,** solidifying the global community's

position against Russia on a global scale, and strengthening the legal basis of international support for their position.

In 1948, after World War II, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention) codified the crime of genocide for the first time. **Appeals to the Genocide Convention were important components of both states' legal arguments**, as Russia's initial justification for the invasion was that it was necessary to prevent a genocide of Russians in eastern Ukraine. At preliminary hearings in 2022, Ukraine said there was no threat of genocide in eastern Ukraine, and further claimed that the 1948 Genocide Convention did not permit or allow for states to invade other states in order to prevent genocide.

The ICJ decided, in a 2022 a provisional ruling, that Russia must 'immediately suspend the military operations that it commenced on 24 February 2022 in the territory of Ukraine'. This ruling was ignored by Russia.

Despite Ukraine's success in the preliminary stages of the case, the ICJ ultimately did not deliver a conclusive legal victory for Ukraine in its 2024 rulings. The Court upheld Russia's objection that **the state's uses of force based on allegations of genocide** – even if false – fell outside the scope of the Genocide Convention and, thus, **was outside the Court's jurisdiction**. While the ICJ did not kill the case entirely, it did say it would seek to decide on whether there was any 'credible evidence that Ukraine is responsible for committing genocide in violation of the Genocide Convention in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine'. This meant that Ukraine's conduct, not Russia's, would be the focus of future arguments.

As of late 2024, Ukraine's attempts to challenge Russia's actions through international law had been limited in their success, and despite gaining international support, had had no impact on Russia's actions.

Activity D – The effectiveness of processes

1 Using one specific example, explain how diplomacy has been used to address a crisis involving armed conflict.

2 Identify one international law relevant to armed conflict, and outline two obligations of states who are party to this international law.

3 Evaluate the extent to which one actor's response to a crisis involving armed conflict reflects their obligations under international law.

Challenges to resolution 3.2.6

Declining global interest

While initial responses to the war in Ukraine were significant, by its third year the attention of global actors has shifted away from Ukraine. This has been caused by many factors.

One significant factor is simply the **emergence of other significant global crises**. After Hamas's surprise incursion into Israel in October 2023, global news coverage shifted to reporting on Israel's invasion of Gaza. Prior to the attack, the war in Ukraine amounted to about eight per cent of CNN's television coverage; afterwards it had fallen to under one per cent.

Reduced attention may also simply be reflective of increased pessimism about Ukraine's ability to overcome Russia. To this point, in an interview with TIME in 2023, Zelenskyy noted that 'nobody believes in our victory like I do. Nobody.' Shifting attention can be seen as leading to **relative deprioritisation of international military and economic aid for Ukraine**, which in reduces its capacity to fight effectively and (in theory at least) force Russia to sue for peace. Zelenskyy claimed in an interview with Reuters that Western allies to Ukraine were taking too long, stating that decisions regarding military support for his country are being made 'late by around one year'.

> " Exhaustion with the war rolls along like a wave. You see it in the United States, in Europe. "
>
> Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 2023. Quoted in ''Nobody believes in our victory like I do.'
> Inside Volodymyr Zelensky's struggle to keep Ukraine in the fight'. TIME.
> time.com/6329188/ukraine-volodymyr-zelensky-interview

As the war persisted, and with outcomes on the front line being mixed at best for Ukraine, **faith in the Ukrainian side's ability to expel Russian forced appeared to be eroding** – even if only gradually. In a 2024 survey by Pew Research, 40 per cent of adults polled across 34 different countries expressed confidence in Zelenskyy, while 46 per cent did not (Fagan et al., 2024). Support amongst survey respondents in Poland – perhaps the state most strongly aligned with Ukraine's in its fight against Russia – was shown to have dropped from 70 per cent in mid-2023 to just 48 per cent in mid-2024.

Amongst a range of possible key factors in this change may be the failure of Ukraine's mid-2023 counteroffensive against Russian forces to make significant progress. Despite six months of intense fighting, Ukrainian forces were only able to make an advance of just 7.5 kilometres. This seems to have influenced global perceptions of Ukraine's chances of victory.

Demographic and personnel challenges

Not only did Ukraine struggle with a tired and battered army; the state is experiencing challenges with its demography.

Ukraine's population of approximately 37 million is around a quarter of Russia's 144 million. In the most basic terms, **its much larger population, economy and industrial base has allowed Russia to sustain and replenish its forces,** and overwhelm Ukraine's smaller pool of troops and weapons. While some good fortune early in the war – and the various forms of international military aid is has received since – allowed Ukraine to slow, and to a certain extent halt Russian advances, it remained very much the 'underdog' in the conflict. At the time of writing the conflict has since largely developed into a 'war of attrition', where both sides are relatively entrenched in their respective positions and difficult to dislodge without enormous commitments of forces and resources by the other side.
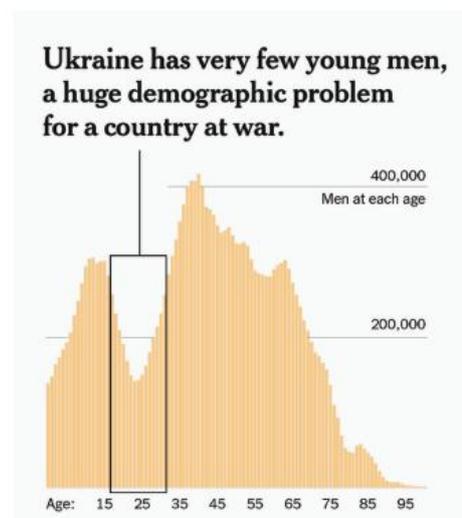
Credit: New York Times, 2024; data from UN World Population Prospects.

Both countries experienced intense economic depression and plummeting birthrates in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Ukraine, this has lead people aged between 18 and 27 to be the smallest generation in the country's recent history.

In attempting to respond to the crisis, in April 2024 the Ukrainian parliament passed a bill seeking to **overhaul conscription rules and boost the size and capability of the nation's armed forces**. The bill sought to provide the military with a clearer indication of how many people it could draft and deploy where needed, giving all Ukrainian men just 60 days to update their personal data with military authorities. To ensure its passage through parliament, proposals to apply more severe penalties for draft dodging were removed — a suggestion that in the past had caused considerable public outrage.

Despite Russia's larger population by comparison, the state has also faced personnel and recruitment challenges, including mass emigration of young men.

Resistance to diplomatic resolutions

As already touched on earlier in this crisis study, Russia and Ukraine both demonstrated consistent reluctance to enter into peace negotiations throughout the war, partly stemming from radically different understandings of what a just resolution would look like. For Ukraine, any resolution that does not involve the return of all occupied territory — including Crimea — has not been considered acceptable. Russia, in turn, has been unwilling to engage in peace talks that do not include commitments from Ukraine to abandon its ambitions to join NATO.

President Zelenskyy has stated that the only way to a lasting peace was a full withdrawal of Russian troops and restoration of Kyiv's exclusive control over all territory falling within its initial, post-independence (1991−2014) borders.

> " The question is not only of the 1991 borders, it's a question of (our) independence in the borders of 1991. This independence must be in (people's) minds, as the direction. "
>
> President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 2024. reuters.com/world/europe/
> ukraine-president-zelenskiy-speaks-reuters-exclusive-interview-2024-05-20

After repeated indications from the Russian government that it would not participate, it was not formally invited to the Ukrainian peace summit held in Switzerland in June 2024. One day before the summit, Russia issued a demanding that Kyiv cede more land, withdraw troops deeper inside its own country and drop its NATO bid as a necessary precondition for peace. Ukraine dismissed these demands, claiming that they would equate to a unilateral surrender by Ukraine. Russia also stated that it would not attend a follow-up peace summit planned for later in 2024, and continued to demonstrate a reluctance to engage with any peace talks organised by Ukraine or its allies.

Visit the resource linked below to learn more:

'Russian diplomat says Moscow won't attend a second Ukraine peace summit'. Reuters, 2024.
reuters.com/world/europe/
russian-diplomat-says-moscow-wont-attend-second-ukraine-peace-summit-2024-07-11

Ability of actors to respond effectively 3.2.7

United Nations

The UN has been limited in its capacity to respond effectively to the crisis, due to Russia's position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.
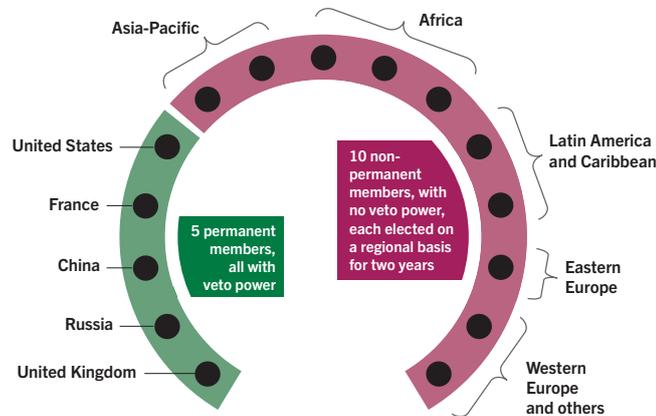
The UNSC has primary responsibility under the UN Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 members — five permanent and 10 rotating non-permanent members — each of whom has one vote. Crucially, **the five permanent members of the Security Council can also veto any proposed agreement**, which is all but guaranteed if any proposal is considered counterproductive to the interests of any permanent member. Under the UN Charter, all member states are obliged to comply with UNSC decisions. The Council meets to identify threats to peace or acts of aggression, then calls on parties to the dispute to settle through peaceful means — while recommending methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the UNSC may seek to impose sanctions on states, or even authorise the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Since the invasion began, Russia twice vetoed UNSC resolutions on Ukraine.

Date	Draft	Details	Votes
25 February 2022	S/2022/155	Draft resolution authored by Albania and the United States and co-sponsored by 81 member states. The draft deplored Russia's aggression against Ukraine in violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.	Eleven members voted in favour, one against (Russia) and three members abstained (China, India and the United Arab Emirates).
30 September 2022	S/2022/720	Draft resolution authored by Albania and the United States condemning Russia's proclaimed annexation of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, and called on states to not recognise the border changes.	Ten members voted in favour, one against (Russia) and four members abstained (China, India, Brazil and Gabon).

President Zelenskyy has heavily criticised the UNSC's lack of effectiveness in responding to this conflict. In an appearance at a UNSC meeting in September 2023, Zelenskyy called for Russia to be stripped of its veto powers as a permanent member of the Security Council. Such an action, however, is considered extremely unlikely.

> "Ukrainian soldiers are currently doing at the expense of their blood what the UN Security Council should do by its voting — they are stopping aggression and upholding the principles of the UN Charter."
>
> Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 2023. 'The use of veto power requires reform, and this can be a key reform in the UN'. president.gov.ua/en/news/ zastosuvannya-prava-veto-potrebuye-reformuvannya-i-ce-mozhe-85745

The United States

The US faced a range of serious obstacles when it comes to responding to the war in Ukraine. This included domestic constraints, such as internal political divisions and financial challenges, along with external factors such as balancing alliances and the risk of escalating conflict with a nuclear-armed state.

Domestically, there were political divisions regarding the continued financial and military support for Ukraine's war effort. In approaching the 2024 presidential election, the views of sitting President Biden and Vice President Harris on hand, and those of former (and eventually returning) President Trump and his Republican allies, were largely opposed. Trump repeatedly threatened that, should he win the election, he would quickly **move to cut off all US aid to Ukraine**, even criticising Ukrainian President Zelenskyy as 'the greatest salesman of all time' at a campaign rally in Detroit in 2024.

Conversely, President Biden continued to reinforce his support for the embattled state. After passing a long-stalled US$61 billion aid package in April 2024 through the House of Representatives, Biden committed to long-term support for Ukraine through to the end of his presidential tenure.

This divide in support was also reflected in the broader population, including along party lines, with Republican supporters shifting from initial supporting US efforts in Ukraine, to believing that the US was doing (and spending) too much on what many understood to be a lost cause. In a Pew Research survey, only 9 per cent of Republican voters initially believed that the US was providing too much aid to Ukraine, but this number had increased significantly to 49 per cent by April 2024 — compared to only 16 per cent of Democratic voters (Wike et al., 2024).

Activity E – Actors' abilities to respond effectively

Write an extended response that evaluates the effectiveness of one global actor's ability to respond to and resolve the armed conflict in Ukraine as a contemporary crisis.

You can craft your response about from one of the actors discussed in this section (the US or the UN), or any other actor mentioned in the broader crisis study (if the latter, we recommend doing some of your own research).

Remember...

An extended response is a piece of structured writing that:

- makes a succinct argument
- considers opposing arguments
- is supported by evidence from sources.

Consequences, stability and change 3.2.8

Global economic disruption

The conflict in Ukraine has had significant (if *uneven*) economic impacts, both domestically and on a global scale.

Domestically, dislocation and economic disruptions have seen the **rate of absolute poverty** in Ukraine skyrocket from 5.5 per cent of the population before the war to over 24 per cent in 2022 — pushing 7.1 million more people into poverty (World Bank, 2023).

Wheat fields in Lviv, western Ukraine. Credit: Sodel Vladyslav.

As already discussed, **interruptions to the supply of wheat and other foodstuffs** were reflected in higher global food prices, which remained 12 to 13 per cent higher in December 2023 than they were in December 2021 (Emediegwu, 2024).

Similarly, interruptions to supplies of Russian gas to Europe contributed to inflated energy prices and seemingly, increased rates of dissatisfaction with political institutions.

The timing of the armed conflict also further exacerbated the impacts of high inflation across the global economy already being experienced post-pandemic.

Read more about the economic impacts of the crisis here:

👆 'Ukraine: What's the global economic impact of Russia's invasion?' Economics Observatory, 2023. economicsobservatory.com/ukraine-whats-the-global-economic-impact-of-russias-invasion

Changing global relationships

Overall, global stability can be understood as having been negatively impacted by the further souring relations between the US and Russia over the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Such tensions carry additional risk by virtue of both powers being heavily armed with nuclear weapons. Russia and America have been party to several nuclear arms control agreements since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, with the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty signifying both states' willingness to negotiate on nuclear arms control even at the height of the Cold War.

The most recent treaty, New START, was bilaterally signed by the two states in 2010 and extended in 2021. In this agreement, both Russia and the United States agreed to:

- deploy no more than 1550 strategic nuclear warheads and a maximum of 700 long-range missiles and bombers
- impose a limit of 800 ICBMs in deployment
- each conduct up to 18 inspections of strategic nuclear weapons sites annually to ensure the other has not breached the treaty limits.

Tensions around the conflict in Ukraine quickly put previous moves towards mutual nuclear disarmament in reverse, however. In February 2023, during a state of the union address, Putin announced that Russia would be suspending its participation in the New START treaty. He stated that for Russia to resume treaty activities, the US would need to cut off support for Ukraine and pressure both France and the UK into arms control talks.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described Putin's decision as 'deeply unfortunate and irresponsible' but continued to assert that the US would continue negotiations at any time. Blinken stated, 'we remain ready to talk about strategic arms limitations at any time with Russia irrespective of anything else going on in the world or in our relationship' (Blinken, 2023).

Putin had also ordered military drills involving tactical nuclear weapons near the Ukrainian border and has not ruled out using nuclear weapons in this conflict. Ahead of the 2024 Russian election, Putin foreshadowed that Russia was prepared for a nuclear war.

Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: www.sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/pol34

Articles

'EU gas supply: When Russia went into self-destruct mode'. DW, 2023. dw.com/en/eu-gas-russia-nord-stream-crisis/a-66668256

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Crisis study: Mass movement of people

The movement of people across boundaries and continents has occurred throughout human history. As political, economic, social and environmental factors change, people **migrate** in search of safer and/or more prosperous places to live. The idea of free movement of people has long been an integral part of the Western liberal conception of human rights. For most of human history the search for a better place to live was not restricted by international borders, nor was it easy to migrate long distances. However, in recent decades a more interconnected world has seen dramatic increases in migration, which has begun to impinge directly on another core Western belief: that of the independent, sovereign state.

> **Migration** is the movement of people from one place to another, where they intend to settle, permanently or temporarily, at a new location.

The Peace of Westphalia in the 17th century is thought to have cemented the idea of territorial sovereignty, placing particular importance on external borders that define a state's jurisdiction. These borders are rarely a natural part of the landscape, but are instead arbitrarily constructed to control land, resources and, crucially, people. State sovereignty and territorial integrity was later enshrined in Article 2.4 of the UN Charter, which states:

2022 recorded a then unprecedented 108 million forcibly displaced people. This included many fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine; pictured are some of those waiting for transportation in Medyka, Poland, near the border with Ukraine. Credit: Pakkin Leung.

> " All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations. "
>
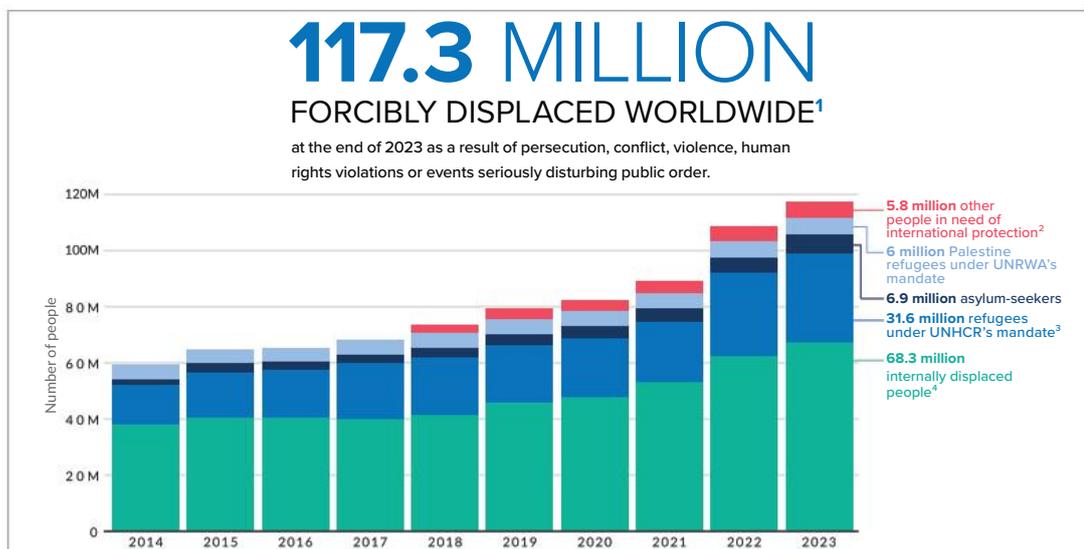> United Nations Charter. un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text

The development of mass communication and transport technologies and the **globalisation** of labour markets have fuelled global interconnectedness and heightened the openness of physical and political boundaries. Coupled with ongoing ethnic, cultural or social discrimination in many parts of the world; political challenges to the sovereignty of states or conflicts over resources; and the increasing consequences of global issues such as climate change or poverty, the movement of people has reached record levels. This combination of factors has seen increasingly restrictive migration policies implemented around the world as states look to maintain national security and protect sovereignty.

> **Globalisation** refers to the relatively sustained increase in global interconnectedness between individuals and communities — particularly that driven by innovations in communications and transport technologies since the 1990s.

| Causes | Responses | Impacts |
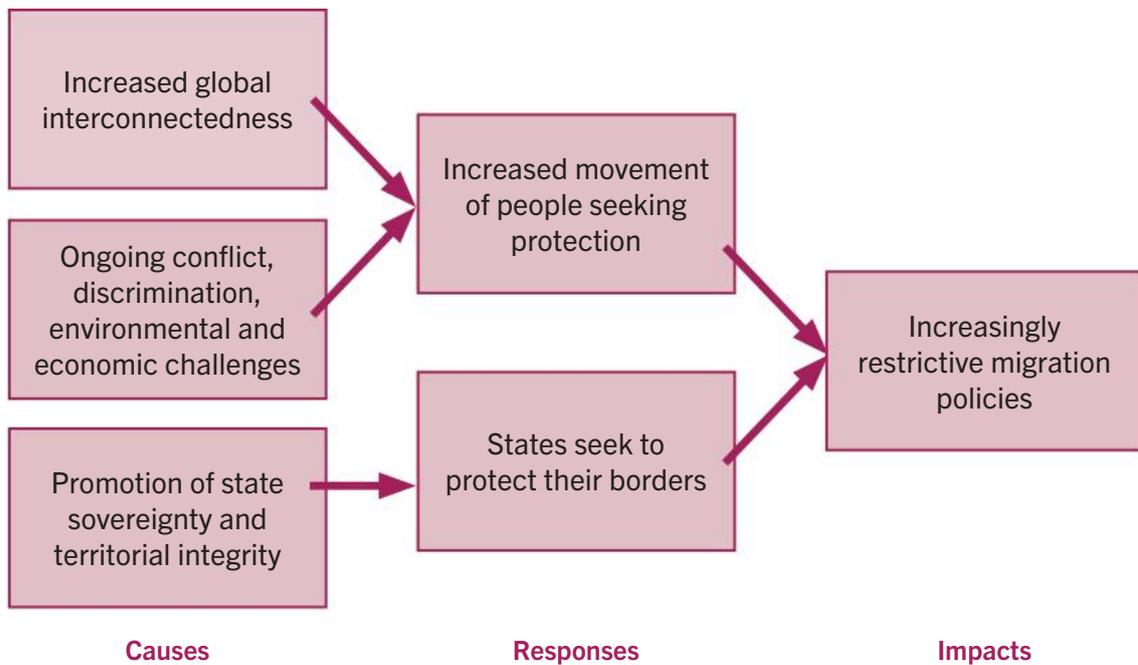
The result of states increasingly enforcing the integrity of their borders is that most people seeking to move for a better life are forced to remain within their current state of residence. These people are referred to as **internally displaced** persons. According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) — the world's principal international refugee organisation — most of the record 117.3 million people forcibly displaced worldwide in 2023 were internally displaced (see graph).

> **Internal displacement** refers to the involuntary or forced movement, evacuation or relocation of persons or groups of persons within internationally recognised state borders.

117.3 MILLION

FORCIBLY DISPLACED WORLDWIDE[1]

at the end of 2023 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.

5.8 million other people in need of international protection[2]

6 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate

6.9 million asylum-seekers

31.6 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate[3]

68.3 million internally displaced people[4]

Credit: UNHCR Global Trends Report, 2023.

Migrants leave their homes for diverse reasons such as armed conflict, **discrimination**, or economic or environmental challenges. Usually, a combination of these factors pushes people to leave and pulls them towards their new homes. Institutions of global governance, and quite often regional groupings, seek to promote the creation and adherence to global rules and laws that aim to protect different groups of migrating people.

> **Discrimination** refers to the process of making unfair distinctions or prejudgements between or about different types of people, such as those based on skin colour, religion and/or ethnic background.

The most significant international law relating to the movement of people is the **1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees**. The Refugee Convention – as it is often referred to – is the cornerstone piece of international law that sets out to define what a refugee is, what rights refugees have, and crucially the responsibilities of states. This law, as well as other international rules and agreements, will be explored in more depth later in this chapter when discussing the processes global actors use when attempting to address this crisis.

When studying the mass movement of people, language is important. Commonly, the term *migrant* is used when referring to anyone who moves from place to place, and the term *international migrant* is used for a person who relocates to a foreign state. The UNHCR says there is no universally accepted definition of the term migrant, but that it is important to distinguish between the following three categories of international migrant:

International migrant
A person who has moved from one state to another, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.

Economic migrant
A person who has chosen to move across international borders in pursuit of work or education opportunities, or to reunite with family.

Asylum seeker
A person who is seeking international protection who has, or intends to, apply for refugee status but has not yet received a final decision on their claim.

Refugee
A person seeking international protection who is outside their home state and meets the criteria for refugee status.

Graphic adapted from CFR Education, 'For migrants, labels matter'.
education.cfr.org/learn/reading/migrants-labels-matter

The criteria for refugee status are defined in Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as a person who:

> owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion … is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.
>
> UNHCR, 1951. 'Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees'.
> unhcr.org/us/media/convention-and-protocol-relating-status-refugees

Importantly, the UNHCR (2024d) states that under international law, 'an asylum-seeker may not be sent back to their country of origin until their asylum claim has been examined in a fair procedure, and is entitled to certain minimum standards of treatment pending determination of their status'.

'Illegal immigrant'

The term 'illegal immigrant' has been heavily politicised in recent decades as governments seek to generate public hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees. The UNHCR glossary states that **a migrant can only be termed 'illegal' once their claim to asylum is rejected and then fails to comply with an expulsion order**, or for other reasons has no legal permission to stay in a host state. A migrant, asylum seeker or refugee with a legitimate claim to protection has a legal right to remain in a state until their claim is processed. Nevertheless, in many situations migrants who arrive by irregular means are labelled as 'illegal' or 'undocumented' when in most cases this is an unwarranted accusation.

These definitions and obligations under international law establish the parameters for our deeper investigation into the mass movement of people. Our study design stipulates that we investigate *humanitarian crises*, and as such, this chapter will largely focus on the **international community's response** to the increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers. However, there is some scope to examine how global actors treat economic migrants — if nothing else to appreciate the often marked difference in policies applied to those who *choose* to relocate as opposed to those who have little or no choice.

Visit the resources below to learn more:

- 'Global trends'. UNHCR. unhcr.org/global-trends
- 'Migration'. Council on Foreign Relations. education.cfr.org/learn/migration

Activity A – A crisis of mass people movement

Complete the following thinking routine. Consider what you have read regarding the record number of people relocating in search of protection and the role that sovereignty plays in allowing states to restrict this movement.

1   Why might the mass movement of people matter to me?

2   Why might the mass movement of people matter to people around me (family, friends, city, nation)?

3   Why might the mass movement of people matter to the world?

Adapted from 'The 3 whys'. Project Zero. pz.harvard.edu/resources/the-3-whys

Short-term causes 3.2.1

The introduction to this section explored the long-term *trends* that underpin this crisis. This section will now consider the short-term *causes* that produce, trigger or drive the mass movement of people. Most often, people choose to migrate for a combination of reasons. Therefore, it is important to remember that the categories provided help us to analyse the most important factors that contribute to this global crisis. We should be mindful, though, that for each individual migrant there will be a complex mix of historical, social, political, economic, cultural, technological and environmental factors that have triggered them to look for somewhere else to live.

Armed conflict

Armed conflict, usually over sovereignty, territory or resources, is the principal cause of the mass movement of people in contemporary global politics. The UNHCR's Global Trends reports are an excellent resource for understanding the scope and scale of this crisis. The 2022 report showed that nine of the top 10 places that refugees originated from are involved in **ongoing armed conflict**. The only exception — Venezuela — has nonetheless still experienced high levels of political instability and violence because of its economic challenges — as explored later in this section.

The leading source of refugees, Syria, has been involved in an ongoing civil war since 2011, with various sides being aided by external actors. Since the majority of the 6.5 million Syrian refugees fled the peak of the violence in 2015–16, and because in this text we aim to focus on events occurring no earlier than 2020, Syria falls outside the scope of our discussion. Conversely, the majority of Ukrainian refugees fled their homes after Russia launched its full-scale **invasion of Ukraine** in 2022. In the early phase of the invasion, Russian forces gained territory quickly and advanced towards densely populated cities such as Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mariupol before being repelled by Ukraine's defence. It was in this early phase that the majority of those 6.5 million people fled the approaching conflict. Of those that fled west, the majority were registered in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic. Additionally, the UNHCR (2024f) stated that by mid-2024 at least 3.5 million Ukrainians had been internally displaced, fleeing to the relative safety of Ukraine's western provinces.

The Ukrainian Exodus
Number of Ukrainian refugees reported by European countries as of May 2023 or most recent available
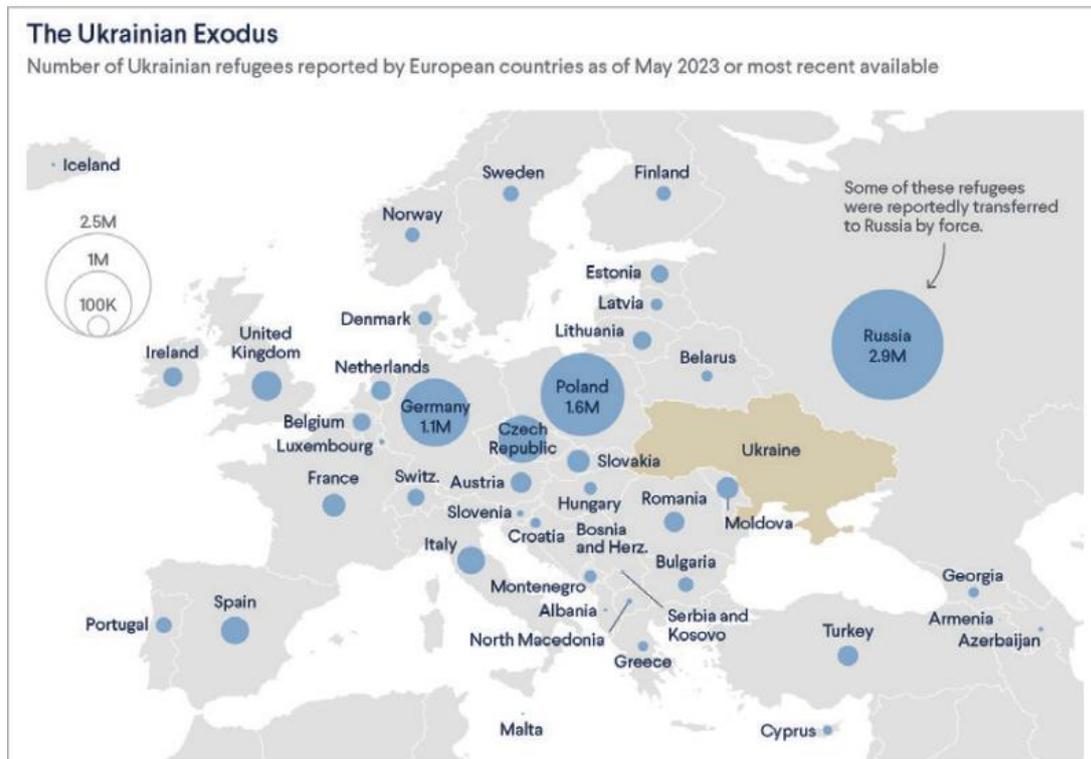
Credit: UNHCR; Council on Foreign Relations. cfr.org/in-brief/ukraine-humanitarian-crisis-refugees-aid

Visit the resources linked below to learn more:

- 'Ukraine conflict at the crossroads of Europe and Russia'. Council on Foreign Relations. cfr.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia
- 'Russia-Ukraine war in maps and charts: Live tracker'. Al Jazeera. aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/28/russia-ukraine-crisis-in-maps-and-charts-live-news-interactive
- 'Ukraine emergency'. UNHCR. unhcr.org/emergencies/ukraine-emergency

Discrimination and persecution

At the centre of most, if not all, of these armed conflicts is the role of ethnic, cultural or social discrimination based on race, gender, social group, nationality or culture. Many of these armed conflicts have their root causes in these areas of discrimination. However, in some cases, discrimination is the driving force behind those fleeing **persecution** and looking for political and religious freedoms they do not enjoy at home.

One such example is the **5.8 million people who fled Afghanistan** in the three years following the withdrawal of US troops in August 2021, and the subsequent takeover by the Taliban. Without the support of the US military, the internationally recognised administration in Afghanistan was quickly overrun by the Taliban; the international community is yet to recognise the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan. Often labelled a terrorist organisation, or at least supportive of some terrorist groups, the Taliban has a history of discrimination and repression of women, girls and minority religious and ethnic communities such as Hazaras (Amnesty International, 2024). For those groups historically discriminated against by the Taliban, fleeing discrimination under their impending rule was a driving force behind leaving. Most Afghans who left were registered in neighbouring Iran (approximately 3.7 million) and Pakistan (approximately 2 million) (UNHCR, 2024b). In late 2023, Pakistan announced that all 'undocumented foreign nationals' would have to leave by 1 November 2023 — a decision affecting approximately 1.7 million Afghan refugees (Al Jazeera, 2023). Another 3.25 million people have been internally displaced within Afghanistan, according to the UNHCR (2024a).

> **Persecution** refers to prolonged oppression or unjust treatment through the excess use of authority, and may extend beyond discrimination to include explicit punishment for political dissent.

Evacuees load on to a United Arab Emirates military transport aircraft in Kabul, Afghanistan, as the US forces finalised their withdrawal from the country in 2021.

Visit the resources linked below to learn more:

- 'The Taliban in Afghanistan'. Council on Foreign Relations. cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan
- 'Where did the Afghan refugees go — and where next?'. Lowy Institute, 2023. lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/where-did-afghan-refugees-go-where-next
- 'Afghanistan emergency'. UNHCR. unhcr.org/emergencies/afghanistan-emergency

Economic factors

While the movement of people in search of a more prosperous life has long been a factor in migration, oftentimes rapidly developing **economic crises can quickly lead to mass movements of people**. For instance, in Venezuela, 6.1 million people have fled to neighbouring states such as Colombia and Peru to escape poverty, because of the spiralling cost of living and high unemployment rates. Venezuela's GDP shrank by roughly three-quarters between 2014 and 2021; in 2018 year-on-year inflation peaked at 130 000 per cent (Roy and Cheatham, 2024) when most Western economies aim for between 2 and 3 per cent, and by 2019, 96 per cent

of households were listed as living in poverty (Statista, 2022). This economic collapse, coupled with international sanctions and a poor response to the COVID-19 pandemic, led to a devastating humanitarian crisis. Venezuelans experienced severe shortages of basic goods such as food, drinking water, fuel and medical supplies, causing them to flee.

Visit the resources linked below to learn more:

↪ 'Venezuela situation'. UNHCR. unhcr.org/emergencies/venezuela-situation
↪ 'Venezuela: The rise and fall of a petrostate'. Council on Foreign Relations. cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-crisis

Environmental challenges

The intensifying effects of climate change – in particular the increased severity of natural disasters such as fire and floods, but also the role climate change plays in **reducing crop yields and driving food insecurity** – are behind rising numbers of people migrating. The UNHCR (2024f) notes that, in 2022, 84 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers fled from highly climate-vulnerable countries, an increase from 61 per cent compared to 2010. Additionally, natural disasters in 2022 triggered a record 32.6 million internal displacements. Importantly, many of these people cannot claim refugee status, as they fail to meet the criteria mentioned earlier in the Refugee Convention of 1951. Most climate-related displacement occurs *within* countries, while the Refugee Convention offers protection only to those who have crossed an international border, and only to those fleeing war, violence, conflict or persecution – **not** natural or climate related events.

Visit the resources linked below to learn more:

↪ 'Climate change and displacement: The myths and the facts'. UNHCR. unhcr.org/au/news/stories/climate-change-and-displacement-myths-and-facts

Torrential rain and flooding in Pakistan in 2022, exacerbated by the effects of climate change, left 6.4 million people in need of shelter as well as food and other essentials. Credit: UNHCR/Usman Ghani.

Activity B – Cause and effect

1 Using one specific example, explain how **armed conflict** can cause the mass movement of people.

2 Using one specific example, explain how **discrimination and persecution** can cause the mass movement of people.

3 Using one specific example, explain how **environmental factors or economic challenges** can cause the mass movement of people.

Remember...

Explain means to give a detailed account of why and/or how, with reference to causes, effects, continuity, change, reasons or mechanisms; make the relationships between things evident.

Focus on Europe

Most refugees and asylum seekers fleeing the examples of armed conflict, discrimination and persecution discussed earlier — as well as economic or environmental disasters — escape across borders to neighbouring states. For instance, most Afghans have fled to neighbouring Iran, and most Syrians have fled to neighbouring Turkey. However, the continent of Europe remains a focal destination for many refugees and asylum seekers pursuing safety and a chance at (re)building relatively peaceful and prosperous lives. The graphic provided shows how, relative to its population, Europe receives a large number of people in need of protection.

Unlike other continents where the movement of people is largely contained within the continent, Europe also draws many refugees and asylum seekers from other continents. This final point has been a major factor driving intense political debates within and between European states regarding how to manage the rise in people seeing Europe as their best chance at a new life. This challenge to political stability, combined with the added demand posed by Ukrainians fleeing the armed conflict with Russia, makes Europe an ideal case study for this chapter.

While there is substantial movement of people *within* Europe — aided considerably by arrangements guaranteeing freedom of movement among the majority of European Union (EU) member states — this case study primarily focuses on people seeking to move to EU states from states *outside* Europe.
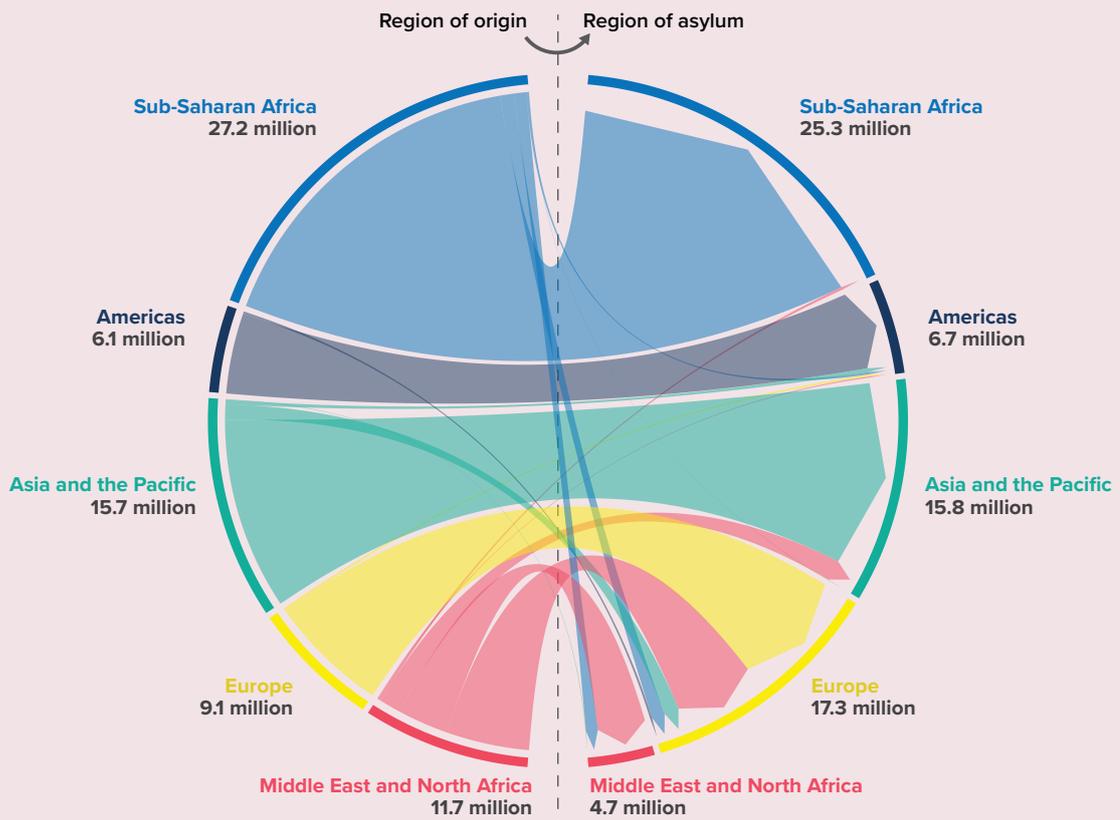
Flows of refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection from their region of origin to their region of asylum, 1975—2022.
Credit: UNHCR Global Trends Report, 2022.

Different perspectives of global actors 3.2.2

Regional groupings

Political actors' perspectives can be thought of as a public representation of their values, norms or world views. In the case of a regional grouping such as the **European Union**, this can be found by examining one of its founding agreements, the **Treaty of Lisbon**. Article 2 lists 'human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights' as the foundational values of the Union. Specifically relating to refugees and asylum seekers, Article 78 of the treaty affirms the EU's commitment to international law and human rights by stating that 'the Union shall develop a common policy on asylum … ensuring compliance with the principle of non-**refoulement**'.

Since becoming European Commission President (the EU's top diplomat) in 2019, Ursula von der Leyen has sought to unite Europe in the face of many external crises. Aside from war returning to Europe, in Ukraine, **migration has been a major test of unity for European member states**. While maintaining that Europe must respond to rising numbers of people arriving in Europe in accordance with international law and with respect for human rights (as per its founding charters), von der Leyen made it clear that maintaining stability and order within Europe was also a vital perspective of her administration. In 2023, von der Leyen highlighted this when launching the Pact on Migration and Asylum:

The **European Union** is a political and economic union with many unique features, comprising 27 member states, with a combined population of around 450 million people and 15 per cent of the world's GDP.

The **Treaty of Lisbon** is the international agreement that, since 2009, has formed the constitutional basis of the EU; it formally outlines the various mechanisms used to make EU policy decisions and includes binding requirements on member states to protect certain human rights.

Refoulement means the forcible return of refugees or asylum seekers to a country where they are liable to be persecuted.

> " At the beginning of my mandate, I made a commitment to establish a common system [to] ensure that Member States share the effort [of managing migration] responsibly, showing solidarity with those that protect our external borders while preventing illegal migration to the EU. "
>
> Ursula von der Leyen, 2023. ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_23_6781

States

The perspectives underlying state action are closely tied to the leadership of the state and the type of political system involved. While all EU member states have committed to the Treaty of Lisbon and, therefore, strive to uphold liberal democratic systems and respect human rights, there are differing perspectives within Europe on how to manage the mass movement of people.

Some states perceive refugees and asylum seekers as vulnerable people in need of protection and, therefore, prioritise their responsibility to respect human rights and their obligations under international law. **In Germany, the right to asylum has a high priority** and is enshrined in the constitution. This commitment to its historical

and humanitarian obligations is often summed up by the German term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* — literally 'overcoming the past'. This term is generally associated with Germany's process of coming to terms with the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Academics, politicians and the media often use the term to explain how Germany's history confers on it a unique responsibility to respond to humanitarian crises, particularly those in Europe. When faced with large numbers of people arriving in Germany in 2015, mostly from Syria, then Chancellor Angela Merkel famously stated that 'if Europe fails on the question of refugees, it won't be the Europe we wished for' (The Economist, 2015). Merkel established a *Willkommenskultur* ('welcome culture') for refugees, and following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated in parliament that 'it is still completely unclear how many women, men and children from Ukraine will seek refuge with us. All we know is that there will be many. . . . The refugees are welcome here with us' (The Local, 2022).

Conversely, some states perceive their security and economic prosperity as more pressing than their obligations to human rights and international law. In recent years, **Italy has become a major destination for refugees and asylum seekers** crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa. In 2023, the central Mediterranean route became the busiest migration path to Europe, with Italy receiving the most migrants of any neighbouring state at over 155 000 across a 12-month period (Santos, 2024).
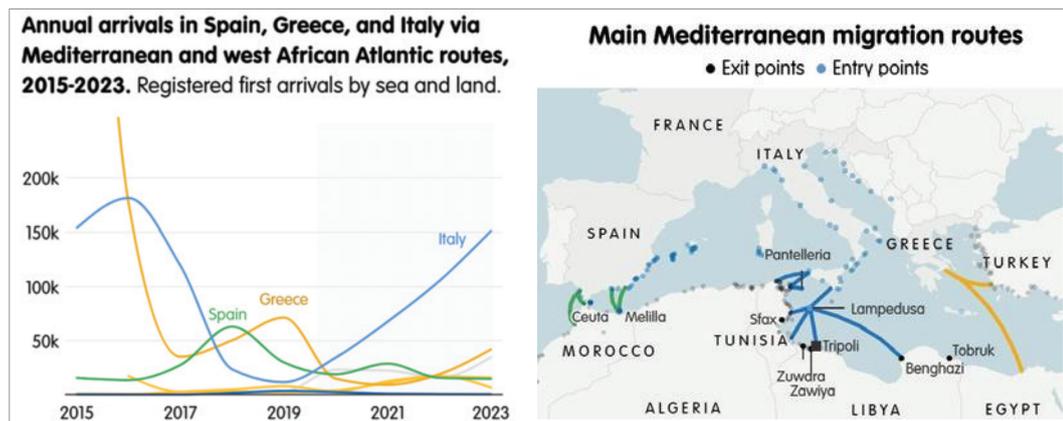
Credit: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2023; data from IOM, UNHCR, Global Initiative and national authorities. ecfr.eu/publication/road-to-nowhere-why-europes-border-externalisation-is-a-dead-end

These trends have seen a rise in anti-immigration sentiment in Italy. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni (pictured) came to power in 2022 following a populist campaign largely focused on a **promise to reduce mass immigration** to Italy with the campaign slogan 'yes to secure borders, no to mass migration'. Her position was shaped by fears that mass migration to Italy would erode traditional Italian culture, stating that 'our whole identity is under attack' (The Economist, 2022). As Italy continued to receive large numbers of migrants Meloni said that she would not allow Italy to become 'Europe's refugee camp'. Aside from the headline-grabbing statements about refugees and asylum seekers being a threat to Italian national security and culture, her message was also very popular with those voters who felt that uncontrolled immigration was an important factor in Italy's persistent economic instability.

For more on Meloni, read:

↘ 'Giorgia Meloni: I won't allow Italy to become Europe's refugee camp'. The Guardian, 2023. theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/20/giorgia-meloni-i-wont-allow-italy-to-become-europe-refugee-camp

Non-state actors

Without the need to balance public concerns over security or economic prosperity as states do, non-state actors can maintain a much more singular focus on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. This is usually seen with NGOs who have a stated aim to focus on human rights. One such group, **Médecins Sans Frontières** (MSF), or 'Doctors Without Borders', has been heavily involved in assisting those attempting to migrate to Europe, particularly those making the sea journey across the Mediterranean to states such as Italy. MSF (2024) opposes policies aimed to restrict the movement of people, declaring that 'we firmly place ourselves in solidarity with those on the move and with those who assist them'. Since 2015, MSF has operated or been involved with eight search-and-rescue vessels in the Mediterranean, providing search-and-rescue capacity as well as medical care to migrants.

> " Médecins Sans Frontières provides assistance to populations in distress, to victims of natural or man-made disasters and to victims of armed conflict … irrespective of race, religion, creed or political convictions. "
>
> Médecins Sans Frontières. 'The MSF Charter'. msf.org/who-we-are

Read more about MSF's work in the Mediterranean here:

🖰 'In 2023, 3041 people died trying to cross the Mediterranean'. MSF. msf.org/mediterranean-migration-depth

⚙️ Activity C – Distinguishing different perspectives

1 Choose **two** actors that have featured in this section (Ursula von der Leyen, Olaf Scholz, Giorgia Meloni and/or MSF).

2 For each actor, look through the quotations in the previous section and then select a:

   a WORD that captured your attention or struck you as powerful

   b PHRASE that moved, engaged or provoked you

   c SENTENCE that was meaningful to you, that you felt captures their perspective on migration.

3 Write a short paragraph that explains what is similar and what is different about their perspectives on the mass movement of people.

Activity adapted from 'Word-phrase-sentence'. Project Zero.
pz.harvard.edu/resources/word-phrase-sentence

The impact of actors' interests 3.2.3

Regional grouping

Regional groupings and regional integration grew markedly in the second half of the 20th century as states sought to enhance their security through cooperation with their neighbours and pursue the economic benefits of greater interconnection. The EU began life after World War II as an economic union named the European Coal and Steel Community. The idea was to make the economic consequences of going to war so great that it would

prevent another European conflict. By 2013, the EU had grown to 28 member states (before the United Kingdom withdrew in 2020) and has sought to create common policies for trade, competition, agriculture and transport. In more recent years the EU has been forced to respond to many global crises such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and, importantly, migration. These **crises have seen the focus of the EU extend beyond the promotion of regional integration** to more salient matters involving the security of member states and citizens. In 2024, the EU confirmed its latest five-yearly strategic agenda with the following three priorities:

- a free and democratic Europe
- a strong and secure Europe
- a prosperous and competitive Europe.

The second of these, 'a strong and secure Europe', clearly outlines the interests of the EU regarding refugees and asylum seekers:

> " Pursuing a comprehensive approach to migration and border management. "
>
> European Council, 2024. 'Strategic agenda, 2024–2029'.
> consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/strategic-agenda-2024-2029

The strategic agenda highlights that while the EU wishes to portray a public perspective of adherence to international law and respect for human rights, the challenge of the mass movement of people has forced the EU to prioritise the security and stability (or at least *perceptions* thereof) of its member states.

In 2023, Hans Leijtens took over as executive director of Frontex, the EU agency responsible for external borders, promising to restore credibility to EU migration policy and ensure that the agency's activities were conducted in accordance with international law. This tension between competing interests is explored further in the article linked below.

🖰 'New Frontex boss vows to protect human rights'. DW, 2023.
dw.com/en/new-frontex-boss-vows-to-protect-human-rights/a-64707831

States

In general, states' primary interests are in the protection of their sovereignty and pursuit of their **national interests**, which include economic prosperity, regional relationships and security. However, the true interests of states may be concealed by government leaders, may contradict what is publicly stated and may transform as internal and external circumstances change. Often, the perspectives and priorities of certain interest groups may exercise disproportionate control over how the 'national interest' is constructed and understood – in this way, some claims about national interest(s) may be considered subjective and/or political interpretations, rather than objective facts.

- Some states may see that accepting refugees and asylum seekers can help to **boost their regional relationships**; accepting migrants may help to alleviate the financial and infrastructure burdens associated with providing humanitarian support to unsettled refugees in neighbouring states. Relationships between states can also be strengthened through demonstrating commitments to shared values and norms, such as adherence to international law and respect for human rights, including the right to seek asylum. Over time, resettled communities tend to be at the forefront of building broader social, cultural and economic linkages between their country of origin and country of residence.

- Some also recognise that **migration can help create economic prosperity** for host states; migrants tend to be of working age, have lower rates of unemployment and are often more willing to take difficult or less desirable jobs that local employers might otherwise struggle to fill. This has been supported by research from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024) (a group of higher-income and broadly liberal democratic countries), which shows how migrants improve productivity, address key gaps in the labour market and contribute to states' revenue via taxation. Interestingly, migrants also tend to be more 'law-abiding' and are generally less likely to commit crimes than native-born residents (Kaladelfos and Finnane, 2018).

Germany's approach

Germany has demonstrated that the prioritisation of refugees and asylum seekers ahead of economic migrants can be in a state's interest. An intense awareness of the crimes committed in the country's name during World War II has contributed to German governments' relatively strong desire to develop a standing on human rights issues within the European community. Article 16a of Germany's constitution grants victims of political persecution an individual right of asylum. It reads that 'the fundamental right of asylum thus has high priority and expresses Germany's willingness to fulfil its historical and humanitarian obligation to admit refugees'. The UNHCR (2024c) further notes that 'Germany's support for refugees is unwavering and multifaceted'. Germany is not only the UNHCR's second-largest donor, but also has become the 'third largest refugee-hosting country in the world', as well as an important resettlement country.

Conversely, some states may see accepting refugees and asylum seekers as a threat to their security and/or economic prosperity.

- Most refugees and asylum seekers are fleeing violent conflict and persecution, and some actors in recipient states believe that these migrants will bring that violence 'with' them, thus, **threatening the security of the host state**. Although this is rarely the case, it has become a powerful message for government leaders to justify measures that restrict the intake of refugees and asylum seekers. 'Securitisation theory' is a perspective that suggests that issues such as migration are not *essentially* threatening in themselves. Rather, it is internal political actors casting migrants as a threat to the security of residents that 'problematises' them — which is, therefore, used to justify repressive policy measures that are otherwise favoured by those actors (Eroukhmanoff, 2018).

- States and other actors may perceive refugees and asylum seekers as needing ongoing support — shelter, food, supplies, medical care, education — and, thus, posing an unacceptable **financial burden on the state**. Despite evidence that migrants and migration can provide long-term benefits to economies and societies — especially those facing labour shortages and ageing populations — many government leaders may nonetheless use arguments framed around the idea of migrants as a burden to justify measures that restrict the intake of refugees and asylum seekers.

Italy's approach

As demonstrated, the dramatic rise in people seeking asylum in Italy, both in 2015 and 2023, saw the state shift its focus to the protection of national security and economic prosperity. The government of Giorgia Meloni has acted on its popular election promise to stem the flow of irregular migration into Italy and, in turn, 'secure' Italy's borders and lessen the economic burden of sheltering and processing asylum seekers. Her government's policies have sought to:

- prevent migrants from crossing the Mediterranean
- prevent search-and-rescue vessels from assisting migrants
- quickly deport any asylum seekers whom the government perceives as a security risk
- force asylum seekers to pay (approximately €5000) to avoid being detained while their asylum claims are heard.

Meloni has also argued that Italy's economic instability will not be solved by increased immigration, but instead through increasing Italy's birth rate.

For more information, watch or read the following:

- 'How Meloni's anti-migrant agenda is shifting Europe to the right'. The Guardian, 2023 (3 min). youtu.be/8xuOs_eL1wE
- 'When is migration a security issue?'. Brookings Institute, 2011. brookings.edu/articles/when-is-migration-a-security-issue

CAM

Non-state actors

As discussed earlier, non-state actors – especially recognised NGOs – do not need to balance competing interests of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers versus the needs of the state. Usually, NGOs' interests are focused on one specific area such as human rights or environmental issues. Therefore, those with specific **humanitarian objectives** can focus entirely on the needs of migrants. In relation to migrants, NGOs are generally focused on a combination of:

- **advocacy** – promoting and campaigning for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, sometimes through activism and protest in line with like-minded social movements
- the provision of **services** to migrants such as temporary shelter, medical care, essential needs, rescue operations, and assistance with gaining refugee status determinations that allow them to stay in host countries for extended periods.

Since 2015, MSF has provided search-and-rescue capacity, or provided medical care during search-and-rescue operations, in the central Mediterranean Sea:

> "We work in search and rescue because it is a duty, fuelled by the humanitarian need to prevent people from drowning while they seek safety."
>
> Médecins Sans Frontières. msf.org/mediterranean-migration-depth

Explore more here:

- 'In 2023, 3041 died trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea'. MSF. msf.org/mediterranean-migration-depth

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Activity D – The impact of differing interests

Complete the following short-answer questions to help develop your understanding of the impact of specific actors' political interests.

1   Explain the impact on the mass movement of people by states (such as Italy) who prioritise security as a national interest.

2   Explain the impact on the mass movement of people by states (such as Germany) who prioritise regional standing as a national interest.

3   Discuss how the differing interests of **two** political actors can impact the crisis of the mass movement of people.

Responses by global actors 3.2.4

States 3.2.4.1

Despite the efforts of regional groupings to coordinate the responses of member states (see 'Regional groupings') and institutions of global governance to establish agreed norms and standards (see 'International law' later in this section) for the responses of states, ultimately the political concept and reality of sovereignty empowers **states to have the final decision** regarding the policing of their borders. Concerning the management of refugees and asylum seekers, the options for states fall into one of the following three broad categories: resettlement, local integration or repatriation.

Read more here:

▷   'A system under strain'. Council on Foreign Relations. cfr.org/refugee-crisis/#!/a-system-under-strain

Resettlement offers the most durable solution for refugees and asylum seekers. While not always popular, it can be a symbolic gesture for affluent states to show solidarity with refugees, as well as with those states hosting large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers.

> **Resettlement** refers to the process by which those who have had their claim for refugee status accepted come to remain and build a life in another country.

Despite this, fewer than 40 states have official resettlement programs, with a very small number and proportion of global refugees being resettled. According to data from the UNHCR, 96 311 refugees were officially resettled in 2023, equating to just 0.2 per cent of the worldwide total in that year. Most of these were resettled in the United States (61 644), with Germany (4881) and France (3003) being the two European states to resettle the most refugees.

For more information, see:

▷   'Resettlement fact sheet 2023'. UNHCR. unhcr.org/media/resettlement-fact-sheet-2023

Local integration is usually the response taken by states who are overwhelmed by large numbers of people seeking entry to their state. This solution entails refugees assimilating and naturalising in their host state and availing themselves of the rights they had been denied by their state of origin. In such cases, refugees take part in the economic, social and cultural elements of the communities in which they've settled, but without any guarantees of the rights enjoyed by citizens.

> **Local integration** refers to states allowing asylum seekers and refugees entry into their state without necessarily verifying their claim to refugee status or offering any official resettlement scheme.

According to the UNHCR, in 2022 70 per cent of refugees were 'hosted' by neighbouring states, with Turkey hosting nearly 3.6 million refugees – the largest number worldwide – followed by Iran with 3.4 million. Germany was the European state

hosting the largest numbers of refugees, at 2.1 million. For many refugees and asylum seekers, being hosted in a third country entails being confined to a refugee camp or processing centre, often in poor conditions. While only officially resettling a small number of refugees, Germany's approach to local integration has been relatively extensive and well managed. **Germany's system of 'tolerated stay' for asylum seekers** (known as *Duldung)* ensures asylum seekers are provided with free

transport, accommodation, food and other necessities while they await a decision on whether they can settle permanently. Following this, asylum seekers must participate in integration courses, including German language courses and locally run work schemes and community service. Despite this, many asylum seekers report difficulties being accepted into German society and often wait many years to be granted permanent residency.

The disused Tempelhof Airport in Berlin, Germany, has been repurposed as accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers.

Further resources:

- 'Germany has revamped its approach to migrants, but acceptance, integration are as hard as ever'. RadioFreeEurope, 2023. rferl.org/a/germany-migrants-afghanistan-ukraine-bosnia-refugees-integration/32732326.html
- 'Integration strategy'. European Commission. migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-germany_en#integration-strategy

Under international law, forced **repatriation** may be undertaken by forcibly returning migrants to their home state, implementing measures that strengthen or enforce border security (and, thus, prevent entry), or promoting strategies that deter or discourage migrants from making outward journeys in the first place.

> **Repatriation** refers to any policy that prevents migrants from entering a state with the intention that they return to their place of origin.

An example of this approach can be seen in Italy's policy to restrict the ability of NGO search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea. In January 2023, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni issued a decree that effectively **criminalised the search-and-rescue operations** of NGOs. Her government argued that these operations were seen as a 'pull factor' for migrants and facilitated irregular migration and people smuggling. In practice, the decree requires that NGO vessels immediately proceed to a designated port, often a distant port, after each rescue,

which delays search-and-rescue operations and prevents these vessels from conducting multiple rescues. Non-compliance results in fines of up to €50 000 and a lengthy detainment of rescue ships. In early 2024, the MSF rescue vessel *Geo Barents* was detained by Italian authorities for rescuing 45 people from the water after their vessel had capsized. The detention of *Geo Barents* was the twentieth time that a humanitarian search-and-rescue ship had been detained since the enforcement of the 2023 decree.
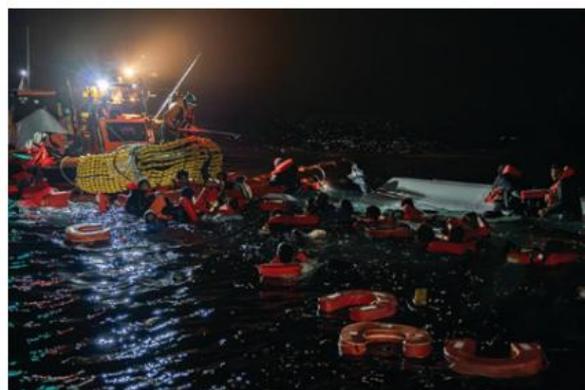
An overcrowded boat crossing the Central Mediterranean capsized and intercepted by MSF, where 45 all people were safely retrieved. Credit: MSF.

Further resources:

- 'New hurdles for rescuers in the Mediterranean'. DW, 2023. dw.com/en/ new-hurdles-for-sea-rescuers-in-the-mediterranean/a-64847000
- 'International law and the criminalization of sea rescue'. InfoMigrants, 2023. infomigrants.net/en/ post/45860/international-law-and-the-criminalization-of-sea-rescue
- 'MSF rescue ship detained in Italy following threats by Libyan Coast Guard'. MSF. msf.org/ msf-rescue-ship-detained-italy-following-threats-libyan-coast-guard

Regional groupings 3.2.4.2

A principal aim of all regional groupings is to coordinate the actions of member states, particularly in response to a crisis such as the mass movement of people, in the hope that this will promote stability in the region. The EU has seen how large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers has led to **some disunity among member states.** This section has discussed how member states that are on the EU's 'border' (such as Italy) may feel overrun with migrants and may be driven to implement draconian policies to stem the flow. Conversely, EU members in the 'centre' of the EU (and relatively insulated from such shocks, such as Germany) may tend to call for the EU to respond to the flow of refugees and asylum seekers in accordance with international law and with respect for human rights.

Pact on Migration and Asylum

This tension has motivated the EU to respond with a set of policies aimed both at limiting the number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe and better dispersing these migrants among member states. The process culminated in the signing of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, which was agreed upon by the **European Parliament** and Council in late 2023. The reforms will speed up the process of applying for asylum and require member states to share responsibility for those who do so.

Three key elements of this pact are:

- **lowering the number of new arrivals** through a uniform screening process, a common database to detect unauthorised movements, and the coordination of third-party search-and-rescue operations

- **better dispersing migrants among member states** through the 'solidarity mechanism' managed by a new EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA), in effect requiring frontline countries such as Greece and Italy to build detention centres, more rapidly process asylum seekers, and deport unsuccessful applicants; other countries will be required to resettle more migrants or provide financial compensation

- **return or resettle migrants** to states outside the EU through the implementation of a 'return directive' and 'returns coordinator' that seek to negotiate readmission agreements with '**third countries**'; they also provide development aid to these states to encourage them to limit the outward flow of migrants.

> The **European Parliament** is a 720-member legislative body that forms one of the EU's seven key institutions; members are directly elected every five years by EU citizens and are tasked with considering and adopting EU-wide legislative proposals from the primary executive arm of the EU, the 27-member European Commission.

The headquarters of the European Commission (executive branch of the EU) in Brussels, Belgium.

> A **third country** refers to one that is not a refugee's 'first' country (their country of origin) or a 'second' country (where they first sought asylum); third countries may offer permanent resettlement opportunities for those unable to settle in the latter or return to the former.

> ❝The New Pact on Migration and Asylum is a set of regulations and policies to create a fairer, efficient, and more sustainable migration and asylum process for the European Union. The Pact, which was proposed in September 2020 and agreed between the European Parliament and the Council in December 2023, is designed to manage and normalise migration for the long term, providing certainty, clarity and decent conditions for people arriving in the EU. It also establishes a common approach to migration and asylum that is based on solidarity, responsibility, and respect for human rights.❞
>
> European Commission. 'Pact on Migration and Asylum'. home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en

Read more here:

- ‘EU migration and asylum policy’. European Council. consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy

- ‘Pact on Migration and Asylum’. European Commission. commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en

- ‘EU parliament adopts stricter migration rules in landmark asylum reform’. France24, 2024. france24.com/en/europe/20240410-eu-parliament-vote-stricter-migration-rules-landmark-asylum-reform

- ‘EU approves major overhaul of migration rules’. BBC News, 2024. bbc.com/news/world-europe-68779387.amp

- ‘EU asylum and migration pact has passed despite far right and left’s objections’. The Guardian, 2024. theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/10/eu-asylum-and-migration-pact-has-passed-despite-far-right-and-lefts-objections

Temporary Protection Directive

Separate from this, the EU has offered special protection to Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion. One week after the February 2022 invasion, the EU invoked the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time in its history. This usurped the normal process for asylum seekers entering Europe and provided Ukrainians with the following special privileges within Europe:

- a residency permit for up to three years

- guaranteed access to the asylum procedure

- free movement between EU member states

- access to employment, social welfare, medical care, education, accommodation and banking services.

Read more here:

- ‘Obligations of EU countries towards persons enjoying temporary protection’. European Commission. home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en

Many observers praised the EU for its humanitarian response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and this generous show of solidarity towards Ukrainians fleeing conflict. However, others claimed that this action demonstrated the hypocrisy of European migration law, whereby Europe is welcoming of people from similar ethnocultural backgrounds, such as Ukraine, but resistant to those from further afield, such as the Middle East and North Africa. You can read more about these debates here:

- ‘The Ukrainian exodus’. Foreign Affairs, 2022. foreignaffairs.com/europe/ukrainian-exodus

- ‘Amnesty International: Double standard of human rights applied across EU – and the world’. InfoMigrants, 2023. infomigrants.net/en/post/47808/amnesty-international-double-standard-of-human-rights-applied-across-eu--and-the-world

Non-state actors 3.2.4.3

Non-state actors, and in this case specifically humanitarian NGOs, do not have the ability to effectively manage the movement of people, as they **lack the power to override the sovereignty of states**. However, they can assist refugees and asylum seekers in their search for a safer place to live via the following methods:

- investigating issues of concern
- raising public awareness to express their dissatisfaction with official policies
- lobbying states and institutes of global governance
- providing direct humanitarian aid to those in need (Baylis, Smith and Owens, 2022).

MSF focuses on the final option – providing direct humanitarian aid – through its search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea that aim to assist refugees and asylum seekers crossing from North Africa to southern Europe. In 2023, 3041 migrants died or went missing making this journey. Since 2015, MSF has operated or partnered with eight vessels (most recently the *Geo Barents*) with search-and-rescue capacity and onboard medical teams to respond to those in distress.

MSF charter vessel *Geo Barents* operates in the Mediterranean Sea rescuing migrants who experience difficulties attempting to reach Europe. Credit: MSF.

Read more here:

- 'Mediterranean migration'. MSF. msf.org/mediterranean-migration

Activity E – Linking perspectives, interests and responses

1 This graphic illustrates how the perspectives of a political actor shape their interests and, in turn, how these interests drive the responses of political actors.

```
Perspectives  ➡  Interests  ➡  Responses
```

Using the actors discussed in this section, complete a flow chart (using the model provided) to spell out these relationships (the EU has been done for you as an example to follow).

Actor	Perspectives	Interests	Responses
European Union	Asylum seekers should be treated according to international law and with respect for human rights.	Responsibly managing migration to Europe, while ensuring the stability and security of member states.	Secure external borders, coordinate a fair reallocation of refugees among member states, seek to repatriate migrants to third countries.
Germany			
Italy			
Médecins Sans Frontières			

Processes used to address the crisis 3.2.5

Our study design asks us to look at two types of processes that might be used to address a crisis: **diplomacy** and international law.

Diplomacy 3.2.5.1

European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum

As discussed, the EU has had to balance its response to the mass movement of people to reflect its desire to uphold international laws and respect human rights, but also ensure the stability and security of its member states. This diplomatic process was instigated by the EU's executive branch, the EU Commission and EU Council, and involved negotiations between the 27 EU member states through its legislative branch, the EU Parliament. This culminated in the **signing of the Pact on Migration and Asylum**, which was agreed upon by the European Parliament and Council in December 2023. See 'Responses' section for more detail.

> **Diplomacy** refers to the negotiations that take place between global actors, usually in response to a crisis, and can be conducted through formal diplomatic channels and regular planned meetings, as well as impromptu discussions.

European Union bilateral deals

The Pact on Migration and Asylum goes some way to managing the flow of migrants into Europe, but not enough to appease the states that receive the most asylum seekers, such as those on Europe's southern boundary (Greece and Italy). To minimise the likelihood of having to process large numbers of asylum seekers or needing to flout international law and turn them around, the EU has been **looking beyond its borders to reduce the number of migrants** heading to Europe in the first place.
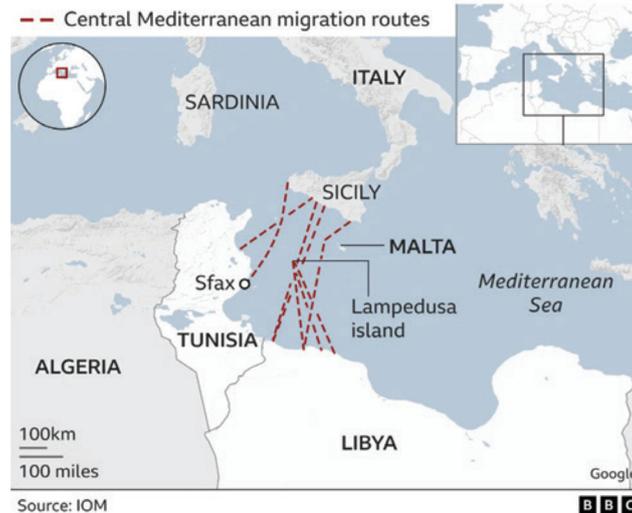
Credit: International Organization for Migration, BBC.

In recent years, the EU has signed deals with Libya and Tunisia – places from which many migrants make their final journey to Europe (see map, pictured) – whereby the EU provides funds for these states in return for them preventing migrants making the journey across the Mediterranean. In 2016, the EU agreed to a similar deal with Turkey. This process of shifting responsibility of the management of refugees and asylum seekers to third countries has become known as 'externalisation'. Key points of these deals, as well as some further readings on each, are provided below.

EU–Libya deal (2017)

- In February 2017, the Italian government signed an EU-sponsored agreement with the Libyan government: the Memorandum of Understanding on Migration.

- Between 2011 and 2020, Libya was in the midst of a long-running civil war and therefore lacked a stable government to enforce its borders.

- The Libyan authorities received €42 million (as of 2022) from the EU and Italy to fund its coast guard operations that actively find migrant vessels and return them to Libya.

- Once migrants are brought back to Libya, they are usually held in detention camps run by militants. NGOs have compiled evidence of human rights abuses in these camps (see later section 'Ability of actors to respond effectively').

- The EU claims that this initiative is aimed at assisting the Libyan government's ability to 'save lives at sea' (European Commission, 2023).

Read more about the Libya deal here:

📖 'Italy-Libya agreement: Five years of EU-sponsored abuse in Libya and the central Mediterranean'. MSF. msf.org/italy-libya-agreement-five-years-eu-sponsored-abuse-libya-and-central-mediterranean

EU-Tunisia deal (2023)

- In August 2023, the EU agreed to a memorandum of understanding regarding a strategic partnership with Tunisia.

- Initially, the EU pledged €150 million to support the Tunisian economy, focusing on trade, agriculture, investment and migration.

- Of this initial funding, €105 million was allocated to combating anti-smuggling operations, reinforcing border management and speeding up the return of asylum seekers whose applications are denied.
- Up to €1 billion in additional loans and financial support was pledged for future years.

Read more about the Tunisia deal here:

🔖 'Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic and global partnership between the European Union and Tunisia'. European Commission. ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3887

🔖 'In Tunisia, the EU is repeating an old and dangerous mistake'. Politico, 2023. politico.eu/article/eu-team-europe-tunisia-president-kais-saied-ybia-refugee-migrant-crisis

🔖 'The contentious EU-Tunisia deal is finally here. But what exactly is it?' Euronews, 2023. euronews.com/my-europe/2023/07/17/the-contentious-eu-tunisia-deal-is-finally-here-but-what-exactly-is-in-it

Left to right: Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Tunisian President Kais Saied and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni agree to the memorandum of understanding in August 2023.

International law 3.2.5.2

While states accept the responsibility to adhere to **international law**, it is the institutions of global governance and non-state actors that are usually tasked with promoting international law and applying pressure on states who are not upholding their obligations. For the mass movement of people, it is the UNHCR and humanitarian non-state actors that are seen as the 'guardians' of international laws such as the Refugee Convention.

> **International law** refers to a body of rules established by custom or written legal agreements that are accepted as binding upon the international community and that apply to all global actors; written legal agreements, such as treaties, are only binding to those who give consent through explicit ratification.

1951 Refugee Convention

The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was initially ratified in 1951 as a response to Europeans fleeing the aftermath of World War II. This geographical limitation was removed by the adoption of the 1967 Protocol, thus, making it a global treaty.

The 1951 Convention provides:

- a process for states to recognise people who enter their territory without prior permission
- refugees a form of recognition and, thus, certain rights
- states with an exclusion process and, thus, the ability to determine whether individuals are refugees.

The Refugee Convention has three important components:

- the international definition of a refugee (Article 1.2; see 'Introduction' section)
- core principles asserting that asylum seekers must be given a fair opportunity to present their case for refugee status (Articles 31–32) and that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom (Article 33)

- the basic minimum standards for the treatment of refugees, including the right to housing (Article 21), work (Articles 17−19) and education (Article 22), so they can lead a dignified and independent life while displaced.

Further reading:

'The 1951 Refugee Convention'. UNHCR.
unhcr.org/au/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention

EU Dublin Regulation

The 'Dublin Regulation' is an international law agreed upon by EU member states that aims to determine which member state must take responsibility for processing asylum seekers. Initially adopted in 1990, the Dublin Regulation essentially demanded that asylum seekers must be **processed by the first member state they reach**. In effect, this places almost all the responsibility on member states with an external (non-EU) border that faces major migration routes (such as Greece or Italy) to process asylum seekers. The latest iteration of this law, Dublin III, which came into force in 2013, aims to better disperse migrants according to family considerations and member state capacity. However, critics argue that it still severely limits migrants from choosing the state they wish to go to.

International maritime laws

Given the focus of this chapter on migration to Europe, particularly via the Mediterranean Sea, it is worth considering two examples of international maritime law that are often cited by humanitarian non-state actors as legal grounds for their search-and-rescue operations:

- the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which contains a legal requirement (Article 98) for vessels to rescue 'persons in distress' at sea

- the International Convention for the **S**afety **o**f **L**ife **a**t **S**ea (**SOLAS**), which contains a legal requirement (Chapter V, Regulation 7) for contracting states to provide search-and-rescue operations around their coasts.

Activity F – Effectiveness of processes

Complete the following short-answer questions relating to the processes used by global actors.

1 Using one specific example, explain how diplomacy can be used to address the crisis of the mass movement of people.

2
    a Identify one international law relevant to the mass movement of people.

    b Outline two obligations of states who are party to this international law.

3
    a Select one actor profiled in the 'Responses' section. For this actor, evaluate the extent to which their response to the mass movement of people reflects their obligations under the relevant international law.

    b When considering the extent to which an actor's response reflects their obligations under international law, evaluate how this response has then contributed to political stability and/or change.

Challenges to resolution 3.2.6

Inability to resolve the causes of migration

As discussed in the 'Introduction' section, the number of refugees and people in refugee-like situations has reached record levels and continues to rise. One clear explanation for this is that the drivers of migration (as discussed in 'Causes') have not been addressed.

- Many of the global armed **conflicts** that push people away from their usual place of residence in search of safety are complex, fractured and intractable. The conflicts that serve as major sources of migrants — Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan and South Sudan — have been running for many years and continue with no clear end in sight.

- Situations in which people face **discrimination** and experience restrictions on their political and religious freedoms are also becoming more prevalent. Freedom House, an independent organisation that monitors democracy and human rights, claimed that 2023 was the eighteenth consecutive year in which global freedom declined. Read the full report here:

  'The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict'. Freedom House, 2024.
  freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2024/
  mounting-damage-flawed-elections-and-armed-conflict

- Global efforts to minimise the causes and consequences of climate change are failing to limit the **environmental or economic challenges** that force people to flee their usual place of residence. The 2023 UNHCR Global Trends Report highlights the increasing number of people living in areas exposed to higher-than-normal climate-related hazards (pictured). Additionally, the Refugee Convention only accounts for those displaced due to conflict and discrimination, not those facing environmental or economic challenges.
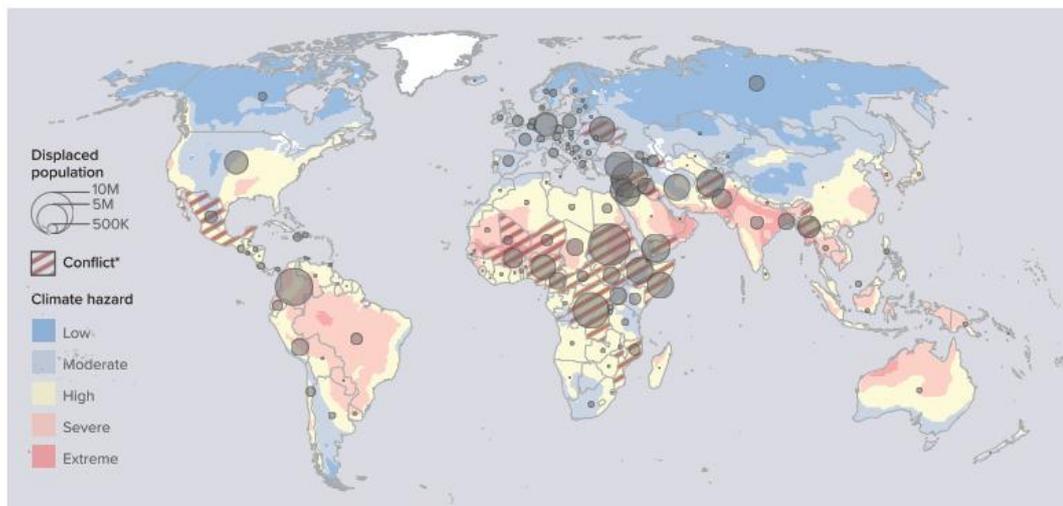
Climate-related hazards, countries with more than one conflict-related death per 100,000 (2022) and the number of forcibly displaced people per country (2023).
Credit: UNHCR, 2023. unhcr.org/au/media/global-trends-report-2023

Difficulties enforcing international law

Institutions of global governance establish the rules, norms and legal agreements that seek to *encourage* the cooperation of states. However, these institutions have not been delegated sufficient power to effectively enforce these international laws.

States may breach international laws for a variety of reasons: they may see that the laws contradict their national interests, that laws may encroach upon their sovereignty, or that laws are discriminatory — particularly those states concerned that systems of international laws operate with an inherent pro-Western bias.

The institutions created to monitor and police these violations all have limitations.

- The **International Court of Justice** (ICJ) can only adjudicate disputes between states and cannot enforce its decisions.

- The **International Criminal Court** (ICC) can only target individuals; it does not have universal support and lacks the power to make arrests.

- The **United Nations Security Council** (UNSC) can issue sanctions and approve military action against states, but the veto power of its permanent five members often prevents resolutions from being passed.

Notably, many states openly violate their international legal commitments without consequences; many international laws are, in some ways, not fit for purpose. Nonetheless, international law does have a meaningful role to play in establishing global consensus, responding to crises and legitimising some state actions in response to uncooperative or 'rogue' actors. In turn, this can help strengthen non-state actors and domestic populations in holding their governments to account. Both these dynamics are at play regarding the Refugee Convention; many scholars debate ways in which the system of international laws could be reformed to better suit the needs of migrants, states and native populations.

Further reading:

🖙 'What is international law?' Council on Foreign Relations. world101.cfr.org/understanding-international-system/global-governance/what-international-law

Conflicting national interests

Effectively responding to the mass movement of people requires cooperation and consensus among global actors. As seen in our discussion about 'interests', cooperation is needed to balance the competing interests of different states. Some perceive that refugees and asylum seekers pose a threat to national interests such as security and economic prosperity, while others perceive that responding with generosity towards migrants upholds their humanitarian obligations and, thus, improves other national interests, such as regional relationships and economic prosperity. These conflicting interests pose a challenge to resolving the crisis of the mass movement of people, because a **lack of cooperation among states** can delay the progress of diplomatic resolutions, diminish their effectiveness and/or prevent the enforcement of agreed norms, rules or legal agreements.

The following excerpt from an article in *The Economist* highlights the conflicting national interests among European states, particularly the two states profiled in this chapter: Italy and Germany. The full article also highlights how the perceived threat that migrants pose to many states prevents those states from accepting refugees and asylum seekers even when a large worker shortage exists across Europe.

🔍 ❝Europe is stuck in a need-hate relationship with migrants

Alas, the EU is facing a fresh migration crisis

The continent [Europe] suffers from old divisions. Southern European countries such as Italy and Greece complain that they bear the brunt of EU rules which force countries where migrants arrive to bear the expense of processing them, even though most migrants want to end up in places such as Germany and Sweden. Those rich countries think southerners are flouting the rules by failing to intercept migrants as they set foot in the EU. . . .

Italy is fuming at Germany about its government funding for NGOs that succour small boats in the Mediterranean. What in Berlin is deemed a 'moral duty' to save imperilled migrants is decried in Rome as a 'pull factor' for asylum-seekers; a politician in Giorgia Meloni's hard-right ruling coalition has compared the arrival of migrants to the German invasions of the Second World War. ❞

The Economist, 2023. 'Europe is stuck in a need-hate relationship with migrants'. economist.com/europe/2023/10/04/europe-is-stuck-in-a-need-hate-relationship-with-migrants

Read more about the disputes between Germany and Italy regarding migration here:

🔖 'Italian PM 'astonished' at Germany paying charities for refugee rescues'. The Guardian, 2023. theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/25/italian-pm-astonished-at-germany-paying-charities-for-refugee-rescues

Credit: Peter Schrank, 2023.

⚙️ Activity G – International law: A force for good, or a waste of time?

1   Prepare an argument that could be used in a class debate based on the following prompt:

'International law is a flawed concept and, thus, should be abandoned.'

You may choose to agree with this prompt and consider arguments based on the ease and frequency by which global actors (mostly states) flout their obligations under international law. Conversely, you may contend that international law helps to establish global norms and consider arguments based on the role international law plays in legitimising the actions of actors such as humanitarian NGOs.

When preparing your argument, consider the role that international law plays in contributing to political stability and/or change.

Ability of actors to respond effectively 3.2.7

The ability of actors to respond effectively depends on their capacity to influence the actions of others (in other words, use their power) and whether it is possible to align their interests with what is required to effectively respond to a crisis.

Regional groupings

Regional groupings are essentially clubs of geographically *close* states. This means that the response to a crisis from a regional grouping is entirely dependent on the power and interests of its member states. As states primarily aim to maintain sovereignty, they will only sponsor an effective solution from a regional grouping that is not seen to threaten sovereignty.

During an informal EU meeting in Spain in late 2023, **Hungary and Poland refused to add their signatures to a joint declaration** aimed at speeding up approval of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The leaders of both states took issue with the pact's requirements that all member states would be required to contribute to the redistribution of refugees within Europe. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a long-time opponent of accepting refugees and asylum seekers, stated:

> " there is no chance to have any kind of compromise and agreement on migration. Politically, it's impossible. … If you are … forced to accept something (that) you don't like, how would you like to have a compromise and agreement? "
>
> Jorge Liboreiro, 2023. 'Hungary and Poland block (again) an EU joint declaration on migration'. Euronews. euronews.com/my-europe/2023/10/06/hungary-and-poland-block-again-an-eu-joint-declaration-on-migration

Despite these comments and the objection of Hungary and Poland, the Pact on Migration and Asylum was accepted by the European Parliament and Council in December 2023. However, both these states would assume the role of EU Council President (a rotating six-month position) immediately after signing the pact − Hungary in July 2024, and Poland in January 2025. The UNHCR issued a paper in January 2024 urging Hungary to use its position as EU Council President responsibly to ensure proper implementation of the pact:

> " UNHCR is hopeful that this Pact is a step in the right direction … and so we urge the EU Presidencies to mobilize the necessary political will as the Pact enters its final crucial stage and urge all Member States to act boldly in the best interest of refugees. "
>
> UNHCR, 2024. 'UNHCR calls on EU to ensure asylum pact is implemented with protection at its core'. unhcr.org/europe/news/press-releases/unhcr-calls-eu-ensure-asylum-pact-implemented-protection-its-core

However, the EU does have some power to influence the actions of member states. For instance, across a three-year period from 2021−23, **the EU withheld access to common funds** for both Hungary (€7 billion) and Poland (€36 billion), this time for eroding accepted democratic principles. In 2020, the European Court of Justice (an EU body) ruled that Hungary had acted illegally in response to asylum seekers by failing 'to fulfil its obligation to ensure effective access to the procedure for granting international protection' (Emmott and Dunai, 2020). However, in this case, no financial penalty was imposed.

States

States are widely understood to be the 'central' actors in global politics, and the concept and practice of sovereignty allows states to have high levels of control over their borders and what takes place within them. As discussed in the introduction

to this chapter, Article 2.4 of the UN Charter enshrines the concept of **territorial integrity and the political independence** of states. Therefore, states are largely able to decide on their policies towards migrants in line with what key state decision-makers perceive as aligning best with national interests.

As discussed, successive German governments have perceived that accepting large numbers of migrants can improve their regional relationships and regional standing, whereas successive Italian governments have perceived this as a threat to their security and economic prosperity. Regardless, in both cases the state has been able to decide for itself which policy direction to take. In this way, the ability of these states to respond effectively depends significantly on the **perspectives and interests of the government leaders** in each.

Liberal democratic states can face particular challenges in their ability to respond effectively to crises. As democratic political systems are **thought to require the support of public opinion to retain legitimacy**, the leaders of democratic states may be obliged to reconsider their policies if they wish to stay in power. In Germany, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's desire to respond effectively to this crisis by welcoming migrants has been met with opposition from the populist anti-immigration party, the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD). Initially, this posed no challenge to his legitimacy as Germany's leader; however, in 2023 the AfD steadily improved its performance in regional elections and opinion polls, and in 2024 significantly increased the number of seats it held following European Parliament elections. This prompted calls from local mayors and regional leaders for Scholz to change course on his asylum policies, and for the German government to make it more difficult for asylum seekers to settle in Germany.

A campaign leaflet for the German AfD party, which reads 'We decide for ourselves who we allow in'.

Non-state actors

Unlike states, or even regional groupings (being essentially 'clubs' of states), **non-state actors do not possess sovereignty over territory** and, therefore, lack the forms of power that would enable them to respond effectively to a crisis. However, as mentioned, some non-state actors possess considerable economic power to fund humanitarian responses to crises, such as MSF's search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

Many non-state actors have large membership bases and a global reach via social media, which grant them a significant degree of **cultural power**, expressed through their ability to spread their message and evoke widespread sympathy for and solidarity with people in need of protection. For instance, in January 2023, 20 non-state actors (including MSF) issued a joint statement condemning Italy's decree that aimed to obstruct search-and-rescue operations (see 'Responses' section). The joint statement called upon Italian politicians to reject the law and EU institutions to investigate the legality of the law.

Read the joint statement regarding Italy's decree here:

> ⬧ The statement released by MSF proclaimed that Italy's decree would obstruct lifesaving efforts at sea, and would cause more deaths.
> msf.org/new-decree-obstructs-lifesaving-efforts-sea-and-will-cause-more-deaths

Non-state actors can also improve the likelihood of effective responses by using their **diplomatic power** to lobby institutions of global governance. In 2019, two non-state actors — Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch — jointly submitted a third-party intervention to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), arguing that Italy shared responsibility for alleged abuse of migrants by Libyan authorities. The submission argued that Italy had breached its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights by cooperating with Libya to enable its coast guard to intercept people at sea and take them back to Libya, where they were routinely exposed to torture and other abuses. At the time of writing, a final judgment had not been passed in this case.

MSF's January 2023 statement.
msf.org/new-decree-obstructs-lifesaving-efforts-sea-and-will-cause-more-deaths

Read the joint submission to the ECHR here:

> ⬧ 'Italy shares responsibility for Libya abuses against migrants: third-party intervention filed at European Court of Human Rights'. Amnesty International, 2019.
> amnesty.org/en/documents/eur30/1392/2019/en

While such actions can apply pressure to the actions of states and regional groupings, they have not resulted in large changes to policy.

⚙️ Activity H – Actors' abilities to respond effectively

Write an extended response that evaluates the effectiveness of **one** global actor's ability to respond to and resolve the mass movement of people as a contemporary humanitarian crisis.

You should choose from one of the actors discussed in this section: the EU, Germany, Italy or MSF.

💡 Remember...

An extended response is a piece of structured writing that:

- makes a succinct argument
- considers opposing arguments
- is supported by evidence from sources.

Consequences, stability and change 3.2.8

A global crisis, such as the mass movement of people, can force a change to the political status quo. A society can be considered stable when there is widespread acceptance of the values, institutions and processes that underpin that society, and/or where there have been consistent responses to political issues even in the face of upheaval or disturbance. When an unforeseen event occurs, or there is a significant amount of disagreement with prevailing norms, there are likely to be forces working to maintain the status quo, as well as those working to change the status quo.

There are several ways that students might interpret the European migrant crisis that emerged in 2015–16 through the lens of 'stability and change' — we have highlighted two.
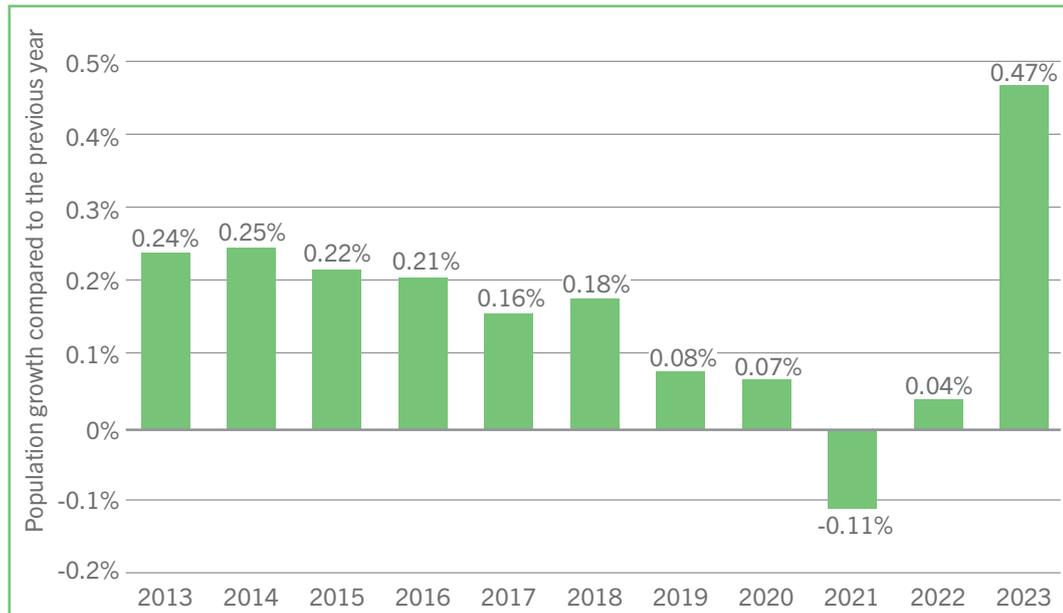
Net annual population growth in the EU, 2013–23. Credit: Statista, 2024.

Perspective A — high refugee intake is the 'status quo'; decreased refugee intake represents change

In this view, the forces encouraging change have wanted to see greater cooperation between EU member states to settle more refugees, whereas the forces favouring stability have wanted to see individual member states reassert control over the nature and extent of mass movement of people within their national borders.
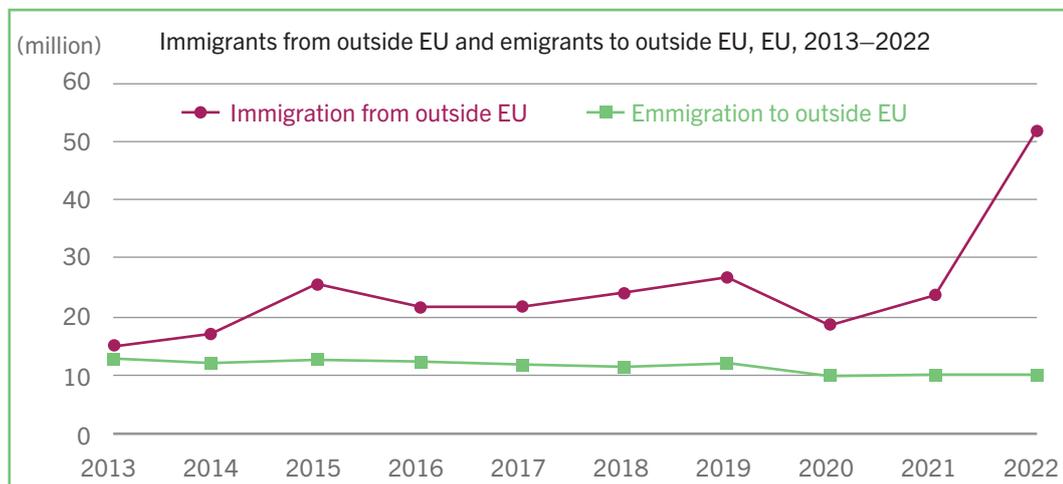
Immigrants from outside EU and emigration to outside EU, 2013–22. Credit: Eurostat.

Perspective B — low refugee intake is the 'status quo'; increased refugee intake represents change

In this view, increased refugee intake in the mid-2010s represented a change from a *relatively* low-intake status quo. Advocates for lower resettlement rates have since become increasingly dominant in the debate; this has been accompanied by a rise in popularity for anti-immigration populist parties and a slowing down of European integration, with the state reasserting its position as the dominant actor in policymaking.

As with the interpretation of most political questions, your answers to these questions depend on your perspective, what factors you think are most relevant, and (in this case) what you consider the 'status quo'. We have provided two graphs as sources, which (along with the information provided in this crisis study, supplemented with your own research) might help you to work out which perspective makes the most sense to you.

The rise of populism

Populism is a political perspective that emphasises the idea of 'the people', typically juxtaposing this group against 'the elite'. In recent times, this has been taken to mean that 'the people' are those who have been excluded from power due to their sociocultural and socio-economic status, and 'the elite' are those holding positions of power in politics, the economy, the media and the arts.

Populists share a suspicion of and hostility towards elites, mainstream politics, established institutions and global interconnectedness. Regarding the mass movement of people, right-wing populist politicians in particular tend to **argue that the political institutions and 'globalist' elites have encouraged unsustainable levels of inward migration**. A pillar of their campaigns has been to lower immigration to (supposedly) preserve traditions, culture and national identity, as well as a means of conserving scarce resources and relieving burdens on infrastructure. This reaction against the globalist elite can best be seen in Europe by looking to the following examples:

- Giorgia Meloni (**Italy**) — who led her populist Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy) party to electoral success in 2022, based largely on an anti-immigration campaign (see 'Perspectives' section).

- Marine Le Pen (**France**) — who has finished runner-up in the past two French presidential elections and will likely contest a third in 2027 on a strong anti-immigration platform.

A billboard by Viktor Orbán's populist Fidesz party during Hungary's 2018 elections. Credit: Reuters/ Leonhard Foeger.

- Viktor Orbán (**Hungary**) — prime minister since 2010; his policies have made it harder for asylum seekers to enter Hungary and have angered European institutions.

- Geert Wilders (**Netherlands**) — a mainstay of Dutch politics, his anti-immigration Party for Freedom (known as PVV) won the largest group of seats in the 2023 Dutch elections; in 2024 this eventually saw a coalition government form between four conservative parties.

Fearing the consequences of a voter backlash come election day, established political leaders and parties are reconsidering their policies to be less welcoming of refugees and asylum seekers in the wake of the rising popularity of populist politicians. The Politics (VCE Units 1 and 2) textbook features a case study on populism and its challenge to democracy; a selection of further resources on this topic is also included below.

- 'Europe's populist surge'. Foreign Affairs, 2016. foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2016-10-17/europes-populist-surge
- 'Populists in Europe —especially those on the right — have increased their vote shares in recent elections'. Pew Research Center, 2022. pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/06/populists-in-europe-especially-those-on-the-right-have-increased-their-vote-shares-in-recent-elections
- 'Europe's far-right populists buoyed by Wilders' win in Netherlands'. Australian Financial Review, 2023. afr.com/world/europe/europe-s-far-right-populists-buoyed-by-wilders-win-in-netherlands-20231124-p5emhe

The state remains the most powerful actor

In the second half of the 20th century, many observers were commenting on the ever-increasing integration of European states and whether the EU could go so far as embracing a type of **federalism**. As far back as 1946, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill even called for a 'United States of Europe' (European Commission, 2021), such was the desire for European integration. However, the shocks of the 2010s Eurozone financial crisis, and crucially the migration crises of 2015—16 and 2023, have seemingly halted much of this trend towards integration.

> **Federalism** is a system of government in which power is divided between a central national (or, in this case, *supra*national) government, and more geographically dispersed lower-tier governments that administer smaller areas or jurisdictions.

The perspectives, interests and *successes* of populist politicians are part of what led the United Kingdom to leave the EU in 2020 (known as Brexit) and have played a significant role in Europe more broadly in **delaying and diluting progress towards a more coordinated and effective response** to the mass movement of people. In other words, those who dislike further European integration (sometimes referred to as 'Eurosceptics'), particularly on the right, are often motivated by a dislike for large-scale immigration.

While many established European politicians such as EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen perceive integration and cooperation as vital to responding to crises, it is increasingly common to see politicians arguing to reform (or 'wind back') the EU so that states maintain ultimate decision-making power.

> " It shows that more and more countries within the European Union contest the way it works … and hope that we can again master a migration that is considered by many Europeans as both massive and anarchic. "
>
> French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, 2023.

> " More and more Europeans are demanding in the streets and at the ballot box that their nations, their borders and their rights be defended. "
>
> Leader of Spain's far-right Vox party Santiago Abascal, 2023.

Reactions to the crisis of the mass movement of people has seen many in the EU shy away from further integration and return to a status quo, wherein the state remains the central actor.
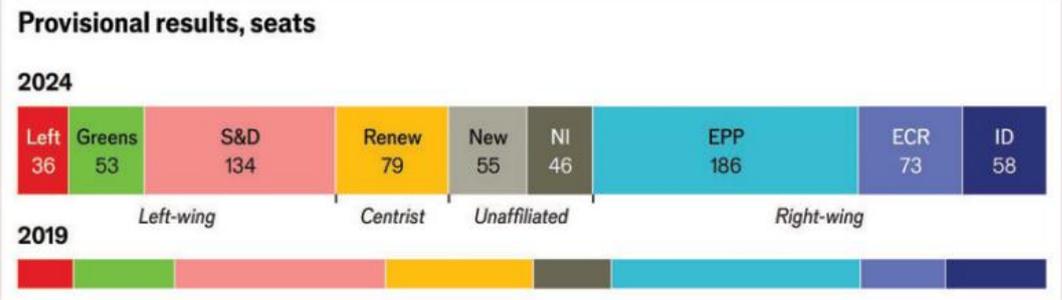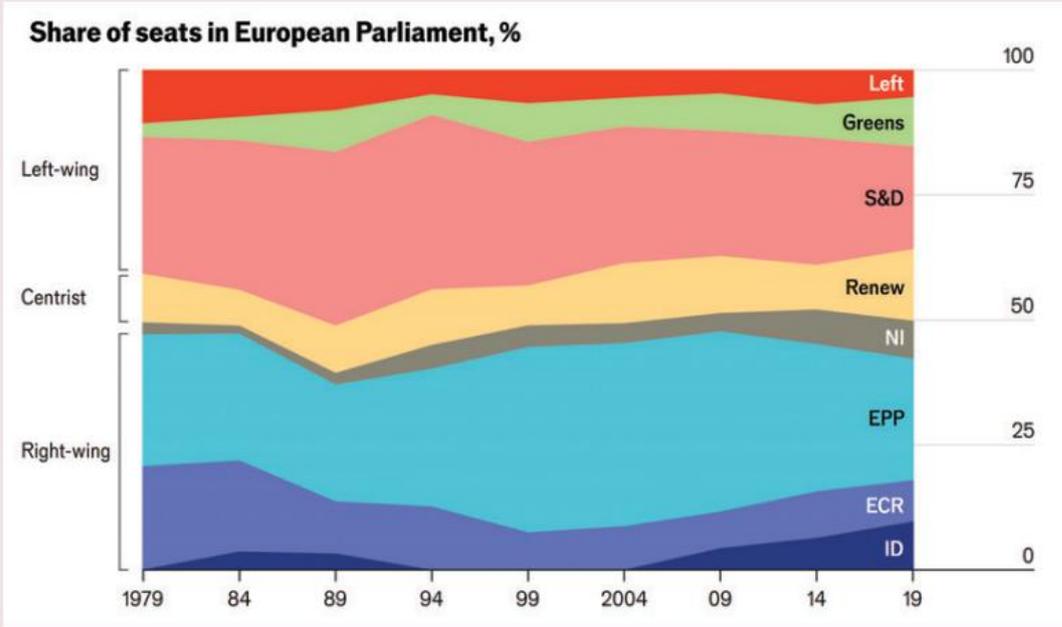
Read more here:

☞ 'Euroskeptics applaud shock Wilders win in Dutch election'. Politico, 2023.
   politico.eu/article/euroskeptic-cheer-shock-geert-wilders-dutch-election

☞ 'Occupy Brussels! Viktor Orban's plan for Europe'. Politico, 2024.
   politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-plan-europe-hungary-council-presidency-election

🔍 Elections to the European Parliament

The EU held elections in mid-2024 for the European Parliament, the legislative branch of the organisation and a *relatively* direct link between European citizens and the EU's institutions. State-based political parties tend to associate themselves with other like-minded parties to form 'blocs'. The graphic provided charts the electoral fortunes of each bloc, showing the modest but steady rise of right-wing parties in particular. The results of the 2024 elections further entrenched this steady rise.

Share of seats in European Parliament, %

Left	Greens	S&D	Renew	New	NI	EPP	ECR	ID
36	53	134	79	55	46	186	73	58

Provisional results, seats

2024

Left-wing — Left 36, Greens 53, S&D 134 · *Centrist* — Renew 79 · *Unaffiliated* — New 55, NI 46 · *Right-wing* — EPP 186, ECR 73, ID 58

2019

Credit: The Economist, 2024. economist.com/interactive/eu-elections-2024-polls-parliament

Activity I – The significance of mass people movement

1 Conduct an inquiry into the rise of **one** of the following European political parties:

— Rassemblement National (National Rally), France, associated with the right-wing Identity and Democracy bloc

— Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), Italy, associated with the right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists

— Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany), Germany, right-wing, but not affiliated.

Your inquiry should:

a document their results in the recent EU Parliament elections and their progress over time

b describe their proposed policies towards migration

c investigate the role that the mass movement of people has had on their electoral success

d investigate the impact that their electoral success has had on political stability and/or change both within their state and across Europe.

2 Conclude your inquiry by answering the following **extended response** question:

Evaluate the political significance of the mass movement of people.

The following resources have been provided to help guide your inquiry:

'European elections: What you need to know about the vote'. BBC, 2024. bbc.com/news/world-europe-68899405

'Is the rise of the far right in Europe inevitable? It's complicated'. The Minefield (podcast). ABC, 2024 (54 min). abc.net.au/listen/programs/theminefield/the-european-parliament-elections-and-rise-of-far-right/103854126

'5 things to know about the EU election results'. Politico, 2024. politico.eu/article/eu-election-results-2024-things-to-know

'The far right's election gains rattle EU's traditional powers, leading Macron to call snap polls'. AP, 2024. apnews.com/article/eu-election-results-european-parliament-acd0ceef91d198cf5e9ee695f394b28c

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Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2024. 'Migration'. oecd.org/en/topics/policy-issues/migration.html

Roy, D. and Cheatham, A. 2024. 'Venezuela: The rise and fall of a petrostate'. Council on Foreign Relations. cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-crisis#chapter-title-0-4

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2024a. 'Afghanistan emergency'. unhcr.org/emergencies/afghanistan-emergency

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2024c. 'Germany'. reporting.unhcr.org/donors/germany

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Revision questions

Test your understanding of your selected crisis by answering the following questions.

Short-answer questions

1 Describe one cause of a contemporary global crisis.

2 Explain one consequence of a humanitarian crisis for a neighbouring state.

3 Outline one way in which global interconnectedness has impacted a global crisis.

4 Identify one response by a non-state actor to a global crisis and explain its impact.

5 Explain how one state's economic interests have exacerbated the severity of one contemporary crisis.

6 With reference to one example, outline how competing interests of states may complicate the resolution of one global crisis.

7 Describe the impact that a regional grouping or an institution of global governance have had in responding to a specific global crisis.

Extended response questions

1 Analyse the causes and consequences of a humanitarian crisis within the last 10 years.

2 Evaluate the effectiveness of an institution of global governance or a regional grouping in resolving a contemporary crisis.

3 Discuss the drivers of cooperation in efforts to resolve one contemporary crisis.

4 Compare two global actors' perspectives on the resolution of a current global crisis.

5 Assess the role of international law in mitigating one global crisis.

6 'The crisis you have to worry about most is the one you don't see coming.'

   With reference to the quote above, evaluate the effectiveness of two states' efforts to respond effectively to one global crisis.
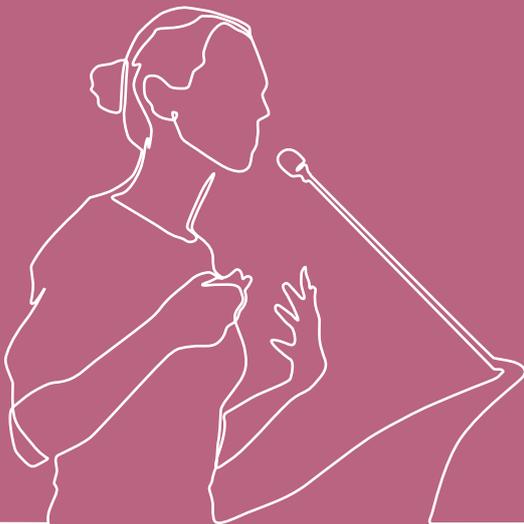
Power and the national interest

"Unit 4, Area of Study 1: Power and the national interest

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the various sources and forms of power used by a state in the Indo-Pacific region and evaluate the extent to which it is able to achieve its national interests.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

1 the sources and forms of power used by the selected state in pursuit of its national interests, including

    1.1 political power

    1.2 economic power

    1.3 military power

    1.4 diplomatic power

    1.5 cultural power

2 the national interests of the selected state, including

    2.1 security

    2.2 economic prosperity

    2.3 regional relationships

    2.4 regional standing

3 the state's use of foreign policy instruments in the region to achieve its national interests, including

    3.1 diplomacy

    3.2 trade

    3.3 foreign aid

4 the effectiveness of the state in achieving its national interests

5 challenges to the state in achieving its national interests

6 the consequences of at least two of the state's national interests for other regional actors

7 the extent to which the actions and national interest outcomes of the selected state bring about stability and change in the Indo-Pacific region.

Key skills

i   use and analyse a range of political questions to investigate how an Indo-Pacific state uses power to achieve its national interests

ii   analyse and interpret a range of sources of information on one Indo-Pacific state and its pursuit of its national interests

iii   analyse the power of one Indo-Pacific state

iv   analyse the causes and consequences of one Indo-Pacific state's use of power and foreign policy instruments

v   analyse the different national interests of one Indo-Pacific state

vi   analyse different perspectives on one Indo-Pacific state's national interests

vii   discuss the extent to which one Indo-Pacific state has contributed to political stability and/or change in the region

viii   evaluate the political significance of one Indo-Pacific state's use of power

ix   construct an argument to evaluate the significance and effectiveness of one Indo-Pacific state's pursuit of its national interests, using evidence from sources.

Key questions

How is power exercised in the Indo-Pacific region?

How has one selected state defined its national interests?

What are the challenges that inhibit the achievement of a state's national interests?

How effective is the state in using power to achieve its national interests?

Preface

In this area of study, students explore power and politics in the Indo-Pacific. Through a detailed study of ONE state in the Indo-Pacific region (China, Japan, India, Indonesia or the United States of America), students analyse its sources of power, its national interests and the actions undertaken to achieve those interests.

National interests are used by states to inform and justify domestic and foreign policy actions. They are often multifaceted and changeable, and subject to competing perspectives and interests. Students learn that although states in the Indo-Pacific vary markedly, they share common interests in the pursuit of security, economic prosperity, regional relationships and regional standing. To achieve these outcomes, states draw on their sources and forms of power and channel them through foreign policy instruments. The application of these forms of power can, at times, produce favourable outcomes for the state. However, it can also provoke reactions from other global actors, resulting in unintended consequences that challenge the pursuit of national and strategic interests.

Students investigate the actions of their chosen Indo-Pacific state and evaluate the degree to which different forms of power achieve the stated national interests. Students also examine the significant challenges that face their chosen Indo-Pacific state in the pursuit of its interests and assess the extent to which the state's actions and its national interest outcomes contribute to political stability and change. Students evaluate the political significance of their chosen regional state and its ability to achieve its interests.

In developing a course, teachers must select one of the following states of the Indo-Pacific to be studied in depth.

1 People's Republic of China

2 Japan

3 Republic of India

4 Republic of Indonesia

5 the United States of America

Power and the national interest

The 45 states of the Indo-Pacific region, as defined by the study design, encompass (as of 2024):

- 60 per cent of the world's population, at over 4 billion people

- approximately 60 per cent of the world's GDP

- five of the 10 largest economies in the world

- 12 time zones

- 13 of the 20 most populous cities in the world

- eight of the 10 largest armies in the world

- the five most carbon-emitting countries, equal to approximately 60 per cent of the global total.

The Indo-Pacific contains a vast range of states, from major power states to tiny Pacific Island states. These states are diverse and include low-, middle- and high-income countries. Some states have democratic governments, others authoritarian ones, and the Indo-Pacific encompasses both Western and non-Western cultures.

A map of the world with countries considered within the Indo-Pacific region highlighted. The six largest by GDP are marked in dark green. Credit: MapChart, 2024.

The recent history of the Indo-Pacific region, and of the world more generally, has been one of increasing global interconnectedness, also referred to as globalisation. The development of trade relationships between states has led to significant economic growth, particularly for China, India and Indonesia. Diplomatic relations have also increased between states, such as through multilateral forums like Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). From the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, the United States firmly held a unipolar position as the world's only true superpower. The United States and China developed a stronger relationship as trading partners, and during this time there was widespread optimism that strategic rivalries would be put aside for mutual benefit (White House Archives, 2009).

However, since the 2010s, there seems to have been a greater resistance to globalisation among many national governments, with some states seeming to pull back from these interconnections. At the same time, the unipolar position of the United States is being challenged by China, with India rising as a third power, and

it does seem likely that we may see a return to 'great power competition' within the region. As you study the Indo-Pacific, take note of the tension within the region — between attempts at maintaining cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships between states on the one hand, and a competitive, largely distrustful approach to the geopolitical arena on the other.

Relevant terminology

This area of study asks students to choose one state in the Indo-Pacific region to focus on. Regardless of which state you choose, the terminology used is the same. The study design encourages us to take the view that all states have the same core interests, forms of power and foreign policy instruments at their disposal to pursue these interests. What differs between states is the way in which they interpret these interests, the context in which they pursue them and the specific actions they take.

National interests

Security — refers to the need for a state to ensure its continued survival. This traditionally includes concerns such as territorial integrity and protecting a state's borders from external threats. It also relates to internal issues such as rebel or separatist movements or concerted and widespread disregard for the rule of law. Contemporary approaches to national security include other problems that may threaten the continued existence of the state, such as resource security and government corruption, as well as energy and cybersecurity.

Economic prosperity — relates to the desire for states to generate wealth. This can occur through the productivity of the population, innovation, trade with other states and/or exploitation of resources. States' focus on economic prosperity can be out of concern for the welfare of the population or to the benefit of the government. For developing states, economic prosperity is usually viewed through the lens of poverty reduction, while in developed states it refers to the continued sustainability of the economy and its competitiveness with other states.

Regional relationships — states value positive relationships with their neighbours, mostly because of its flow-on impact for national security and economic prosperity. Positive regional relationships can prevent states from encountering territorial issues and can lead to opportunities for trade. Regional relationships can also be leveraged for diplomatic support or to coordinate action on issues that cross state borders. Pursuit of regional relationships can occur through bilateral dialogue or multilateral forums.

Regional standing — refers to the overall perception of the state among actors in the region. States said to have positive regional standing are generally viewed as predictable and rule-abiding and have a beneficial impact on other states. Conversely, those with poor standing tend to be viewed as rogue states. The standing of a state generally relates to its centrality in the region: those with good standing are central to the regional arena, while those with poor standing are generally viewed as more peripheral. In many ways, regional standing is the most subtle of interests, as it often does not lead to direct gains but instead forms the background against which states pursue more direct interests.

Power

Military — the use or threat of force to achieve an interest. In most cases this is carried out by a state's military, but it can also occur through law enforcement agencies or paramilitary forces.

Economic — the use of payment or economic reward to achieve an interest. This can take the form of aid, investment or trade.

Diplomatic — the use of international dialogue to achieve an interest. This can include speeches, international agreements, participation in intergovernmental forums and more.

Political — the use of a state's legislation to achieve an interest. These are generally laws but may also be administrative mechanisms or broad policies.

Cultural — the export of a state's cultural beliefs or practices to achieve an interest. This includes language, art and media.

Keep in mind that uses of power often aren't discrete, and **sometimes it can be difficult to categorise an act as a specific form of power**. For instance, a state might form an international agreement that also involves the provision of funding — this could exemplify the use of both diplomatic *and* economic power.

You may have also come across the common distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' power in your studies. While these terms aren't specifically in the study design, they can be useful ways to describe and analyse uses of power.

Hard power refers to actions that are essentially coercive, either through threat of force or payment. **Soft power** instead describes actions that aim to persuade or attract another actor without there being a direct benefit or threat involved.

Joseph Nye, who coined the term soft power, described it as such:

> "When one country gets other countries to want what it wants — might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants."
>
> Joseph Nye, 1990. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. Basic Books.

The phrase 'want what it wants' is useful here, as this is what distinguishes soft power from hard power. In hard power, the opinion of the actor being influenced isn't very significant, whereas for soft power opinion it is at the core of its effectiveness. This quotation also demonstrates the value of soft power — if an actor convinces another that their interest(s) align, this can lead to long-term benefits for both, without the need for constant direct exertion of power. Nye also argues that 'smart power' — that is, the combination of hard and soft power rather than the exclusive use of either — is the most effective response to many issues.

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Foreign policy instruments

Policy instruments can best be understood as the types of actions a state takes to pursue its national interests. The study design lists three foreign policy instruments that *must* be studied:

- diplomacy
- trade
- foreign aid.

Students should be aware that not all actions by a state are covered in these three instruments. Similarly, not all actions can be described as *foreign* policy instruments but are instead domestic in character. This is particularly the case for almost all examples of political power by a state.

Activity A – Who's who in the Indo-Pacific

1 Using your own research, categorise the Indo-Pacific states listed in the study design by the criteria below. You can do this individually or as a class. You can arrange the results in lists or tables.

   a developed / developing

   b liberal democracy / illiberal democracy / authoritarian

   c Western / non-Western

   d established / rising / declining

   e great / middle / minor power

   f higher-income / lower-income.

   Which of these criteria do you think is the most useful for understanding how power is currently arranged in the Indo-Pacific?

   Remember: With any categorisation task in the social sciences, there will always be 'borderline' cases. The purpose of this task is less about being definitive and more to get you thinking about how power is arranged and distributed in the region, as well as how these different categories might be determined by looking at different aspects.

2 Using the MapChart website, create your own map of the Indo-Pacific region. Use the 'background' and/or 'border colour' tools to categorise each of the Indo-Pacific states listed in the study design according to the criteria you selected above.

   mapchart.net/world-pacific.html

3 Make a timetable of political events between 2000 and 2024 in the Indo-Pacific region. Ensure you include the following:

   a China joins the World Trade Organization (WTO)

   b Xi Jinping becomes president of China

   c Narendra Modi becomes prime minister of India

   d the China—Australia free trade agreement

   e the India—Australia trade agreement

   f the COVID-19 pandemic

   g China becoming the second-largest economy in the world

   h India becoming the most populous country in the world

   i the formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD, or 'Quad')

   j the formation of BRICS

   k China's announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

4 Write down five questions you have about this area of study. Return to these as you work through the chapter and see how well you can answer them at the end. You might like to arrange this as a table (modelled below).

Question	Initial impression	At end of study

5 Discuss each of the following statements in a short paragraph, stating whether you agree or disagree. Don't worry at this stage if you're unsure; just pick a side and make an argument for it.

   a 'A state's regional circumstances fundamentally shape its national interests.'

   b 'The core national interest of all states should be national security. All other interests should be subordinate to security concerns.'

   c 'Hard power is effective in achieving immediate aims, but soft power is more effective in the long term.'

   d 'The foreign policy of a state is mostly determined by domestic concerns.'
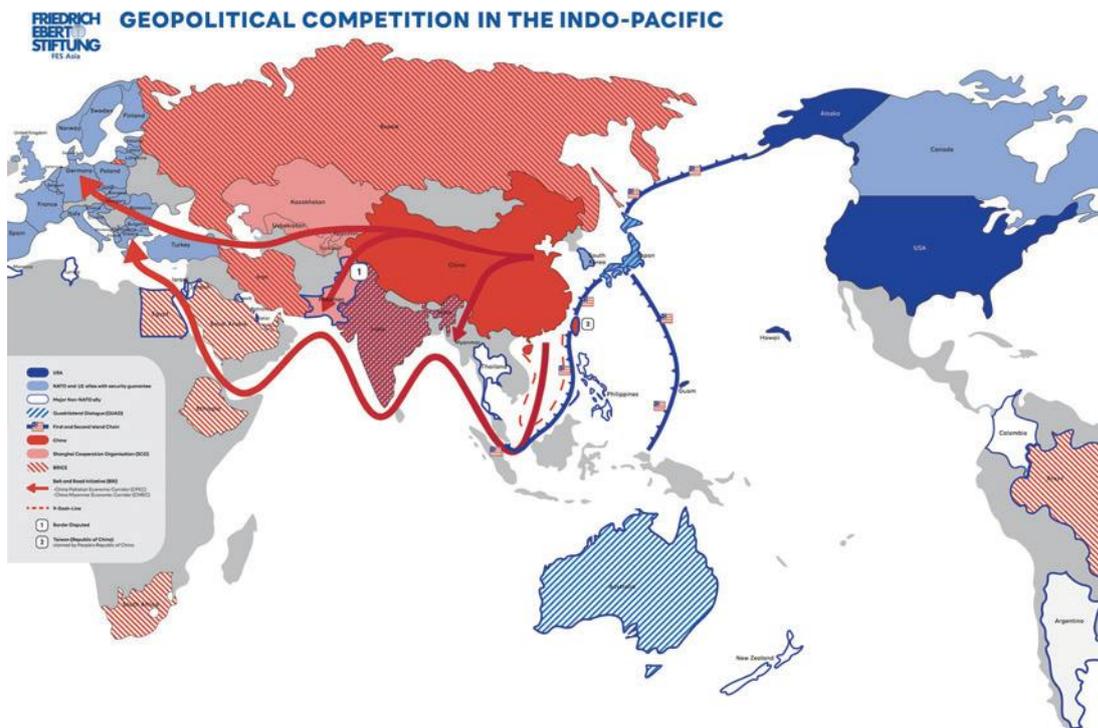
Credit: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Asia, 2024. asia.fes.de/news/geopolitical-competition-indo-pacific

🔍 State study: China

China is currently a 'pivot point' in the global arena, meaning it is the state around which, more than any other, the affairs of the world turn. This is because China, along many fronts, poses the most significant challenge to the status quo of international relations, as developed largely by the United States and Western powers over the 20th century. China's resurgence upends the previous order in the Indo-Pacific region, in which the United States has been the dominant presence since the end of World War II.

The current international order can be characterised by:

- a high degree of global interconnectedness, particularly in trade
- a 'rules-based order', characterised by a significant degree of inter-state cooperation guided by multilateral institutions
- the promotion of liberalism and other related values, such as human rights, market-based economies and liberal democracy.

To some degree China's rise in the Indo-Pacific presents challenges to each of these principles. If China replaces the United States as the dominant power in the region, it will seek to reshape international relations to better reflect its own interests. This process will take place militarily, through projection of military force in the region; economically, through cementing itself as the focal point for world trade; and through developing a system of alliances and soft power in the region. This contest between China and the United States can be understood as '**great power competition**' — in broad terms, China aims to supplant the United States as the dominant state in the region, while the United States aims to encircle and slow China, thereby maintaining the current status quo. Through this lens, the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific is 'zero-sum', in that China's gains are losses for the United States, and vice versa.

For much of the 2000s China's rise as an economic power, particularly as a manufacturing power, was a core element of the narrative of global interconnectedness. China's growth has been viewed as a positive development, lifting millions out of poverty within the country while at the same time providing Western states access to cheap products. In turn, many observers had **hoped that Chinese society would naturally liberalise** as its people became wealthier, and as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) governing elites saw some of the benefits of the international system.
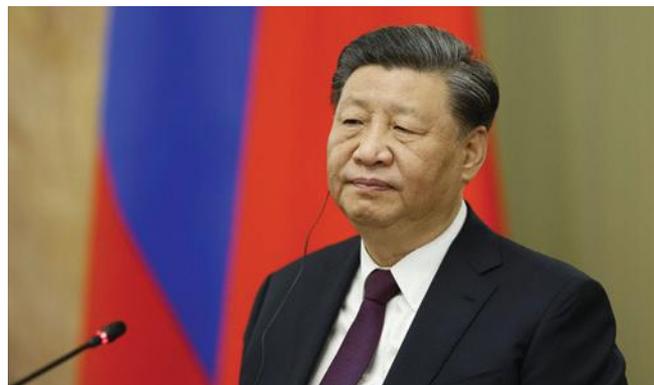
Chinese President Xi Jinping during a state visit to Moscow, 2023.

Despite those hopes, China has remained illiberal and authoritarian in most respects, and has become **increasingly assertive in the international arena**, particularly following the second term of President Xi Jinping. China has followed a predominantly aggressive strategy in pursuit of its national interests. This includes:

- increasing its military presence in the South China Sea

- increased threats towards Taiwan

- implementing authoritarian laws in Hong Kong and Xinjiang province

- cyberattacks and intellectual theft from Western corporations

- providing material and diplomatic support to authoritarian regimes

- imposing trade restrictions on Australia

- confrontational diplomacy (sometimes called 'wolf-warrior' diplomacy, referencing a patriotic Chinese action film from 2017 — see the next chapter's section on China for a more detailed discussion of wolf-warrior diplomacy).

Taken together, these factors have meant that some states — particularly those that favour the current order — are now more likely to distrust China.

For the CCP, though, the developments of the past 20 years form only part of the story. The Chinese government sees its actions within a greater historical context, as part of the 'national rejuvenation of the Chinese nation', as Xi puts it. For the CCP, the current era represents overcoming the legacy of the 'century of humiliation' between 1839 and 1945, a period in which China was repeatedly invaded and forced to make territorial concessions to Western powers and Japan, including Taiwan and Hong Kong. This interpretation, promoted by the government, shapes the way China approaches its national interests today. As Merriden Varrall (2023) from the Lowy Institute puts it, 'any analyst of China's behaviour on the world stage should not take even the smallest intellectual step without thinking about how China understands the 'century of humiliation''.

Spheres of influence in China, 1850–1914. Credit: Facing History.

From this perspective, China and many of its people see their recent actions as rectification of a string of injustices that subverted the natural order of the region. Prior to the century of humiliation was a thousand-year period in which China and India were alternately the first- or second-wealthiest and most powerful regions in the world. In this context the latest period of Chinese expansion is a return to status as the dominant power of the region.

In his speech at the 14th National People's Conference in 2023, Xi Jinping made this connection explicit:

> "Since its founding, the Communist Party of China has closely united and led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in working hard for a century to put an end to China's national humiliation. The Chinese people have become the masters of their future, the Chinese nation has achieved the great transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong, and China's national rejuvenation has become a historical inevitability."

China's history in a nutshell

221 BCE–1912	Chinese imperial period under various dynasties (ending with the Qing). Often included 'tributary' relationships with other regional powers, where the latter recognised China's dominance and paid tribute in exchange for a certain degree of protection and mutual support.
1839–45	The British Empire initiates the First Opium War by invading to overturn Chinese attempts to ban the sale of opium in China. The war ends in 1843 with China ceding Hong Kong to the British, agreeing to pay them reparations, along with other concessions.
1850–64	Christian-inspired rebels fight to overthrow the imperial government in the Taiping Rebellion, with the ensuing civil war leading to the death of approximately 10 per cent of China's population (20–30 million people).
1856–60	The Second Opium War concludes with China making various territorial and economic concessions to Britain, France, Russia and the United States.
1885	The Sino-French War ends with China losing influence over Vietnam and Indochina.
1895	China loses Taiwan and influence over Korea following the First Sino-Japanese War.
1899–1901	The Boxer Rebellion begins as a mass movement against foreign subjugation and Western influence in China, defeated by an alliance of six European powers, the United States and Japan. This results in a range of further territorial and financial concessions from the faltering Qing government.
1905	Japan defeats Russia and establishes control over parts of formerly Chinese Manchuria.
1906	Flooding in the Huai River basin leads to the Chinese famine, one of the deadliest in world history.
1911	Revolution overthrows the Qing government and establishes the Republic of China (ROC).
1915	Japan demands China accept effective control over its internal affairs in its '21 Demands'.
1916	The national government collapses, with warlords taking effective control over many regions.

1919	Formerly German-held territory in China is transferred to Japan under the Treaty of Versailles.
1927–49	The Chinese Civil War rages between nationalist (Kuomintang [KMT]) and communist (CCP) forces; fighting is mostly put on hold during fighting against Japan between 1937 and 1945.
1931–45	Invasion by Japan and resulting atrocities devastate China and its population, leading to the death of 15–22 million people.
1949–50	The CCP under Mao Zedong gains control over mainland China (including Tibet) and establish the People's Republic of China (PRC). Nationalist forces flee to Taiwan, with naval assistance from the United States as part of its strategy to 'contain' communism.
1950–53	China intervenes militarily in support of North Korea in its war against US-backed South Korea, with Chinese volunteer forces numbering in the hundreds of thousands engaged in active combat with US troops.
1958–62	The Great Leap Forward campaign to rapidly transform China from an agrarian to industrialised society leads to mass famine ('the Great Chinese Famine') and economic collapse, as well as the deaths of tens of millions of people.
1966–76	The Cultural Revolution emerges as a mass movement seeking to purge remnants of capitalist, traditional and moderate elements from Chinese society, led by Mao Zedong.
1971	The UN recognises the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China in place of the ROC government based in Taiwan, followed not long after by Australia (1972) and the United States (1979).
1978–92	Reforms undertaken by incoming leader Deng Xiaoping (under the mantra of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics') gradually 'opened up' the economy to foreign investment and technology; China moves towards a relatively more market-based economy and private sector development, introducing its vast labour force to the global economy.
1989	Protests against corruption and in favour of greater political liberalisation culminating in the Tiananmen Square massacre are quashed by the military, with the declaration of martial law, mass arrests and an increase in state censorship.
1997	Hong Kong reverts to Chinese control following expiration of the 99-year lease of the territory by the United Kingdom that commenced in 1898.
2001	China joins the WTO.
2010	China overtakes Japan to become the second-largest national economy, behind the United States.
2012–13	Xi Jinping takes over as leader and begins a campaign to tackle corruption and increase efficiency.
2015	The CCP announces its decision to end the one-child policy, first introduced in 1979.

2,000 YEARS OF ECONOMIC HISTORY IN ONE CHART
All major powers compared by GDP from the year 1 AD
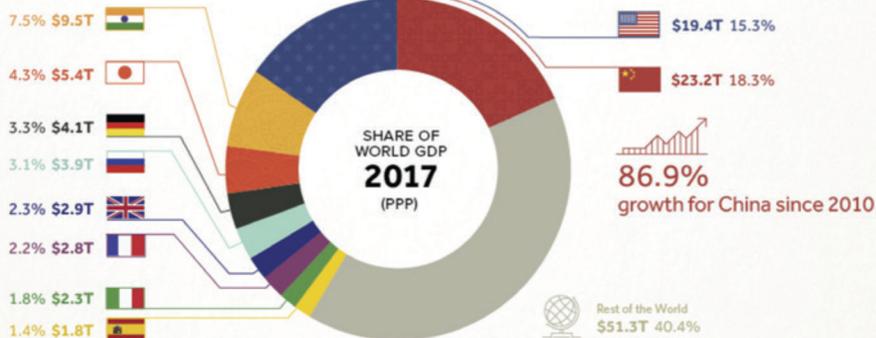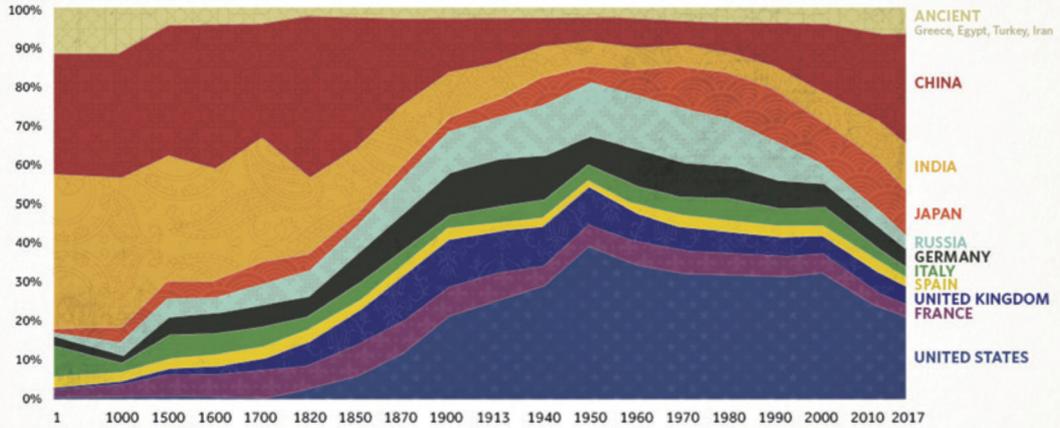
Credit: Visual Capitalist, 2017; Angus Madison and IMF, 2010.
visualcapitalist.com/2000-years-economic-history-one-chart

Activity B – Reflecting on China's history

1 In this subject we are required to focus on *contemporary* events — those within the past 10 years. Nonetheless, history is important in understanding the context of current events, structures and decisions. Describe the history of China from each of the following perspectives:

   — China

   — Western states

   — neighbouring developing states.

2 Use a timeline maker (such as the one available at the website time.graphics) to mark important events for China.

3 To what extent is China's claim for increased power in the international arena legitimate? Should Western states seek to make amends for, or otherwise account for, the century of humiliation in their approaches to dealing with China?

4   Are there possibilities for conciliation between China and the West? Explain your thoughts. You might consider reading the following articles, which present a range of views on this question:

Joseph S. Nye, 2024. 'US–China cooperation remains possible'. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. aspistrategist.org.au/us-china-cooperation-remains-possible

Scott Kennedy, 2024. 'US–China relations in 2024: Managing competition without conflict'. Center for Strategic and International Studies. csis.org/analysis/us-china-relations-2024-managing-competition-without-conflict

Yi Fan, 2022. 'Fifty years on, three lessons from Sino–US rapprochement'. China–US Focus. chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/fifty-years-on-three-lessons-from-sino-us-rapprochement

5   a   What do you think are the possible outcomes of Chinese great power competition with the West?

b   Of these, which do you think is the most preferable option? Why?

Sources of power used by the Chinese state 4.1.1

Economic power

The source of China's growing power can, to a significant extent, be found in its economic successes — particularly its ability to engage with and profit effectively from **developments in the global economy since the 1990s**. In the early 2000s China joined the WTO and oversaw **rapid expansion of its manufacturing sector**. In doing so, it utilised an abundance of relatively cheap workers to become the largest exporter in the world, achieving average GDP growth of 9 per cent

China's share of global GDP compared to the United States and EU, 2002–2022. Figures adjusted for purchasing power parity, using 2022 US dollars. Credit: IMF, Statista.

per year between 2000 and 2019. As a result, China's GDP has grown to be the second largest in the world and is widely predicted to surpass that of the United States sometime in the 2030s.

This economic power is largely due to the **sheer size of China's population**. Since 1978, China experienced the largest internal migration in human history, with more than 200 million people moving from rural areas into cities, mostly to take up manufacturing work. This coincided with a range of economic reforms that encouraged industrialisation, private enterprise and international trade. In doing so, Chinese workers became much more 'productive' than they had previously been — and consequently the country became wealthier overall (even if the effects were uneven across regions and groups). Economist Keyu Jin (2023) suggests that the force behind China's economic growth 'can be summarized in one sentence: China was catching up to its own potential'. In 2024, Chinese manufacturing comprised 35 per cent of the global total, and while Western workers remain significantly more productive than Chinese workers, this is offset by China's much larger labour force, estimated to be more than 780 million in 2022.

China's economic growth has also had a significant impact on the lives of Chinese people, being credited with **lifting 850 million people out of absolute poverty** between 1978 and 2013. This has seen China transform from a state with a higher percentage of people living in absolute poverty than Sub-Saharan Africa in 1978, to a 'middle-income' state. According to the World Bank, seven out of 10 people who escaped absolute poverty in the last 40 years were Chinese.
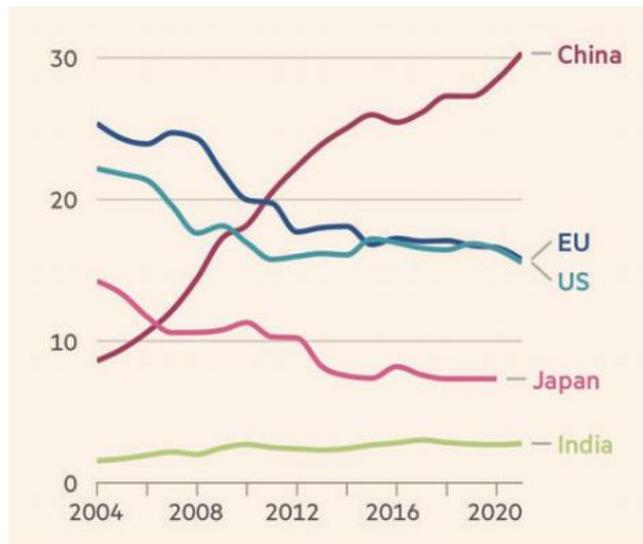
China's and other countries' share of global manufacturing output, 2004–2021, measured on a value-added basis. Credit: Financial Times; World Bank, 2023.

> " Hundreds of millions of people in China today lead better lives than they did twenty years ago thanks to their country's economic and social transformation. They have more and better food to eat, live in better houses, are more economically secure, with better health care, better education and more personal opportunities than they have ever known before. It may be uncomfortable to say it, but in half a lifetime the Chinese Communist Party has presided over the biggest increase in human welfare in history. "

Hugh White, 2017. 'Power shift: Australia's future between Washington and Beijing'. *Quarterly Essay*, no. 39.

Nonetheless, the wealth of the average Chinese person remains well below most Western nations, with its GDP per capita (adjusted for purchasing power, measured in US dollars) measured in 2024 at $25 000 (ranked 73rd) compared to $85 000 for the United States (ranked eighth) (IMF, 2024). By some measures, China has the highest number of billionaires globally, at over 800, while it also has over 600 million people with daily incomes of less than US$5 (Shi, 2023). In this way China is both a major economic power and a developing economy.

China's economic power is an enormous part of why it has returned as such a significant actor in the global arena. White explains this relationship:

> " In the long run, economics is what counts in power politics. National power has many manifestations — military, political, cultural — but only one ultimate source. No country in history has exercised great power without great wealth, and the country with the most wealth always ends up with the most power. The wealth that matters is the aggregate wealth of the state, rather than that of individuals. That is why, while China's per-capita income will lag far behind the West's for decades if not longer, China's political and strategic weight in the world will depend on its overall, rather than per-capita, GDP. "

Hugh White, 2017. 'Power shift: Australia's future between Washington and Beijing'. *Quarterly Essay*, no. 39.

Military power

Take note of the various forms of power used by the Chinese state to achieve its national interests. Consider how effective each of these forms of power is at achieving its interests and what conclusions might be drawn from this.

Activity C – The sources of China's power

1   Using what you've learnt so far about China, explain the relationship between a country's population and both its economy and military as 'sources of power'.

2   China has often been accused of having a 'soft power deficiency'. Consider and explain ways in which China might improve its soft power within the region.

Official photos of China's third aircraft carrier *Fujian* — thought to be the largest and most advanced aircraft carrier ever built outside the United States — during sea trials in 2024.

Before further exploring China's uses of power, we suggest skipping ahead to '4.1.2 China's national interests', which includes discussion of a range of cases demonstrating the various forms of power through which China achieves its national interests. Since China often uses multiple forms of power to pursue its interests, it can be valuable to expand your understanding by considering which forms of power are more effective in these instances, and the ways in which each power might either reinforce or counteract another.

Below are significant examples of each form of power, taken from the case studies explored in the next section. Additional examples have been provided in some instances.

Political 4.1.1.1

Uyghur cultural restrictions	Human Rights Watch, 2024. 'China: Religious regulations tighten for Uyghurs'. hrw.org/news/2024/01/31/china-religious-regulations-tighten-uyghurs
Air pollution regulations in major cities	Lindsay Maizland, 2021. 'China's fight against climate change and environmental degradation'. Council on Foreign Relations. cfr.org/backgrounder/china-climate-change-policies-environmental-degradation
'High-quality development' and 'new productive forces' economic policies	Arthur R. Kroeber, 2024. 'Unleashing 'new quality productive' forces: China's strategy for technology-led growth'. The Brookings Institution. brookings.edu/articles/unleashing-new-quality-productive-forces-chinas-strategy-for-technology-led-growth
Establishment of municipalities in South China Sea — Sansha City	Zachary Haver, 2021. 'CCP governance comes to the South China Sea'. Lowy Institute. lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/ccp-governance-comes-south-china-sea
Passing of Article 23 in Hong Kong	Kelly Ng, 2024. 'Article 23: What is Hong Kong's tough new security law?' BBC News. bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-68508694

Economic 4.1.1.2

BRI investments	Ahmad Syarif, 2023. 'Belt and Road Initiative's new approach and what it means for Chinese investments in Indonesia'. The Conversation. theconversation.com/belt-and-road-initiatives-new-approach-and-what-it-means-for-chinese-investments-in-indonesia-218438
Financial incentives to Pacific Island states	Darshana M. Baruah, Satyendra Prasad and Denghua Zhang, 2024. 'How Chinese financing shapes the Pacific'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. carnegieendowment.org/posts/2024/02/how-chinese-financing-shapes-the-pacific
Green energy investments	Isabel Hilton, 2024. 'How China became the world's leader on renewable energy'. Yale Environment 360. e360.yale.edu/features/china-renewable-energy
COVID-19 assistance	Moritz Rudolf, 2022. 'How China uses health diplomacy as a soft power'. International Politics and Society. ips-journal.eu/topics/foreign-and-security-policy/how-china-uses-health-diplomacy-as-a-soft-power-tool-6276
Trade relationship with the United States	Anshu Siripurapu and Noah Berman, 2024. 'The contentious US–China trade relationship'. Council on Foreign Relations. cfr.org/backgrounder/contentious-us-china-trade-relationship

Military 4.1.1.3

Military build-up in South China Sea	Riley Walters, 2023. 'China's military puts Indo-Pacific on edge'. Geopolitical Intelligence Services. gisreportsonline.com/r/china-indo-pacific-military
Incursions into Taiwanese airspace	Agence France-Presse, 2023. 'China's warplane incursions into Taiwan air defence zone doubled in 2022'. The Guardian. theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/02/chinas-warplane-incursions-into-taiwan-air-defence-zone-doubled-in-2022
Military drills close to Taiwan	Kelly Ng and Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, 2024. 'China holds military drills around Taiwan as 'strong punishment''. BBC News. bbc.com/news/articles/cqvv29gpqn1o
Mass incarceration of Uyghurs	Human Rights Watch, 2022. 'China: Xinjiang official figures reveal higher prisoner count'. hrw.org/news/2022/09/14/china-xinjiang-official-figures-reveal-higher-prisoner-count
Contributions to UN peacekeeping	Courtney J. Fung, 2023. 'China's small steps into UN peacekeeping are adding up'. Global Observatory. theglobalobservatory.org/2023/05/chinas-small-steps-into-un-peacekeeping-are-adding-up

Diplomatic <small>4.1.1.4</small>

Diplomatic isolation of Taiwan	Benjamin Herscovitch, 2022. 'China's efforts to isolate and intimidate Taiwan are pushing US allies closer. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. gjia.georgetown.edu/2022/07/05/chinas-efforts-to-isolate-and-intimidate-taiwan-are-pushing-u-s-allies-closer
Joint letters sent to Human Rights Commission	Amnesty International, 2022. 'Joint public letter on Xinjiang to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/5304/2022/en
Diplomatic meetings between the United States and China	Susan Thornton, 2023. 'The benefits (and limits) of China—US high-level diplomatic engagement'. The Diplomat. thediplomat.com/2023/11/the-benefits-and-limits-of-china-us-high-level-diplomatic-engagement
Announcement of net zero emissions target	Fiona Harvey, 2020. 'China pledges to become carbon neutral before 2060'. The Guardian. theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/22/china-pledges-to-reach-carbon-neutrality-before-2060
Solomon Islands security deal	Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, 2022. 'China—Solomon Islands security agreement and competition for influence in Oceania'. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. gjia.georgetown.edu/2022/12/02/china-solomon-islands-security-agreement-and-competition-for-influence-in-oceania

Cultural <small>4.1.1.5</small>

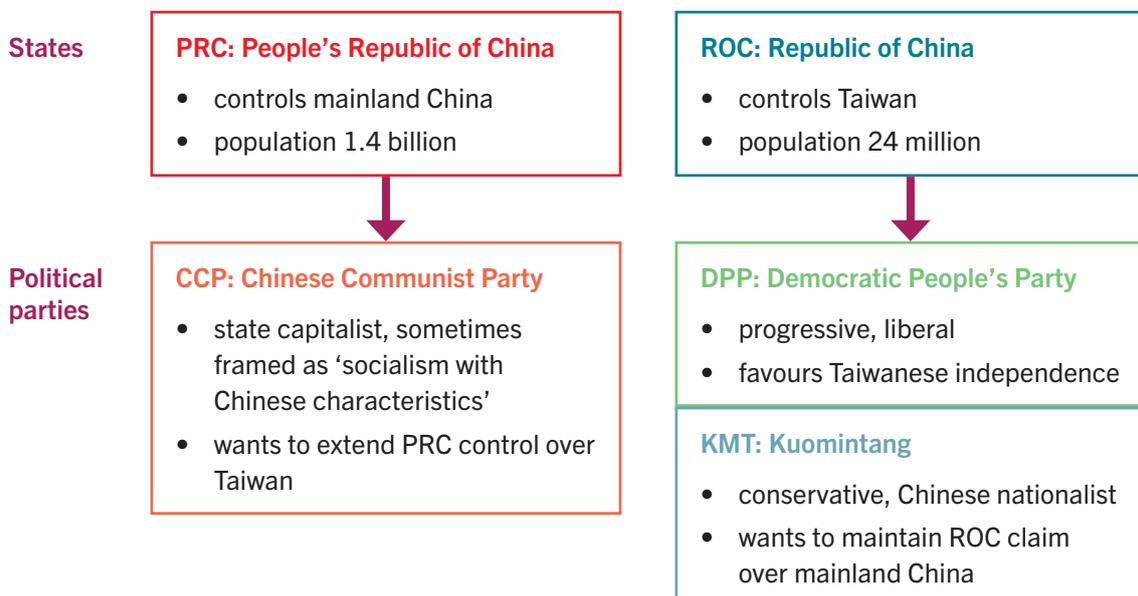|	
Panda diplomacy	Mia Taylor, 2024. 'A brief history of 'panda diplomacy' — with new additions to global zoos'. BBC News. bbc.com/future/article/20240226-a-brief-history-of-panda-diplomacy---with-new-additions-to-global-zoos
Confucius institutes	ABC News, 2019. 'China's Confucius institutes have spy agencies and governments should be increasingly alarmed'. abc.net.au/news/2019-03-10/confucius-influence-around-the-world-in-question/10875960
China hosting 2022 Winter Olympics	Global Times, 2022. 'Winter Olympics start new era for spread of Chinese culture'. globaltimes.cn/page/202202/1253143.shtml
Seeking positive depictions of China in film	Hugo Harvey, 2023. 'China's quest for blockbuster soft power'. Oxford Political Review. oxfordpoliticalreview.com/2023/11/24/chinas-quest-for-blockbuster-soft-power
Broadcasting of Chinese state media in the region, such as English-language station CGTN	Merriden Varrall, 2020. 'Behind the news: Inside China Global Television Network'. Lowy Institute. lowyinstitute.org/publications/behind-news-inside-china-global-television-network CGTN: youtube.com/CGTN

China's national interests 4.1.2

Security 4.1.2.1

Taiwan

After two decades of civil war, in 1949 Mao Zedong's CCP defeated the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) and claimed control of mainland China, declaring it the People's Republic of China (PRC). The KMT fled to the island of Taiwan, proclaiming itself the Republic of China (ROC) in exile. Since then, Taiwan has established a liberal and democratic government and many of the features of a modern state. However, its government has never claimed sovereign independence as 'Taiwan'. Instead, it formally maintains its claim to be the legitimate government of the entirety of China, although this has been de-emphasised significantly since the 1990s. Meanwhile, **the CCP has declared the reintegration of Taiwan a 'core national interest'**, and it is a key element of Xi Jinping's 'great rejuvenation' project. The CCP considers there to be 'one China' that encompasses both China and Taiwan, with the CCP the rightful government of this territory.

Officially, most of the international community agree with the PRC position, in part because doing so is more or less a prerequisite for doing business with mainland China. Nonetheless, many Western states also maintain informal diplomatic and trade relations with the government in Taiwan and argue that the matter needs to be resolved peacefully. The United States maintains **strategic ambiguity** regarding Taiwan, agreeing with the principle of 'one China' while also arming itself and committing to defend Taiwan from any threat to the 'security, or social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan', under the *Taiwan Relations Act 1979*. In a 2022 interview, US President Joe Biden said that 'Taiwan makes their own judgments about their independence' and confirmed that the United States would defend Taiwan if there were an 'unprecedented attack' (Pelley, 2022). Taiwan is also a major purchaser of US arms, including in 2023 a US$14-billion backlog that had yet to be fulfilled.
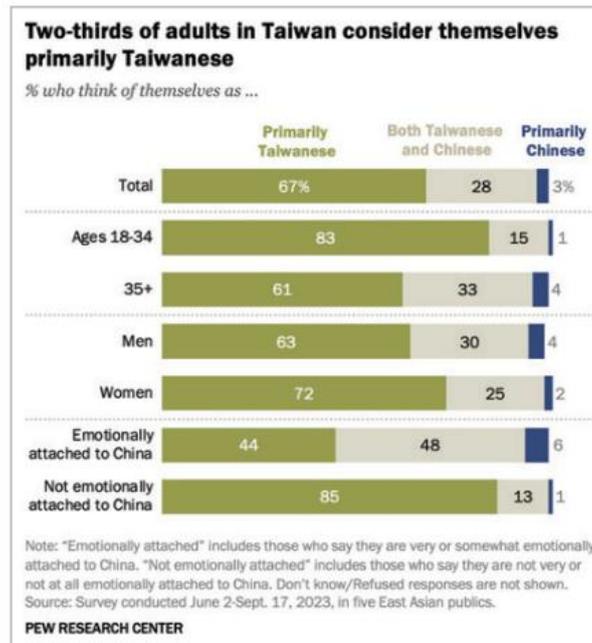
States	**PRC: People's Republic of China** • controls mainland China • population 1.4 billion	**ROC: Republic of China** • controls Taiwan • population 24 million
Political parties	**CCP: Chinese Communist Party** • state capitalist, sometimes framed as 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' • wants to extend PRC control over Taiwan	**DPP: Democratic People's Party** • progressive, liberal • favours Taiwanese independence **KMT: Kuomintang** • conservative, Chinese nationalist • wants to maintain ROC claim over mainland China

During Xi's 2021 speech at the 100th anniversary of the CCP, he made the following remarks on Taiwan:

> " Resolving the Taiwan question and realizing China's complete reunification is a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the Communist Party of China. It is also a shared aspiration of all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation. We will uphold the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, and advance peaceful national reunification. All of us, compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, must come together and move forward in unison. We must take resolute action to utterly defeat any attempt toward 'Taiwan independence', and work together to create a bright future for national rejuvenation. No one should underestimate the resolve, the will, and the ability of the Chinese people to defend their national sovereignty and territorial integrity. "

In contrast, Taiwan has become increasingly resistant to China, as the pro-independence Democratic People's Party has now won three presidential elections in a row, the latest in January 2024. Additionally, while more than 95 per cent of the population are Han Chinese, Taiwanese increasingly claim a distinct identity from China, with over two-thirds of adults considering themselves primarily Taiwanese, less than 30 per cent as both Chinese and Taiwanese, and only 3 per cent as primarily Chinese (Huang and Starr, 2024).

China has used a wide variety of policy instruments to try to **force Taiwan to reintegrate**. Most recently it increased military activities around the island. China sent military aircraft into Taiwanese airspace over 1700 times in both 2022 and 2023 (Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, 2024), including nuclear-capable bombers. While these planes did not fly over Taiwan itself, they did encroach on Taiwan's surrounding airspace. China has also staged military drills in the Taiwan Strait, including a week of live-fire drills in 2022 following then-Speaker of the US House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

Two-thirds of adults in Taiwan consider themselves primarily Taiwanese

% who think of themselves as ...

	Primarily Taiwanese	Both Taiwanese and Chinese	Primarily Chinese
Total	67%	28	3%
Ages 18-34	83	15	1
35+	61	33	4
Men	63	30	4
Women	72	25	2
Emotionally attached to China	44	48	6
Not emotionally attached to China	85	13	1

Note: "Emotionally attached" includes those who say they are very or somewhat emotionally attached to China. "Not emotionally attached" includes those who say they are not very or not at all emotionally attached to China. Don't know/Refused responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 2-Sept. 17, 2023, in five East Asian publics.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Credit: Pew Research Center, 2024.

China's air force increasingly flew into the south-western corner of Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone, which crossed the median line of the strait between the two.
Credit: Jarrod Fankhauser/ABC News.

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At the same time, China also launched a series of ballistic missiles, including, in an unprecedented move, four that flew directly over Taiwan. China engaged in a similar round of drills when Pelosi's successor, Kevin McCarthy, met with President Tsai Ing-wen in Los Angeles in 2023. Xi Jinping has also reportedly ordered the Chinese military to be prepared to annex the island by 2027.

In addition to military actions, **China also seeks to isolate Taiwan diplomatically**. For many decades, the PRC and ROC have both campaigned to be recognised as the sole legitimate representative of 'China', a contest that has gradually shaken out almost entirely in the PRC's favour. Most recently, the PRC has encouraged Nauru in 2024, as well as Solomon Islands and Kiribati in 2019, to 'switch' diplomatic recognition. These arrangements are typically **accompanied by economic incentives**; for example, comments reported by Taiwan's Central News Agency suggest that the Nauru switch was assisted by a deal including investments worth US$125 million over several years. Similarly, China offered US$500 million in financial aid as an incentive for Solomon Islands to switch recognition away from Taiwan. As of 2024, only 11 states recognise Taiwan over China, with no major power recognising ROC sovereignty.

China has engaged in other, more coercive measures regarding Taiwan, including pressuring airlines to produce maps that show Taiwan as part of the PRC. In 2018, Qantas began referring to Taiwan as 'Taiwan China' in response to a request from the Civil Aviation Administration of China. The same request was sent to more than 40 other airlines at the same time. China asked airlines to remove any public information that suggested that Taiwan, Hong Kong or Macau were not part of the Chinese state. The letter also threatened that authorities would block access to their websites in China if they did not comply. In the same year China also asked the Marriott hotel chain and the Zara fashion label to no longer refer to Taiwan as a country. More significantly, China blocked Taiwan's attempts to join the World Health Organization (WHO), including most recently in 2023. In a widely publicised online interview in 2020, a senior WHO adviser appeared to avoid questions regarding Taiwan's response to COVID, referring only to 'China'.

Taiwan has also been excluded from international organisations such as Interpol (which facilitates international police cooperation) and the International Civil Aviation Organization. These moves seek to normalise the concept that Taiwan is part of China and conversely that Taiwanese independence is illegitimate.

The WHO was accused of being influenced by China, after its top official appeared to avoid questions from a journalist about Taiwan's membership in a 2020 interview. theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/30/senior-who-adviser-appears-to-dodge-question-on-taiwans-covid-19-response

Uyghurs

Over 90 per cent of Chinese people are of Han Chinese ethnicity. This means that China meets the criteria for what most consider a 'nation-state' — one in which most of the population share common bonds of language, culture, religion and ethnicity. Nonetheless, China also contains 55 other officially recognised ethnic groups, many of whom number in the millions. Although the CCP recognises China as a multiethnic

state in some respects, in others it tends to promote a sense of China as *essentially* Han and, by extension, that all Han Chinese are part of the PRC (regardless of whether they live within its borders). Of China's minority groups, the Uyghur population is one of the largest — totalling 12 million people, which is slightly less than half of Australia's population. **Uyghurs represent a significant challenge to China's security**, insofar as there are widespread separatist sentiments among this group.

Most Uyghurs in China live in Xinjiang (a Chinese word meaning 'new territory'), located in the far west of the country and designated as an 'autonomous region' by the Chinese government. Uyghurs are of Turkic ethnicity, and most are Muslim. Various Uyghurs **support the creation of a separate state** ('East Turkestan') on a range of grounds, including their cultural distinctiveness from the rest of China, as well as their marginalisation and exploitation at the hands of the CCP.

Credit: w.wiki/Akjq

Uyghurs are not alone in being a significant separatist movement in the PRC. Tibetans have campaigned for a separate state for decades, and there is also an Inner Mongolian separatist movement. These inform the CCP's reaction to the Uyghurs, because advances in Uyghur independence would likely lead to greater unrest among other ethnic groups as well. In turn, both Tibetans and Mongols in China, like Uyghurs, are **subject to a range of restrictions on practising and passing on their culture**.

For the CCP, such movements are observed within the context of historical territorial losses during China's 'century of humiliation'. Xinjiang is particularly significant to China's territory, as it provides access to Central Asia, through which the economic 'belt' of the BRI has access to European markets.

In the 2010s a series of deadly attacks against civilians were conducted by Uyghur militants in the name of independence. These included a 2013 attack in which a car ran over pedestrians in Tiananmen Square, killing two before bursting into flames. In 2014, eight Uyghurs attacked people with knives in Kunming train station, killing 31 people. However, since 2016, Uyghurs have not been associated with any such attacks.

Despite this, **China has used a range of military and political powers to restrict and repress Uyghur people**. While specific numbers and details are difficult to verify independently and are disputed, bodies including the US State Department and Human Rights Watch claim that as many as 1 million Uyghurs have been subjected to unjust imprisonment in re-education camps by the Chinese government since 2014 (Maizland, 2022). Individuals have been detained for practising their religion, having international contacts or attending a foreign university. The government describes the prisons as 'vocational training camps' and says their aim is to 'de-radicalise extremists'. Those imprisoned describe having to pledge loyalty to the CCP and sing praise for communism. In 2022, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2022) reported patterns of torture in these camps.

Although by 2024 there were signs that many of these camps had been closed, **Xinjiang continued to have some of the highest incarceration rates in the world**. Ten thousand people were sentenced on terrorism-related charges in Konasheher county in 2022, which equates to 1 in 25 people in the region (Wu and Kang, 2022). There is also evidence of Uyghur forced labour for those who have been released (Al Jazeera, 2022).
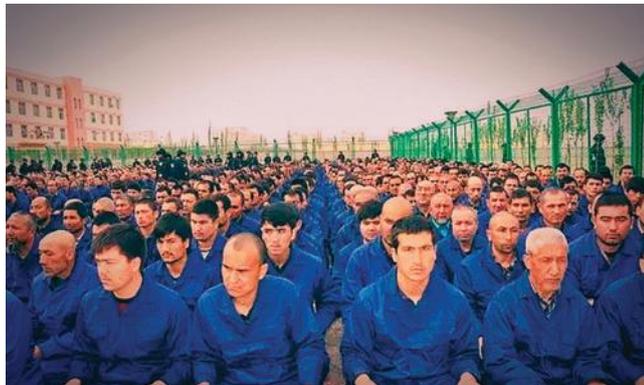
Re-education camp detainees in Xinjiang listening to 'de-radicalisation' talks. Credit: Radio Free Asia, 2017.

In addition to mass detention, the CCP government has used a range of political and legal **measures to suppress Uyghur identity**. The teaching of Uyghur language has been subject to restrictions in schools, as have Muslim fasting practices for civil servants, teachers and students during Ramadan, including the wearing of longer beards and veils (Sudworth, 2019). In 2024, the CCP introduced new regulations requiring the **Sinicisation** of religious practices. These state that religions (generally, not specifically Islam) must 'practise the core values of socialism' and 'deeply excavate the content of [religious] teachings and interpret them in line with the requirements of contemporary China's development and progress, and in line with the excellent tradition of Chinese culture' (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Sinicisation is a process by which people or groups are acculturated or assimilated into Chinese (particularly Han Chinese) culture, language, social norms and/or identity.

⚙️ **Activity D – 'The One Australia principle'**

1 Consider the table provided and answer the questions that follow.

	Taiwan	Tasmania
Distance from mainland	180 km	220 km
Size	35 000 km^2	90 000 km^2
Population	23 million	540 000
Population as a % of total	1.7%	2.2%

a To what extent is it natural that Tasmania is considered part of the state of Australia? Should the same be considered true for Taiwan?

b How might an Australian government treat a Tasmanian independence movement (or a government based in Hobart claiming to be the one, true Australian government)?

c If an effectively independent Tasmania were to form an alliance with China, including purchasing Chinese arms, how would Australia react?

d What conclusions can you draw from this comparison when it comes to Taiwan? To what extent does the PRC claim of sovereignty over Taiwan have legitimacy?

2 Watch the following interview between a Hong Kong–based journalist and WHO official Dr Bruce Aylward and answer the questions that follow.

🔖 Max Walden, 2020. 'WHO accused of suppressing information about Taiwan's coronavirus prevention measures', ABC News. abc.net.au/news/2020-03-31/ who-accused-of-suppressing-taiwan-coronavirus-response-data/12101512

a To what extent does this demonstrate China's power?

b How might China's sensitivity regarding Taiwan's status and recognition by other actors help advance its security interests?

c How should diplomats manage demands that Taiwan be considered part of the PRC?

3 Consider how the Chinese government might view Uyghur separatism as a potential threat to stability within the state.

a What actions could (or *should*) the CCP take to address this issue?

b How do the policy instruments used by China compare to 'anti-terrorism' laws in Western states?

4 China's actions in Xinjiang have been characterised as acts of genocide by the US State Department and the Canadian and Dutch parliaments. Conversely, Human Rights Watch has stated that while the Chinese government is committing ongoing crimes against humanity there, they have not seen evidence of genocidal *intent*.

a Read and reflect on the definition of genocide provided in Article 2 of the Genocide Convention (1948): un.org/en/genocide-prevention/1948-convention

5 Using what you've learnt so far, supplemented by your own research, answer the following questions.

a To what extent can the Chinese government's actions in Xinjiang be described as genocidal?

b How useful is this term regarding the repression of Uyghur people?

Economic prosperity 4.1.2.2

Renewables and green technology

One method China has used to pursue economic prosperity has been investments in renewables and green technology. Since the early 2010s China has **dominated production of renewable energy technology**, including producing 90 per cent of the world's solar panels – with Chinese solar exports worth US$52 billion in 2022. China has also found success in the production of electric vehicles (EVs), tending to focus on smaller, affordable vehicles over the luxury EVs produced by companies such as US-based Tesla. China now accounts for 60 per cent of the world's EV sales, dominating both the Chinese domestic market and the markets of other middle-income states such as Thailand and Indonesia. Much of this growth comes from state subsidies for car manufacturers, with the CCP government spending US$29 billion on subsidies and tax breaks for EV manufacturers between 2009 and 2022. In 2024, revenue from China's EV sales was worth over US$300 billion and is projected to grow to nearly US$400 billion by 2028. These have had a significant impact on China's economy – in 2023, 40 per cent of China's GDP growth came from renewable sources such as solar panels, alongside the production of lithium batteries.

China has also taken significant **steps to reduce local air pollution**. The WHO has estimated that air pollution contributes to 1 million deaths per year, with a much higher number of people experiencing periods of unproductivity due to illnesses such as pneumonia. The cost of environmental degradation in China has been estimated at 2.2 per cent of GDP, or over US$250 billion per year. In response, in 2023 China announced an air pollution policy that aimed to reduce by 10 per cent the concentration of fine particle pollutants that lead to the most serious health issues, through a range of regulations such as banning the use of coal generators that only provide electricity to single factories. The Chinese government has also committed to a target of one in three cars sold being electric by 2030. Policy measures by the CCP have already had some success, with concentrations of fine particles decreasing by 42 per cent between 2013 and 2021. These improvements are expected to contribute to China's economic growth.

China has also made a range of commitments regarding climate change. In 2020, Xi Jinping announced that China aimed to reach net zero emissions by 2060 and for emissions to peak by 2030. As of 2024, China already had the largest solar and wind capacity in the world, with 28 per cent of its energy production coming from clean energy sources. Nonetheless, China has remained the largest carbon emitter in the world, being responsible for more than one-quarter of global emissions in 2023. Additionally, China has continued to build coal-fired power stations to feed the state's need for all forms of energy, building three times more coal stations than the rest of the world combined in 2020. As a result, China's emissions rose by 5 per cent in 2023, and organisations such as Climate Action Tracker doubted that China would be able to meet its net zero commitments. Broadly speaking, this may reflect the government's desire to **strike a balance between reducing emissions via renewable energy and continued use of fossil fuels** to drive its economic development – with both contributing to China's economic prosperity in different ways.
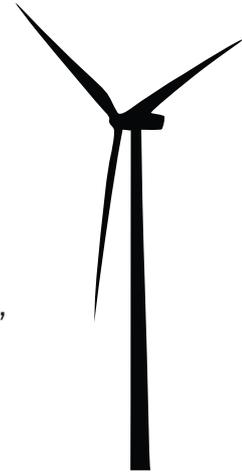
Read more here:

⇲ 'Clean energy is boosting economic growth'. International Energy Agency, 2024.
iea.org/commentaries/clean-energy-is-boosting-economic-growth

⇲ 'China on course to hit wind and solar power target five years ahead of time'.
The Guardian, 2023. theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/29/
china-wind-solar-power-global-renewable-energy-leader
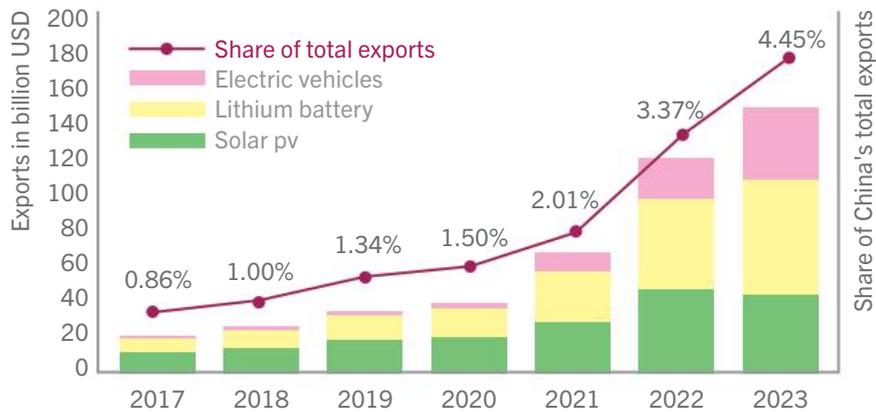
Select 'green' Chinese exports — share of total exports and value in USD, 2017-2023.
Credit: Jing Zhang and Christoph Nedopil, 2024. 'China Green Trade Report 2023'. Asia Insights.
Griffith University. blogs.griffith.edu.au/asiainsights/china-green-trade-report-2023

Economic reform

China has adopted an evolving series of economic and political policy instruments
with the aim of reforming its economy and achieving greater prosperity. These use
a variety of terms, but all seek to achieve the same broad shift — to move China's
economy from its previous basis to one that more closely resembles the economy of
Western developed states. In doing so, it seeks to:

● reduce reliance on exports and stimulate domestic demand

● prioritise high-end technological manufacturing over mass market production.

Initially released in 2015, the 'Made in China 2025' policy aimed to achieve this
by **increasing production in 10 high-tech industries, including pharmaceuticals
and robotics**, investing US$300 billion into this plan. Then, in 2020, Xi announced
a 'dual circulation strategy' that aimed to develop a domestic market for Chinese
goods alongside its traditional export market. The creation of such a market would
then protect China from disruptions caused by international trade restrictions, such
as those imposed by the US Trump administration in 2018.

'Made in China 2025' target sectors. Credit: Asia Briefing, 2018.
china-briefing.com/news/made-in-china-2025-explained

More recently, China has adopted the terms 'new productive forces' and 'high-quality development' as slogans for achieving economic prosperity. 'New productive forces' refers to manufacturing in industries such as semiconductors and electronic vehicles, with a particular focus on the research and development of new technologies. According to state news agency Xinhua, China has established 'sci-tech partnerships' with more than 160 countries in clean energy, artificial intelligence and biomedicine. The Economist (2024b) calculated that annual investment in 'new productive forces' has reached US$1.6 trillion annually, of which China has set aside US$139 billion per year for strategic sectors. Tilly Zhang of Gavekal Dragonomics, a consultancy firm, has said that 'China wants … to be the leader of the next industrial revolution' (The Economist, 2024a). China has already experienced some success — according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute out of 64 'critical technologies' China led the world in all but 11 in 2023.

Conversely, the focus on 'high-quality development' has been taken to mean a **pivot away from unsustainable economic practices** and an awareness that overall economic growth must come down from the highs experienced from the early 1990s through to the end of the 2010s. According to China Daily (2024), 'to promote high-quality development, the country needs to strike a balance between speed and quality'. This is evident in the CCP's decision to no longer set average growth targets in the 14th Five-year Plan (2021−25) and the most recent growth rate target of 5 per cent in 2024. Taken together, these measures may show that the **government is trying to reshape China into a higher-income economy**, similar to that of Western and OECD states, where annual GDP growth is likely to be between 1 per cent and 3 per cent.

The government has also demonstrated a desire to **shift away from property-led economic growth**, which has been responsible for up to one-quarter of China's GDP in the decade 2010−20. This form of growth often relies on growing debt being supported by growing *demand*, the latter of which has slowed as China runs out of people looking to migrate from regional to urban areas. The failure of real estate developer

Residential buildings developed by Evergrande in the southern province of Yunnan. Credit: w.wiki/AuD$

Evergrande in 2023 — which had borrowed more than US$300 billion and had more than 1300 projects across China — sparked a crisis across the real estate sector and contributed significantly to a downturn in China's economy overall. The government refused to offer Evergrande a bailout package and to instead allow it to go into liquidation, suggesting the Xi administration was content to have the economy rely less on unsustainable growth in the property sector.

Read more here:

⌕ 'Here's what to know about the collapse of China's Evergrande property developer'. NPR. npr.org/2024/01/30/1227554424/evergrande-china-real-estate-economy-property-collapse

Policy instrument	Explanation	Key stats
Made in China 2025	Grow domestic production of 10 key industries	US$300 billion
Dual circulation strategy	Creation of a dual-layer economy: outside layer is export-based, and inner is domestic-based	Domestic market $1.4 billion, with per capita income of US$14 000 annually
New productive forces	Investment in research on new technologies such as artificial intelligence and biomedicine	US$1.6 trillion annually
High-quality development	Reduction of growth targets and shift away from debt and real estate—led economic growth	2024 growth rate 5%

At the time of writing, China faces very significant economic challenges, having entered a period of deflation, where prices for consumer goods have been reducing. This is particularly challenging, as deflation can lead to a negative cycle of reduced business expenditure, increased unemployment and negative economic growth.

It's unclear whether China's ongoing reform efforts will succeed in reshaping the economy. Change is undoubtedly necessary to avoid an impending crash.

> " China no longer has a reliable engine of growth. The country's property boom is over. Cash-strapped developers are afraid to start building flats and people are afraid to buy them. The infrastructure mania has run out of road: indebted local governments lack the funds. Exporting goods to the rest of the world, which China relied on for decades to escape poverty, is getting harder as protectionism rises and Western countries become increasingly wary of relying on authoritarian states. Much therefore rests on one remaining source of growth: boosting the spending of China's 1.4bn people. "
>
> The Economist, 2024. 'Can China's consumers save its economy?'
> economist.com/china/2024/02/06/can-consumers-rescue-chinas-economy

Activity E – China's renewables and economics

1 Read the following article and answer the questions that follow.

Chermaine Lee, 2023. 'Is China a climate hero or a fossil fuel baddie?' Deutsche Welle. dw.com/en/is-china-a-climate-hero-or-a-fossil-fuel-baddie/a-67600268

   a How would you respond to the question posed in the title of this article?

   b Is it justifiable for China to continue to increase its per capita emissions to approach those of Western states? Why, or why not?

2 States such as Australia and the United States have recently announced investments in renewable energy and future technologies such as quantum computing. Read the following piece:

Brendan Walker-Munro, 2024. 'Quantum of silence'. Lowy Institute. lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/quantum-silence

   a How significant is competition between states in these areas?

   b Does this constitute a race between China and the West?

   c If so, which state seems more likely to win?

3 Conduct your own research into China's economic situation to answer the following questions.

   a What is China's economic outlook currently?

   b Is it largely positive or negative?

   c What specific issues currently shape China's economic outlook?

Regional relationships 4.1.2.3

Relationship with the United States

Over the past decade China and the United States have developed a more acrimonious relationship, largely due to their geopolitical rivalry. This is because of the growing perception among policymakers in both countries that one state's success is at the expense of the other. Despite this, there have been significant attempts by China to develop positive exchanges with the United States. **Both have been able to 'compartmentalise' aspects of their relationship**, so that they may agree on some issues while continuing to disagree on others.

The core of the China–US relationship remains their trade interdependence. This is the largest trade relationship in the world, worth over US$750 billion in 2022, with the United States being China's main export destination (US$530 billion) and China being the United States' third-largest destination (US$150 billion), after Canada and Mexico. Together, they represent around 40 per cent of global economic output. As such, **these states rely on each other for a significant proportion of their economic prosperity**: China gains in the form of sales income from exports, while the United States receives improved purchasing power due to the low cost of Chinese products.

These figures indicate that there is a substantial **trade imbalance** between the states, worth over US$360 billion. The US trade imbalance with China has been viewed by some economists and politicians as a problem for the United States, who must buy more products from China than it sells to them — one result being that wealth (particularly *currency*) flows from America to China. Conversely, other experts argue that these statistics should not be seen in isolation, given the broader economic benefits of the trade relationship, such as lower prices for consumers.

> **Trade imbalances** occur when the value of a country's imports significantly exceeds the value of its exports, or vice versa; this can lead to economic issues such as currency instability, excessive debts or poor trade competitiveness.

Read more here:

🖰 'America doesn't import too much from China: The real problem is US exports are too low'. Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, 2023. itif.org/publications/2023/10/02/america-doesnt-import-too-much-from-china-us-exports-are-too-low

🖰 'What is a trade deficit and how does it affect the economy?' World Economic Forum, 2022. weforum.org/agenda/2022/11/trade-deficit-global-economy

America's trade deficit with China was the main pretext for **the Trump administration's 'trade war' with China in 2018–19**. The US placed tariffs on Chinese products worth US$550 billion, while China responded with tariffs amounting to products worth US$185 billion (Hass and Denmark, 2020). In 2020, the two states signed a 'phase one' deal that sought to end the dispute, with China agreeing to purchase an additional US$200 billion of US products over two years. However, China failed to meet this commitment, and the Biden administration largely kept tariffs on Chinese products in place.

The United States and China have nonetheless reached agreements on several issues.

- In a 2021 joint statement on the sidelines of the Glasgow climate conference, both states recognised the seriousness of climate change and committed to holding global average temperatures to well below 2 degrees Celsius.

- During a 2023 meeting between presidents Biden and Xi, the two leaders agreed to resume military dialogue that had previously been suspended (after former US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022) and to begin discussing the possibility of coordinating efforts to regulate artificial intelligence technology.

- In 2024, China began discussions with the US on restricting traffic of the drug fentanyl — China being the world's largest producer.

Read more here:

'The contentious US–China relationship, by the numbers'. The New York Times, 2023. nytimes.com/2023/07/07/business/economy/us-china-relationship-facts.html

'The contentious US–China trade relationship'. Council on Foreign Relations, 2024. cfr.org/backgrounder/contentious-us-china-trade-relationship

Mask diplomacy

One of the ways China sought to improve relationships with states both within the region and more broadly is through **providing aid in the form of medical supplies and vaccines** in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic raged in 2020 and 2021, China began supplying masks and other protective equipment to states worldwide. According to Bloomberg, during 2020 Chinese factories exported 224 million single-use masks — almost 40 for every person in the world. These shipments were equal to 2 per cent of Chinese exports in 2020, worth US$52 billion. Similarly, China sent medical assistance to both lower-income *and* higher-income states. In March 2020, China gifted 31 tonnes of medical supplies as well as doctors to Italy to address what was at the time the largest COVID outbreak. In contrast, other EU states refused to donate supplies to Italy, instead stockpiling them for their own populations.

China was also a **significant source of vaccines for many lower-income countries**. Although the Chinese Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines were less effective than Western mRNA vaccines, they were arguably more valuable to developing states, as they did not use live viral material and, therefore, could be stored at normal refrigerator temperature. While the vaccines were shown to have only around 50–60 per cent effectiveness, they still reduced harm from COVID and were much more available to lower-income states than those produced in the West, which were stockpiled by higher-income countries. In 2021, China pledged 2 billion

Credit: Agus Suparto/Indonesian Presidential Palace via AP, 2021.

doses to COVAX, a WHO program that aimed to ensure fair distribution of COVID vaccines, particularly to frontline health workers around the world. Within the region, Indonesia became a significant destination for Chinese vaccines, ordering 50 million doses of Sinovac and 60 million of Sinopharm at a cost of US$45 million. In 2021, Indonesian President Joko Widodo (pictured) became the first world leader to publicly receive a Chinese COVID vaccine — doing so on live television.

These actions can be viewed as an attempt to reverse the damage to China's international image, being the place where COVID-19 was first detected. China's strict lockdown policies meant that in the initial stages of the pandemic it was relatively *less* impacted than other countries such as the United States, where infections were much more widespread. As a result, China's aid seemed aimed at '**shifting the narrative**' from being the source of the outbreak to leading the fight to *respond* to it, particularly in lower-income countries.

Panda diplomacy

'Panda diplomacy' refers to the Chinese government's long-standing practice of 'loaning' pandas (which are only found in mainland China) to zoos in other countries as a way of reinforcing positive relationships with those countries. Zoos that are granted a breeding pair of pandas must pay US$1 million per year to China, with any offspring they produce also considered property of the Chinese government. This represents a form of cultural power insofar as **pandas are widely seen as a positive symbol of China**; in this way, it can be a means of fostering positive sentiment among the recipient country's population.

There is a correlation between China's gift of pandas and the fostering of political and economic relationships. However, it is difficult to determine whether panda diplomacy is a cause or outcome of these decisions. For example, in 2017, China agreed to send Indonesia two pandas to celebrate 60 years of bilateral ties. China is Indonesia's largest trading partner and is considered a core member of the BRI, as the maritime 'road' necessarily passes through Indonesia's territorial waters. It is considered so significant that President Xi announced the maritime portion of the initiative in Jakarta in 2013. Meanwhile, Indonesia has also repeatedly asserted that it is not a claimant in the South China Sea dispute.

Elsewhere, in 2019, China also sent Russia pandas during a visit in which Xi described Vladimir Putin as his 'best friend'.

The location of all 60 individual pandas living outside mainland China. Credit: AFP, 2024.

Conversely, China has used its **reluctance to initiate or renew panda loans as a way of expressing strain in its relationships with Western countries**. From 2019, China began recalling pandas from US zoos, reflecting their displeasure over the ongoing US–China trade dispute, alongside other issues. By 2024, there were scheduled to be no remaining pandas hosted in US zoos. Nonetheless, after a four-hour meeting between presidents Biden and Xi during the APEC summit at San Francisco in 2023, Xi announced that two pandas would be sent to San Diego. During the dinner at which he made the announcement, Xi called pandas 'envoys of friendship between the Chinese and American peoples'.

Views of China's approach to foreign policy

The Chinese government has had mixed success in promoting a positive self-image internationally. Establishing the actual contribution of China's recent efforts (such as those discussed in this section) to popular perceptions in other countries is somewhat difficult. However, data from polling conducted in a range of countries provides some indication of the polarity of global opinion towards China.

- In 2019, 71 per cent of those polled in Russia viewed China positively (Pew Research Center, 2019).

- A 2023 survey found that 49 per cent of Indonesians expressed a favourable opinion of China compared to 25 per cent unfavourable (Lowy Institute, 2021).

- In 2023, 83 per cent of Americans and 87 per cent of Australians surveyed viewed the Chinese government **unfavourably**, respectively (Pew Research Center, 2023).

Read more here:

☞ 'China can't catch a break in Asian public opinion'. Foreign Policy, 2023.
foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/28/china-soft-power-asia-culture-influence-korea-singapore

Country	Unfavourable	Favourable
US	83	14
Canada	79	14
Sweden	85	12
Germany	76	18
France	72	22
UK	69	27
Spain	66	28
Italy	58	36
Hungary	50	42
Japan	87	11
Australia	87	11
South Korea	77	22
India	67	26
Indonesia	25	49
Kenya	23	72
Brazil	48	39
Argentina	34	41
Mexico	33	57
24-country median	67	28

%
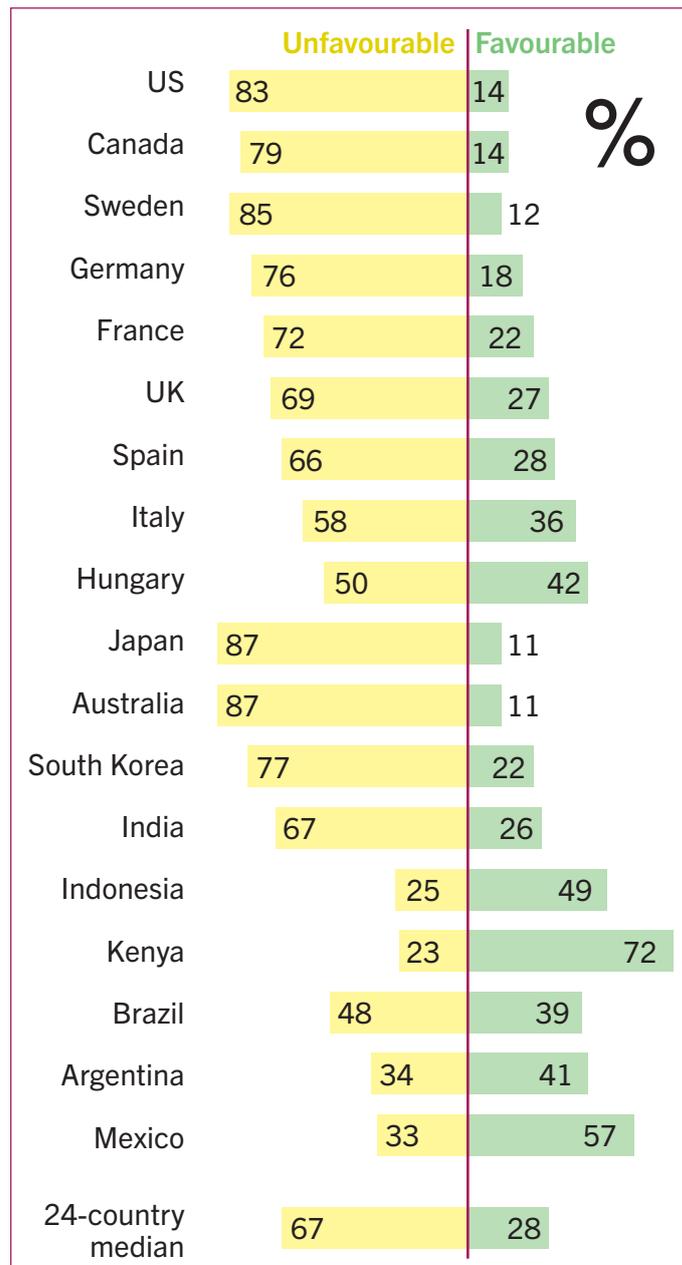
Proportion of survey respondents in selected countries who reported having a favourable or unfavourable view of the Chinese government's approach to foreign policy in 2023.
Credit: Pew Research Center, 2023.
pewresearch.org/global/2023/07/27/views-of-china

Activity F – Perceptions of China's approach to foreign policy

1   Watch this video of the meeting between Chinese and US officials in Alaska, 2021:

abc.net.au/news/2021-03-20/us-china-finish-tough-and-direct-talks-in-alaska/13264462

a   Do you believe former US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was right to raise concerns regarding Hong Kong and the Uyghurs during this meeting? Why, or why not?

b   Did raising these concerns have a positive or negative effect? Consider the impact on these issues and on US–China relations.

c   To what extent was Yang Jiechi's response legitimate?

2   Conduct research to describe recent dialogue between the United States and China.

a   Has it been characterised by further hostility or by conciliation?

b   What issues have been discussed between these states?

3   China's aid programs to developing states are often contrasted with those of the West; China's aid is often attractive, as it comes with few conditions, but are typically loans rather than gifts, meaning that they need to be repaid. Western aid tends to be grants, but they often come with a range of conditions attached.

a   Imagine you represent a lower-income country. Which of these options might be more attractive, and why?

4   Explore the following:

Laura Silver, Christine Huang and Laura Clancy, 2022. 'How global public opinion of China has shifted in the Xi era'. Pew Research Center. pewresearch.org/global/2022/09/28/how-global-public-opinion-of-china-has-shifted-in-the-xi-era

a   Which states have primarily positive perceptions of China?

b   Which states have primarily negative perceptions of China?

c   What factors have shaped these perceptions?

d   Which of these states have been beneficiaries of mask and/or panda diplomacy? Do these statistics suggest either have been impactful?

5   Consider your own perspective on the Chinese government.

a   Is it broadly positive or negative?

b   What major factors have shaped your opinion?

c   To what extent is it shaped by cultural factors – for example, Chinese media, history, food and art?

Regional standing 4.1.2.4

South China Sea

While this section focuses *primarily* on regional standing, China's pursuit of sovereignty over the South China Sea links quite well to multiple national interests.

National security

Credit: Jarrod Fankhauser, 2023, for ABC News. abc.net.au/news/2023-02-03/
south-china-sea-beijing-china-taiwan-gas-fishing-military/101843870

China claims approximately 80 per cent of the South China Sea, based on a 'nine-dash line' on maps used by the PRC to mark the extent of its southern maritime boundary claims since 1952. While this claim was rejected by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016, it is likely that the CCP continues to consider the claim legitimate. The strength of this feeling can also be linked to the century of humiliation and China's keen awareness that it does not possess all its traditional territory. As such, China sees the South China Sea as a national security issue that involves the reclamation of its territorial integrity.

Economic prosperity

Controlling the vast majority of the South China Sea also has implications for China's continued prosperity. Indeed, the sea itself has significant resources, including an estimated 11 billion barrels of oil, 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 12 per cent of the world's fish stock, worth over US$21 billion. It is also crucial as a global shipping lane, with roughly one-third of all global shipping passing through the South China Sea, the majority of which travels to or from China itself. In 2016, nearly 40 per cent of Chinese trade passed through the South China Sea, worth US$1.4 trillion. Therefore, if the Chinese government can exert effective control over the South China Sea, it will dually secure China's direct access to valuable natural resources while also ensuring control of trade in this region.

Regional relationships and regional standing

China's pursuit of territorial control over the South China Sea has had a significant **negative** impact on its relationships with states in the region. Notably, it has led to direct conflict with the Philippines and Vietnam, who are the other major claimants

in the area. While the dispute appears to have damaged its regional relationships and regional standing, in some sense its ability to exercise effective control over the area can be understood as adding to China's regional standing, insofar as it shows the state as being more *powerful* and capable than even a few decades prior.

Consider the following two ways of interpreting the idea of 'standing' in the international arena.

- It may reflect the perception that a state is among the most **supportive and reliable** in the region.

- It may reflect the view that the state is among the most **powerful** in the region.

In both cases, China is viewed as central to the order of the region. If standing is considered in terms of centrality, then friendly relations with states is only one way to achieve this aim. An interpretation of standing that instead focuses on power is effectively a realist interpretation of international relations, where states consider the world order as a system of competing national interests, rather than as a cooperative system that aims to ensure the universal betterment of all.

Hugh White describes the significance of a state's standing as follows:

> "Great powers care deeply about their place in the international system, because everything else that is most important to them — their security, prosperity and status — depends on it. Only the direct defence of their own land and people matters more to them, and often not even that. "
>
> Hugh White, 2017. 'Without America: Australia in the New Asia'. *Quarterly Essay*, no. 68.

The South China Sea dispute demonstrates China's pursuit of greater regional standing because it puts the state's interests in more direct conflict with those of the United States, which currently projects power in the region through 'freedom of navigation' operations while also supporting the competing claims made by both Vietnam and the Philippines. If China were able to establish control and thereby prevent or restrict US presence in the South China Sea, it would be clear evidence that China's power in the region would have surpassed that of the United States. This is because China will have been more successful in pursuing its aims, while preventing America from achieving theirs. In doing so, it will demonstrate to states in the region that, in the end, the United States cannot be relied on to support their territorial integrity. As such, it may be in their interests to realign and switch their support to China, as without it, they may not be able to access the South China Sea.

Cutting it fine

China's strategy in the South China Sea has sometimes been described by way of a metaphor — 'slicing the salami'. This sees a series of individually small but repeated actions that gradually, incrementally and cumulatively make a material difference (in this case, establishing increasingly more effective control over the area). In this scenario, none of these individual actions seem sufficiently serious enough to warrant a serious response (such as a military one by other actors with an interest in the region).
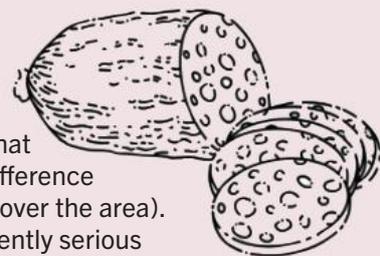
In pursuit of its aims, China has completed **land reclamation projects** on at least four islands including Fiery Cross Reef and Woody Island. China has installed a range of military equipment including radar, airstrips, hangars for military aircraft, and both anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles. According to US Indo-Pacific commander Admiral John C. Aquilino, 'over the past 20 years, we've witnessed the largest military buildup since World War II by the PRC'. These islands have been likened to stationary aircraft carriers or 'lily pads', which allow China to track other vessels and threaten denial of access.

China has also been implicated in **unsafe interception of other military assets** in the region.

- In 2021, the Chinese coastguard used water cannons and engaged in dangerous manoeuvres, seeking to prevent Filipino ships from accessing particular areas.

- In 2023, a Chinese jet flew within 3 metres of a US bomber in the area.

- Also in 2023, a US destroyer was forced to divert course to avoid a collision with a Chinese naval ship.

- In the same year a coastguard ship was accused of ramming Filipino ships that were attempting to resupply a military outpost on Second Thomas Shoal.

In response to the incident with the US destroyer, the former CCP Minister of Defence, General Li Shangfu, said the following during the 2023 Shangri-La Dialogue:

> We must prevent attempts that want to use freedom of navigation and innocent passage as a pretext to exercise hegemony of navigation. As defence minister … I see a lot of information about foreign vessels and fighter jets coming into areas near our territory. They are not here for innocent passage, they're here for provocation. …
>
> What's the point of going there? For China, we always say mind your own business, take good care of your own vessels, your fighter jets, take good care of your own territorial airspace and waters. If that is the case, then I don't think there will be future problems.

Jamie Seidel, 2023. ''How wars start': Close call reveals terrifying China reality amid warship showdown'. news.com.au/technology/innovation/military/how-wars-start-close-call-reveals-terrifying-china-reality-amid-warship-showdown/news-story/185b4e476dd481eafbb8ad3588218f70.

China has also utilised a maritime fishing fleet to conduct informal or 'grey zone' operations in the area. These are ostensibly **private fishing vessels that act to establish a presence near islands and harass ships from other states**. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, this militia constitutes 'a force of vessels ostensibly engaged in commercial fishing but which in fact operate alongside Chinese law enforcement and military to achieve political objectives in disputed waters' (Poling et al., 2021). There have been multiple

Satellite images showing the rapid development of Fiery Cross Reef between 2014 (left) and 2016 (right). Credit: Getty Images.

instances of up to 100 fishing vessels that have swarmed Whitsun Reef in Philippine territory, who then engage in 'rafting', where they are tied together in long lines that inhibit the Philippines from moving them on. Most of these ships do not fish and instead are effectively squatting in this territory. The CCP provides subsidies to these ships if they remain in the area for 280 days of the year.

In 2020, China **declared the formation of two municipalities** that covered the South China Sea. The jurisdiction of Sansha City in Woody Island covers an area of 2 million square kilometres, which includes 280 islands, shoals and reefs. China has also built civilian architecture including schools, hospitals and private enterprises. In doing so, the Chinese government established a civilian presence on the island to substantiate its claim of having a permanent presence in the area, and to 'normalise' it as an ordinary area of Chinese territory.

> " From Washington, it has been hard to see why Beijing would want to change a regional order which has worked so well for so long – not just for America, but for countries in Asia, including China itself. They don't see that for China the US-led order perpetuates the humiliations inflicted when China's old imperial state and tributary system was destroyed by Western powers in the nineteenth century. They don't see that it perpetuates a subordinate status for China, and stands in the way of it regaining what it sees as its natural place at the head of the regional order. They do not see how important this is, not just to ruling elites in Beijing but also, so far as one can judge, to the vast majority of Chinese. They accept too readily the well-worn assumption that economic growth is all that matters to the Chinese people, and therefore to the Chinese Communist Party. They fail to see, therefore, that the Chinese are just as jealous of their country's standing and reputation, and just as suspicious of others who might seek to degrade it, as Americans are. For the Chinese, and for Xi Jinping, nothing is more important than China regaining its place as a great power, subordinate to no one, and as the primary power in East Asia. "
>
> Hugh White, 2017. 'Without America: Australia in the New Asia'. *Quarterly Essay*, no. 68.

The Belt and Road Initiative

First announced in 2013, the BRI has been a signature policy of Xi Jinping's presidency and is a core instrument through which China seeks to both develop positive relationships with other states and improve its overall standing within the Indo-Pacific. In 2017, the CCP officially incorporated the BRI into its constitution.

The nine-dash line next to 'Asia' doodles in the background may appear innocuous enough, but sensitivities around its inclusion led to *Barbie* being banned from screening in Vietnam. Credit: Warner Bros, 2023.

As of 2024 the BRI involves 151 states, comprising two-thirds of the world's population and 40 per cent of global GDP. Within the region **almost every Indo-Pacific state has joined the BRI**, with notable exceptions being India, Australia, Japan, Bhutan and Taiwan. China has spent more than US$1 *trillion* on BRI-related projects, the most prominent of which have involved development of key infrastructure such as roads, ports and railways.

> " The Belt and Road Initiative is the most ambitious template for inter-regional trade and development ever. If its future expansion is built on the pillars of sustainability, inclusiveness, and resilience, it could potentially become the greatest contributor to economic and social development ever. "
>
> World Economic Forum, 2021. 'The Belt and Road Cities' Connectivity Index'.
> weforum.org/publications/belt-and-road-cities-connectivity-index-report

BRI projects improve developing states' ability to act as trading partners with China, thereby contributing to the latter's economic prosperity. The World Bank estimates that by 2030 the BRI will generate US$1.6 trillion in annual global revenue.

The BRI can be understood as part of a larger project of reorienting the world economy towards China. **BRI projects increase states' dependence on the Chinese economy**, leading to greater leverage that can be used to progress China's political aims. This is particularly the case, as Chinese investments in partner countries typically take the form of loans, leading many analysts to argue that the BRI is a form of 'debt-trap diplomacy'.
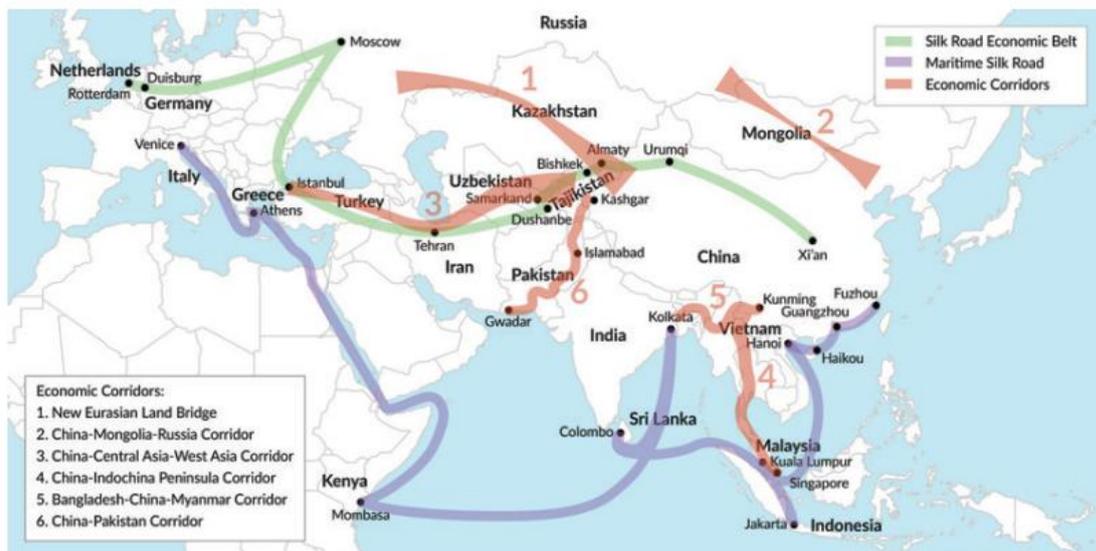
A simplified map of China's 'Belt and Road' Initiative. Credit: macpixxel for Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG. gisreportsonline.com/r/belt-road-initiative-dangers

Australian political journalist Peter Hartcher has compared the BRI to the Roman Empire:

> " The original Belt and Road was built 2000 years ago; the Roman Empire was its forerunner. As their empire grew, the Romans built a network of paved roads 80 000 kilometres long to move their armies at speed in straight lines. Today the roads would be called a 'dual use technology'. They were built chiefly for the army to extend Rome's power, but they also served as the most important trade routes and cultural vectors of their time, generating wealth and spreading Christianity. The roads allowed Rome to build a polyglot of peoples, races, languages and kingdoms. They put Rome at the centre. It was a truism that 'all roads lead to Rome'. "
>
> Peter Hartcher, 2021. *Red Zone: China's Challenge and Australia's Future*. Black Inc.

Significant examples of BRI projects include:

- **Pakistan** – US$62 billion for the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor, the overall name for a series of roads, railways and energy pipelines that would stretch from western China to the Arabian Sea – which, in turn, is part of the Indian Ocean. The corridor is significant to China, as it may eventually lead to a cost-effective alternative trade route, enabling trade to travel from China to India, the Middle East, Africa and Europe (and vice versa) without ever having to pass through the South China Sea, or the western Pacific Ocean more broadly.

- **Indonesia** – 71 BRI-associated programs as of 2023, valued at US$20.3 billion. China provided funding for the construction of the $5-billion Jakarta–Bandung high-speed railway, which opened in 2023. They have also agreed to contribute funding for the development of the new Indonesian capital, Nusantara.

- **Malaysia** – one of the top 10 destinations for BRI investment and the largest recipient of BRI investment in South-East Asia, with over US$40 billion in investment in the last 10 years. This includes the East Coast Rail Link project at US$18 billion, which was initially cancelled in 2018 due to corruption concerns before being renegotiated.

The political impact of BRI is already evident. At the 2024 ASEAN meeting in Melbourne, **Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim urged other states to accept China as a superpower**, suggesting that the risk of conflict in the South China Sea had been exaggerated by Western observers. Similarly, he stated that the status of Taiwan was an issue for China and the Taiwanese alone to resolve. Additionally, in 2019, 50 states – all of which were members of the BRI – sent a joint letter to the UN Human Rights Council supporting China's stance on Xinjiang. Then, in 2020, 53 countries from the BRI made a joint submission to the Council in support of Hong Kong's new national security law. In the case of the latter, this was contrasted with another joint statement that criticised the law, signed by 27 states, of which only six had joined the BRI.

Activity G – China's significance in the region

1. In your own words, explain why states seek to improve their regional relationships and/or regional standing.

2. Use this site to explore the map of China's military power in the South China Sea and answer the questions that follow.

   amti.csis.org/power-projection-network

   a. How can China's actions be described as a 'salami strategy' for control over the area?

   b. Does this strategy make it more or less likely that China will achieve control over this area?

   c. What responses could the international community make to China's actions?

3. Consider the pros and cons of China's pursuit of dominance over the South China Sea.

   a. In what ways does it serve China's interests overall?

   b. In what ways might it detract from China's interests overall?

4. Use the following site to explore the BRI within the Indo-Pacific:

   carnegieendowment.org/2023/12/05/
   how-has-china-s-belt-and-road-initiative-impacted-southeast-asian-countries-pub-91170

   a. What have been the reactions of other states regarding the BRI?

   b. What might they have seen as the benefits of the initiative?

   c. Alternatively, what might other states see as potential pitfalls or disincentives attached to becoming involved in the BRI?

Foreign policy instruments and how they are used 4.1.3

The study design also asks students to respond to specific questions about foreign policy **instruments**. Note that these must be *foreign*, as opposed to domestic policy instruments. For the purposes of the study design, Taiwan (ROC) can be considered a foreign country, as it bears most of the hallmarks of statehood, despite the contest between it and the PRC over their respective claims for sovereignty.

Provided are listed examples of each foreign policy instrument.

Diplomacy 4.1.3.1

- diplomatic isolation of Taiwan
- joint letters sent to the Human Rights Commission
- diplomatic meetings between the United States and China
- announcement of net zero emissions target
- Solomon Islands security deal.

Trade 4.1.3.2

- trade with the United States
- trade with Taiwan
- trade restrictions on Australia
- trade with North Korea — see:

'The China—North Korea relationship'. Council on Foreign Relations, 2024. cfr.org/backgrounder/china-north-korea-relationship

Foreign aid 4.1.3.3

- COVID-19 aid
- BRI loans
- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank projects — see:

'China's intentions for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank'. Australian Institute of International Affairs, 2024. internationalaffairs.org.au/chinas-intentions-for-the-asian-infrastructure-investment-bank

'What do we know about Chinese lending in Africa?' Carnegie Endowment, 2021. carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/06/what-do-we-know-about-chinese-lending-in-africa

Effectiveness of the state in achieving its national interests 4.1.4

When considering the effectiveness of a state achieving its national interests, it's worth acknowledging that states rarely 'achieve' their interest as such. **States may be more or less successful in pursuing their various interests**; however, the interests themselves are an ongoing commitment that require attention, maintenance and reconsideration in light of changing circumstances.

As such, it's useful to consider the effectiveness of a state's actions in terms of whether an interest has been *advanced*. Typically, actions pursued by any actor can be measured against progress towards a long-term goal — noting that on many occasions actions may fail in this respect, stall or even backfire. At times, there may seem to be a disconnect between a state's actions and the goals they are trying to

achieve. Additionally, a state's use of different forms of power and policy instruments often interact with each other in complex ways. It can be valuable to see these as levers or switches on a soundboard, which can 'amplify' each other while on other occasions contradicting or cancelling each other out.

In the case of China, it seems likely (from our vantage point at the time of publication) that it is on track towards achieving many of its national interest goals. Nonetheless, there are examples of the Chinese government facing significant challenges and instances when their actions do not appear to have led to direct benefits. Evaluations of effectiveness are largely a matter of interpretation and generally require us to link specific policy instruments with outcomes that are uncertain or still developing.

Activity H – How China exercises power

Use what you've learnt so far to answer the following questions.

1 Rank China's actual use of different forms of power according to their effectiveness.

2 Explain why you have ranked each type of power in this way.

3 Which forms of power do you think are more likely to help China's short-term goals?

4 Which are likely to assist in China's long-term goals.

5 Complete a table using the labels provided to show the ways in which China uses various forms of power to pursue its interests.

	Security	Economic prosperity	Regional relationships	Regional standing
Military				
Economic				
Diplomatic				
Political				
Cultural				

6 Use the suggested 'causal chains' provided to practise describing China's effectiveness at pursuing its national interests.

Interest [informs] action [which leads to] consequence

National security ➡ military posturing towards Taiwan ➡ growth of Taiwanese national identity

National security ➡ Uyghur mass incarceration ➡ reduction in terrorist acts

Economic prosperity ➡ economic reforms ➡ US trade war

Economic prosperity ➡ renewable energy investments ➡ building of coal-fired power plants

Regional relationships ➡ US trade relationship ➡ compartmentalisation of relationship

Regional relationships ➡ panda diplomacy ➡ favourable views of China

International standing ➡ South China Sea dispute ➡ US freedom of navigation operations

International standing ➡ BRI ➡ letters to UN Human Rights Council

7 Create a concept map for this area of study outlining the following:

— national interest

— relevant case studies

— relevant policy instruments

— other details.

Make sure to include flow-on effects and the repercussions of China's actions on other national interests. Use the template provided as a starting point.
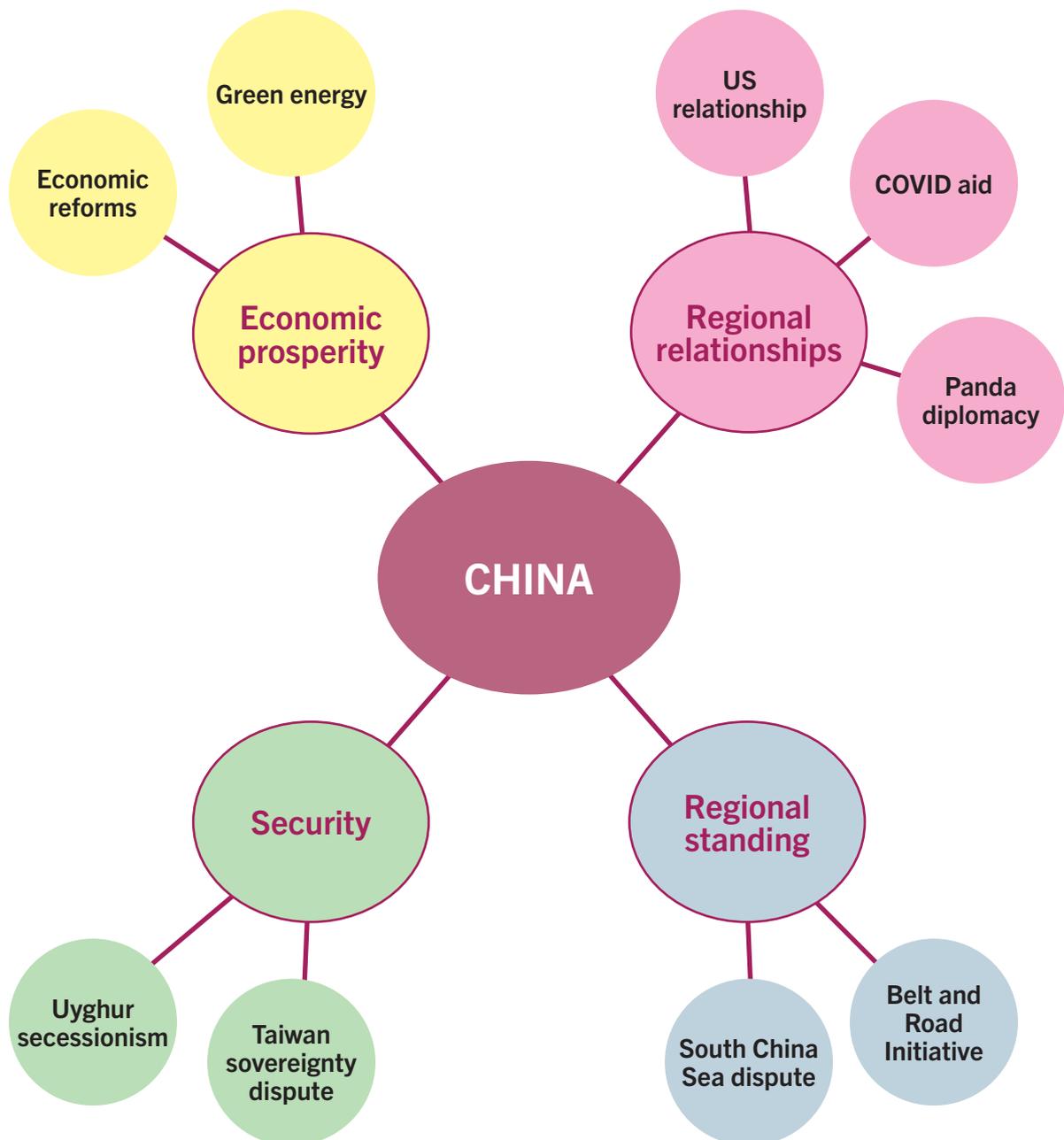
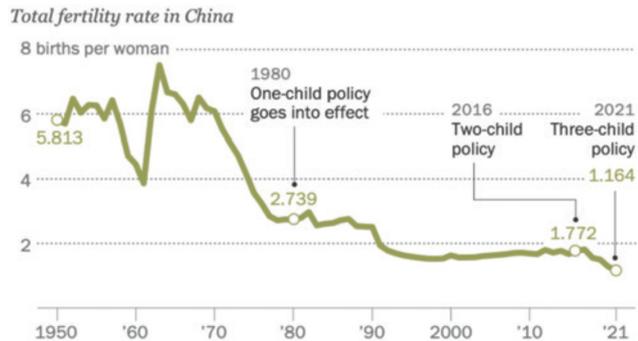## Challenges to the state achieving its national interests

Demography

Perhaps the most significant challenge to China's national interest — particularly its ability to achieve economic prosperity and attain high-income status — is its **ageing population**. China faces the consequences of the one-child policy that was put in place between 1979 and 2015, which saw birth rates dramatically reduce by restricting many families to having just one child. This has led to an uneven age distribution in the population, meaning that as workers age there are significantly fewer people in the following generation to replace them. If China's current over-60 population were a country, it would be the fourth-most populous in the world; in fact, it is projected that by 2050, one-third of China's population will be over 60. This means that a smaller proportion of the population will be of working age and, therefore, available to contribute to economic productivity and standard of living — however, at the same time, there will be an increase in seniors who may require care.

China's fertility rate has decreased precipitously in recent years, despite its loosening of the one-child policy

Total fertility rate in China

By 2100, China may have more people outside the working-age population than inside it

The dependency ratio, or the ratio of those outside the working age population (ages 0 to 14 and 65+) for every 100 people in the working-age population (ages 15 to 64)

Under the **medium variant scenario**, in 2100 there will be an estimated **102.8** dependents (ages 0-14 or 65+) per 100 working-age adults (15-64).

Credit: Pew Research Center, 2022.
pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/05/
key-facts-about-chinas-declining-population

Although the one-child policy ended in 2016, the average birth rate has continued to decline. This is partly due to a 'natural' reduction which takes place as populations become wealthier, and particularly when women have greater choice and access to education and economic mobility. Chinese citizens have also increased their focus on safeguarding living standards for themselves (and any children they may *already* have) — for instance, by purchasing property pursuing higher education, or just saving generally maintaining greater savings to better protect themselves from unforeseen challenges or health issues. China's birth rate is currently below the replacement rate (that is, the rate of deaths in the population). As a result, the Chinese population is now shrinking. (In fact, in 2023, India overtook China as the most populous state.) This has led economist Keyu Jin (2023) to ask, 'will China grow old before it grows rich?'

The other long-term impact of the one-child policy concerns gender. There are 118 men for every 100 women in China, largely owing to selective pregnancy terminations. Because of this, men in China are more likely to remain single and less likely to father children.
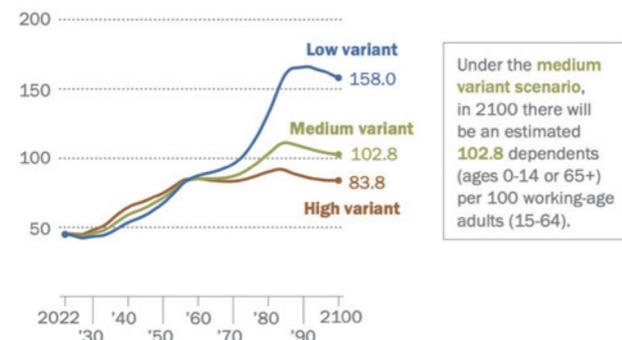
Most advanced countries face the issue of an ageing population. Many Western states – including Australia – have responded to similar problems by encouraging immigration. However, China is reluctant to do so. Observers such as Hartcher (2021) speculate that the CCP may be moving China more closely to a more 'race-based' understanding of what it means to be Chinese, while other speculating that the party may be concerned about continued relatively high birth rates among the non-Han Chinese population leading to a relative decrease in the proportion of the population that is Han (Stone, 2020). There are only 1 million foreign-born residents in China, equal to 0.1 per cent of the population. In comparison, Australia has over 7 million foreign-born residents, nearly 30 per cent of the population. Additionally, far more people emigrate from China than immigrate to it; in 2021, the country experienced a net out-migration of 200ª000 people.

International rivals

Another challenge to China's interests is the **efforts of rival states to constrain it**. The United States led these efforts during both the Trump and Biden administrations, and it seems likely America will attempt to restrict China's power in future. This has occurred economically, through tariffs imposed by Trump in 2018, and through the 2023 restrictions on sales of semiconductors and other advanced technologies to China. Similarly, the United States has sought to encircle China through a web of military agreements between themselves, India, Australia and Japan, known collectively as 'the Quad'. Among the most prominent of these has been the AUKUS agreement, in which Australia will procure nuclear-powered submarines. However, the United States has also developed military ties with India, including becoming India's largest military exercise partner. Similarly, during a White House state visit in 2024, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and President Biden agreed to a range of defence pacts, including encouraging Japan to cooperate with the AUKUS alliance. In turn, the United States has encouraged ally states to engage with each other – Australia and Japan signed a joint security declaration in 2022, and in 2023 India and Japan also agreed to further security cooperation. Another example is the 'Five Eyes' intelligence-sharing network between Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand, which has increasingly focused on China's cyber capabilities.

Consequences of national interests for other regional actors 4.1.6

Security

China's desire for security has had increasingly negative implications for its neighbours. This includes Taiwan, which faces continued pressure and may in the end fall under control of the PRC. China's security goals may also lead to reduced control over territorial waters for states in the South China Sea, particularly the Philippines and Vietnam. This would have further consequences, in that these states may face restrictions on access to the region for fishing, energy resources and trade.

Another consequence of China's growing military power is the increasing perception of it as a **major security threat to Japan**. A direct consequence of this has been the reinterpretation of Japan's pacifist constitution to include the concept of collective self-defence. Japan also administers the (uninhabited) Senkaku Islands located to the north-east of Taiwan, which are claimed as Chinese territory by both the PRC and Taiwan. In 2022, Japan introduced a new security strategy that involved

US$320 billion in military spending, making Japan the third-largest military spender in the world after the United States and China. It is even speculated that Japan may seek to develop nuclear weapons to act as a deterrent.

Read more here:

🗒 'Japan is destined to have nuclear weapons'. The National Interest, 2023. nationalinterest.org/feature/japan-destined-have-nuclear-weapons-207811

The Senkaku (also known as Diaoyu) Islands (circled) are an ongoing point of friction between Japan and China.
Credit: w.wiki/8ktm

Economic prosperity

China's continued economic growth is generally considered a positive development for the region, as it should lead to greater prosperity and opportunities for its trading partners. For example, China is the main destination for Australian mineral resources such as iron ore, with total exports to China worth US$120 billion in 2023. Similarly, China imports machinery and technology from South Korea and Japan, worth US$162 billion and US$160 billion respectively in 2023. Growth allows China to further invest in lower-income states in the region, thus, spurring economic growth in these countries.

At the same time, if China does successfully transition away from its traditional economic model and instead adopts principles such as the 'dual circulation strategy', 'new productive forces' and 'high-quality development', this may lead to less demand for resources and technologies from other states. A China that has moved away from real estate–led economic growth and that has embraced renewable energy sources may not require Australian fossil fuels to the same degree as it has previously. Similarly, as China makes its own advancements in technology, it will have less need to import from states such as Japan and South Korea.

Regional relationships and regional standing

If China improves relationships with states in the region, it will likely be mutually beneficial for almost all states in the Indo-Pacific. Notably, China's use of development assistance and cultural power to improve ties with states such as Indonesia and Malaysia should dampen security tensions within the region. Outside the major sticking point of the South China Sea, states may continue to view China as a constructive partner and seek greater ties with them.

At the same time, China's relationships with 'rogue' states — particularly Russia, North Korea and Myanmar — seem likely to cause concern, particularly for Western states. Additionally, China's attempts to attract South-East Asian and Pacific Island states tend to be viewed by Western states as a kind of 'tug of war', in that any move towards China constitutes a move away from the West.

Read more here:

🗒 'North Korea and China aren't the allies you think they are'. RAND, 2023. rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/09/north-korea-and-china-arent-the-allies-you-think-they.html

The Chinese government's goal regarding regional standing is to reclaim dominance in Asia. This has led to positive consequences for states that have received Chinese funding for infrastructure projects. Although the BRI has many downsides, it is undeniable that there have also been benefits. A range of roads, ports, power stations and railways across the Indo-Pacific have been built that would not have

been without China's financial assistance. Similarly, China's aid in the region has improved the lives of many, including the rollout of vaccines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conversely, this has negative consequences for the country China seeks to supplant: the United States. A direct consequence of China's rise was the US decision to engage in a trade war that harmed its own economy. According to a 2019 study, the trade war cost the US economy 300 000 jobs and 0.3 per cent of GDP (Hass and Denmark, 2020). The United States has also become less significant in the region as states turn to China as a way of pursuing their interests. A 2023 Lowy Institute report found that the United States had lost influence to China in economic relationships, defence networks, diplomatic influence and cultural influence across South-East Asia.

Read more here:

☞ 'Asia Power Snapshot: China and the United States in Southeast Asia'. Lowy Institute, 2023. lowyinstitute.org/publications/asia-power-snapshot-china-united-states-southeast-asia

Lastly, China's rise has implications for India, whose own economic growth will see the country chase a greater role within the Indian Ocean, in the same way that China's rise led it to pursue power within Asia. It is unclear at this stage whether this will see conflict between the two states or if, instead, they will be able to reach an accommodation of each other's growing power. However, India and China did clash militarily in the Himalayas in 2020–21, with a series of skirmishes occurring on the contested border between the two states.

Effects on stability and change in the Indo-Pacific 4.1.7

From this section it should be clear that China seeks significant change in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in its aim to become the dominant state in Asia. China's 'dream' is to reshape the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific so that it becomes central to all activity in the region. This will occur in multiple dimensions – economically, militarily, diplomatically and culturally. In turn, this has implications for the international order. Political scientist Elizabeth Economy explains:

> By now, Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambition to remake the world is undeniable. He wants to dissolve Washington's network of alliances and purge what he dismisses as 'Western' values from international bodies. He wants to knock the US dollar off its pedestal and eliminate Washington's chokehold over critical technology. In his new multipolar order, global institutions and norms will be underpinned by Chinese notions of common security and economic development, Chinese values of state-determined political rights, and Chinese technology. China will no longer have to fight for leadership. Its centrality will be guaranteed.
>
> Elizabeth Economy, 2024. 'China's alternative order and what America should learn from it'. Foreign Affairs. foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-alternative-order-xi-jinping-elizabeth-economy

At the same time, it is worth noting that there is nothing unusual or sinister about China's aim. All it is doing is seeking to secure its national interests. All major powers seek to project military power, often under the guise of 'defence', to advance their own interests. China strives for greater economic prosperity and in doing so needs to adjust the economy to changes in technology and circumstances. They expand their diplomatic and cultural networks, often as a by-product of the quest for security and economic growth. And finally, they seek greater international recognition as a reflection of their own sense of national pride.

Activity I – China's overall significance in the Indo-Pacific

1. Using what you've learnt so far and your own research, find relevant statistics for each of the following topics in this area of study, as well as two more of your own choosing.

   - Contribution of renewables to China's GDP growth
   - Incursions into Taiwan's airspace
   - Trade between China and Taiwan
   - Uyghur mass imprisonment
   - Trade with the United States
   - COVAX contributions
   - Shipping in the South China Sea
   - BRI investments and expected returns

2. Return to the table you completed in the first activity for this country study (Activity A). Try answering the questions you asked at the start of this chapter. Has your understanding changed over the course of your studies?

3. Explain how China's demography and international rivals challenge each of its national interests – security, economic prosperity, regional relationships, regional standing. Consider if there are other challenges that China faces in achieving its national interests.

4. Plan and write responses to the following extended response questions.

   a. Discuss the degree to which China is concerned with its regional reputation.

   b. Discuss the extent to which domestic concerns shape China's use of foreign policy interests.

   c. Evaluate challenges to the achievement of China's national interests.

   d. Discuss the extent to which the actions and national interest outcomes of China bring about stability and change in the Indo-Pacific region.

5. Discuss the political significance of China's uses of power in the Indo-Pacific region. Consider how China fits in the overall balance of power within the region. Is it justifiable to argue that China has become more significant to the Indo-Pacific than the United States?

Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: www.sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/pol34

Articles

China Power, 2019. 'How are global views on China trending?'
chinapower.csis.org/global-views

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With an ancient culture stretching back to a Bronze Age Indus Valley civilisation that began around 3300 BCE, the 21st century has seen India gradually re-emerge as a superpower, reclaiming its historic positions as both an Asian behemoth and a strategic bridge between east and west. With East Asia and South-East Asia to its east and the Middle East and Africa to its west, India's geography and geopolitical situation offer massive potential for growth and power, but also present significant challenges. While the world's focus from the late 1990s through to the 2010s was squarely on China and its phenomenal rise, the 2020s and 2030s may represent India's time 'in the limelight'.

India has a rich and significant history, with its lands having been hotly contested by various other civilisations — from the ancient Persians and Alexander the Great, to the Mughals and the British — vying for control of its land. The 20th-century American historian and philosopher Will Durant summarised the unquestionable importance of India to world history — and pointed out how the West has previously neglected it.

> Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all. Nothing should more deeply shame the modern student than the recency and inadequacy of his acquaintance with India. …This is the India that patient scholarship is now opening up like a new intellectual continent to that Western mind which only yesterday thought civilization an exclusive Western thing.
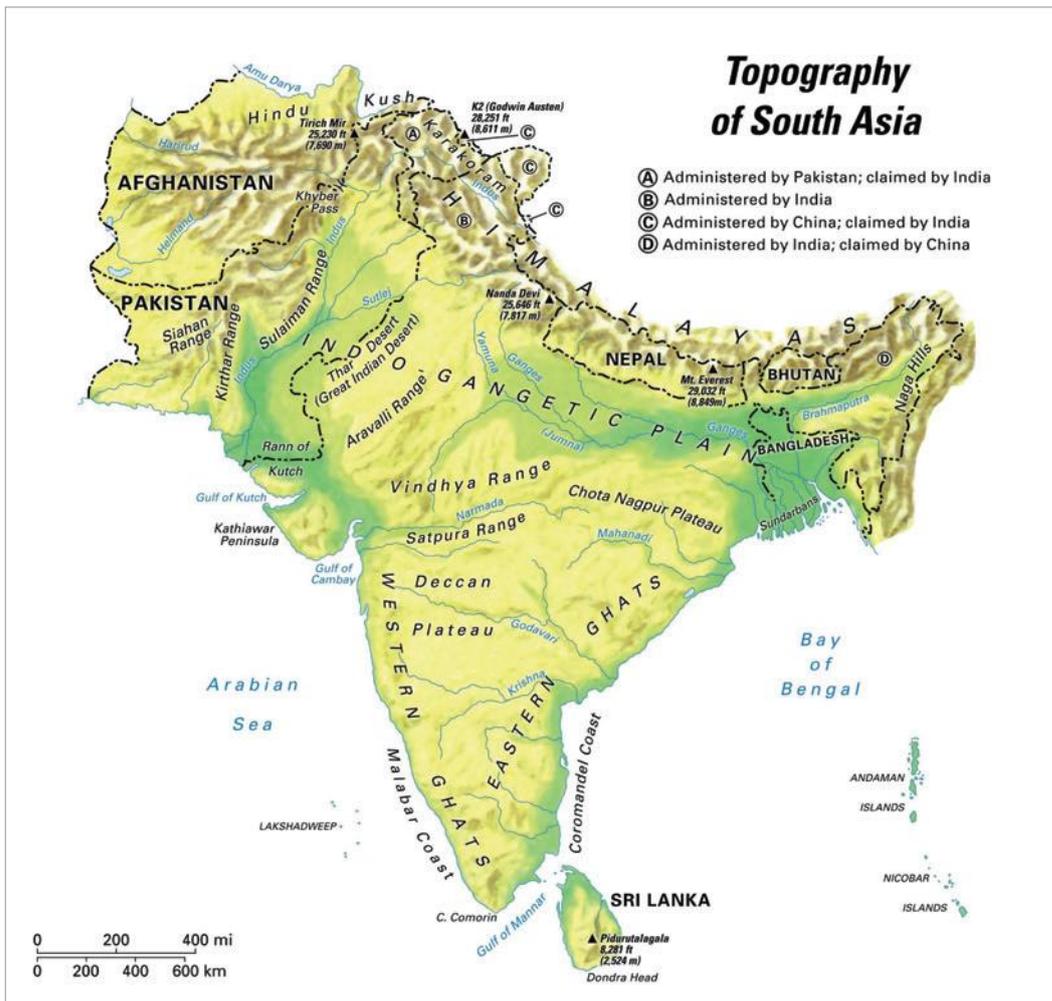
In the 21st century, India is **the world's largest multi-party democracy,** with close to 1 billion eligible voters — overtaking China in 2022 to become the world's most populous nation. While the Chinese population is ageing, India's population is youthful and is predicted to continue to grow until mid-century. This has flow-on effects for the economy; while growth of the Chinese economy is slowing, India is experiencing some of the highest rates of GDP growth in the world, and is on target to become the **third-largest economy by around 2027**.

From involvement in security arrangements, such as the Quad, to diplomatic overtures and trade deals, regional and global powers are all clamouring to establish and strengthen their relations with India. The Australian government sees India as central to its geopolitical strategy — as a vital counterweight to China — and India is one of the top sources of immigrants to Australia, helping to cement ties between the two nations. However, Australian policymakers find some elements of India's politics troubling, including the shortfalls of its democratic system and the fact it has relatively warmer relationships with states such as Russia, China and Iran.

India's rise — and pursuit of its national interests — is fraught with considerable domestic and international challenges. Internally, the country has always **struggled to establish and maintain unity and harmony based on a clear sense of identity**. The nation is an amalgamation of diverse regions, cultures, castes, languages and religions, with tensions occasionally erupting into sectarian violence or outright rebellion against the central government. There is significant ongoing economic and political inequality and corruption. Regional and religious identities are stronger

in India than in almost any comparable state. Internal tensions have given rise to religious, ethno-nationalist and populist movements, as well as political parties that threaten to undermine and destabilise India's democracy and its secular underpinnings. Like other states, India is also **facing considerable environmental challenges**, ranging from resource depletion and environmental degradation to the impacts of climate change.

India's geostrategic standing is complicated. Indeed, the country is blessed with an enviable geography, sitting just north of one of the world's most important maritime trade routes (the Indian Ocean) – which connects East Asia with the Middle East, Europe and Africa. To its north, the Himalayas have long provided it with a natural defensive barrier. However, India is confronted by challenges from rival powers, the most significant being Pakistan. Hostility from Pakistan can be traced back to the traumatic partition of the two nations in 1947 and has led to several wars and countless skirmishes. However, despite a long history of cultural and economic exchange between the two, China now represents the biggest challenge to India's rise, with border disputes directly challenging Indian sovereignty and China's Belt and Road Initiative being perceived as part of a strategy to contain India. Whether or not these two Asian giants can continue to rise and coexist peacefully will be a central question in the broader geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region in the 21st century.

Credit: Encyclopedia Britannica.

India's history in a nutshell

3300–400 BCE	The Indus Valley civilisation emerges in the Bronze Age.
	The later Vedic period sees the emergence (synthesis) of Hinduism.
400 BCE	Birth of Buddhism.
1503	The Portuguese establish the first European colonial and trading outposts in southern India, signifying the beginning of the lucrative spice trade that would attract the interest of other European powers.
1526	Babur establishes the Mughal Empire, spanning most of the subcontinent.
1612	The British East India Company establishes a trade relationship with the Mughals, laying the groundwork for a gradual expansion of the latter's influence across the subcontinent.
1857	The last Mughal emperor is deposed.
	The Indian Mutiny sees widespread revolt against British rule. It is brutally put down and leads to the establishment of direct British rule, known as the British Raj.
1885	The Indian National Congress is established.
1906	The Muslim League is established.
1919	The Amritsar massacre fuels growing anger at the British among the Indian population.
1942	The 'Quit India' movement is launched by Mahatma Gandhi during World War II.
1947	The last British governor-general of India, Louis Mountbatten, announces the partition of British India into India and Pakistan, sparking violent clashes among Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. The formal independence of both India and Pakistan follows soon after.
1948	Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated by a Hindu nationalist. The First Indo-Pakistani War takes place, primarily in response to the disputed Kashmir region.
1951	Formation of Hindu nationalist political party Bharatiya Jana Sangh, predecessor to the modern Bharatiya Janata Party ('Indian People's Party', often referred to as simply 'BJP').
1962	The Sino-Indian War takes place over the disputed Aksai Chin region of Ladakh state takes place.
1965	The Second Indo-Pakistani War follows Pakistani attempts to infiltrate Kashmir.
1971	The Third Indo-Pakistani War breaks out, following Indian involvement in the independence struggle in East Pakistan that leads to the establishment of Bangladesh.
	India signs a 20-year treaty with the Soviet Union that cements decades of cooperation between the two powers.

1974	India becomes a nuclear power after successfully testing its first atomic device.
1984	Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, a military operation targeting Sikh separatists in Amritsar. The assassination sparks nationwide anti-Sikh riots.
1991	A period of economic liberalisation begins, with the Indian economy moving away from the more economically interventionist character pursued since independence.
2002	An estimated 2000 people are killed in the Gujarat riots. The Chief Minister of Gujarat State, Narendra Modi, is accused of condoning the predominantly anti-Muslim violence.
2003 and 2008	Muslim extremists orchestrate bomb blasts in Mumbai, killing 50 and 174 people respectively.
2007	India joins the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue ('Quad') alongside Australia, the United States and Japan.
2014	Elections see Congress-aligned Manmohan Singh replaced as India's prime minister by the BJP's Narendra Modi.
2020–21	Chinese forces object to Indian road construction in the Galwan river valley and skirmishes ensue, marking a spike in long-running border disputes with China.

Activity B – Differing perspectives on Indian history

1 In this subject you are required to focus on events within the past 10 years. However, history is important in setting the context for understanding current events. Describe the history of India from each of the following perspectives:

   a India

   b Western states

   c other developing states.

2 Use an online timeline maker to mark important events for India. Find one here:

   ⇱ time.graphics

3 To what extent is India's return to superpower status inevitable, and why?

4 What are the possible geopolitical outcomes for the broader region of India's rise?

Sources of power used by the Indian state 4.1.1

India's development post-independence has been shaped by the international geopolitical realities of the Cold War and the polarisation of ideas and alliances after World War II. It wasn't until the 1990s that India emerged determined to 'open up' and integrate itself fully into a globalised economy and assert its influence on the global stage after decades of relative obscurity.

India was a **key member of the Cold War—era non-aligned movement**, which aimed to keep the nation outside the bipolar dynamic created by the US—Soviet Union rivalry. The rationale for non-aligned states was that their interests would best be served by remaining neutral in this global competition, allowing them to pursue a

'third way' of diplomatic, security and economic ties with both camps. Overall, this strategy was successful for India, which maintained diplomatic and economic relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, receiving considerable loans, aid and technical support from both. However, relations with the United States were rocky throughout the Cold War, with tensions fuelled by developments such as growing US–Pakistan ties, the Indo-Pakistani wars, and India becoming a nuclear power in 1974. However, since the Cold War ended, relations between the two states have gone from strength to strength, with the United States now India's largest trade partner and India being seen as instrumental to the broader geopolitical interests of the United States and its allies, such as Australia and Japan.

While India's ties with Western powers have strengthened in recent years, in many ways its strength still lies in its ability to successfully 'juggle' its relationships with the United States, Europe, Russia and China. The United States and its allies are sometimes frustrated by what they observe as 'fence-sitting' by the Indian government when it comes to its responses to international developments, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Chinese actions in the South China Sea. **India's responses to such events and its engagement with the region may be understood as being driven by pragmatism**, along with an acute awareness of its own strengths, limitations and need for resources. In a similar vein to the 'peaceful rise' policy adopted by former Chinese leader Hu Jintao, on many levels India is playing a game of 'catch-up', seeing the benefit of building up its own capabilities rather than investing precious resources into fruitless confrontations.

Observers have assessed India as being capable of engaging military power in its immediate region but lacking the ability to project its power in the broader Indo-Pacific. Read this article to learn more.

⇱ 'India: Capable but constrained'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020. carnegieendowment.org/posts/2020/10/india-capable-but-constrained?lang=en

Political 4.1.1.1

India's status as the world's largest democracy, with over 900 million eligible voters, is arguably its greatest political strength. This gives the government legitimacy, both domestically and internationally, despite persistent weaknesses in and concerns about the country's liberal democratic credentials.

Partition of India in August 1947

···· British India before partition

In 1947, while facing insurrection from Indian nationalists, British colonial authorities forced a division of the Indian subcontinent into two new states — a Hindu-majority 'India' and Muslim-majority 'Pakistan' — with one million dying and tens of millions displaced during the ensuing chaos. The eastern part of Pakistan later became independent (with Indian support) as Bangladesh, after defeating and ejecting Pakistani forces in 1971. Credit: BBC, 2022. hbbc.com/news/world-south-asia-62467438

After independence was achieved in 1947 and the country emerged from the traumatic events of Partition, India was declared a republic in 1950 and held its first general election in 1952.

- India is a **federation** made up of 28 states (largely self-governing) and eight 'union territories' (directly administered by the federal government).

- There are **18 major languages**, and the constitution does not elevate any single language to the status of official language.

- In terms of **religion**, while Hindus constitute the overwhelming majority of the population, at just under 80 per cent (1.2 billion in 2024), there is a large minority of Muslims (14 per cent, roughly 204 million in 2024), making India the country with the third-largest Muslim population in the world, just behind Pakistan. There are also significant Sikh, Christian and Buddhist religious minorities.

India is a parliamentary democracy with a legislature made up of two houses: the 250-member upper house, known as the **Rajya Sabha** (Council of States), which is indirectly elected by the Legislative Assemblies of each state and territory, and the 545-seat lower house, known as the **Lok Sabha** (House of the People). The executive branch of government is led by the prime minister, who holds ultimate power in the government, while the president is the official head of state (similar to the monarch in the United Kingdom, or the governor-general in Australia), whose primary focus is upholding the constitution. General elections take place every five years and last roughly six weeks. In the 2024 elections, the diverse range of political parties coalesced into two loose alliances:

- the right-leaning National Democratic Alliance, dominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

- the centre-left Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, with the Indian National Congress (often just referred to as 'Congress') as its largest party — led by Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi.

Party	Ideology	Percentage vote in 2024	Percentage of seats in 2024
Bharatiya Janata Party	conservative, nationalist	37	44
Telugu Desam Party	neoliberal	2	2
37 other aligned parties		5	10
National Democratic Alliance — total		**44**	**43**
Indian National Congress	liberal, moderate	22	18
Samajwadi Party	socialist	5	7
35 other aligned parties		15	20
Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance — total		**42**	**41**
unaligned/other		14	3

Note: percentage vote and seat figures include some simplification and rounding. Credit: hw.wiki/BvCi

The Citizenship Amendment Act ('CAA') of 2019 granted accelerated pathways to citizenship to a number of religious minorities fleeing persecution from countries neighbouring India. Objections to the specific exclusion of Muslims in the eligibility criteria triggered violent riots in Delhi in early 2020, characterised by groups of Hindu men attacking Muslims, their homes and businesses.
Credit: Press Trust of India, 2020.

As might be expected in such a geographically, linguistically and culturally diverse nation, regional and other forms of identity play an important role in India, and **sectarian tensions — such as those in Punjab and Kashmir to the northwest — are an ever-present threat to the stability and functioning of Indian democracy**. Secularism and inclusiveness were, from the outset, and at least *in theory*, central goals of the Indian republic, with the constitution recognising all the nation's major and minor ethnic groups, religions and languages.

A recent example of sectarian tensions was the 2020 Delhi riots in response to the controversial 2019 *Citizenship (Amendment) Act*. The BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been accused of pursuing Hindutva, a form of **Hindu-first nationalism**, and of stoking the communal intolerance that leads to such violence. Indeed, Modi was chief minister (premier) of the state of Gujarat in 2002 when violence broke out, leading to the death or injury of well over 2000 people, mainly Muslims. Although Modi and the BJP denied it, there were fears that policies such as the Citizen (Amendment) Act were intended to elevate the status of Hindus, potentially threatening the state's secular underpinnings.

Case study: The Khalistan movement

One challenge that India has had to respond to using political power is the Khalistan movement — a Sikh separatist movement with its roots in pre-independence India — and the desire by some members of the Sikh community in the north-western state of Punjab for a semi-autonomous or even completely independent nation.

The Sikh religion was founded in the late 15th century, and today there are 21 million Sikhs in India, with more than half living in the Punjab. Sikhism constitutes the fourth-largest religious group nationally. Sikhs were overrepresented in the Indian independence struggle, as well as in the country's civil service, police and defence forces in the first few decades following independence.

The idea of an independent nation for the Sikhs first arose in the 1930s, with the movement having received funding and support from members of the extensive Sikh diaspora, as well as from Pakistan. It came to prominence again in the 1970s and early 1980s, culminating in armed insurgency against the Indian state, who responded with the brutal military action known as **Operation Blue Star**. This saw armed conflict in the streets of Amritsar and around the holiest of Sikh sites, the Golden Temple. In response to these heavy-handed actions by the government, then prime minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984, and this, in turn, provoked large-scale anti-Sikh riots. Sikh separatists also went on to bomb an Air India flight in 1985 and assassinate Indian General Arun Vaidya in 1986.

This cycle of violence led to concerted efforts by authorities to **attempt defuse the more extreme views of the Khalistan movement** — and for some years, tensions did ease. Appeals to peaceful coexistence and national unity have nonetheless been accompanied by intolerance on the part of the Indian state and its security service of any ongoing separatist activities, and this intolerance has extended beyond the borders of India. In mid-2023, a scandal of global significance was set off when a Sikh-Canadian, Hardeep Singh Nijjar — the leader of pro-Khalistan organisations in Canada, home to 800 000 Sikhs — was shot dead in British Columbia. This event sparked a diplomatic stoush between the governments of Canada and India, as it came to light that the alleged culprits were employed by the Indian security services.

This event and the revelation of Indian espionage in Australia in 2024 seem to demonstrate that India, like Russia and China, is increasingly willing to exert its political power both domestically and internationally in the pursuit of national security.

Thousands of Sikhs from across the United States waiting to vote in a non-binding referendum on the Khalistan Referendum in San Francisco in early 2024. The group organising the vote — Sikhs for Justice — was banned by the Indian government in 2019 for alleged 'anti-India activities'. Credit: Sree Sripathy for India Currents/CatchLight Local. indiacurrents.com/sikh-khalistan-referendum-san-francisco

Activity C – Understanding India's democracy

1   Read this article and answer the questions that follow.

▷   'Democracy in India'. Chatham House, 2022. chathamhouse.org/2022/04/democracy-india

   a   Identify some of the key characteristics of Indian democracy.

   b   According to this article, what are some of the challenges facing democracy in India?

2   Read these articles and answer the questions that follow.

▷   'Why India's democracy is dying'. *Journal for Democracy*, 2023. journalofdemocracy.org/articles/why-indias-democracy-is-dying

▷   'Indian election: Narendra Modi hasn't delivered the expected landslide'. The Conversation, 2024. theconversation.com/indian-election-narendra-modi-hasnt-delivered-the-expected-landslide-where-the-bjp-may-have-gone-wrong-231532

   a   What are some of the indicators of democratic decline outlined in the first article?

   b   Using the differing perspectives of the two articles, provide a brief evaluation of the state of Indian democracy.

3   In what ways could India's democracy be seen as an asset in the pursuit of its national interests? Explain your answer. The following article may provide some useful ideas.

▷   'How India's democracy shapes its global role and relations with the West'. Chatham House, 2024. chathamhouse.org/2024/04/how-indias-democracy-shapes-its-global-role-and-relations-west

Economic 4.1.1.2

India's recent and projected GDP growth has been very high by international standings (6—8 per cent per annum). But between the mid-18th century and the late 20th century, India's economy declined dramatically relative to other powers. As a result of British invasion and colonisation, India's share of the global economy dropped from around 25 per cent in the early 1800s to a mere 3 per cent in 1947. India's economic development post-independence was shaped by a high degree of state intervention in the economy, as consecutive Indian National Congress—led governments pursued **protectionist** policies and **state ownership of large swathes of the economy**. Some attempts were made to liberalise the economy in the 1960s and 1980s, but it was not until the political and economic crises in 1990—91 that led Congress prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to begin the process of economic liberalisation that would ultimately transform the Indian economy — including deregulation, privatisation and reforms to the financial system. This made India more attractive for foreign investment and led to it becoming more deeply integrated into the global economy.

> **Protectionism** refers to measures that restrict imports on goods from other countries, such as charging taxes or duties on them ('tariffs') or setting physical limits on quantities of imported goods ('quotas'), usually motivated by a desire to shield local businesses from foreign competition.

India's liberalisation efforts have been far from smooth sailing, with growing inequality and fierce backlash from some sectors of Indian society, such as farmers, who have been faced with the removal of state subsidies and price guarantees. In 2021, 2023 and 2024, a series of farmers' protests threatened to destabilise the Modi government:

▷   'Why India farmers are protesting again'. BBC News, 2024. bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68282270

Nonetheless, many Indians have benefited significantly from economic liberalisation, with astonishing growth in certain sectors – particularly technology and services – helping to improve the living conditions for millions. As the graph provided shows, the respective GDP share of the agriculture and services sectors have effectively 'switched places' since 1950; agriculture shrank to roughly 15 per cent of the economy, while the services sector now accounts for more than 50 per cent (DFAT, 2018).

The concentration of growth in the technology and service sectors is largely the product of demographic attributes, with India having a relatively young working-age population who generally have a high command of English. Along with generally lower wages, these has given India a competitive advantage over countries in East Asia and Europe whose populations have long been growing older on average.

Recent decades have also seen the **large-scale emigration of multitudes of young, educated Indian professionals** seeking opportunities in destinations like Australia. The test will be whether India can counter or even reverse the 'brain-drain' effect resulting from skilled workers emigrating; however, this will partly depend on how effectively the country tackles some of the serious challenges facing its economy.
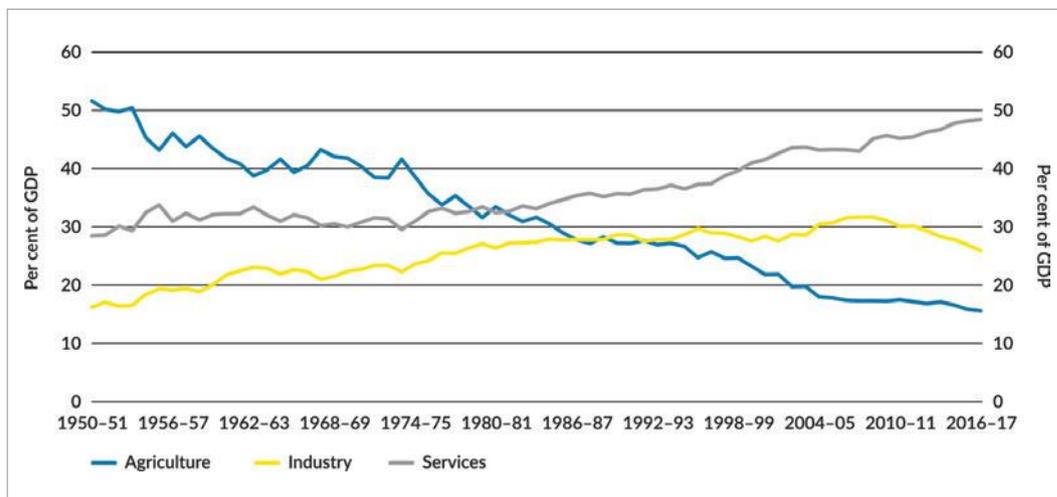
Share of GDP by the three main sectors of the Indian economy.
Credit: DFAT, 2018, with data from CEIC Asia Database, Treasury (Commonwealth of Australia) and Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (India), 2018.
dfat.gov.au/publications/trade-and-investment/india-economic-strategy/ies/chapter-1.html

India's economic growth and development to a large extent mirrors the journey of the Chinese economy since its own liberalisation in the 1990s. India has also had similar growing pains, such as **increasing income inequality, rapid urbanisation and widespread pollution and environmental degradation**, all of which have had impacts on real living standards while also constraining formal economic growth. As in China, economic growth has lifted millions out of extreme poverty, with a roughly 30 per cent reduction in the number of people living below the poverty line in the last 30 years; this trend is set to continue as more people migrate from poorer rural areas to seek better opportunities in urban areas. Nonetheless, roughly one-quarter of the Indian population still lives below or just above the poverty line, and the gains in wealth being generated in India are very unevenly distributed. In 2024, the richest 1 per cent owned 40 per cent of the country's wealth (Bharti et al., 2024).

India's economic growth is shaped by its access to resources and the development of infrastructure. India is the world's third-largest electricity generator and importer of oil. Its ability to meet growing demand in these sectors is critical to its continued economic development. The country's reliance on oil and gas imports presents it with a geostrategic challenge; it is **vulnerable to potential supply disruptions** resulting from conflicts in neighbouring regions — particularly the Middle East.

If not addressed or adequately planned for, the related issues of **water scarcity and impacts of climate change** may pose an even greater challenge. With roughly 18 per cent of the world's population but only 4 per cent of its water supply (DFAT, 2018), India is already experiencing serious water supply problems, particularly in the Punjab and densely populated Gangetic plains of northern India, which rely heavily on rivers and underground water sources — both are predicted to be heavily impacted by changing weather and rainfall patterns.

Military 4.1.1.3

India's military capabilities have been paramount for the country since its independence. It is close to a number of states considered 'fragile' — including Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh — some of whom have ongoing disputes with India. Pakistan and China have long been understood as the two most likely sources of an organised external military threat, not least because of increasing cooperation between the two. Since Partition, India and Pakistan have been engaged in

Indian and Pakistani soldiers performing in the daily ceremonial 'Beating Retreat' ceremony near the Attari–Wagah border. The drill, beginning in 1959, symbolises both the intense rivalry and links of brotherhood between the two counties.

an extended arms race, punctuated by the two going to war four times. India gained nuclear weapons in 1974, followed by Pakistan in 1998, which you can read more about here:

'India and Pakistan'. Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, 2024. armscontrolcenter.org/countries/india-and-pakistan

According to the Global Firepower Index, India:

- ranks fourth for overall military strength
- is the number one arms importer globally
- spends 2 per cent of its GDP on the military (compared to Australia's 1.9 per cent, and China's 1.7 per cent)
- ranks fifth for overall global military expenditure.

While China 'outranks' India in all areas other than manpower potential and geography, India supplements its military capabilities through collaboration with like-minded states, such as the USA, Japan and Australia. This pursuit of multilateral collective security is most evident in India's involvement in the Quad (alongside the United States, Australia and Japan) and its participation in joint military exercises such as the Malabar naval exercises.

Diplomatic 4.1.1.4

India has a long history of pursuing what has been called **multi-alignment diplomacy**, maintaining relations with powers that are often at odds with one another, such as the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War. With the collapse of the latter and the growing prominence of China since the early 1990s, India has made concerted efforts to reorient itself diplomatically and strategically within the Indo-Pacific region and more broadly. These efforts seem to have paid off, with many other mid-sized states in Asia, as well as Western powers such as the United States and Australia, seeking to support India's growth as a counterweight to an increasingly assertive China. As the so-called 'Asian Century' sees the Indo-Pacific re-emerging as the 'centre of gravity' for the global economy, India's cordial relations with its regional and global partners will be key to its ability to benefit. In contrast to China's more assertive pursuit of its interests, in many ways India's approach can be understood as much more intentionally and strategically *ambiguous*.

Through its 'Look East' (1996) and 'Act East' (2014) policies, the Indian government has **invested in its economic and strategic relations with neighbouring states in South-East Asia**. At the centre of this stands India's relationship with ASEAN, as an increasingly influential regional grouping. In 2022, India and ASEAN commemorated 30 years of formal ties that began with India becoming a 'Sectoral Dialogue Partner' in 1992 and have since being solidified into a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'. While the focus of such relations remains the strengthening of economic cooperation and trade, they are underpinned by long-standing political, diplomatic and cultural ties.

India and ASEAN member states.
Credit: National Biodiversity Authority of India.

Some Western observers have criticised India's ties with certain powers and its perceived silence on key issues of global disagreement such as the Russia—Ukraine conflict, leading to accusations of 'fence-sitting'. This was showcased in 2023 when India hosted the G20 summit while resisting pressure from the United States and its allies to produce a clear joint condemnation of Russia's actions in Ukraine. India was able to force a compromise, a watered-down statement of concern about the events in Ukraine. India's multi-alignment diplomacy can be seen as an asset, insofar as it allows it to occupy a position to mediate between rival powers. As one commentator noted, 'as major powers contest and compete, India will be more favourably positioned as a country that has channels of communication open with different stakeholders' (Harsh V. Pant, quoted in Borowiec and Sharma, 2023).

Cultural 4.1.1.5

> Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be language, or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be law or customs, primitive art or primitive science, everywhere you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because some of the most valuable and instructive materials of the history of man are treasured up in India and India only.
>
> German philologist Friedrich Maximilian Müller, 1882. *India: What Can it Teach Us?* Longmans, Green and Co.

> It has been my long-standing conviction that India is like a donkey carrying a sack of gold — the donkey does not know what it is carrying but is content to go along with the load on its back. The load of gold is the fantastic treasure — in arts, literature, culture, and some sciences like Ayurvedic medicine — which we have inherited from the days of the splendor that was India.
>
> Indian lawyer and philanthropist Nani Ardeshir Palkhiwala (1920–2002).

> India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border!
>
> Former Chinese ambassador to the United States Hu Shih, 1942.

India has for millennia been a source of cultural, linguistic and religious innovations that have had significant influence internationally. These include:

- the classical **Sanskrit** language, which serves as the basis for many Asian languages
- the **decimal system** and the mathematical concept of zero
- the religion of **Buddhism,** which spread across Asia and has over 500 million adherents
- the practice of **yoga** and associated 'holistic' approaches to physical and mental health
- **Ayurvedic medicine**, which has been integrated into a range of alternative approaches to preventative health care
- the vibrant and colourful approach to storytelling embodied by **Bollywood** — India's film industry
- Indian **cuisine**, particularly its use and combination of spices — it is among the world's most popular culinary traditions, so much so that the desire to access India's spice trade was one of the key driving forces behind European exploration and colonisation.

Buddhism emerged in northern India in the 5th century BCE. With over 520 million adherents — largely spread across countries in East and South-East Asia — it is the world's fourth-largest religion. India is home to a range of Buddhist pilgrimage sites, such as Bodh Gayā in Bihar (pictured), where the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment. This has contributed to its broader popularity as a tourist destination, with around 10 million international visitors to India in 2023 alone.

Despite these cultural assets, its sheer size and its history, India ranked only 29th in Brand Finance's 'Global Soft Power Index' in 2024, demonstrating to some extent the difficulty the state faces in using cultural power to help advance its broader and more concrete geopolitical interests. This, in turn, can be attributed to the socio-economic and political challenges of the modern Indian state, such as corruption, inequality, sectarianism and caste-based divisions, which all contribute to weakening the national image and its appeal to an international audience. The 'attractiveness' of India has generally resonated more with other lower-income countries than higher-income ones — particularly as a result of its opposition to European imperialism, the diversity and durability of its democracy, and its leadership role in the non-aligned movement in the post-independence era. That said, it is less clear whether this appeal may erode due to less liberal and inclusive attitudes, such as those reflected by the policies of the Modi government.

You can read further reflections on India's cultural power here:

- 'India rising: Soft power and the world's largest democracy'. Brookings Institution, 2018. brookings.edu/articles/india-rising-soft-power-and-the-worlds-largest-democracy
- 'India's soft power diplomacy: Challenges and opportunities'. Diplomatist, 2023. diplomatist. com/2023/02/01/indias-soft-power-diplomacy-challenges-and-opportunities

Activity D – Sources of state power in India

1 Explain the relationship between the following sources of power: population, economy, military.

2 With reference to the text, map and videos provided in the links below, explain how India's geography provides the country with both strategic opportunities and strategic risks. You may wish to do this in the form of a simple 'T chart', or in paragraph form.

↳ 'The geography of India explained'. FactSpark, 2024 (13 min). youtu.be/sxBG1cdWtO4

↳ 'Geography Now! India'. Geography Now, 2018 (19 min). youtu.be/vEy6tcU6eLU

↳ 'Indian Ocean region: A pivot for India's growth'. Brookings Institution, 2016. brookings.edu/articles/indian-ocean-region-a-pivot-for-indias-growth

3 Using the resources provided and your own research, create a SWOT analysis of India's economy.

↳ 'The problem with Indian economy'. Econ, 2023 (11 min). youtu.be/2Jjq1O_2_pc

↳ 'How strong is India's economy?'. Economics Explained, 2024 (15 min). youtu.be6UYK0ayEW08

↳ 'An India Economic Strategy to 2035: The macro story'. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018. dfat.gov.au/publications/trade-and-investment/india-economic-strategy/ies/chapter-1.html

India's national interests 4.1.2

Security 4.1.2.1

The Indian government has navigated considerable security challenges, from maintaining effective control over a diverse population and geography to confronting ongoing threats on its borders. Domestically, consecutive governments have had the unenviable job of **holding together a federal state beset by internal frictions between various strong regional, ethnic and religious identities**. While formally secular, there have been intense pressures from Hindu nationalists wishing to capture and use the power of the state to promote the Hindu majority's dominance at the expense of other religious groups. Such threats have fuelled anxiety among other groups, which have consequently buoyed support for secessionist movements, such as those as described in our Khalistan and Kashmir case studies.

The feud-like nature of Indo-Pakistani relations is also ever-present in India's understanding of its own security landscape. Not only has India fought four wars against Pakistan, it has also long been responding to insurgency threats (including but not limited to those in Kashmir), many of which are largely funded by Pakistan as part of that nation's 'Bleed India with a Thousand Cuts' policy. As the name suggests, the aim of this policy is to **drain India's strength by forcing it to respond to such threats through endless anti-insurgency operations**.

Pakistan has tested India's resolve to defend its northern borders in a series of **border skirmishes in the high Himalayan regions of north-eastern Kashmir, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh** in remote north-eastern India. These disputes have taken place along a 4000-kilometre shared border and represent the world's longest running and most geographically extended dispute. Since 1962, the two powers have largely avoided armed clashes in these disputed regions, but tensions boiled over into a series of armed clashes in 2020–22, leading to the deaths of soldiers on both sides and causing several diplomatic crises between the two governments.

While relatively minor in scale, it also had to deal with challenges to its sovereignty from China, including the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and the Galwan skirmishes of 2020–22. Taken together with the considerable strategic cooperation between

Pakistan and China, these two countries are the most significant factors in India's thinking about its external security. As such, India strives to **maintain military superiority over Pakistan** (helped by Pakistan's population being only around one-sixth of India's), while also **effectively deterring encroachments** from a much more capable and well-armed China.

Learn more below:

🖱 'Mapping India and China's disputed borders'. Al Jazeera, 2020. interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/mapping-india-and-china-disputed-borders/index.html

🔍 Case study: Kashmir and Jammu

Since the establishment of India in 1947 and the traumatic events of Partition, the status of the Himalayan regions of Kashmir and Jammu has been an open wound for India, **testing its ability to exercise control over its claimed territory**. The religious divisions that plague India are at their most acute in this region, with Kashmir being 97 per cent Muslim and Jammu 66 per cent Hindu. Effective control of the region is split among India, Pakistan and China.

After 1947, the newly established Pakistan made several overtures to the Maharaja (prince) of Kashmir for the state to be incorporated into Pakistan. This coincided with sectarian violence and incursions by Muslim tribal fighters in the north-west corner of Kashmir that ultimately led to pseudo-control over that region by Pakistan. The Maharaja was unable to maintain the state's independence and saw its incorporation into India as the only option. This decision led to the First Indo-Pakistani War of 1947–48, which caused considerable loss of military and civilian lives on both sides and Pakistan taking over administration of former Indian territory in the far north-west.

Credit: BBC News, 2023. bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11693674

Since this first war and the subsequent Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 — in which Pakistan was effectively defeated and lost East Pakistan (now known as Bangladesh) — the Pakistani government has been accused of funding Muslim militias outside India and separatists within Kashmir, to destabilise and weaken India.

Internally, the fight for unified control over Kashmir has waged for decades, with opposing political and religious groups fighting each other as well as India's federal government. There have been serious human rights abuses perpetrated on all sides, with widespread violence, sexual assaults and instances of ethnic cleansing. Some of these have been perpetrated by organs of the Indian state itself. More recently, the more hardline Hindu nationalism of the Modi government inflamed Muslim sentiment in Kashmir and further alienated this population. The Indian government's *Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act* **(2019) removed the special semi-autonomous status that the region had held since 1947**. Fearing widespread unrest, the security forces imposed a statewide lockdown in Kashmir and Jammu, detaining thousands of civilians, including up to 13 000 teenage boys, some of whom were allegedly subjected to torture by the police and security forces (Srinagar, 2019).

" Indian security forces claim they are fighting to protect Kashmiris from militants and Islamic extremists, while militants claim they are fighting for Kashmiri independence and to defend Muslim Kashmiris from an abusive Indian army. In reality, both sides have committed widespread and numerous human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law (or the laws of war). "

Human Rights Watch, 2006. 'India: Impunity fuels conflict in Jammu and Kashmir'. hrw.org/news/2006/09/12/india-impunity-fuels-conflict-jammu-and-kashmir

The Indian government has long argued that Kashmir is an integral part of its national territory. Pakistan has long challenged this and has received significant material support from China (which also borders Kashmir and disputes the borders in this region). In recent years there has been increasing cooperation between Pakistan and China.

India has **failed to ever fully integrate this region**, and it seems unlikely that this will change any time soon. Author Sheikh Gulzar summed up the paradoxical nature of the Indian state's obsession with Kashmir when he wrote 'repeatedly calling Jammu and Kashmir an integral part of India only raises doubts'.

The Indian state may need to use more of the 'carrot' than the 'stick' to subdue separatist sentiment and establish effective and lasting connections that cement more meaningful integration of Kashmir with the rest of India. There is evidence that the federal government's efforts to **invest in infrastructure and strengthen cultural ties** may have paid strategic dividends, with growing middle-class wealth fuelling a boom in domestic tourism to attractions in Kashmir (Wani, 2023). A more balanced use of state power would seem to be the only way that India can counter the separatist threat within the region, while maintaining an effective deterrent to external threats. Author Dr Amit Ray speaks to this promise of an alternative for the region:

> "The Kashmir issue was created out of fear, mistrust and animosity and it should be solved through courage, trust, and friendliness. It should be solved from the ground of development of brotherhood, education and prosperity and not from the ground of religion, terrorism or military actions. It just needs more character, more courage and more compassion."
>
> Amit Ray, 2017. *Nuclear Weapons Free World — Peace on Earth*.

Activity E – India's security dilemmas

1   Using the resources provided and your own research, investigate either the territorial dispute with Pakistan in Kashmir or the border dispute with China and answer the questions that follow.

☞ 'China—India: An analysis of the Himalayan territorial dispute'. Indo-Pacific Strategic Papers. Department of Defence, 2015. defence.gov.au/defence-activities/research-innovation/research-publications/china-india-analysis-himalayan-territorial-dispute

☞ 'Hustling in the Himalayas: The Sino—Indian border confrontation'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020. carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/06/hustling-in-the-himalayas-the-sino-indian-border-confrontation?lang=en

☞ 'Conflict between India and Pakistan'. Global Conflict Tracker. Council on Foreign Relations, 2024. cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-india-and-pakistan

☞ India and Pakistan fought 3 wars over Pakistan — here's why international law falls short to solve this territorial dispute'. The Conversation, 2021. theconversation.com/india-and-pakistan-fought-3-wars-over-kashmir-heres-why-international-law-falls-short-to-solve-this-territorial-dispute-164672

   a   What are the historical origins of the dispute?

   b   What is the strategic importance of the region for the respective actors?

   c   What is the current status of the dispute, and what is the potential for further conflict?

Economic prosperity 4.1.2.2

The government of India sees the country's continued economic growth and development as vital to achieving its aims. The growth and evolution of the Indian economy, albeit beset with growing pains and challenges, seems likely to deliver a relatively stronger and more assertive Indian presence in the region — particularly when combined with diplomatic initiatives such as the Act East Policy and involvement in associations like BRICS.

For years, Indian governments have watched the rise of China and tried to create a similar set of conditions that would allow for such an economic transformation in India, even despite its very different sociopolitical landscape. On the surface this seems to be working, with Prime Minister Modi declaring the government's confidence in 2023 that, in light of a slowing Chinese economy, India would become a driver of the global economy. With sustained rates of growth of between 6 and 8 per cent per annum, India appears poised to **move from being the world's ninth-largest economy in 2015 to being its third largest by 2027**.
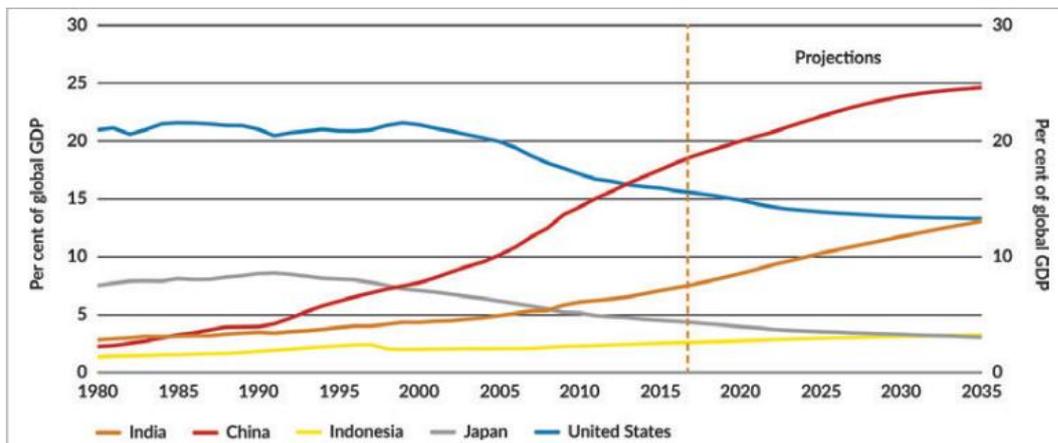
Share of global GDP of the five largest Indo-Pacific economies. Credit: DFAT, 2018, with data from IMF World Economic Outlook and Treasury (Commonwealth of Australia).

India began opening up and engaging more in the global economy following policy shifts at the start of the 1990s. What began as a series of liberalising reforms soon led to an evolving Indian economy that tapped into entrepreneurial potential and **made use of its areas of comparative advantage** – **particularly its relatively young, educated and English-speaking workforce**. This led to an explosion in tech-sector jobs, such as in call centres.

The Indian government has been keen to showcase its economic transformation to the world. In early 2024, Prime Minister Modi spoke in New Delhi about the idea of Viksit Bharat ('Developed India') 2047, in time for the 100th anniversary of Indian independence. The implication is clear: India's government sees **economic prosperity as essential to the country's broader aims** of building its diplomatic presence and strengthening economic cooperation and trade with its partners in the Indo-Pacific and beyond; of equal importance is its ability to push back against the strategic challenges posed by current or potential rival powers.

> "There is undoubtedly an air of optimism in the country. It successfully hosted the G20, became the first to send a rocket near the Moon's south pole, and has birthed a few dozen unicorns. The soaring stock markets have also had a trickle-down effect on the wealth of its middle class. On the face of it 'Modinomics' – the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's economic vision for India – appears to be working. But dig deeper, and the picture is more complex. For a vast swathe of the country's 1.4 billion people who live on the margins of sustenance, it's not boomtime just as yet."
>
> Nikhil Inamdar, 2024. 'India's economy: The good, bad and ugly in six charts'. BBC. bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68823827

In pursuit of its aims, the government has implemented a range of **initiatives that target support to certain areas of India's economy, particularly the technology sector**, where the country already has a proven track record and comparative advantages. In addition, the government has undertaken to tackle some of the country's protracted weaknesses, such as relatively poor infrastructure, bureaucracy, and poor low workforce participation. Implementing digital governance (use of digital technologies to speed up bureaucratic processes, such as licence and permit applications) has led to considerable reduction in inefficiencies and 'red tape'. In recent years the government has also committed over US$100 billion per year to capital expenditure on infrastructure, more than doubling the length of new major highways in the decade to 2024 than in the previous decade. Nonetheless, India still lags well behind China in terms of infrastructure development and investment.

In terms of workplace participation, the story is more mixed; the promise of a *developed India* is still elusive for many. A **large proportion of India's young skilled workers are not able to find opportunities** and are forced to look for work outside their field of expertise, migrating to already strained megacities such as Mumbai or heading overseas — the result of which has been a protracted 'brain drain'. The country also falls well behind other major economies when it comes to women's participation in the workforce. While it is improving, the percentage of working-age women engaged in formal work still sits around 30 per cent, compared to roughly 60 per cent in Australia and China. One economist at the World Bank stated that India risked 'squandering its demographic dividend' — the otherwise enormous economic growth potential of having such a large working-age population (Inamdar, 2024).

2025

By 2025, India will have one-fifth of the world's **working age population**

2030

By 2030, there will be over 850 million internet users in India

2035

By 2035, India's five largest cities will each have economies of comparable sizes to middle-income countries today

Credit: DFAT, 2018. 'An India Economic Strategy to 2035'. dfat.gov.au/publications/trade-and-investment/india-economic-strategy/ies/index.html

After coming to power in 2014, Prime Minister Modi launched a major economic policy that aims to address some of the concerns about the diversity of India's economy and its ability to compete with manufacturing giants such as China. For example, **the 'Make in India' initiative focused on the diversification and scaling-up of India's manufacturing capabilities**, with the aim of growing this sector by 12—15 per cent per year and creating 100 million jobs. The goal is to make the country a leading manufacturer in areas such as biotechnology, automotives, aerospace, pharmaceuticals and textiles, as well as a hub for services, such as finance, education and information technology.

The rationale for the initiative was that India needed to replicate its success in the service sector – which saw the country receive the nickname 'the back office of the world' – and expand this success into other fields, particularly manufacturing. India's manufacturing industry has for decades lagged well behind those of other Asian economies, particularly China, The 'Make in India' initiative would diversify the economy and make it more robust and resilient (to withstand major disruptions, like those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic). The initiative comprises various sub-programs, such as 'Skill India', 'Startup India' and 'Digital India', with successes on various fronts, such as increases in mobile phone manufacturing and the development of renewable energy technologies. Interestingly, this has coincided with India being seen as a viable alternative for investors seeking to diversify away from over-reliance on China – this is perhaps best exemplified by Foxconn's (manufacturers of the Apple iPhone) decision to move a large proportion of its manufacturing to India. While there are certainly challenges, the Indian economy seems likely to be transformed by these developments, providing the state with greater economic means and diplomatic clout required to pursue its ambitious national agenda.

Activity F – India's pursuit of economic prosperity

1 Access the following two sources and answer the questions that follow:

'India's economy: The good, bad and ugly in six charts'. BBC News, 2024. bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68823827

'An India Economic Strategy to 2035'. DFAT, 2018. dfat.gov.au/publications/trade-and-investment/india-economic-strategy/ies/index.html

   a Summarise some of the key strengths and weaknesses of the Indian economy as outlined in the two sources.

   b In what ways might the Indian economy impact the state's ability to achieve its broader interests?

   c What are some of the areas of opportunity for Australia as outlined in the DFAT report?

   d In what ways could closer economic cooperation be mutually beneficial to both states?

2 As the world's largest developing economy and most populous nation, India will be a key element in international efforts to tackle climate change. Read the following resources and answer the questions that follow.

'How is India tackling climate change?' London School of Economics, 2022. lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/how-is-india-tackling-climate-change

'India'. Climate Action Tracker. climateactiontracker.org/countries/india

   a What are some of the predicted impacts of climate change on the Indian economy?

   b Identify some successes and shortfalls of Indian responses to climate change.

   c As a developing nation, should India be given greater time and assistance in tackling climate change?

Regional relationships 4.1.2.3

As discussed, India has pursued a **multi-alignment approach** to foreign policy and diplomatic relations, including with its Indo-Pacific neighbours. This is an evolution of its foreign policy from official non-alignment (despite close ties with the Soviet Union) to one that seeks to foster harmonious and mutually beneficial relations with regional partners, while also being pragmatic in its response to potentially disruptive aspects of China's rise.

India's pragmatic approach can be seen in how it has simultaneously:

- maintained relations with Russia, despite diplomatic pressure to side with Western liberal democracies in their condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and attempt to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin
- shown willingness to collaborate with regional powers such as Australia and Japan in their strategic efforts to 'contain' China, as demonstrated by India's participation in the Quad.

While some observers have described this approach as unprincipled, India relies heavily on trade with Russia to fuel its economic development. Its ties with Russia are also seen as a pragmatic measure to help counterbalance the strength of China and Pakistan's deepening strategic relationship.

Another key part of India's strategy has been **strengthening ties with ASEAN** and other states to its east. India's interest in the region (shared by China, the United States and Australia) flows in part from ASEAN's status as the fastest growing economic region in the world. A geopolitical issue that affects the whole region is the dispute over control of the South China Sea, in which five ASEAN member states are direct stakeholders, with Vietnam and the Philippines having been directly confronted by China's militarisation efforts in the area. As a result of these aligning interests, India has been a party to a range of bilateral agreements with ASEAN members and has regularly participated in joint military exercises with the likes of Vietnam (VINBAX) and the Philippines, most notably in 2023 with the first ever ASEAN–India Maritime Exercise.

Head of India's navy Admiral R. Hari Kumar speaking at the launch of the first ASEAN–India Maritime Exercise at Changi Naval Base in Singapore, 2023.
Credit: Indo-Pacific Defense Forum.

'India, ASEAN hold first maritime exercises'. The Diplomat, 2023. thediplomat.com/2023/05/india-asean-hold-first-maritime-exercises

In 2014, newly appointed Prime Minister Modi launched India's **Act East Policy**, which was designed to build on existing economic and diplomatic ties to cooperate with nations to its east on a range of geopolitical and geostrategic issues. This policy has strengthened India's ties with its immediate neighbours to the east, ASEAN member states, as well as East Asian partners, such as Korea and Japan. A key focus of these initiatives is improving transport infrastructure and connectivity, with projects including the Agartala–Akhaura rail link between India and Bangladesh and the Asian Trilateral Highway to link India with Thailand via Myanmar. However, the policy goes well beyond economics and is ultimately aimed at elevating India's standing and integrating it more effectively in the region through the so-called 'four Cs': culture, commerce, connectivity and capacity building.

Regional standing 4.1.2.4

India's multi-alignment approach has successfully increased the role it plays in the foreign policies and strategic aims of a wide range of regional partners. However, when it comes to how the country is perceived by other regional powers, India has found itself in an **increasingly competitive environment**. As shown, China is using

investment and aid to establish itself as a hegemonic power in the region and beyond, through programs such as the Belt and Road Initiative. Some of India's immediate neighbours, such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal, are already used to walking a diplomatic and strategic tightrope between China and India, and may continue to leverage increasing strategic competition between the two as a way to avoid domination by either.

India's desire to raise its profile is demonstrated in actions such as hosting the 2023 G20 summit, prestigious achievements in its space program, and joint military and strategic initiatives such as the Quad. In 2021, the country's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar summarised what he envisioned as India's path to regional and global recognition, stating, 'this is a time for us to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbors in, extend the neighborhood, and expand traditional constituencies of support' (Tellis, 2021).

As Foreign Minister, Jaishankar has alluded that India is willing and able to take on a bigger role in the Indo-Pacific. Some have argued that India can only achieve its broader geopolitical aims by making bolder decisions and will just need to manage the repercussions in its region. Indeed, the country may be able to serve as a (however flawed) democratic counterweight against more authoritarian models of governance in the region, with its size and capabilities serving to intimidate its close neighbours while also (potentially) exerting pressure in favour of greater regional cooperation.

Foreign policy instruments and how they are used 4.1.3

As discussed, India makes use of a multi-alignment approach to diplomacy and has trade relationships with a diverse range of other countries. Additional specific examples of how it uses these instruments are provided, along with suggestions for further reading.

Diplomacy 4.1.3.1

Membership of the Quad (with Japan, the United States and Australia)	'Quad and its significance for India'. The Times of India, 2021. timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/truth-lies-and-politics/quad-its-significance-for-india 'India in the Quad: Insider or outlier?' The Strategist/ASPI, 2024. aspistrategist.org.au/india-in-the-quad-insider-or-outlier
BRICS membership	'India's hesitation as China pushes for BRICS expansion'. Lowy Institute, 2023. lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/india-s-hesitation-china-pushes-brics-expansion 'India key to future of BRICS grouping'. Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, 2024. ipdefenseforum.com/2024/05/india-key-to-future-of-brics-grouping
Act East Policy	'India wants strategic engagement with Southeast Asia — but how?' The Strategist/ASPI, 2024. aspistrategist.org.au/india-wants-strategic-engagement-with-southeast-asia-but-how 'India's 'Act East' policy and regional cooperation'. Observer Research Foundation, 2020. orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-act-east-policy-and-regional-cooperation-61375
International Solar Alliance	'About us'. International Solar Alliance. isa.int/about_uss 'International Solar Alliance: The sun never sets'. Indian Council of World Affairs, 2023. icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=1&ls_id=10106&lid=6449 'How India leads the global fight against climate change'. Press Insider, 2023. pressinsider.com/news/how-india-leads-the-global-fight-against-climate-change

Trade 4.1.3.2

Trade relations with Russia	'Russia/India' (partnership profile). OEC. oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/rus/partner/ind
	'What is India's role in boosting Russia's war economy?' DW, 2024. dw.com/en/what-is-indias-role-in-boosting-russias-war-economy/a-69536269
	'The limitations of India and Russia's transactional relationship'. United States Institute of Peace, 2024. usip.org/publications/2024/02/limitations-india-and-russias-transactional-relationship
ASEAN–India Free Trade Area	'India's trade deficit with ASEAN expands since FTA of 2010'. The Economic Times, 2024. economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/trade-deficit-with-asean-expands-since-fta-of-2010/articleshow/109401531.cms?from=mdr
	'Boosting India–ASEAN economic collaboration: Key highlights from PM Modi's 12-point proposal'. ASEAN Briefing, 2023. aseanbriefing.com/news/boosting-india-asean-economic-collaboration-key-highlights-from-pm-modis-12-point-proposal
India–Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement	'Free trade agreement with India by year-end: Sri Lankan foreign minister'. Business Standard, 2024. business-standard.com/economy/news/free-trade-agreement-with-india-by-year-end-sri-lankan-foreign-minister
	'India–Sri Lanka economic and trade engagement'. High Commission of India, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2023. hcicolombo.gov.in/page/india-sri-lanka-economic-and-trade-engagement

Foreign aid 4.1.3.3

To the Pacific Islands	'Indian aid to the Pacific'. Devpolicy Blog, 2019. devpolicy.org/indian-aid-to-the-pacific-20190319
	'Strengthening ties in turquoise waters: India's South Pacific affair'. South Asian Voices, 2024. southasianvoices.org/southasianvoices-org-geo-m-in-n-india-strengthening-ties-south-pacific-05-21-2024
To South and South-East Asia	'India's foreign aid to South Asia'. Observer Research Foundation. 2016. orfonline.org/research/indias-foreign-aid-to-south-asia
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Effectiveness of the state in achieving its national interests 4.1.4

Despite the wording of our study design, states rarely actually 'achieve' their national interests. By their nature, **national interests require constant and ongoing attention, maintenance and reconsideration in light of changing circumstances**. As such, it can be useful to consider the effectiveness of a state's actions in terms of whether an interest has been *advanced*. Sometimes particular actions may stall or even backfire. At times there may seem to be a disconnect between a state's actions and the goals it is trying to achieve. Additionally, a state's use of different forms of power and policy instruments often interact with each other in complex ways. It can be valuable to see these as levers or switches on a soundboard that can at times 'amplify' each other while on other occasions contradict or cancel each other out.

In recent years, India has made considerable efforts across a range of its interests — especially towards improving its international standing through engagement in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Nonetheless, the Indian government faces significant challenges, both domestically and internationally. There are times when India seems to be sending out mixed messages or falling short in how effectively it uses its foreign policy instruments. Evaluations of effectiveness are largely a matter of interpretation and generally require us to link specific policy instruments with outcomes that are uncertain or still developing.

Activity G – Assessing India's pursuit of its national interests

1 Use what you've learnt so far to answer the following questions.

    a Rank India's use of different forms of power according to their effectiveness.

    b Explain why you have ranked each type of power in this way.

    c Which forms of power do you think are more likely to help India's short-term goals?

    d Which are likely to assist in India's long-term goals.

2 Draw up a table like this one and indicate which area of national interest each form of power advances.

	Security	Economic prosperity	Regional relationships	Regional standing
Military				
Economic				
Diplomatic				
Political				
Cultural				

3 Use these suggested 'causal chains' to practise describing India's effectiveness at pursuing its national interests:

Interest [informs] action [which leads to] consequence

National security ➡ involvement in the Quad ➡ antagonism of China

National security ➡ responses to Kashmir and Khalistan separatist threats ➡ erosion of social cohesion

Economic prosperity ➡ economic liberalisation ➡ unrest in agricultural sector

Economic prosperity ➡ renewable energy investments ➡ India as potential leader of global South

Regional relationships ➡ investment in neighbouring states ➡ fears of Indian hegemony

Regional relationships ➡ cultural diplomacy ➡ fostering ties with Indian diaspora

International standing ➡ South China Sea dispute ➡ projection of Indian power into Pacific

International standing ➡ BRICS ➡ India as counterweight to China

4 Create a concept map for this area of study regarding India, outlining the following factors:

a National interest

b Case studies

c Policy instruments

d Relevant other details

Make sure to link flow-on effects or repercussions of India's actions on other national interests. Use the template below as a starting point.
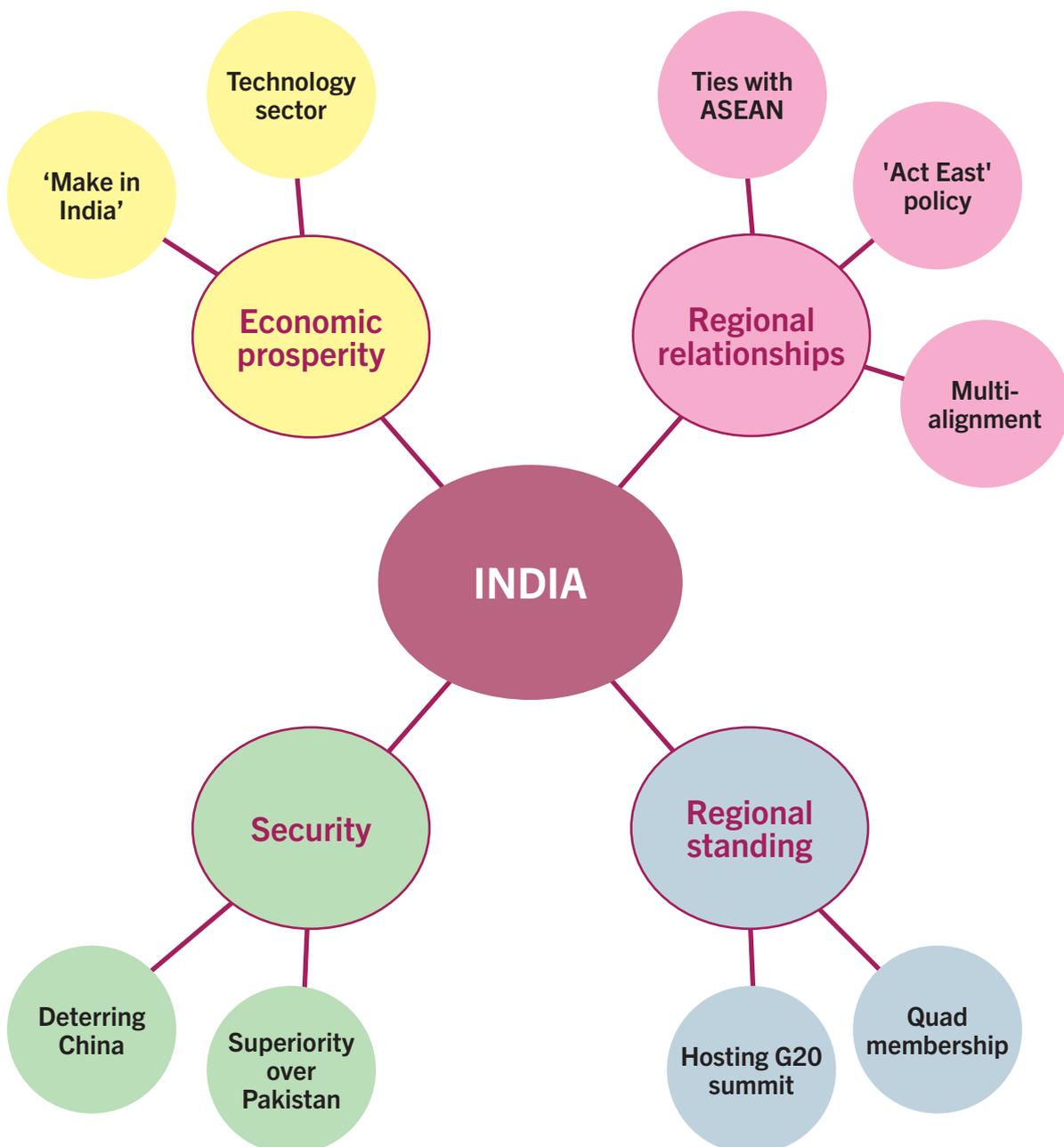
Challenges to the state achieving its national interests 4.1.5

Unity and governance

As discussed, India is a **vast multicultural state with strong regional and ethno-religious identities**, across which the central government has struggled to maintain unity, with the legacy of Partition, ongoing separatist threats and Hindu nationalism continuing to plague the republic. Added to this are economic and social divisions: liberalisation has led to rapid urbanisation, uneven growth and huge wealth inequality, all of which are compounded by pervasive corruption and ongoing caste-based discrimination. The government has responded with a range of initiatives aimed at building infrastructure to deliver greater prosperity to the bulk of the Indian population. However, the challenge is whether it can do so in a manner that effectively capitalises on the demographic dividend that India possesses. Ideally, the growth of the economy would more evenly spread across India and begin to curb the rate of internal migration and emigration of large numbers of young, educated Indians.

Regional rivalries

While India possesses an enviable geography — that effectively acts as a bridge between West and East Asia, through its direct access to the Indian Ocean and Africa — it is also bordered by formidable rivals in China and Pakistan. Their close cooperation can be seen as an **active campaign to *contain* India**. While China may not regard India as its equal yet, it does not want this to change and has protested at any sign of Indian overreach or collaboration with China's other regional rivals, such as the United States, Japan or Australia. Consequently, the Indian government is aware of the precariousness of its geopolitical situation. It has so far pursued pragmatic multi-alignment with relative success, but it's unclear how long it will be able to continue to do so effectively.

Consequences of national interests on other regional actors 4.1.6

Security

United States

Since the end of the Cold War, and in the face of an increasingly assertive China and resurgent Russia, there has been **potential for greater alignment in the strategic interests of India and the United States**. India's commitment to ambiguity in its foreign policy has not prevented it from fostering security ties with like-minded states such as the United States, Japan and Australia, who share its broader interests in an open, rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. It could be argued that given its geopolitical and economic realities, India must remain pragmatic in its diplomatic relationships and in the pursuit of its security interests. At the same time, the increasing alignment of Russia and China, and their mutual cooperation with regional partners such as Pakistan, is in some ways forcing India's hand towards strengthening security arrangements with the United States and its allies.

During the Cold War, distrust between the United States and India was partially the result of the latter's determination to pursue non-alignment, which frustrated consecutive US administrations. However, since the end of the Cold War, there

has been an increasing willingness by the United States to accommodate India's insistence on maintaining its outward appearance of strategic autonomy. Meanwhile, as already noted, geopolitical developments in the region have been gradually changing the Indian mindset. According to Indian politician and historian, Shashi Tharoor:

> India has traditionally been reluctant to pick sides, but China's repeated encroachments on its territory across the disputed Himalayan border, and its killing of 20 Indian soldiers in June 2020, have rendered neutrality untenable. While India maintains its independent posture, the recent G7 summit in Hiroshima notably included the second-ever in-person Quad summit between Biden, Modi, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. During the meeting, the four leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. The message to China is clear. While India maintains that it is not a US ally but a partner, it has increasingly aligned itself with the democratic West in its escalating rivalry with communist China.

<div align="right">Shashi Tharoor, 2023. 'The US and India's non-aligned alliance'. The Strategist/ASPI.
aspistrategist.org.au/the-us-and-indias-non-aligned-alliance</div>

As Tharoor also points out, in many ways, US–Indian relations run deeper than mutual concerns over China. As the world's two largest democracies, India and the United States share a considerable amount of interests and characteristics. The United States has a **growing Indian–American diaspora of over 4 million**, with—perhaps surprisingly —the highest median income among all ethnic groups in America (Prakash, 2023). It is predicted that this segment of the US population will help to raise the profile of India in the eyes of US policymakers. Economically, the relationship already speaks for itself, with the United States being India's largest trade partner and the third-largest investor in 2024. Many US investments in India have direct or indirect defence applications, ranging from artificial intelligence to cybersecurity and microchip production. The United States identified India as an important part of its strategy to free itself from reliance on Chinese semiconductors. There have also been agreements that see the direct sale of US military hardware such as fighter jet engines and military drones to India.

So, while the United States and India lack a formal alliance, their partnership is evolving in line with the geopolitical realities of the Indo-Pacific region, and it seems likely that both parties will seek to continue to strengthen their cooperation. Alongside Japan and Australia, India is instrumental to the United States' apparent aims in the region (the containment of China) and, despite historic hesitancy, India is also

US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Modi pictured during talks covering defence, security, energy, trade and people-to-people ties in 2020. Credit: Anadolu Agency. aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/trump-modi-talk-business-on-final-leg-of-india-tour/1744219

seeing partnership with the United States as necessary in the pursuit of its own security. As pointed out by Singh et al:

> the peace and development of the Indo-Pacific region are heavily reliant on Indo–US cooperation in a variety of fields. China's economic and military presence in the region has caused severe apprehensions for both India and the US. … As a result, both the US and India, as well as other major Asian players, have been working to establish a coordinated defence structure in the region. The South China Sea's geostrategic importance has prompted India to pursue cooperative military cooperation with the US and other Indo-Pacific members. … As a result, India has learnt that the strategic partnership between the Indo–US in the region is a precondition for the success of the newly reframed 'Act East'.
>
> Bawa Singh et al., 2023. *New Great Game in the Indo-Pacific: Rediscovering India's Pragmatism and Paradoxes*. Routledge.

> In the past, it was often said that Pakistan was a US ally but not a friend, while India was a friend but not an ally. With the US out of Afghanistan, Pakistan has become a less significant ally. But, while India still isn't one, owing to its insistence on strategic autonomy, even US sceptics who say the two countries' interests are more aligned than their values concede that those interests warrant closer cooperation.
>
> Shashi Tharoor, 2023. 'The US and India's non-aligned alliance'. The Strategist/ASPI.
> aspistrategist.org.au/the-us-and-indias-non-aligned-alliance

Economic prosperity

Australia

Australian–Indian economic cooperation has gained considerable momentum in recent years, with both governments identifying each other as important partners in their respective Indo-Pacific strategies. For Australia, strengthening its economic ties with India is considered key to reducing its reliance on China. In many ways, there is more at stake for Australia. Although China is the largest source of imports for both countries, India's top export market is the United States, and its reliance on China, while significant, is not as critical as Australia's.

DFAT signalled the importance of India in its report *An India Economic Strategy to 2035* (DFAT, 2018), which highlighted the mutual benefits of greater economic cooperation and the increasing importance that India would play in Australia's economic prosperity. According to this report:

> over the next 20 years, a growing India will need many of Australia's goods and services – including in education, agriculture, energy, resources, tourism, healthcare, financial services, infrastructure, science and innovation, and sport. There's no single major market out to 2035 with more growth opportunities for Australian business than India. Australia's ties with India are long-standing and strong. What's now needed is a step change in the economic partnership, led at the highest levels of government and business. The India Economic Strategy is an ambitious plan to transform Australia's economic partnership with India out to 2035. Getting the Strategy right will strengthen the resilience of the Australian economy and help realise India's aspirations.

Australia's relationship with India, like the latter's relationship with the United States, runs deeper than economics. The two countries broadly share a liberal democratic outlook that **places value in the protection and maintenance of the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and the free trade it underpins**. This is particularly important to a middle power like Australia that lacks the buying power or military might to achieve its aims through other means. Like the United States, Australia has a sizeable and growing Indian diaspora, helping to foster closer relations between the two countries. As the DFAT report further points out:

> in the last decade we have seen a very large increase in the size of the Indian diaspora in Australia, now 700 000 strong and the fastest growing large diaspora in Australia. To reach this size in a little over a decade is remarkable. This diaspora will have a big role to play in the partnership of the future. They can go into the nooks and crannies of a relationship where governments cannot. They can shape perceptions in a way governments cannot. And they create personal links, in business, the arts, education, and civil society which can help anchor the relationship.

Of course, it is important that Australia maintains a balanced approach with its trade and economic relationships, ensuring that its ties with India are not prioritised at the expense of its other regional partners. Simply 'exchanging' its supposed over-reliance on China for an over-reliance on India would be unwise. Nonetheless, there is much optimism about growing cooperation between India and Australia, on both the economic and geopolitical fronts, albeit without the almost gold-rush fervour that characterised Australian interest in China in the 2000s. A cautious and balanced approach to strengthening ties, alongside a similar focus on cooperation with other regional partners, and ASEAN in particular, can only serve the interests of both countries. In service of these aims, there are things that both India and Australia can do, such as each advocating for a greater role for the other on key economic forums. For example, India could help to facilitate closer ties between Australia and ASEAN, and Australia could reciprocate by pushing for the inclusion of India into APEC. This, among other benefits, could lead to the creation of an Asia-wide free-trade agreement.

Regional relationships

Bangladesh

Few bilateral regional relationships matter more to India than its relationship with Bangladesh. For years, India and China have vied for influence with Bangladesh in the form of trade, investment and security cooperation, and India is well placed to come out on top, despite some periods of tension and diplomatic incidents. Bangladesh is a key focus of both India's Neighbourhood First policy and the broader Act East Policy; these emphasise strong diplomatic, economic and strategic cooperation with regional partners, particularly in the face of a more assertive and engaged China. India and Bangladesh have a shared history and geography: they only separated as political entities in 1947, and share Bengali cultural and linguistic traditions, several major rivers and one of the longest land borders in South Asia. Further, India was instrumental in the creation of modern Bangladesh, when it supported and sided with the latter's fight for independence from Pakistan. This led to a war between India and Pakistan, which then led to Bangladesh's independence in 1971 — with this support being something Bangladeshi governments have not forgotten. India

has largely enjoyed friendly bilateral relations with Bangladesh, but there have been issues. Most notably, in 2021 there were widespread protests in Bangladesh against the state visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the wake of his government's *Citizenship Amendment Act* (2019), which was widely perceived as anti-Muslim in nature.
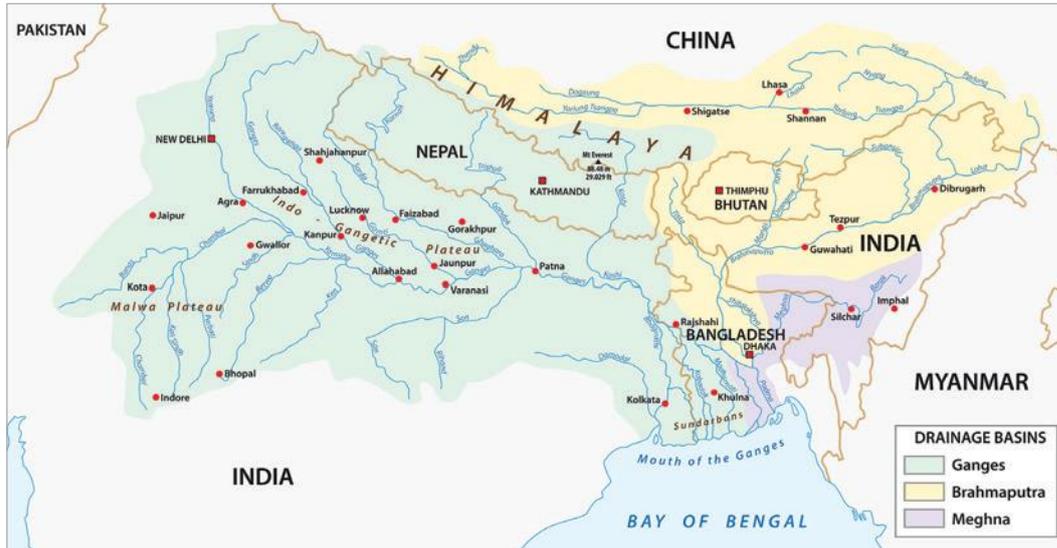
India and Bangladesh share the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna river systems, a situation that fosters both cooperation and tension over the allocation and management of water resources.
Credit: Rainer Lesniewski.

On the economic front, India represents the biggest export market in Asia for Bangladesh, with trade between the two totalling just under US$16 billion in 2023. There has been considerable Indian investment in Bangladesh and **cooperation over a range of shared infrastructure and security initiatives**, such as the India–Bangladesh Coastal Surveillance System in 2019, aimed at improving security of shipping lanes in the Bay of Bengal.

There is considerable convergence and cooperation between the nations in some areas of economic activity (e.g. finance, digital technologies and the textile industry). Textiles are a field of healthy competition, with Bangladesh's massive garment manufacturing industry ranking second in the world, well ahead of India. Indeed, economic development in Bangladesh has been so impressive in recent years that it now ranks as a middle-income state and has the potential to overtake India on a per-capita basis – something that could help to foster a somewhat less unequal partnership with India.

An example of how quickly attitudes towards India can change is the 'India Out' protests, which received considerable public support in Bangladesh (as a similar campaign did earlier in the Maldives). The campaign was sparked by accusations that India had interfered in the 2024 elections in the Maldives amid widespread concerns over irregularities in the electoral process. Those elections saw the re-election of resolutely pro-Indian prime minister Sheikh Hasina, with the first six months of her fourth term marred by growing protests and clashes with police leaving thousands dead and many tens of thousands wounded. In mid-2024, those protests surrounded the prime minister's residence, **leading Hasina to announce her resignation and flee from Bangladesh to seek refuge in India**. Since then, she remained in a secure location in India under that government's protection, even despite calls by the new Bangladeshi government under Muhammad Yunus for her to return and face trial for charges for atrocities committed under her tenure.

So, how can we assess India's success in fostering an effective relationship with Bangladesh? India's role as hegemon in South Asia means that it needs to tread carefully with smaller neighbours such as Bangladesh to avoid being seen as overbearing. While the India–Bangladesh relationship runs deep and is arguably India's most important in the region, recent tensions have been a major test of its resilience.

Read more about challenges to the relationship posed by former prime minister Hasina here:

'A myopic policy': India's backing of ousted Bangladesh leader Sheikh Hasina leaves it in a bind'. The Guardian, 2024. theguardian.com/world/article/2024/sep/03/a-myopic-policy-indias-backing-of-ousted-bangladesh-leader-sheikh-hasina-leaves-it-in-a-bind

China

It seems likely that strategic competition between China and India will become an increasingly important feature in the Indo-Pacific over the coming decades, with both powers having a stake in each other's immediate neighbourhoods and the broader region.

Despite Chinese challenges to Indian territorial integrity dating back to the immediate era post-independence, governments in New Delhi have been reluctant to explicitly 'name' China as one of its primary rivals in the region. However, recent developments have prompted India to become *somewhat* more receptive to invitations from other governments – notably Japan and the United States – to position itself as a bulwark against what they consider an overly assertive China. India's increasing presence and clout in the Indo-Pacific can be observed in a range of diplomatic, economic and security developments, from strengthening association with ASEAN to its participation in the Quad.

Decision-makers in China appear to recognise that India has the potential to become a challenger, so much so that some see the former's Belt and Road Initiative, and more specifically its close partnership with Pakistan, as being driven (at least in part) by a desire to contain and manage India. Other observers perceive a tendency for the Chinese government to look down on India:

> " India is seen as underdeveloped, and therefore it does not pose challenges and threats to many countries. The West does not take India seriously, so New Delhi can enjoy peaceful ties with Washington and its allies. In this view, China is strong enough for the West to be afraid, so it is natural that Western governments will seek to prevent China from surpassing them. "
>
> Mu Chunshan, 2023. 'How is India viewed in China?' The Diplomat. thediplomat.com/2023/03/how-is-india-viewed-in-china

This highlights a key ongoing challenge facing Indian policymakers: **they must respond to China's growing dominance in a measured and strategic way, without reinforcing its perception of India as a future threat**; at the same time, India must avoid actions that could undermine the broader diplomatic benefits of its traditional non-alignment strategy, which has allowed for greater engagement with multiple global powers.

While India is engaging more in the region and fostering relationships with Indo-Pacific partners, it lacks the clout of its larger Asian neighbour. China's deeper pockets mean it can deliver more in terms of investment and trade. It has become omnipresent across the whole region and made substantial inroads with India's neighbours, such as Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh, not to mention its key strategic and economic partner Pakistan – despite pushback in some of these states, as exemplified by the 2017 anti-China protests in Sri Lanka. As Tessa Walker points out:

> " Where India cannot fill the needs of smaller South Asian states, China exists as a powerful, tempting actor creating economic and political competition within the region. These smaller states are no longer solely reliant upon India as a partner, being able to look elsewhere for foreign investment and large-scale trade. This carries the potential to deepen the rift between India and China. "
>
> Tessa Walker, 2024. ''India out': What this campaign means for South Asian neighbours'. Lowy Institute. lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/india-out-what-campaign-means-south-asian-neighbours

Whatever the gap between the two in the 2020s, if current demographic and economic trends continue, India seems likely to approach or eclipse China on several of these fronts over the coming decades.

Activity H – India's regional standing vis-a-vis China

1 In your own words explain regional standing as a national interest and why states seek improved standing.

2 Read the following article on Chinese–Indian competition and answer the questions that follow.

   'Has India made friends with China after the Modi-Xi agreement?'. Brookings Institution, 2024. brookings.edu/articles/has-india-made-friends-with-china-after-the-modi-xi-agreement

   a What is the context behind the strategic competition between India and China in relation to the Global South?

   b What is the significance of the 2024 deal between the two governments over their shared border?

3 Read the following analysis and summarise in your own words India's response to the South China Sea dispute.

   'Despite the excitement, India's south China Sea policy remains unchanged'. Lowy Institute, 2023. lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/despite-excitement-india-s-south-china-sea-policy-remains-unchanged

4 Read the following articles and answer the questions that follow:

   'India pushes back against China's economic influence'. East Asia Forum, 2023. eastasiaforum.org/2023/09/09/india-pushes-back-against-chinas-economic-influence

   ''Goes against our territorial integrity': India on China–Pak Infra Project'. NDTV, 2024. ndtv.com/india-news/not-in-favour-of-cpec-india-reiterates-its-stance-on-pojk-5780805

   'India's answer to the Belt and Road: A road map for South Asia'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018. carnegieendowment.org/research/2018/08/indias-answer-to-the-belt-and-road-a-road-map-for-south-asia?lang=en

   a How has India responded to Chinese economic influence in the region?

   b In what ways are the Belt and Road Initiative and China–Pakistan Economic Corridor considered a threat to India's interests?

   c How might India effectively respond to these challenges?

Effects on stability and change in the Indo-Pacific 4.1.7

India's rise will have a considerable impact on the Indo-Pacific region. In many ways it signals a return to a multipolar era globally, with India and China as the *regional* hegemons of, at least, the Asian landmass and its immediate surrounds. However, this growth in power and influence means the Indian government must make strategic decisions about the nation's direction. India's pursuit of multi-alignment has so far allowed it to maintain favourable relations with a range of regional partners in pursuit of its various interests. The question concerns how long it can continue along this path and to what extent external developments and pressures may force a strategic rethink, as the government reacts to and prepares for a changing Indo-Pacific. India's criticisms of the Belt and Road Initiative and China's encroachment in its immediate neighbourhood, along with India's involvement in joint military manoeuvres in the South China Sea, would seem to indicate that India is already adapting to new geopolitical realities.

In her 2020 working paper for the Carnegie Endowment, Darshana M. Baruah summed up the crossroads at which India finds itself:

> The Indo-Pacific is now a theater of opportunity to increase India's profile and role globally. As New Delhi continues to move forward with its Indo-Pacific initiatives, it will face further geopolitical challenges, balancing its old and new partnerships. As countries in Southeast Asia and smaller island nations continue to navigate within the Chinese–US competition, India will also be faced with complex and challenging questions. Far more often than not, India will perhaps find itself in a position of having to balance its relationship with new strategic partners such as the United States and old friends like Russia. Similarly, New Delhi's strategic interests might appear in contrast with its traditional positions on nonalignment and other Cold War–era policies.

Read more here:

'India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's theater of opportunity'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020. carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/06/india-in-the-indo-pacific-new-delhis-theater-of-opportunity

Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: www.sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/pol34

Articles

'What has happened to the rule of law in India?' The Atlantic, 2024. theatlantic.com/international/archive/2024/02/what-has-happened-rule-law-india/677337

'Will this be the 'Indian Century' Four key questions'. The New York Times, 2023. nytimes.com/interactive/2023/04/19/world/asia/india-china-population.html

'India shows the world how to deal with hegemonistic China'. Firstpost, 2024. firstpost.com/opinion/india-shows-the-world-how-to-deal-with-hegemonistic-china-13750968.html

'The limitations of India and Russia's transactional relationship'. United States Institute of Peace, 2024. usip.org/publications/2024/02/limitations-india-and-russias-transactional-relationship

'India−Russia relations show renewed spark'. Geopolitical Intelligence Services, 2024. gisreportsonline.com/r/indo-russian-friendship-is-being-reaffirmed

India−China relations are unlikely to see much progress'. China Power, 2024. chinapower.csis.org/analysis/rajagopalan-india-china-relations

'India−China: Reversal of fortunes'. Brookings Institution, 2023. brookings.edu/articles/india-china-reversal-of-fortunes

'National security: The Sikh state of North America'. Fair Observer, 2023. fairobserver.com/world-news/national-security-the-sikh-state-of-north-america

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'India is not a US ally − and has never wanted to be'. TIME, 2023. time.com/6288459/india-ally-us-modi-biden-visit

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Avani Dias, 2024. *Looking for Modi*. ABC. abc.net.au/listen/programs/looking-for-modi

Tanvi Madan, 2024. *Global India*. Brookings Institution. brookings.edu/tags/global-india-podcast

Professor Robin Jeffrey, 2018. *India Rising*. Latrobe University. latrobe.edu.au/asia/podcasts

Videos

'Why Bollywood is losing its spark'. DW History and Culture, 2023 (13 min).
    youtu.be/8no3BQMs8sw

'Will India become an economic superpower?' DW News, 2023 (24 min).
    youtu.be/c_SEBHQTGJw

'India rising, China reversing?' Good Times Bad Times, 2024 (24 min).
    youtu.be/oNQYBowp_Mo

'Why India's diaspora is so powerful'. The Economist, 2023 (4 min).
    youtu.be/cCGQ-oAUCpk

Looking for Modi. ABC, 2024 (46 min). iview.abc.net.au/show/looking-for-modi

'Sikhs, spies and murder'. *Foreign Correspondent*. ABC, 2024 (24 min).
    iview.abc.net.au/video/NC2410H004S00

'Bollywood: The politics behind the scenes'. *Foreign Correspondent*. ABC, 2023
    (30 min) iview.abc.net.au/video/NC2310H015S00

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Revision questions

Test your understanding of your selected state by answering the following questions.

Short-answer questions

1 Outline how one form of power is used by the state to pursue its national interests.

2 Explain one way that regional relationships impact the national interest of the state.

3 Identify one challenge faced by the state in achieving its economic interests.

4 Compare two differing perspectives on the state's national interests.

5 Describe one foreign policy instrument used by the state to influence its regional relationships.

6 Outline one consequence of the state's pursuit of economic prosperity on one other state in the Indo-Pacific.

7 Explain how cultural power is used by the state in pursuit of its interest(s).

8 Outline one example of the state using foreign aid to improve its regional relationships and/or regional standing.

9 Describe one challenge to the state's pursuit of its security interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Extended response questions

1 Analyse the effectiveness of a state's use of power to achieve its security interests.

2 Evaluate the impact on two specific regional relationships on the state's pursuit of its national interests.

3 Discuss the extent to which competing perspectives have influenced the state's foreign policy decisions.

4 Analyse the impact of one foreign policy instrument (diplomacy, trade or foreign aid) on the state's relationship with one other regional actor.

5 'Maritime and land border disputes are a growing source of potential instability in a more contested Indo-Pacific.'

With reference to this quote, evaluate the degree to which one state's actions have contributed to political stability in the Indo-Pacific.

4.2

Unit 4,
Area of study 2:

Australia in the Indo-Pacific

"Unit 4, Area of Study 2: Global issues, global responses

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse different perspectives on Australia's national interests in the Indo-Pacific region and evaluate the degree to which Australia's pursuit of its national interests has resulted in cooperation or conflict with three states in the region.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

1 Australia's national interests in the Indo-Pacific including

    1.1   security

    1.2   economic prosperity

    1.3   regional relationships

    1.4   regional standing

2 different perspectives on Australia's national interests in the region, internally and externally

3 the forms of power used by Australia in pursuit of its national interests including

    3.1   political power

    3.2   economic power

    3.3   military power

    3.4   diplomatic power

    3.5   cultural power

4 Australia's use of foreign policy instruments in the region in pursuit of its national interests including

    4.1   diplomacy

    4.2   trade

    4.3   foreign aid

5 challenges to Australia's relationship with at least one member of the Pacific Islands Forum and at least two other states from the Indo-Pacific region

6 Australia's responses to a regional issue or crisis and how these have contributed to cooperation and/or conflict with a selected state from the Indo-Pacific region

7 the extent to which Australia's actions contribute to political stability and/or change in the Indo-Pacific region.

Key skills

i   use and analyse a range of political questions to investigate how an Indo-Pacific state uses power to achieve its national interests

ii   analyse and interpret a range of sources of information on one Indo-Pacific state and its pursuit of its national interests

iii   analyse the power of one Indo-Pacific state

iv   analyse the causes and consequences of one Indo-Pacific state's use of power and foreign policy instruments

v   analyse the different national interests of one Indo-Pacific state

vi   analyse different perspectives on one Indo-Pacific state's national interests

vii   discuss the extent to which one Indo-Pacific state has contributed to political stability and/or change in the region

viii   evaluate the political significance of one Indo-Pacific state's use of power

ix   construct an argument to evaluate the significance and effectiveness of one Indo-Pacific state's pursuit of its national interests, using evidence from sources.

Key questions

How does Australia perceive its strategic and national interests in the region?

How does Australia go about achieving those interests?

What are the different perspectives on Australia's role in the region?

What are the key challenges to Australia's regional relationships?

How has Australia responded to regional issues and crises and what are the impacts of those responses on regional relations?

Preface

In this area of study, students assess the impact of Australia's policies, actions and inactions in the region of the Indo-Pacific. They investigate contemporary Australian perspectives of the national interest in terms of security, economic prosperity and regional stability, and examine different perspectives on these interests, within Australia and outside Australia's borders. Students analyse Australia's foreign policy responses to regional issues and crises by investigating Australia's relations with three states, one from the Pacific Islands Forum and two other states from the wider Indo-Pacific region. Students evaluate the degree to which Australia cooperates with three states in the region. They also evaluate the effectiveness of Australia's responses to issues of concern to the selected states, such as human rights, armed conflict, a mass movement of people, climate change, global economic instability, development issues, or weapons of mass destruction. 99

Australia in the Indo-Pacific

All states prioritise the maintenance of their sovereignty — facilitated by security interests being satisfied — and pursue opportunities to enhance their economic prosperity. This ensures they have enough economic power to meet the needs of their citizens and can fund the approaches necessary to achieve other interests and objectives. Additionally, as a member of a global community of states, consideration is also given to how these objectives are pursued and the potential responses of other actors.

In this area of study, we stay in the Indo-Pacific but reorient ourselves towards looking at Australia's perspectives, interests and actions in a regional context. We then explore various aspects of Australia's relationship with three other powers in the region.
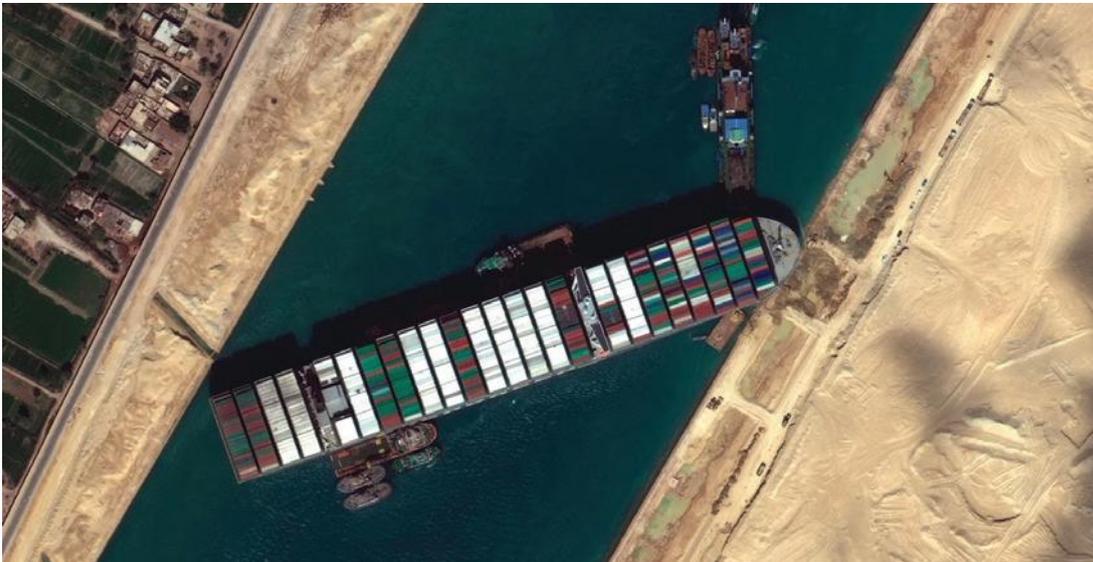
Satellite imagery showing the cargo ship *Ever Given* stuck in the Suez Canal in 2023. Along with the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal represents a key choke point for global trade between the Indo-Pacific region and the rest of the world. Credit: Associated Press, 2023. voanews.com/a/firm-says-cargo-vessel-ran-aground-in-egypt-s-suez-canal/6910182.html

History of Australia's regional foreign policy in a nutshell

Pre-1788	First Nations peoples occupy the continent for tens of thousands of years; they have limited but significant trade-based relationships in the north with peoples living in Papua and the Indonesian archipelago.
1788	The First Fleet arrives, beginning a long and sustained process of dispossession of local inhabitants by British authorities and colonisation by peoples from Britain and Ireland.
1850s	There is a significant flow of immigration spurred by the gold rushes, including from China, feeding growing anxieties among European settlers about migration from Asia.
1901	Formerly a collection of colonial governments, Australia federates while remaining focused on regional stability and trade with the British Empire.

1914—18	Australia fights as part of the British Empire, including smaller campaigns that lead to its consolidation of direct administrative control over neighbouring Papua New Guinea (PNG).
1930s	Japan emerges as an increasing strategic threat to Australian and British interests in the region, intensified by the latter's preoccupation with conflicts in Europe.
1941—45	The outbreak of war with Japan triggers a realignment in Australian policy towards the United States as its primary security 'guarantor'. The United States and Australia (among others) fight as allies against Japan in a range of theatres across the Pacific Islands and South-East Asia.
1945	Australia and the United States serve as founding members of the UN.
1951	The ANZUS Treaty formalises Australia's military alliance with the United States and New Zealand in the Pacific as the Cold War comes to dominate politics in the region and internationally; the United States comes to prioritise the 'containment' of communism.
1950—53	The Korean War pits the United States, Australia and other Western powers against North Korea – the latter supported by Chinese forces and Soviet supplies and equipment.
1950—63	Australia fights alongside other Commonwealth forces against communist insurgents in Malaysia.
1962—75	Australia joins the United States in fighting against communist forces in Vietnam.

Australia's national interests

Australia's interests in the Indo-Pacific 4.2.1

Australia is a large country with a relatively small population, located at the confluence between the Pacific Ocean to the east and the Indian Ocean to the west. While the term 'Indo-Pacific' is relatively new and emerges from a largely US-driven perspective that seeks to counterbalance China's predominance in more limited geographic expressions like Asia-Pacific, it does represent a useful way to delineate Australia's broader geopolitical 'neighbourhood'.

Politics and diplomacy in the 2020s in this region are increasingly shaped by a great power rivalry between the United States and China. As discussed in the previous chapter, the region includes some of the world's wealthiest states, as well as some of its poorest, along with dozens that can be understood as medium-income countries – many of whose economies are growing rapidly. It has experienced more weather-related disasters than any other region over the last 20 years and contains seven of the 10 states regarded as most vulnerable to natural disasters (Atwii et al., 2022).

In this context, Australian governments come to formulate their understanding of the country's national interests – security, economic prosperity, regional relationships and regional standing. Consider the following reflections as you read through this section:

> " We deploy our own statecraft toward shaping a region that is open, stable and prosperous. A predictable region, operating by agreed rules, standards and laws. Where no country dominates, and no country is dominated. A region where sovereignty is respected, and all countries benefit from a strategic equilibrium.
>
> A region that safeguards our capacity to disagree.
>
> A region that preserves our agency.
>
> A region that protects our ability to decide our own destiny.
>
> When we talk about our interests, this is what we mean.
>
> That kind of region doesn't simply exist organically. It demands our national effort, especially as some seek to rewrite the rules. "
>
> Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, 2023. 'National Press Club Address, Australian interests in a regional balance of power'. foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/speech/national-press-club-address-australian-interests-regional-balance-power

> " In its simplest form, the national interest should be about ensuring security, prosperity, and social cohesion of the nation and its people, today and into the future. But different sections of Australian society place different weights and priorities in terms of security, prosperity, and social cohesion. And there is no shared understanding of the costs the Australian people are prepared to pay to achieve each. "
>
> Dr Heather Smith, 2023. 'Reconciling the Australian national interest'. Australian Institute of International Affairs. internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/reconciling-the-australian-national-interest

As mentioned in the preceding 'nutshell', this continent was occupied by hundreds of distinct First Nations groups for tens of thousands of years prior to European colonisation. This included important trade connections with islands to the north, which played a part in economic prosperity for many of those peoples. Notably, British colonisation was itself both an enormous security challenge and violation of the sovereignty of those peoples, the consequences of which are felt heavily today. Too often in the history of what we call 'Australia', the interests of that country and the colonies that preceded have been explicitly and directly in conflict with the interests of First Nations peoples, having served as part of narratives that sought to justify violence and dispossession undertaken by settlers. Students should keep this in mind when considering contemporary discussions about these questions, and understand that claims about what might constitute a national interest should always be considered *critically*.

Security 4.2.1.1

If sovereignty is a key aspect of statehood, then the capacity for a state to defend itself against challenges to its sovereignty underpins its existence. Security can involve the protection of a state's territory from both internal and external threats, as well as having the ability to protect (and project) a state's interests.

Australia's security interests have been shaped by a range of historical, cultural and geographical factors since the colonial era. From the establishment of the first colonies by the British, ongoing dispossession and settlement by Europeans, through to the process of Federation, and well into the latter stages of the 20th century, **Australia has typically seen itself as distinct from the region in which it exists**, with a character far more European (if not explicitly *Anglo*) than its neighbours. The White Australia policy was the result of one of the first pieces of legislation passed by the newly formed Commonwealth Parliament in 1901. The policy effectively limited non-white migration to the extent that by 1947 only 2.7 per cent of the non-Indigenous population was not born in Australia, the United Kingdom or Ireland, with the Asian population of Australia decreasing by more than 80 per cent from Federation in 1901 to the late 1940s (National Museum of Australia, 2023b).

This poster produced by the government during World War II depicts Australia as surrounded by hostile Japanese ships and aircraft. Credit: Australian War Memorial, 1943, ARTV09061.

This perception of Australia as a European outpost in an alien, hostile environment resulted in assumptions of vulnerability and the existence of a threat mentality, exacerbated by the notion that a sparsely populated, resource-rich state was a tantalising prospect for invasion – despite this being unlikely due to geography. Essentially, Australian security was built on the idea of protecting the nation from potential threats within the region. This perception has changed over time as Australia has become increasingly connected with the region, with diplomatic, economic and security relationships supported by more visible forms of integration – such as Australia joining the Asia Football Confederation in 2006 and hosting the Asian Cup in 2015.

Since its emergence as a medium-sized power (independent of Britain), Australian governments have placed great stock in the strength of its **alliance with the United States**. This is to such an extent that it is often argued Australian foreign policy exists more to support the interests of the United States, as reflected in Australia's historic support for America in most of its major military engagements since World War I – even those where Australian interests themselves might not have been directly threatened. During the Cold War, Australian security considerations were shaped by the 'Domino Theory', which posited that if one country fell to communism, then its neighbours would fall like dominos. Compelled by this frightening prospect, Australia aligned itself with the United States and other anti-communist governments, to limit the likelihood of communism reaching Australian shores.

Given the absence of direct threats to its sovereignty or territory, Australia's security concerns are largely shaped by ideology and interests in the wider region. As a 'middle power' with a prosperous economy, Australia seeks to maintain regional stability and prevent the emergence of hostile actors or conflicts that could disrupt its trade and diplomatic relations. Australia relies heavily on trade for its income and consumption, exporting primary products and importing manufactured goods. In this way, the **security of trade routes** across the Indian and Pacific oceans is vital for its economic wellbeing and national resilience. Australia also faces the paradox of
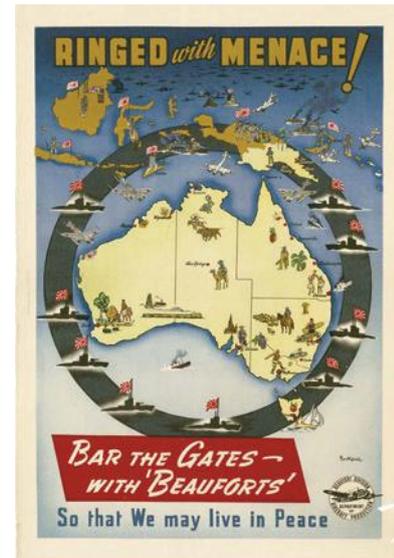
having China as its largest trading partner, while also perceiving China as the main source of strategic uncertainty and potential challenge to the US-led regional order.

Australia has sought to balance its alliance with the United States with a desire to foster positive relationships with its immediate neighbours, especially Indonesia and New Zealand. Both, in their own ways, share common interests and values with Australia, but are also themselves negotiating the complexities of the region in ways they see as aligning with their own interests.

Excluding the unrecognised micronation of the Principality of Hutt River, and sporadic Western Australian **secessionist** sentiments arising from the far side of the Nullarbor (Lee, 2021), Australia has not found itself having to deal with significant or organised internal threats to its sovereignty. From a security perspective, the threat of violence against civilians by those motivated by religious, nationalist and/or racist extremism is the dominant internal security concern (Australian National Security, 2024). Australia's intelligence community has been relatively effective at detecting and disrupting such threats (Barton, 2022), but there remains an ongoing risk of radicalisation or incitement (including by external actors), leading to small-scale attacks by individuals or minor groups.

> **Secession** is the act or pursuit of becoming independent of or withdrawing from a state or other territorial entity.

Economic prosperity 4.2.1.2

Total: $424B
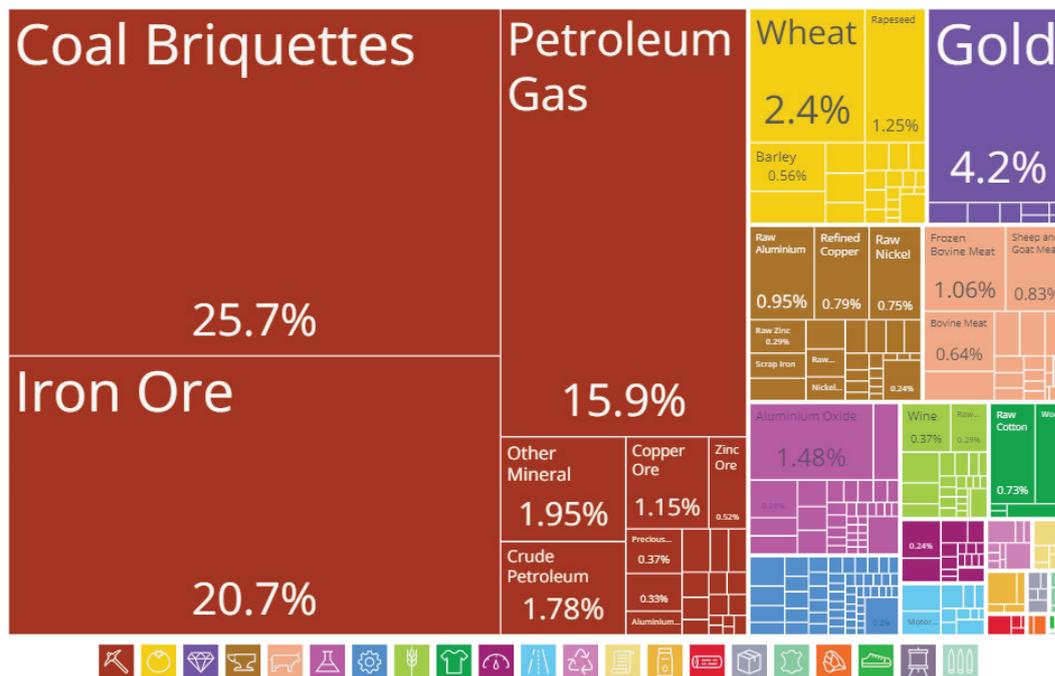
Australian exports by product type (percentage value of annual total), 2022.
Credit: oec.world/en/profile/country/aus

States need economic capacity — the ability to raise funds and/or produce valuable goods and services — to meet the needs and desires of locals and to finance state spending (such as for the military, schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure). Like its peers, **the Australian state relies on economic activity for tax revenue** to properly fund its operations and provide access to a wide range of resources necessary to maintain itself. As in many other countries, government decision-makers tend to reflect the priorities and interests of those with significant and profit-making business interests inside and outside the country.

A state's successful pursuit of economic prosperity can also be helped by effective management of its own finances:

- investing in productive industries and services
- ensuring that revenue (usually taxes) and spending are roughly equal over the long term
- managing national and private debt
- maintaining good credit ratings (which can lower the cost of borrowing money — interest rates)
- attracting productive private investment from domestic and overseas investors.

Increased global interconnectedness has led to Australian businesses (with varying degrees of government support) being more outward-focused, **competing within a highly integrated global economy**. Economic prosperity may be complemented by the promotion of fewer restrictions on trade within the region, expanding access and opportunities for Australian businesses and consumers. Similarly, diversification of imports and exports can help reduce the risks associated with exposure to external shocks and fluctuations, which can negatively impact Australia's economic position.

One such external shock was the **COVID-19 pandemic**, which severely affected Australia's trade and economic performance, as lockdowns, travel restrictions and border closures reduced domestic and international demand for goods and services. Australia's GDP contracted by 0.3 per cent in the March quarter of 2020 and then by 7 per cent in the June quarter, marking the first **recession** in 28 years. The pandemic also triggered the largest drop in employment since the 1970s, with the unemployment rate rising from 5.1 per cent in February 2020 to 6.9 per cent in September 2020. Australia's merchandise exports also declined in 2020 by 7 per cent to $373 billion, while its imports fell by 13 per cent to $273 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of $100 billion, up from $67 billion in 2019.

> **Recession** refers to a period of economic decline, as measured by the value of goods and services produced in a particular area over a period being less than in the immediately preceding period.

Australia's strong economic position enabled the Australian government to respond to these economic challenges by implementing various stimulus measures, such as wage subsidies ('JobKeeper'), additional payments to individuals, and other fiscal and monetary measures aimed at supporting Australians through the crisis and boosting the economic recovery (Chen and Langwasser, 2021). According to the IMF, Australia's response to the pandemic amounted to 10.8 per cent of the GDP, higher than the average of advanced economies (8.7 per cent) and **G20** countries (6 per cent). Australia's ability to provide this level of stimulus meant that by 2021 it was one of a very small number of states with an economy larger than pre-pandemic levels (Janda and Chalmers, 2021).

> The **G20** (or Group of 20) is an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 countries, the EU and the African Union, making up the world's largest economies; it focuses on key global economic issues, including international financial stability, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development.

Nonetheless, Australians have seen a notable decline in average 'real' incomes measured on a per capita (per-person) basis. 'Real' measures are adjusted to account for inflation — that is, the way the value of money decreases over time — which provides a more accurate measure of what goods and services can actually be bought for the same amount of income. This, along with per-person measurements, can provide a clearer picture of peoples' actual 'quality of life' — a core idea underpinning that of economic prosperity.

Real wages might have fallen into a deep hole

Index of real wages, March 2020 = 100
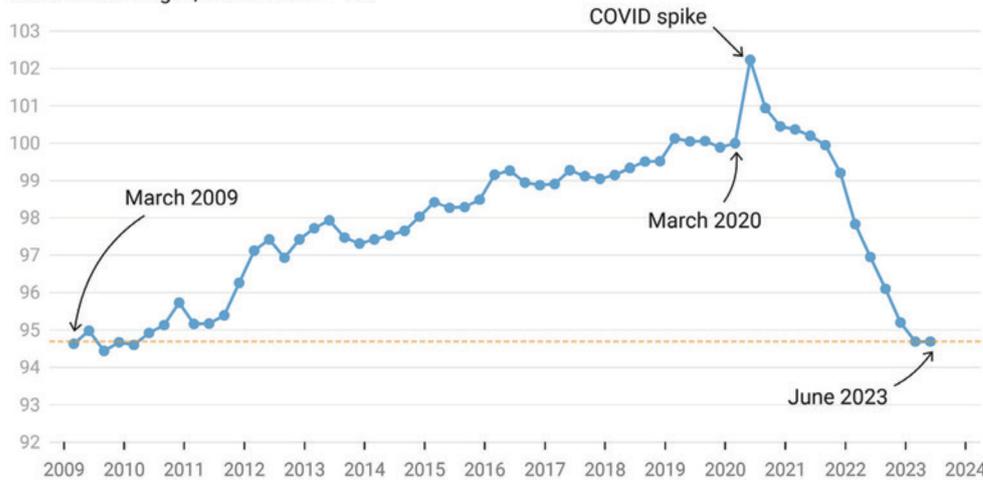
Measures of average 'real' wages in Australia, 2009–23. Credit: Greg Jericho (created with Datawrapper), with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023. theguardian.com/business/grogonomics/2023/aug/17/good-and-bad-news-from-the-latest-australian-wage-price-index abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/wage-price-index-australia

Regional relationships 4.2.1.3

One of the main challenges facing Australia is how to maintain positive relationships with states in the Indo-Pacific region that are vital for achieving Australia's national interest objectives. These relationships require careful management and ongoing engagement, with regional dynamics constantly evolving and sometimes unpredictable.

Indonesia

The Republic of Indonesia, located to Australia's north and with a population of 275 million, is considered a key partner in combating people smuggling, terrorism and transnational crime, as well as promoting development in South-East Asia. Its proximity to Australia is highlighted by the fact that Darwin is closer to Jakarta than Canberra. Australia and Indonesia share a maritime border and, other than PNG, it is Australia's nearest neighbour. The importance of Australian maritime trade routes that pass through Indonesian waters, including the vast majority of iron ore and liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports (which navigate the narrow passage between Lombok and Bali), make the relationship even more significant.
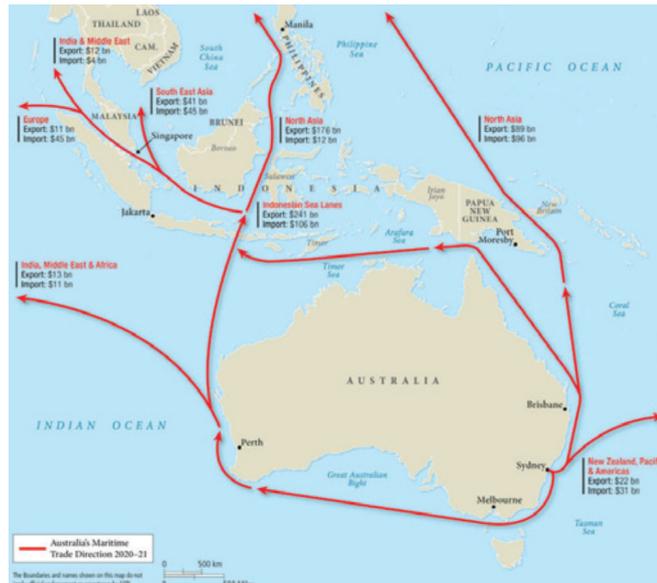
The relationship between the two states is complemented by strong tourism links, with Indonesia being the second-most visited overseas destination by Australian tourists, largely due to the popularity of Bali (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Indonesia is also the ninth-most common nationality of foreign students in Australia and one of the education export markets experiencing the highest levels of growth (Department of Education, 2023).

Australia's shared maritime border with Indonesia means that the Australian government considers Indonesia a **vital partner in combating transnational crime**, including people smuggling and drug trafficking — especially when those activities target Australia. Each has shared interests in cooperating and coordinating to

disrupt and dismantle these networks to protect their respective populations from the impacts of these activities.

Australia and Indonesia collaborate to combat transnational crime through information sharing, joint operations, capacity building and legal assistance. For example, in 2023, the Australian Federal Police and the Indonesian National Police established a joint management group to oversee bilateral cooperation on law enforcement issues, including people smuggling and drug trafficking. These agencies

Credit: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2024. aspi.org.au/ report/trade-routes-vital-australias-economic-security

also conduct joint investigations and operations to target the criminal networks involved in these activities and to rescue and repatriate the victims (Australian Federal Police, 2023). Australia provides training, equipment and funding to support Indonesia's efforts to enhance its border security, maritime surveillance and intelligence capabilities. The two states have also signed a treaty on mutual assistance in criminal matters, allowing each to assist the other in gathering and exchanging evidence for criminal proceedings related to transnational crime.

New Zealand

New Zealand is a close ally of Australia, with whom it shares a range of **key values, cultural, social and political characteristics, and other linkages**, along with a specific joint interest in the Pacific Islands. There is a high degree of migration between the two, leading to strong interpersonal links, as well as economic integration and cross-cultural exchanges through sports, arts and entertainment. The relationship is so close that the original design of Canberra by Walter Burley Griffin featured 'Wellington Avenue' as one of seven grand avenues intended to be named after the capital cities of the states that federated to form the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 (Coleman, 2022). When it became apparent that New Zealand would not accept the offer of statehood, the street was renamed, but this nonetheless reflects the shared colonial history that formed the foundation of what remains a key relationship.

The more than 40-year-old free trade agreement between Australia and New Zealand is regarded as one of the most comprehensive agreements of its type, providing a level of free movement between the two (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT], 2024b). The agreement grants New Zealand citizens a higher level of access to Australian services and opportunities, compared to those from any other regional neighbour.

Neither Australia's relationship with New Zealand nor its relationship with Indonesia is without challenges or tensions; points of difference often emerge on issues such as climate change, trade and human rights.

Solomon Islands

Developments in Australia's relationship with
the Solomon Islands demonstrate how and why
relationships between Australia and other states
can change, sometimes rapidly. **China sought to
gain influence in the Solomon Islands by offering
economic incentives and political support —**
**despite successive governments in the Solomon Islands having previously been
aligned to and supported by Australia through security and economic assistance.**
In 2019, China persuaded the Solomon Islands to switch its diplomatic recognition
from Taiwan to China, ending a 36-year relationship with Taipei. China also promised
to invest in infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges and stadiums, and
provide loans and grants to the Solomon Islands government. China's efforts to
court the Solomon Islands were seen as part of a broader strategy to expand its
presence and influence in the Pacific region, which Australia considers its sphere of
interest (ABC News, 2023). As a sovereign state, the Solomon Islands is absolutely
within its rights to enter into a partnership with China, but this is regarded as
thoroughly incompatible with Australian objectives due to the potential for China to
utilise Solomon Islands territory for military purposes, projecting its military power
far closer to Australia than Australian defence planners would prefer. The Australian
government warned against the risks of taking on unsustainable debt from Chinese
loans and grants, along with the potential loss of control of key assets and resources
(Dziedzic, 2023).

This dynamic — of China seeking to gain influence with states through economic
incentives, and states seeking to leverage that interest for their own benefit by
extracting additional benefits from existing partners — is an increasingly common
feature of the region. This arrangement demonstrates the challenges that
Australia faces in maintaining relationships with states that are strong enough
to resist the Chinese overtures and not reshape its foreign policy to align with
Beijing's preferences.

Later sections of this chapter provide more detailed information about Australia's
relationships with other specific states, including PNG, the United States and China.

The difference between 'regional relationships' and 'regional standing'

While our study design necessitates understanding of these two national interests, it can be
difficult to distinguish between them as concepts. We think 'standing' implies something
about the general quality of a country's relationships in the region, as well as the idea of
having a rank (or 'leaderboard') of how highly a particular state is regarded by its peers
in a general sense. That said, we recommend not worrying too much about the difference
between them — they can be considered two slightly different ways of saying the same thing
and can be used (with reference to relevant examples and ideas) relatively interchangeably
in your responses.

In addition to the three succinct examples of Indonesia, New Zealand and the
Solomon Islands, this chapter includes in-depth discussion of the relationship
between Australia and three other states in the region: PNG, the United States
and China.
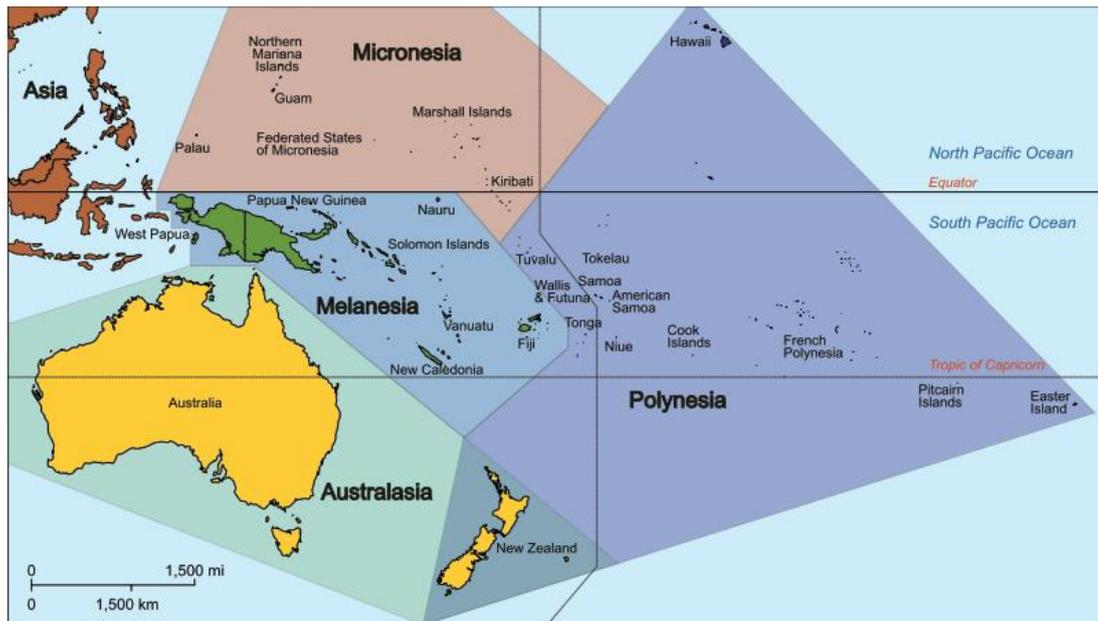
Map showing the states and broader regional classifications that make up the Pacific Islands.
Credit: UN Statistics Division, 2014.

Activity A – Australia's national interests

1 Using the information provided, explain how relationships with other states can have an impact on:
   — Australia's security
   — Australia's economic prosperity.

2 Rank the following states in order of their importance to Australia, based on your understanding of Australia's national interest: New Zealand, Indonesia, China, the United States, Solomon Islands. Use at least five pieces of evidence to support your rankings. Compare your rankings with the rest of your class.

   If there is no consensus (and there shouldn't be!), discuss the reasons for the differences of opinion.

Perspectives on Australia's interests in the region 4.2.2

As a middle power, Australia has traditionally sought to negotiate the often-competing interests of the main Indo-Pacific powers. Since the 1940s, Australia's main security guarantor has been its close relationship with the United States, so much so that some observers see Australia as not having a foreign policy of its own and being merely an **instrument or extension of American foreign policy**.

> " [Australia is] an active, eager participant in the US-led order [with] a capable, technologically advanced military and a number of intelligence agencies that operate in the region and far afield to uphold the US-led order. Australia ... compensates for its less vital strategic location by its actions: frequent military deployments, clandestine espionage operations to support the United States, hosting intelligence facilities, foreign policy mimicry and so on. "
>
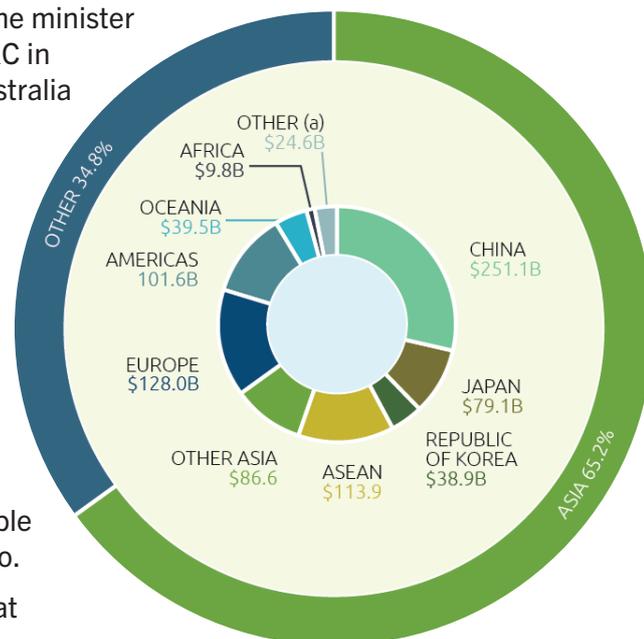> Clinton Fernandes, 2022. *Subimperial Power*. Melbourne University Publishing.

The dominant perspective on Australian interests reflects bipartisan agreement between the two dominant political parties (Labor and Liberal): **that Australia's tie with the United States is its most important relationship** due to its military dominance, cultural similarities, and capacity to protect Australian interests and territorial integrity from serious challenges. Since 1942, the United States has been Australia's 'great and powerful ally', reflected in the 1951 ANZUS mutual defence pact and, more recently, the 2021 AUKUS agreement. Even when the governments and personalities in Canberra or Washington have changed, the basic elements of this relationship have persisted.

While the United States has been Australia's primary security ally, since the late 20th century **China has been Australia's most important trading partner**. Former prime minister Gough Whitlam's recognition of the PRC in 1973 and the signing of the China–Australia Free Trade Agreement in 2015 were significant events in this transformed relationship, with Australia becoming a major source of the raw materials needed to fuel the monumental growth of China's infrastructure and living standards. In turn, China surpassed Japan as the source of most manufactured and consumer goods entering Australia. In this sense, the relationship has been enormously mutually beneficial, despite considerable ideological differences between the two.

Australia's two-way trade by region, 2019–20. Credit: DFAT, 2021. dfat.gov.au/publications/trade-and-investment/trade-and-investment-glance-2021

A 2013 Defence White Paper noted that Australia's official position towards China was that it was not seen as an adversary. However, since the mid-2010s, the relationship has been somewhat more fraught, with **ongoing disagreements between the Chinese and Australian governments** about issues such as:

- China's increasingly assertive diplomatic and military presence in the Indo-Pacific
- China's human rights record, including allegations of genocide against the Uyghur population of Xinjiang
- the suppression of pro-democracy voices in Hong Kong (DFAT, 2020)
- ongoing concerns about the militarisation of the South China Sea (DFAT, 2023)
- the potential invasion and annexation of Taiwan
- China's role in the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (DFAT, 2021)
- retaliatory restrictions imposed by the Chinese government on Australian goods
- ongoing concerns about the potential of Chinese government interference in Australian politics.

All this must be reconciled with China's economic importance to Australia.

> "Trade and investment with China is central to Australia's future prosperity. In 2020, China bought $102 billion of Australian exports, more than a quarter of Australia's total exports to the world; China is our top overseas market for agriculture, resources and services. Chinese investment in Australia reached $92 billion by the end of 2021."
>
> DFAT, 2013. 'ChAFTA: Outcomes at a glance'. dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/chafta/fact-sheets/Pages/chafta-outcomes-at-a-glance

In late 2020, a list of Chinese grievances with Australia was published on X (formerly Twitter) after being handed to an Australian journalist by a Chinese diplomat. The list details the basis for the tension between Beijing and Canberra.

> 1. Foreign investment decisions, with acquisitions blocked on opaque national security grounds in contravention of [the China—Australia Free Trade Agreement]/ since 2018, more than 10 Chinese investment projects have been rejected by Australia citing ambiguous and unfounded 'national security concerns' and putting restrictions in areas like infrastructure, agriculture and animal husbandry.
>
> 2. The decision banning Huawei Technologies and ZTE from the 5G network, over unfounded national security concerns, doing the bidding of the United States by lobbying other countries.
>
> 3. Foreign interference legislation viewed as targeting China and in the absence of any evidence.
>
> 4. Politicization and stigmatization of the normal exchanges and cooperation between China and Australia and creating barriers and imposing restrictions, including the revoke [sic] of visas for Chinese scholars.
>
> 5. Call for an international independent inquiry into the COVID-19 virus, acted as a political manipulation echoing the US attack on China.
>
> 6. The incessant wanton interference in China's Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan affairs; spearheading the crusade against China in certain multinational forums.
>
> 7. The first non-littoral country to make a statement on the South China Sea to the United Nations.
>
> 8. Siding with the US's anti-China campaign and spreading disinformation imported from the United States around China's efforts of containing COVID-19.
>
> 9. The latest legislation to scrutinize agreements with a foreign government targeting towards China and aiming to torpedo the Victorian participation in [the Belt and Road Initiative].
>
> 10. Provided funding to anti-China think tank for spreading untrue reports, peddling lies around Xinjiang and so-called China infiltration aimed at manipulating public opinion against China.
>
> 11. The early dawn search and reckless seizure of Chinese journalists' homes and properties without any charges and giving explanations.
>
> 12. Thinly veiled allegations against China on cyber attacks without any evidence.
>
> 13. Outrageous condemnation of the governing party of China by [Members of Parliament] and racist attacks against Chinese or Asian people.
>
> 14. An unfriendly or antagonistic report on China by media, poisoning the atmosphere of bilateral relations."
>
> Jonathan Kearsley, 2020. The list of '14 grievances' against Australia, provided by a Chinese embassy official to a Nine journalist. x.com/jekearsley/status/1328986579629613057

The complexities of this relationship are also apparent in the changing language of Australian Defence white papers over the past decade. For example, the 2016 report stated that 'the growth of China's national power, including its military modernisation, means China's policies and actions will have a major impact on the stability of the Indo-Pacific to 2035'. The 2020 Defence Strategic Update provided further details about how Australia might approach this potential instability: primarily through the acquisition of additional military technologies and capacities. At a cost of $270 billion over 10 years, this would, according to then prime minister Scott Morrison, provide the Australian Defence Force (ADF) with 'stronger deterrence capabilities … that can hold potential adversaries' forces and critical infrastructure at risk from a distance, thereby deterring an attack on Australia and helping to prevent war' (Macmillan and Greene, 2020). By 2023, the Defence Strategic Review had made it clear: **the ADF was now primarily driven by preparations to fight a potential war against China alongside the United States**, which it understood as necessitating even closer strategic and defence ties with America (Strategic Comments, 2023). Therefore, in the early 2020s, Australian governments have become deeply invested in the tensions that have arisen between the United States and China, as both aim to exert influence and dominance over the Indo-Pacific region. From the United States' perspective:

> strategic competition is the frame through which the United States views its relationship with the [PRC]. The United States will address its relationship with the PRC from a position of strength in which we work closely with our allies and partners to defend our interests and values. We will advance our economic interests, counter Beijing's aggressive and coercive actions, sustain key military advantages and vital security partnerships, re-engage robustly in the UN system, and stand up to Beijing when PRC authorities are violating human rights and fundamental freedoms. When it is in our interest, the United States will conduct results-oriented diplomacy with China on shared challenges such as climate change and global public health crises.
>
> US Department of State, 2021. 'US relations with China'. state.gov/u-s-relations-with-china

The phrase 'working closely with allies and partners to defend [US] interests and values' describes the role the United States hopes Australia continues to fulfil, including the extent to which Australian, Chinese and American interests are intertwined.

Internal perspectives

Within Australian politics, there are diverse perspectives, not only regarding what is best for Australia (in other words, what *genuinely* constitutes the 'national interest') but also regarding the best means of achieving those interests.

The 'pro-AUKUS' perspective

The 'pro-AUKUS' perspective **assumes that China poses an existential threat to Australia's sovereignty, security and values, and that the best way to counter this threat is to align with the United States** as a trusted and powerful ally. According to this view, AUKUS is a strategic partnership that enhances Australia's defence capabilities — especially in the maritime domain — by providing access to nuclear-powered submarines and other advanced technologies. This perspective also sees AUKUS as a signal of solidarity and a commitment to the US-led, rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region, which China seeks to challenge and undermine. Further, it argues that AUKUS is a necessary response to the changing regional security environment, where China's military and economic rise has created an imbalance of power and increased the risk of conflict or coercion.

Supporters of AUKUS argue it provides the enhanced military capacity needed for Australia to achieve what the 2024 National Defence Strategy describes as the cornerstone of defence planning:

> The Strategy of Denial involves changing a potential adversary's belief that it could achieve its ambitions with military force at an acceptable cost. The Strategy of Denial involves working with the US and key partners to ensure no country attempts to achieve its regional objectives through military action. By signalling a credible ability to hold potential adversary forces at risk, the strategy also seeks to deter attempts to coerce Australia through force.

<p style="text-align: right">Department of Defence, 2024. '2024 National Defence Strategy'. defence.gov.au/about/
strategic-planning/2024-national-defence-strategy-2024-integrated-investment-program</p>

In 2022, then prime minister Scott Morrison said:

> over the last decade, the PRC has increasingly attempted to reshape our region, and the world, in a way more conducive to autocracies than liberal democracies. Our region must not embrace the path of acquiescence in the face of coercion. Rather we must practically insist on engagement within the clear and established rules, with accountability and transparency.

<p style="text-align: right">Tyrone Clarke, 2022. 'Scott Morrison says AUKUS and Quad key to fight back against
China's 'arc of autocracy' after missing first week of parliament'. Sky News. skynews.
com.au/australia-news/politics/scott-morrison-says-aukus-and-quad-key-to-fight-back-
against-chinas-arc-of-autocracy-after-missing-first-week-of-parliament/news-story/
c798f6c004eaabc5e952118d69d73948</p>

The 'AUKUS-critical' perspective

The perception of China as a threat that justifies remaining in lockstep with the United States is the subject of significant criticism by key figures within Australian politics.

Former prime minister Paul Keating argues that Australia should develop an independent foreign policy that is not subservient to US interests and does not treat China as an enemy. He believes that China's rise is inevitable and that Australia should seek to engage with it rather than confront it. Keating warned that an alliance with the United States risked dragging Australia into unnecessary wars and damaging its relations with other neighbours in Asia who might be more inclined to engage constructively with a regionally dominant China. Keating articulated his belief that **AUKUS constituted a strategic blunder that would alienate China and undermine regional stability** (Worthington, 2023), and in his inimitable style used an address at the National Press Club to offer further commentary. In Keating's mind, AUKUS:

> - represents the worst international decision by an Australian Labor government since the former Labor leader Billy Hughes sought to introduce conscription to augment Australian forces in World War I . . .
> - [is] the last shackle in the long chain the United States has laid out to contain China
> - does not offer a solution to the challenge of great power competition in the region or to the security of the Australian people and its continent.

<p style="text-align: right">Paul Keating, 2023. 'AUKUS Statement by PJ Keating, the National
Press Club, Wednesday 15 March 2023'. paulkeating.net.au/shop/item/
aukus-statement-by-pj-keating-the-national-press-club-wednesday-15-march-2023</p>

Another prominent critic of the Australia–US alliance and the notion that China poses a threat to Australia is Hugh White, a former Defence official and professor of strategic studies. White contends that the United States is losing its primacy in Asia and that China is emerging as the dominant power in the region, believing Australian governments:

> can no longer assume that Asia will be managed and made safe for us by the dominant power of our former great and powerful friends, and current AUKUS partners, Britain and America. … They must devote all their diplomatic energies not to trying to preserve the old order, but to doing whatever they can to shape the new regional order that is emerging as US power fades.
>
> Hugh White, 2017. 'Without America'. *Quarterly Essay*, no. 68. quarterlyessay.com.au/essay/2017/11/without-america

White suggests that Australia should accept this reality and adjust its policies accordingly, adopting a more balanced approach that respects China's interests and avoids provoking it. He also advocates that Australia pursue a more independent defence capability that does not rely on US protection. White further criticises AUKUS as a misguided attempt to contain China that will increase the risk of conflict and reduce Australia's influence in Asia.

External

The Biden administration's perspective

Under the presidency of Joe Biden, the United States' perspective on Australia's willingness to challenge China was underpinned by an understanding of the latter as a strategic partner and ally in the Indo-Pacific region; indeed, the AUKUS pact is a way to **enhance shared security interests and deter China from challenging the regional order**. The United States views the provision of nuclear-powered submarines to Australia as a symbol of its deep trust and commitment, and as a crucial way to boost Australia's maritime capabilities and presence.

Announcing the new partnership on 15 September 2021, Biden said:

> we all recognize the imperative of ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific over the long term. We need to be able to address both the current strategic environment in the region and how it may evolve. Because the future of each of our nations — and indeed the world — depends on a free and open Indo-Pacific enduring and flourishing in the decades ahead. … This initiative is about making sure that each of us has a modern capability — the most modern capabilities we need to manoeuvre and defend against rapidly evolving threats. … The United States will also continue to work with ASEAN and the Quad, as was stated earlier; our five treaty allies and other close partners in the Indo-Pacific; as well as allies and partners in Europe and around the world to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific, and build a future of peace, opportunity for all the people of the region.
>
> Biden announcing the creation of AUKUS, 2021. whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aukus

The United States regards Australia as a crucial part of an alliance designed to uphold the peace and security of the region, while adhering to the rules-based international order.

The Chinese government's perspective

The establishment of AUKUS and the resultant deepening of the Australia–US alliance has been widely interpreted as posing a **direct challenge to solidifying Chinese power** in the Indo-Pacific region. Unsurprisingly, this has seen the Chinese government (including dominant voices within the CCP and state media) adopt a highly critical perspective, framing Australia's decision to obtain nuclear-powered submarines as a destabilising act that will pose a greater security threat to the Indo-Pacific region. This further represents a rejection of the rules-based international order – the very criticisms levelled against China.

Fu Cong, the Chinese ambassador to the EU, expressed this perspective:

> We deplore the establishment of AUKUS and the cooperation among the US, [United Kingdom] and Australia on the construction of nuclear-powered submarines. This trilateral cooperation undermines regional peace and stability and constitutes grave risks of nuclear proliferation in contravention of the object and purpose of the NPT. … This event also lay bare the double standard of these three countries on non-proliferation, and will have far-reaching implications for the Iran nuclear issue and the de-nuclearization of the Korean [Peninsula].
>
> 'Statement by Director-General FU Cong at the EU Non-proliferation and Disarmament Conference'. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2021. mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg_663340/jks_665232/kjfywj_665252/202406/t20240606_11405405.html

It is important to note that according to the Australian Submarine Agency (2024), 'Australia is pursuing a nuclear non-proliferation approach for its conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarine program within the framework of Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency'. This reflects the extent to which it continues to fulfil its obligations to the NPT, despite allegations to the contrary by Beijing.

Pacific Island governments' perspectives

Pacific Island states have criticised **Australia's focus on the security and economic elements** of Australia's national interests, believing this ignores the existential threat posed by climate change. Former prime minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga, is reported to have raised these concerns with Scott Morrison at a meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2019, stating, 'you are concerned about saving your economy in Australia. … I am concerned about saving my people in Tuvalu' (BBC, 2019).

This perspective is framed around the need to prioritise the process of decarbonisation due to the **impact and consequences of climate change on Pacific Island states**. Believing that climate change is the greatest threat to regional security and stability, Pacific Island states call for urgent action as outlined in the 2019 Kainaki II Declaration, as well as the earlier Boe Declaration (endorsed by the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2018).

The Pacific Island states reflect a diverse range of cultures, societies and political perspectives, and so should not be regarded as a single, homogenous bloc. This has become increasingly apparent as many consider pursuing closer economic, diplomatic and security relationships with China.

Activity B – Perspectives on Australia's interests in the region

1 Using the information provided, explain why Australia's negotiation of competing US and Chinese objectives in the region might be so contentious.

2 Read the following reflections on the AUKUS deal from Hugh White and Paul Keating, then answer the following questions.

Hugh White, 2023. 'The AUKUS submarines will never happen'. The Saturday Paper. thesaturdaypaper.com.au/world/2023/03/15/the-aukus-submarines-will-never-happen

Paul Keating, 2023. 'AUKUS statement'. The National Press Club.
paulkeating.net.au/shop/item/
aukus-statement-by-pj-keating-the-national-press-club-wednesday-15-march-2023

    a Summarise White's and Keating's main criticisms of AUKUS, including three key quotations from each text.

    b Imagine you have been tasked with crafting language to be used in a rebuttal against White or Keating. Outline the arguments that would be used.

Forms of power used by Australia in pursuit of its interests 4.2.3

Political 4.2.3.1

Australia's political power draws on its capacity to use domestic and international law to advance its interests. This derives from the government's capacity to develop and enforce policies through its various institutions.

One crucial area of international law is that which governs states' **claims to control maritime territory**. The UNCLOS grants Australia and other states sovereign control over a belt of coastal waters extending 12 nautical miles from their respective coastlines, as well as the ability to enforce domestic laws relating to customs, taxation, immigration and pollution out to a 24-nautical-mile distance (sometimes referred to as 'the contiguous zone'). UNCLOS also allows states to exercise their political power up to 200 nautical miles from their coastline. This maritime extension of sovereignty is known as an 'exclusive economic zone' (Geoscience Australia, 2014).

Laws passed by the Commonwealth Parliament, such as those related to immigration, can have a significant impact on Australian foreign policy. Recent Australian federal elections have been distinguished by a focus on maintaining a **hardline policy on asylum seekers**, with variations on former prime minister Tony Abbott's well-worn promise to 'stop the boats' — regarded as central to the Coalition's 2013 victory. Despite criticisms of this approach to immigration, this mindset has persisted. In 2024, the Albanese Labor government announced:

> " a $569.4 million boost to the capabilities that underpin the safety and security of our borders, including a significant investment in boats, planes and autonomous vehicles for Operation Sovereign Borders and Australia's civil maritime operations. This additional funding means the Albanese Government is delivering $1.31 billion more than the former government had promised for border protection. "
>
> Andrew Giles, 2024. 'Investing in a safe, secure and resilient future for the Australian community'. Minister for the Department of Home Affairs. minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/AndrewGiles/Pages/ investing-safe-secure-resilient-future-australian-community.aspx

Legislation such as the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) enables the Australian government to use its political power to impose strict border control policies, such as those relating to Operation Sovereign Borders.

As well as adjusting border controls, Australia can also implement **migration policies that may have a significant impact on relations with its regional neighbours**. Notably, the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme allows workers from 10 Indo-Pacific states to be employed on short-term contracts in Australia, to both respond to shortages in Australia's domestic labour market and provide economic opportunities to regional partners. In 2024, the Labor government also announced an overall reduction in migration levels to decrease pressures attributed to population increases, such as those relating to housing costs and inflation.

Parliament has passed other legislation that provides additional means of protecting Australian sovereignty, such as the *National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018* (Cth), which criminalised certain forms of conduct intended to influence political or governmental processes, as well as making it an offence to provide resources or support for foreign intelligence agencies (Australia Federal Police, 2024).

Australian political power can also be understood through Australia's Foreign Investment Review Board. Essentially, this advisory body examines proposed foreign investments in Australia and advises the government on whether they should be permitted to proceed, what conditions should be attached to approvals, and whether a particular investment might be inconsistent with Australian interests. You can read the suggested article below for a prominent example of how Australia exercises its political power via the Foreign Investment Review Board.

'Federal treasurer orders Chinese-linked investors to offload shares in Australian rare earths mine'. ABC News, 2024. abc.net.au/news/2024-06-03/northern-minerals-jim-chalmers-yuxiao-fund-investors/103927762

Economic 4.2.3.2

Australia is one of the wealthiest states in the world, let alone within the Indo-Pacific. According to DFAT (2022), Australia:

- is third in the OECD for household income, with the ninth-highest average earnings in the OECD

- has the sixth-largest pool of managed funds, the ninth-largest stock market and the 10th-largest foreign exchange and debt markets in the world

- is the 14th-largest destination for global direct investment

- is the largest global exporter of LNG by quantity

- is one of the top five global producers of gold, uranium and zinc

- is the world's largest producer of lithium, zirconium and titanium mineral sands; the second-largest producer of cobalt; the fourth-largest producer of rare earths; and the seventh-largest producer of antimony (a brittle, white metallic element used for fireproofing and battery production)

- has the 12th-largest economy in the world.

These statistics demonstrate that Australia is a powerful state within the Indo-Pacific in several important ways.

- Australia has abundant natural resources that are in high demand in the region and beyond, especially for energy and technology sectors. This gives Australia leverage and influence in trade negotiations and economic partnerships, as well as potential sources of revenue and investment.

- Australia has a strong and resilient economy that can withstand shocks and crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or natural disasters. This enhances Australia's credibility and attractiveness as a reliable partner and a source of stability in the region.

- Australia has the capacity and willingness to contribute to regional security and order, both through its own military capabilities and through its alliances and cooperation with other countries. This enables Australia to deter threats, protect its interests and promote its values in the Indo-Pacific.

Military 4.2.3.3
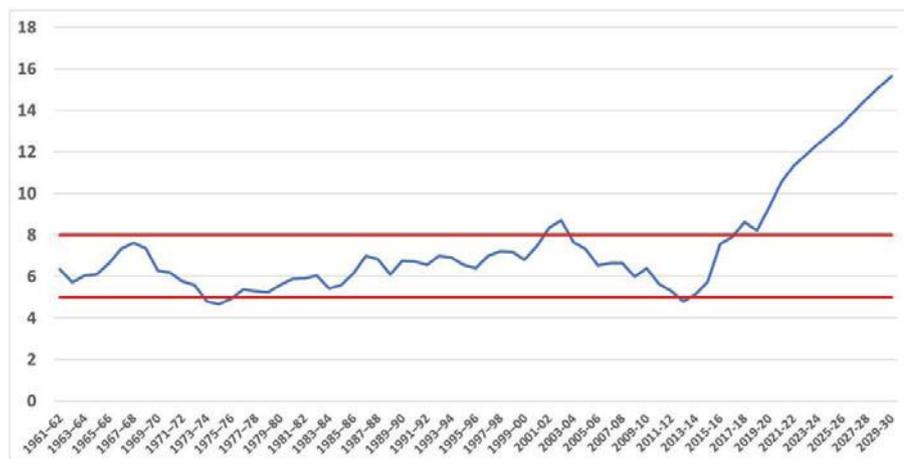
The ratio of defence-to-aid spending by Australian governments, 1961–2030 (projected). The red lines show the bands within which the defence/aid ratio has traditionally moved (where between four and eight dollars was spent on defence for every dollar spent on international aid). Credit: Stephen Howes, 2020. devpolicy.org/defence-and-aid-unprecedented-divergence-20200728

In 2020, the Morrison government committed to spending $270 billion over the next decade to invest in Australia's military capacity, while the 2023 Defence Strategic Review saw the Albanese government commit an additional $19 billion to fulfil the recommendations in the review (Evans, 2023). This additional funding went towards enhancing the ADF's investment in military technology, including the capacity to acquire missiles and nuclear-powered submarines that could carry out long-range strikes beyond Australia's territorial waters. The 2024 Global Firepower Index ranked Australia 16th in terms of military power (despite being ranked only 55th by population).

Currently, the ADF has approximately 64 000 personnel but intends to increase this by 30 per cent, to almost 80 000, by 2040 (Brangwin and Watt, 2022).

This increase in military power is in response to the changing strategic environment within the Indo-Pacific. It also marks a shift from the previous focus on terrorism and smaller-scale conflicts in the region, which would not otherwise be considered a direct threat to Australian interests.

This commitment to modernisation has produced a more powerful military force, with the Australia−US alliance enabling access to military technology such as:

- F-35A Lightning fifth-generation stealth fighters
- unmanned aircraft systems (or drones) such as the MQ-4C Triton − which provides for long-range patrol and surveillance capabilities
- sophisticated maritime and land-based guided weapons systems.
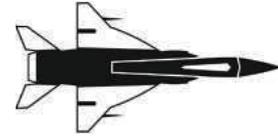
The technology possessed by the ADF may be used to advance Australia's interests in several ways. It gives the ADF a deterrence capability against potential adversaries who might seek to coerce or attack Australia or its allies and partners. For example, the missile technology and nuclear-powered submarines that Australia has committed to acquiring may allow the ADF to strike targets at long ranges and with high precision, as well as operate stealthily and persistently in contested waters. These capabilities would deter any adversary from escalating a major dispute with Australia (however unlikely) into outright armed conflict.

These weapons also enable Australia to project power and influence across the Indo-Pacific region. As a middle power highly reliant on overseas trade flows, Australia does depend on the stability and security of the region, as well as the freedom to navigate the seas and skies. Australia can conduct operations and missions that support these interests through:

- conducting surveillance and reconnaissance
- providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
- participating in peacekeeping and capacity-building activities.

These investments could **improve interoperability and cooperation with allies**, particularly the United States and United Kingdom. By acquiring similar or compatible technology, the ADF can ensure it works effectively with the US military in times of crisis or conflict, as well as in peacetime exercises and training. Establishing common or interoperable platforms and systems can deepen military relationships and enhance the collective security and resilience of the region. Large-scale multinational military training exercises such as Pitch Black, Rim of the Pacific and Talisman Sabre offer regular opportunities for cooperation and relationship building of this type. Conversely, increased interdependence and integration with other countries' militaries may also erode Australia's ability to act independently of those countries in a future crisis. More broadly, investments in military capacity may add to Australia's engagement with other broadly like-minded states in the region, such as Japan, India, Indonesia and Singapore.

However, as discussed in the previous section, the prospect of Australia actually using its military power beyond its borders, in concert with allies like the United States or otherwise, carries important **strategic, diplomatic and ethical risks**. Past involvements in US military interventions in the region and beyond may have made it more difficult for Australia to build relationships with neighbouring countries whose governments are critical of those actions, especially when they appear inconsistent with the principles of sovereignty and self-determination.

In 1950, American international relations theorist John Herz introduced the idea of the '**security dilemma**', which proposes that when states take actions to enhance their defensive capacity − such as through developing their military power − this might instead *decrease* the security of that state. It is assumed that other state

actors cannot be certain that this 'defensive' capability will not be used against them, and so they respond by increasing their own military power, or even by launching a pre-emptive strike to reduce the threat they perceive. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Cook Islands and Kiribati have all publicly expressed concerns to this effect, fearing that Australia's increasing military power might lead to regional militarisation and instability (Chabin, 2023).

Diplomatic 4.2.3.4

Diplomatic power is the **ability of states to influence other global actors through discussion and negotiation**. This power can be exercised through formal diplomatic channels, such as ambassadors, or through institutions of global governance and other supranational organisations.

The extent to which a state can influence another actor in this way typically depends on other forms of power possessed by the actors in question, which can be effectively leveraged to achieve a preferential outcome. Crucially, there must be means for the negotiations and discussions to take place for any form of diplomatic power to be effectively utilised. Australia currently ranks 26th in the world in terms of its diplomatic footprint (Lowy Institute Global Diplomacy Index, 2024). Of Australia's 124 diplomatic posts, 55 are in Asia or the Pacific. Since 2017, Australia has opened a further six missions in the Pacific region, meaning it now has a permanent diplomatic presence in every Pacific Islands Forum member state (Neelam and Sato, 2024).

Diplomatic power also factors into Australia's engagement with key institutions of global governance. Australia is seeking a seat on the UNSC in 2029, which may enhance its status as a global actor and demonstrate a commitment to diplomacy through the UN. Historically, Australia has been at the forefront of developing diplomatic forums to pursue national interests – as a founding member of APEC in 1989 and being instrumental in the establishment of the G20 in 1999.

Membership of these groupings has enhanced Australia's diplomatic power by providing it with **platforms to voice national interests and concerns on global issues** and influence the shaping of rules and norms. Through APEC, Australia has contributed to regional economic integration and trade facilitation, as well as promoting cooperation on health, security and environmental issues. As a member of the G20, Australia has also been involved in coordinating the global response to pressing economic and social problems.

Cultural 4.2.3.5

Cultural power involves leveraging the positive perceptions of a state and its people to exert influence over other actors; in turn, this increases the likelihood that the actions and policies they pursue will better align with a state's interests. The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper highlighted some of the key characteristics that helped foster such a positive perception of Australia. This included the strength of its **democratic institutions, a successful multicultural society, a strong economy and an attractive lifestyle**. The positive attributes associated with Australia's cultural and sporting pursuits are also considered significant assets and are promoted as such.

For these characteristics to be shared with the world, the Australian government funded the New Colombo Plan, which supports undergraduates undertaking study, language training and internships in the region, and encourages a two-way flow of students between Australia and the Indo-Pacific. The key objectives are to foster relationships that enable a wider understanding and appreciation of Australia's positive cultural characteristics.

This approach extends to government support for overseas showcases such as the G'Day USA program, which 'brings together leaders from government, business, the creative industries and academia to deepen the Australia–US relationship and showcase Australia's creative, innovative economy and society to the United States' (American Australian Association, 2024). At its centrepiece is the deployment of Australian members of the Hollywood A-list (and 'lesser' lists) to portray Australia in as positive a light as possible to an audience in the world's largest economy (and our primary security partner).

By using cultural power in these ways, Australia can build trust, goodwill and rapport with foreign governments, organisations and individuals, and increase its ability to persuade, inspire and cooperate with them on issues of common interest or concern. Cultural power can also help Australia to counter negative stereotypes, misinformation or propaganda that may harm its interests or image.

Activity C – Forms of power used by Australia to pursue its interests

1   Conduct research into exercises Pitch Black, Rim of the Pacific, or Talisman Sabre, noting:

   a   the number of states participating

   b   the number of personnel involved

   c   the types of activities undertaken.

   Explain the extent to which this military exercise enhances Australian security, with reference to 'interoperability' and 'deterrence'. Further, consider how other actors in the region may perceive the exercise.

2   Select two articles by Hugh White from the link provided and answer the questions that follow.

   Articles published on The Interpreter (Lowy Institute): lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/contributors/articles/hugh-white

   a   Identify two forms of power referenced in the article.

   b   Summarise the main points of the article, including reference to the limitations on Australian power.

3   Construct the following chart in your exercise book or on your device. In each cell, state how the form of power can enhance that national interest, with reference to one event from the last 10 years. You may use any examples provided in the textbook, supplemented by your own research.

	Political power	Diplomatic power	Economic power	Cultural power	Military power
Security					
Economic prosperity					
Regional relationships					
Regional standing					

Australia's use of foreign policy instruments in pursuit of its interests 4.2.4

Diplomacy 4.2.4.1

Australian diplomacy is conducted primarily through DFAT, with high-profile members of the government also playing key roles. Typically, the most significant diplomatic relationships are pursued by the most high-profile members of government.

Following the election of the Albanese Labor government, Foreign Minister Penny Wong's first solo overseas trip was to Fiji. As Wong explained, 'the visit … demonstrates the importance we place on our relationship with Fiji and on our Pacific engagement' (Dziedzic and Ewart, 2022). Previous governments have been criticised for treating Pacific Island states with relative disrespect by not sending senior government ministers with any degree of frequency or regularity.

The most significant example of regular bilateral diplomacy is the Australia—US Ministerial Consultations, which bring together the Australian Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence with their American counterparts on a near-annual basis, reflecting the centrality of the US alliance to Australia.

That said, diplomacy is not always available to Australia as a foreign policy instrument. The 2022 talks between Defence Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles and then Chinese defence minister Wei Fenghe were the first ministerial-level face-to-face talks between the two states since relations had soured three years prior. This follows Australia's international calls for an investigation into the origins of COVID-19 and the decision to institute a range of retaliatory trade measures.

The gradual re-establishment of diplomatic relations, progressing to a visit by Chinese Premier Li Qiang in 2024, reflects improvements to the Sino—Australia relationship. Notably, Li met with Prime Minister Albanese, and the two leaders committed to an expansion of diplomatic engagement and bilateral trade. China promised two pandas to be hosted at the Adelaide Zoo by late 2024 (Pestrin and Mason, 2024).

Trade 4.2.4.2

Australia has used trade as a foreign policy instrument to promote prosperity and stability in the region. Trade relationships that are developed to benefit all parties are considered to significantly enhance broader regional relationships. In this sense, support for such approaches may add to Australia's regional standing.

Australia is a member of several free trade agreements.

- The **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement** is a regional free trade agreement that came into effect in 2022. It comprises Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, making it the world's largest free trade agreement by members' GDP.

- The **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership** is a similar free trade agreement that came into effect in 2018. It includes Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam.

DFAT promotes Australia's membership of free trade agreements to help increase the markets Australian importers and exporters can access — especially among the fast-growing economies of the Indo-Pacific region who are party to such trade deals. This allows Australian businesses to diversify the locations from which they import and export products, thus, reducing their dependence on select markets (DFAT, 2024a). This also facilitates enhanced cooperation and dialogue with partner states on trade-related issues, such as the digital economy, agriculture, health, education and development. In this way, trade can foster mutual understanding and trust and create opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

By participating in free trade agreements, Australia can boost its economic growth, create jobs, attract investment and enhance its regional standing through the development of positive regional relationships. In doing so, trade agreements also support Australia's foreign policy objectives of promoting stability, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

However, free trade agreements can also be problematic. The Australia–US Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) has been criticised because the **power imbalance between the two led to an agreement that included substantial concessions to the United States on particular issues, such as biosecurity and health policy**, which did not appear to benefit Australia (National Museum of Australia, 2023a). The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement has also raised concerns for not adequately responding to human rights and labour rights abuses in member states such as China and Myanmar, especially in light of the limited trade benefit to Australia that it has been accused of containing (Ranald, 2020). Therefore, the pursuit of free trade agreements requires further critical analysis.

Foreign aid 4.2.4.3

Australia's provision of foreign aid has as its objective:

> "to advance an Indo-Pacific that is peaceful, stable, and prosperous. A region that is predictable — where differences are resolved by international law and norms, and where we can cooperate, trade, and thrive. To achieve this requires sustainable development and lifting people out of poverty."
>
> DFAT, 2023. 'Australia's International Development Policy'. dfat.gov.au/publications/development/australias-international-development-policy

Australia's 'official development assistance' to 'gross national income' ratio — which is used to measure the generosity of an aid program against other donors — was under 0.2 per cent in 2024 and projected to fall to 0.14 per cent by 2036–37. This fell far below the international target of 0.7 per cent and the OECD average of 0.37 per cent (Stanhope, 2024).

There are two state areas of focus for Australia's foreign aid:

- assisting with development through forming partnerships with recipient states, thus, enhancing their ability to respond to the challenges they face
- providing technical and financial assistance, as well as humanitarian and emergency aid, in response to events such as earthquakes, tsunamis and global pandemics that lower-income countries are less equipped to respond to themselves.

The **stability and goodwill that foreign aid seeks to advance** is considered a key element of Australian security interests. A stable and prosperous region is less likely to generate conflict that could potentially spill over to impact Australia's capacity to achieve its interests.

Economic development that occurs as a result of Australian foreign aid also provides economic opportunities for Australian businesses, establishing new potential markets for products. It may also be used to help support and incentivise friendly governments closer alignment with Australia's strategic goals — particularly in Pacific Island states.

Activity D – Australia's use of foreign policy instruments to pursue its interests

1   Construct the following table in your exercise book or on your device. In each cell, provide one example of that foreign policy instrument being successfully used to achieve that national interest.

	Diplomacy	Foreign aid	Trade
Security			
Economic prosperity			
Regional relationships			
Regional standing			

2   Visit the Australian Aid Tracker website and answer the questions that follow.

   devpolicy.org/aidtracker/destinations

   a   Describe the change in destination of Australian foreign aid during the 21st century.

   b   Using your own knowledge of Australia's national interest, propose reasons for these changes.

3   Write an extended response to the following prompt.

   'No individual foreign policy instrument can be successful if deployed in isolation.'

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to developing your understanding of the Australian state's relationship with three other states in the Indo-Pacific:

- PNG
- United States
- China.

The study design requires students to analyse Australia's foreign policy responses to regional issues and crises by investigating its relations with three states, with at least one being a member of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: www.sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/pol34

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Relationship study: Papua New Guinea

The state of **Papua New Guinea** (often abbreviated as just 'PNG') comprises the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and 600 islands in Melanesia (a cultural area in the southwestern Pacific Ocean) to the north of Australia.

PNG has population of around 12 million — slightly less than half than that of Australia — with most people having a Melanesian ethnic background (with smaller Micronesian and Polynesian groups). It has strong cultural ties and similarities to neighbouring West Papua (governed by Indonesia) to the west, Solomon Islands and Fiji to the east, and to the Torres Strait Islands (governed by Australia). PNG itself is incredibly linguistically diverse, having over 800 known local languages, with English, Tok Pisin (Pidgin) and Hiri Motu being the official and most widely spoken languages.

The structure of PNG society ranges from traditional village-based life, subsistence farming and fishing to modern urban life in cities such as Port Moresby (the capital city), Lae and Madang. Around 80 to 85 per cent of the population of PNG directly derives its livelihood from farming, while 15 to 20 per cent live in urban areas. PNG is a constitutional monarchy, with King Charles III as head of state, and is a parliamentary democracy with five-year terms for elected governments.

Activity A – Introducing Papua New Guinea

Create a report to expand what you know about PNG.

1 Research and take notes on key information such as population, demographics, religion, language groups and cultural information.

2 Find news reports about PNG from reliable sources and make notes about two current issues that are happening there.

3 Formulate your own research question around PNG's culture or history and write a 150-word response to help build your background knowledge about the country.

Papua New Guinea and Australia: A recent history

In 1949, Australia established a joint administration over the territories of New Guinea (a former German colony) and Papua (annexed by the British Empire to pre-federation Queensland in 1883), to form the Territory of Papua *and* New Guinea. In 1971, the state came to be known officially as 'Papua New Guinea', and in 1975 it attained full independence from Australia.

In 1975−76, there was a separatist revolt on Bougainville Island, prompting a change in the PNG constitution to grant partial independence to Bougainville. Between 1988 and 1998, separatist rebels mounted an armed struggle against the government. This was inspired by concerns around environmental damage at the Australian-owned Panguna mine and profits leaving the island. A permanent ceasefire was reached in 1998, and the Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed in 2001. This guaranteed a referendum on Bougainville's political status would be held in 10 to 15 years' time. This took place in 2019.
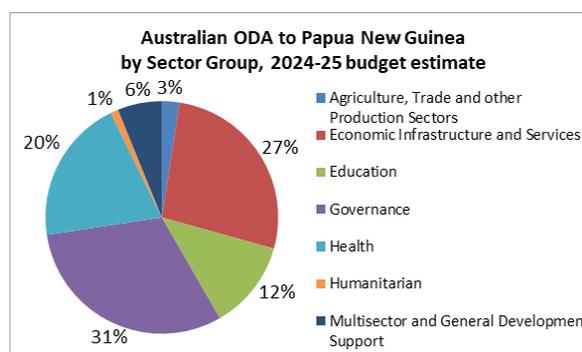
Timeline: History of Papua New Guinea and its relationship with Australia

50 000+ years ago	First evidence of human habitation in the region.
10 000 years ago	The paleocontinent Sahul is split by rising sea levels, separating Australia and what is now PNG − they were previously connected.
1847	The First Christian missionaries arrive; Christianity subsequently becomes the dominant religion.
1880s	Germany establishes a colonial presence in the north ('German New Guinea'), while the British claim the south ('British New Guinea').
1902	British New Guinea is transferred to the authority of Australia (making Australia a colonising power).
1914−75	The Territory of New Guinea is administered by Australia (first as a League of Nations mandate, then as a UN trust territory) after Australian troops capture German New Guinea during World War I.
1942−45	During World War II Japan invades the Territory of New Guinea and the Territory of Papua, which become key theatres of war in the Pacific. This conflict involves thousands of Australian troops, including at the infamous Kokoda Track. Many PNG civilians are killed in combat, fighting alongside ADF personnel.
1949	The administrations of 'Papua' (south) and New Guinea (north) are consolidated into the territory of 'Papua and New Guinea', still under Australian control.
1951	Administration of Territory involves a 28-member Legislative Council with only three places for Papua New Guineans.
1964	The House of Assembly of Papua and New Guinea is formed, with a majority of members being indigenous Papua New Guineans.
1969−89	The Panguna mine, owned by Bougainville Copper Ltd (a subsidiary of Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia) begins operations in Bougainville.

1975	The Parliament of Australia passed the Papua New Guinea Independence Act 1975, changing PNG's status from that of an Australian territory to an independent country (while retaining the British monarch as head of state).
1975–76	Rebels in Bougainville fight to secede from PNG.
1988–97	A renewed uprising in Bougainville results in the deaths of approximately 20 000 people, along with the closure of the Panguna mine in 1989. From 1989 Australia provides resources to support the PNG government in its efforts to suppress the uprising. ADF personnel are deployed in 1998 as part of a peacekeeping force.
2019	A non-binding independence referendum is held in Bougainville, with over 98 per cent of the population voting for independence.
2020	The Human Rights Law Centre lodges a complaint with the Australian government regarding adverse impacts on human rights and the environment of the Panguna mine.
2020	Australia and PNG sign the PNG—Australia Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership.
2023	Australia and PNG sign the Bilateral Security Agreement.

Bilateral relations

PNG's proximity to Australia (just 4 kilometres at the closest point) and historical links make PNG **one of Australia's closest relationships**. The states share an interest in peace and security, border management, trade, investment, cultural exchange and sports. Australia is also PNG's largest development partner, with Australia spending over $500 million annually on a range of economic, social and security projects in recent years.

Australian ODA to Papua New Guinea by Sector Group, 2024-25 budget estimate

- Agriculture, Trade and other Production Sectors — 3%
- Economic Infrastructure and Services — 27%
- Education — 12%
- Governance — 31%
- Health — 20%
- Humanitarian — 1%
- Multisector and General Development Support — 6%

Credit: DFAT, 2024. dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-cooperation-fact-sheet-papua-new-guinea.pdf

A range of bilateral treaties and agreements provide a framework for different aspects of the relationship. For example, the 1987 Joint Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations between Australia and Papua New Guinea outlines 'the principles of mutual respect for one another's independence, sovereignty and equality, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries'. Australia and PNG also share a strong relationship at the political level, with both prime ministers meeting annually. Other key agreements, such as the Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership of 2020 and the Bilateral Security Agreement of 2023, underpin government relations.

Australia remains PNG's largest trading partner, with two-way trade worth over $5 billion in 2023 – though China looks set to overtake Australia. Australia is also a major investor in PNG, committing $26 billion in investments in 2022 in areas such as gold mining, oil and gas projects, and infrastructure and service delivery.

There are also extensive people-to-people ties between the people of PNG and the Torres Strait and Aboriginal Australians. Australia's Seasonal Worker Program and Pacific Labor Scheme allows **many people from PNG to work in Australian farms and industries**. The states have also cooperated in responding to natural disasters, which are common in PNG. Australia has supported PNG by providing relief supplies, rehabilitation and reconstruction for affected communities, the most recent example being $2 million in extra funding to assist PNG's recovery from a deadly landslide in mid-2024 (Faa, 2024).

> This is our patch. This is where we have special responsibilities. We always have, and always will. We have their back, they have ours. We are more than partners by choice. We are connected as members of a Pacific family.
>
> Scott Morrison, 2018. pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-41938

The notion of a 'Pacific family' says much about the importance Australia places on the Pacific region, but this has not always been the case. In mid-2024, Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong admitted that Australia had not always been 'as good a partner [to the Pacific] as we would have liked' (Brennan, 2024). Australia has tended to see Pacific states such as PNG as being of **limited strategic importance**. Many are recipients of Australian aid, which has often been accompanied by a measure of parental superiority. This view was in 2022 in a Western Sydney University Whitlam Institute report on Papua New Guinean perspectives on Australia. Nonetheless, PNG holds particular significance for Australia as its closest neighbour and the second largest member of the Pacific Islands Forum. It is strategically located, has significant resource wealth, and shows great development potential. In a time of great power rivalry in the Pacific, PNG's determination to develop presents a significant challenge to Australian interests.

Activity B – Understanding the Australia-PNG relationship

Complete the following questions using what you have just read about PNG and its relationship with Australia.

1   Record two interesting facts about PNG as a state.

2   Identify two elements of connection between Australia and PNG that you consider important to understanding the states' relationship.

3   Consider where PNG is located geographically (look at a larger map of the Pacific region). Why might this make Australia's relationship with PNG significant?

Challenges to Australia's relationship with Papua New Guinea 4.2.5

PNG's desire for an independent foreign policy

In 2023, Australia signed a significant security agreement with PNG, in which it attempted to insert language reflecting its 'Pacific family' approach. This was met with hesitation by PNG officials, who sought to emphasise PNG's long-standing foreign policy position of 'friends to all, enemies of none'. Under Prime Minister James Marape, **PNG has sought to assert its sovereign right to deal with other states on its own terms**. Many Pacific states share this view, and this poses the potential to fundamentally alter the nature of Australia's relations in the region.

Australia's history as colonial overseer and status as the biggest financial backer of PNG has had mixed effects on the relationship between the two. Australia's investment of almost $650 in PNG over 2022–23 suggest strong ties (DFAT, 2023). Nonetheless, despite a generally positive attitude towards Australia, terms like 'paternalistic' and 'condescending' have often featured in Papua New Guinean assessments of Australia's approach to aid. Former PNG prime minister Michael Somare is said to have coined the term 'boomerang aid', whereby Australian funding has a habit of ending up back in Australia rather than developing PNG's economic independence and self-sufficiency.

Recent research by the Whitlam Institute notes a **perception within PNG that Australian investment is motivated more by geopolitical considerations** than by altruism, aimed at protecting Australia's influence and relative dominance while 'keeping others out' (Baptiste et al., 2022). In contrast, China has used the language of 'equality' to describe its interactions with PNG and the wider Pacific. In 2024, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that Chinese assistance would flow to PNG without 'strings attached' or 'an imposition of our will'. He also took aim at Scott Morrison, saying that the Pacific Islands weren't the 'backyard of any major country' (Swanston and Clarke, 2024).

While Australia remains PNG's largest foreign investor, **as of 2024 China was PNG's largest trading partner**, with Beijing investing heavily in construction, energy, resources, retail and telecommunications. In 2018, PNG became the first Pacific state to sign a memorandum of understanding for China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative; then, again in January 2024, PNG signed an agreement to manufacture products using locally sourced nickel and cobalt. This kind of development assistance is attractive to PNG Prime Minister James Marape, who said in his maiden address to the PNG parliament that he wanted to make PNG the 'richest black Christian nation on earth' (Business Advantage PNG, 2019). Marape also told Australian independent think tank the Lowy Institute (2023) that he does 'not want forever to be a recipient of aid and grants' and further wishes to see PNG develop with 'projects after projects after projects'.

In 2023, PNG's Trade Minister Richard Maru went further when he said 'enough is enough' and complained that **two-way trade between the countries had been heavily skewed in Australia's favour for nearly 50 years**:

> "Starting this year, we are moving on. We will partner with whatever country that will help us achieve that."
>
> Quoted in Maholopa Laveil, 2023. 'PNG's trade ties with China are set to strengthen'. The Interpreter (Lowy Institute). lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/png-s-trade-ties-china-are-set-strengthen

PNG's International Trade Minister Richard Maru. Credit: PNG Post-Courier, 2023. asiapacificreport.nz/2023/10/18/pngs-trade-minister-pledges-china-indon-free-trade-deals-are-in-sights

According to Maru, China was set to become PNG's focus for trade and investment opportunities, as Australia was not doing enough to assist PNG's agriculture exports to the country. Repeating the message of 'friends to all, enemies of none', Maru noted that PNG was not interested in geopolitics and was instead focused on pursuing a secure future for Papua New Guineans.

The Bougainville independence movement

After signing a significant security pact with PNG in 2023, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was asked whether he thought PNG should respect the outcome of the 2019 Bougainville independence referendum. His insistence that he respected 'PNG's sovereignty' and that it was an issue 'for PNG' saw Bougainville's Attorney-General Ezekiel Massat label Australia 'a coward'.
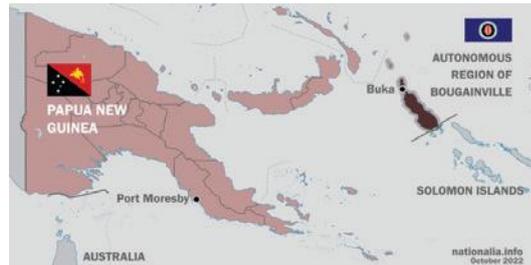
Credit: Nationalia.info, 2022. nationalia.info/ brief/11613/a-working-moderator-to-break- deadlock-in-bougainvilles-independence-process

This exchange highlighted tensions that have existed since 2001, when the Bougainville Peace Agreement brought to an end a decade-long civil war between PNG and the secessionist forces of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army.

Key background: Bougainville Civil War (1988–98)

The conflict arose when Australian company Rio Tinto established the Panguna copper and gold mine in 1972, when Bougainville was still under Australia's control. The PNG government held a 20 per cent stake in the mine, which, at the time, was the largest open-cut mine in the world and represented 45 per cent of PNG's national export revenue (Salgo, 2000). Due to cultural differences, Bougainvillians resented the arrival of thousands of PNG migrants to their island and the Australian miners who came with them. Frustrations also grew, as most of Panguna mine's profits left the island and signs of significant environmental damage became evident. By late 1988, violence erupted due to tensions over the mine. The PNG government attempted to quell the violence, but fighting escalated rapidly and became a general separatist insurgency. By 1989, Rio Tinto closed Panguna mine, and foreign workers left Bougainville (O'Callaghan, 2002).

Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) guerillas above the captured Panguna copper and gold mine, 1994. Credit: Ben Bohane/ Wakaphotos.com.

During the conflict, Australia backed PNG's sovereignty, providing military training and resources that were used as part of a blockade of Bougainville Island in 1990. As the conflict developed and the death toll grew, Australia sought a better position, contributing and leading peacekeeping forces to an international Peace Monitoring Group in 1998. In 1999, Australia's then Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said Australia would consider PNG and Bougainville two parties in a peace process, and in 2001 a roadmap for the creation of an Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) was agreed. Earlier, Downer had negotiated — as part of the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement that formally brought hostilities to a close — inclusion of a 'non-binding' referendum on independence to be held within 20 years, scheduled sometime between 2015 and 2020. This vote took place in 2019 and saw 97.7 per cent of Bougainvillians support full independence from PNG.

Officials count referendum ballots in Buka, 2019. Credit: Bougainville Referendum Commission/Jeremy Miller.

Historical context: Bougainville independence

Watch the following videos to gain a greater understanding of the causes and actions of the Bougainville Civil War and why this remains a highly emotive issue within PNG and for Australia.

'**Mining in Bougainville**'. Gregory Kopa / National Film and Sound Archive, 1970 (3 min). dl.nfsa.gov.au/module/286

These short clips come from the two-part ABC documentary written by Sean Dorney in 2000 called *Paradise Imperfect.* Dorney travelled to the war zones of Bougainville to understand the impact of the nine-year secessionist conflict and the fragile peace process.

The clip highlights several issues:

- Secessionist leader Francis Ona and other Bougainvilleans did not want the planned mine.

- Ideas about land ownership and custody varied between peoples: notably, the Australian administration and new PNG government had different views on 'land', who owns minerals underground, and regarding whether royalties should be paid to exploit underground minerals such as copper.

- It might be problematic to expect the people of far-flung Bougainville to have loyalty to a new nation and understand and support decisions being made for the national good.

'**Broken promises**'. Excerpts from the 1998 documentary by Journeyman Pictures (18 minutes). journeyman.tv/film/76

This Australian documentary was produced in 1998 by Wayne Coles-Janess, focusing on the guerrillas of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army in PNG and their fight against the Bougainville Copper company and Papuan government forces. The army believed they were fighting for their independence and their local environment.

Our Island, Our Fight is notable for its subject matter, particularly as most Western media at the time did not report on the Bougainville Civil War. The film won two awards at the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival.

Activity C – Bougainvillean independence

1   Watch the 'Mining in Bougainville' clip from the National Film and Sound Archive.

   a   Brainstorm other examples in which people have been designated as belonging to an independent nation, but instead wish for autonomy or independence. What do these examples tell you about notions of nationhood?

   b   To what extent were the values, attitudes and fears of the Bougainville peoples considered by the Australian administration and the House of Assembly in Port Moresby upon approving the mining lease on Bougainville to Rio Tinto?

   c   What is your personal response to the Bougainville story as portrayed in this clip?

2   Access the following resources and, using what you've learned so far, answer the question that follows.

'My valley is changing': This is how the Bougainville copper mine started'. Excerpts from the 1970 documentary My Valley is Changing (26 min). youtu.be/Xu5leDuRcUY

'Overview of the origins of the Bougainville conflict'. National Film and Sound Archive. dl.nfsa.gov.au/module/357

   a   What were the main reasons for the people of Bougainville's opposition to the mine, both initially and then later, when growing resentment led to its closure in 1989?

    b   The 1970 clip states that the 10 000-acre mining lease granted to Rio Tinto led to suppression of the Bougainville peoples, who did not want to be part of PNG, let alone sell their land to the state. Why did many Bougainvilleans not want to be part of PNG?

    c   What could have been done differently to get the landowners to side with the mining project?

3 In the clip linked below, journalist Sean Dorney states that the conflict began with a few Bougainvilleans who fought the company, then the PNG army and then each other, after forcing the army out.

📎 'Journalist's Diary of a Conflict'. Sean Dorney / National Film and Sound Archive, 2000 (7 minutes). dl.nfsa.gov.au/module/352

    a   How was the company 'fought'?

    b   Identify the two factions of Bougainvilleans who were in conflict with each other.

    c   In this clip Sean Dorney discusses the logistical difficulties of reporting before satellites and reflects on his efforts to provide 'context' for these short reports. How important are 'frontline journalists' in informing us about global conflicts and their context?

    d   At times, Dorney 'had the story to himself'. Comment on the dangers of this regarding the source's reliability.

4 From colonialism onwards, identify the relevant forces and ideas behind this conflict, then reflect on what you consider their impact has been on political stability and change in Bougainville, PNG, and Australia.

Bougainville's pursuit of sovereignty is about securing control of its domestic and international affairs. Sovereignty forms the basis of a state's identity, and this connects with Australia's strategic goals of regional stability, diplomatic relationships and economic cooperation. For over two decades Australia has attempted to balance its relationship with PNG and Bougainville's Autonomous Government. **PNG Prime Minister James Marape has described the prospect of Bougainville's independence as the greatest challenge facing the nation** and said in 2021 that his responsibility was 'to preserve the union of the country' (Harding and Pohle, 2022). PNG has real concerns that granting Bougainville's independence could embolden other regions within a state of 800 languages and thousands of cultural groups across its 22 provinces. There are also concerns about the capacity of Bougainville to successfully transition to a stable and functioning state, as it remains substantially reliant on PNG; indeed, the reopening of the Panguna remains central to Bouganvillian plans for independence (Nobetau, 2024).

However, should PNG fail to ratify the 2019 referendum, this raises the question of what Australia's response might be. **Either outcome − independence or a continuation of the status quo − presents a significant challenge for Australian policy in the region.** PNG is a key security ally and economic partner of Australia, evidenced by the Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership (2022) and Bilateral Security Agreement (2023). However, PNG has demonstrated that it is open to partnering with China, so far allowing the state to build a military hospital in Port Moresby in 2022. Therefore, Australia does not want to appear unsupportive of any PNG ambitions for national unity. However, Bougainville has shown that it, too, is open to international support, receiving a 2019 offer of US$1 billion from China and further investments in mining, tourism, transport and agriculture. This was described by one Bougainville Revolutionary Army leader as 'the first holistic offer', asking 'where are Australia, the US and Japan?' (Bohane, 2019). Any Australian involvement risks accusations of 'neo-colonial' interference, a point emphasised by Chinese state media in 2022 (Hong, 2022). This could also be perceived as

Canberra focusing on its own security priorities, which would undermine the Labor government's 'plan for a stronger Pacific family'. How Australia navigates this strategic challenge will have significant implications for regional stability.

Activity D – Bougainville's independence and regional stability

1. Read the resources provided and conduct further research (more recent, if you can find it) on the implications of PNG's action/inaction on Bougainville's independence, including the impact on regional stability. Take notes and discuss your findings as a class.

   'Will the decision on Bougainville's independence rupture Australia's Pacific family? UTS China-Australia relations Institute'. University of Technology Sydney, 2023. uts.edu.au/acri/research-and-opinion/commentary/will-decision-bougainvilles-independence-rupture-australias-pacific-family

   Moving beyond the Bougainville Peace Agreement by Ian Kemmish AM (former High Commissioner to PNG), 2023. nsc.anu.edu.au/content-centre/research/moving-beyond-bougainville-peace-agreement

Activity E – Relationship challenges

Our study design requires you to understand the challenges facing Australia's relationship with one member of the Pacific Islands Forum. Using the two challenges outlined, complete the following activities. Discuss the nature of the two challenges. Why are they a challenge to Australia's relationship with PNG?

1. Using quotations included in the description of each challenge, select a:
   - word that captured your attention or struck you as powerful
   - phrase that moved, engaged or provoked you
   - sentence that was meaningful to you.

   Be prepared to support your decisions.

2. Complete a written response to the following questions.
   - **Explain** one challenge to the relationship between Australia and PNG.
   - **Evaluate** two challenges to the relationship between Australia and PNG.

Australia's responses to a regional issue or crisis 4.2.6

China's challenge to Australia in the Pacific

The Pacific region has become an increasingly contested space where China has sought to significantly increase its influence. This has seen China **offer support to Pacific states in the form of security, infrastructure and financial resources**, and further challenge Australia's position as the dominant regional power.

Credit: Natalie Leung.

This was evident in 2018, when Chinese President Xi Jinping signed an article that circulated in local PNG news agencies titled 'Set sail on a New Voyage for Relations between China and Pacific Island Countries'. That same year Australian prime minister **Scott Morrison had referred to the Pacific as 'our patch', in recognition of the challenge China presented to Australian interests in the region.** President Xi wrote of the rapid growth in China-PNG relations and described them as representing the 'epitome of China's overall relations with Pacific Island countries' (Desheng, 2018). He went on to explain that China and Pacific Island states consider each other true friends and good partners.

By 2022 Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong promised to 'blitz the Pacific', making numerous visits in the wake of a Chinese-proposed region-wide agreement covering security and trade between China and 10 Pacific Island states. The boldness of China's offer prompted Australia's succeeding Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to admit that Australia had 'dropped the ball' and that Wong's Pacific visit would be a genuine 'step up' (Dziedzic, 2022). That same year, **China had signed a security agreement with the Solomon Islands,** causing Australia to raise concerns with its capital, Honiara.

In terms of growing competition, it was telling that both China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Anthony Albanese visited PNG in 2024 within one day of each other. PNG Prime Minister James Marape's response was that 'they didn't plan to be back-to-back … but PNG is blessed' (Swanston and Clarke, 2024).

These developments mean that Australia has been forced to contend with the fact that it is no longer the automatic 'partner of choice' in the Pacific.

Australia's response to China's challenge: The Pacific Step-up

Australia's response to China's challenge in the Pacific was to focus on strengthening relations with Pacific states. The need for greater regional engagement had already been outlined in a 2016 Defence White Paper and a 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, which emphasised the need to 'step up [Australia's] efforts to support a more resilient Pacific'. **Announced in 2018 against a backdrop of 10 years of declining Australian aid spending, then prime minister Scott Morrison said the 'Pacific Step-up' would take Australia's engagement with the Pacific to a new level** and would launch a 'new chapter in relations with our Pacific family'.

In 2019, Australia partnered with a Solomon Islands Provincial Government for the first time to develop crucial infrastructure: Gizo Marketplace

Credit: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Step-up has had to 'compete' with China's South-South Cooperation policy, which has seen China engage Pacific states through **offers of loans and funding for infrastructure projects**. This move has broad implications for regional stability. The Chinese government, meanwhile, has insisted that its interest in the Pacific involves the same supporting hand offered to other developing states and is not motivated by attempts to gain geostrategic advantage.

As part of the Step-up program, Australia promised to help promote economic prosperity through ambitious initiatives, such as a $2 billion Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific. Funding was also allocated to encourage security cooperation in the Pacific, with Morrison pledging $500 million for renewable energy and climate disaster relief as well as training colleges for Pacific states to improve their national security planning and defence engagement.

Australia also sought to build on the personal, historical and cultural ties with Pacific states, promising a new PacificAus Sports initiative, education programs, and a diplomatic mission in each of the Pacific Islands Forum member states. Government documents, such as DFAT's 'Stepping Up Australia's Engagement with Our Pacific Family' (2019), outline the Australian government's view that regional engagement was 'just as important as what we do' − reflecting an awareness of the need to treat Pacific states as equals.

Nonetheless, since 2017, **Australia's actions in the region have been widely interpreted as a response to growing Chinese influence**. For example, some, like Dr Pichamon Yeophantong and Dr Luke Fletcher (2019), have noted that Pacific states are more resilient in their dealings with China than Australia imagines, and that China's actions in the Pacific are driven more by economic (rather than geostrategic) interests. Similarly, others, like Joanne Wallis (2023) suggested that Australia needed to avoid 'simply reacting to China', and that offering a visa waiver program for Pacific Islanders to access Australia's relatively well-paid labour market would be a more effective policy to give meaning to the idea of the 'Pacific family' − and one that China could not beat.

Australia contribution to cooperation and conflict with PNG

The following actions taken by Australia can be understood in the context of the Pacific Step-up.

Cooperation: Sports diplomacy

> "For us, nothing can be better than both the Australian Government and the Papua New Guinea Government working hand in hand to have a team in the NRL based in Port Moresby, with a footprint in Far North Queensland as well as in the South Pacific."
>
> PNG Prime Minister James Marape in 2023.

Sport is one of Australia's key soft power assets, with sports diplomacy becoming an increasingly important aspect of the diplomatic process.

Released in 2019, the Australian government's 'Sports Diplomacy 2030' strategy featured a global focus, but was designed primarily to give Australia a leading role in strengthening partnerships in the Pacific. Through the PacificAusSports program, Australia has engaged with 11 Pacific states across four sporting codes.

Of particular significance is the **connection Australia and PNG have through rugby league**.

Rugby league is considered PNG's national sport. In line with Australia's Pacific Step-up and the advantage it has over China in terms of a culture of elite rugby league, there has been reinvigorated interest in including a PNG team in Australia's National Rugby League (NRL). Australia has a history of connecting with PNG, notably through involving the Port Moresby Vipers in the Queensland Cup in the 1990s; currently, the Port Moresby-based PNG Hunters play in the Queensland Rugby League and Queensland Cup competitions. The Hunters won their first premiership in 2017 and are considered a feeder team into a future PNG NRL side. Their games are broadcast on free-to-air television in PNG and have popular appeal.

In 2023, Prime Minister James Marape emphasised the potential of rugby league as a potent 'unifying force' for PNG during an address to the NRL. His view is that PNG's bid to become the 18th side to join the National Rugby League competition is a matter of 'justice'.

In mid-2024, Australia's Minister for the Pacific Pat Conroy said that the government and the NRL were 'aligned on a way forward' for PNG's entry into the league (Conroy, 2023). He emphasised that 'Australia and PNG share a passion for rugby league' and reiterated the importance of having an NRL side for the people of PNG. Evidently, there was '**huge potential for rugby league to bring [Australia and PNG] even closer together**'.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and PNG Prime Minister James Marape — both NRL fans. Credit: PMO.

In 2024 the Australian government outlined a deal worth $60 million per year over 10 years ($600 million) to assist with the club's establishment and to engage in community outreach within PNG. Marape said he wanted to see a decision made before 2025. According to Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, the initiative to have a PNG team in the NRL has 'been a long held ambition' that the government was 'really committed to' (Lowrey, 2024). Despite a range of challenges, including player recruitment and safety in a city that has struggled with high rates of violent crime, there was confidence that a deal could be made.

You can read more about the deal (and its possible implications here):

> 'Papua New Guinea's chance at an NRL team may hinge on a pledge not to sign a security deal with China'. ABC News, 2024. abc.net.au/news/2024-10-14/png-australia-nrl-deal-security-pact-with-china/104467706

Cooperation *and* conflict: Bougainville's independence

In the context of the Pacific Step-up and Australia's desire for closer relations with PNG, the issue of Bougainville's independence continued to be a source of tension between the states. In late 2022, Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles responded to a question on the issue, and this was immediately reported in PNG as an indication that **Australia was backing PNG's stance against Bougainvillean independence**. Marles stated that Australia 'stands ready… to support the prime minister and the government of PNG, in the decisions that it makes in respect of the future of Bougainville'. The ABG took this to mean that Australia would back PNG

in negotiations and that it was promising more military help to PNG. Bougainville President Ishmael Toroama accused Australia of having abandoned its neutral position through issuing 'veiled threats' and saw Marles's comments as being 'the very first time [Australia] [had] come out clear … to support the government of PNG on the issue of Bougainville's independence aspirations' (Kuku, 2022). For Toroama, Australia's response was a case of history repeating itself — with **Australia seeking to destabilise Bougainville's quest for independence**.

Bougainville President Ishmael Toroama.

PNG Prime Minister Marape accepted the importance of addressing the issue of Bougainville's independence, but emphasised the seriousness for PNG's sovereignty. However, for President Toroama, any discussion of regional security and Chinese influence was a 'moot point to the 97.7 percent of [Bougainvillians] who voted for independence in the 2019 Bougainville independence referendum'. As he explained, 'my government and my people do not take kindly to threats and we will never kowtow to [neo-colonialists] that seek to usurp the sovereignty of Pacific Island nations with their bullying tactics and intimidation' (Kuku, 2022). Evidently, Toroama's belief that Australia prioritises maintenance of the status quo and that Bougainville remains part of PNG **undermined Australian neutrality**. This had the potential to deepen conflict between PNG and Bougainville as they attempted to address issues such as the appointment of moderators to advance independence negotiations, the payment of development grants owed to Bougainville, and the sharing of fisheries revenue.

Bougainville's Attorney-General Ezekiel Massat soon labelled Australia a 'coward'. For Massat, no state could be neutral on the issue following the 2019 independence referendum result. Therefore, Australia and other parties involved in the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement should see PNG's ratification of Bougainville's independence as a foregone conclusion and, thus, act accordingly. This was despite the referendum being 'non-binding' according to the terms of the 2001 ceasefire agreement. Massat also interpreted Australia's 2023 Bilateral Security Agreement with PNG as primed for when the PNG's parliament inevitably rejected the independence vote, threatening 'trouble' if this were to occur. Former Australian High Commissioner to PNG Ian Kemish, meanwhile, rejected Massat's view, and implied that the deal was really about defending Australia's regional relationship with PNG from China. Kemish's view was that PNG was likely to block Bougainvillean independence, and that Australia and the region would have to explore a 'plan B' (Kemish, 2023).

Activity F – Australia's response to a regional crisis

Using this section, complete the following questions.

1   Using evidence from this relationship study, explain why China's actions represent an issue that Australia has responded to.

2   Using evidence, explain Australia's Pacific Step-up initiative and the intentions behind it.

3   Using quotes to support your response, explain two different perspectives on Australia's national interests and actions in the Pacific.

4   Analyse the impact of Australia pursuing its national interests on the PNG government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG).

5   Plan and write a response to the following extended response-style question. Your response should include evidence from this relationship study.

Evaluate the effectiveness of Australia's cooperation with PNG.

Effects on political stability and change in the Indo-Pacific 4.2.7

Australia's Pacific Step-up

Despite the Pacific Step-up, it seems unlikely that Australian will return to a position of dominance in the Pacific. Nonetheless, Australia has shown that it is willing to invest significantly in the relationship with PNG, in areas ranging from security to rugby league. In this way, strategic competition in the region has seen Australia contribute to shifting the fairly one-sided patron–client relationship it had with PNG to one in which another 'patron' (China) competes and 'bids' for greater influence. To a certain extent, this competition gives PNG (and other Pacific states in similar circumstances) somewhat more *leverage*, which they may be able to use to cultivate greater investment and prosperity for Papuans than they may have otherwise. Under the banner of 'friends to all, enemies of none', PNG is more determined than ever to exercise its sovereign right to engage with other states on its own terms. This strategy is not without risks, however – some have warned that 'unmanaged competition for influence among key development partners can compromise good governance and privilege geopolitical posturing over local priorities' (Keen and Tidwell, 2024).

China's approach in the Pacific and offers to assist PNG 'without strings attached' has been described as promoting regional equality. Australia has countered this by crafting a 'Pacific family' narrative and by acknowledging, through DFAT, that how Australia engages the region is 'just as important as what we do' (Layton, 2022). The reality is that **PNG now prioritises its lucrative trade relationship with China while preferring to engage with traditional powers in the realm of security** – an example being the 2023 Bilateral Security Agreement. In mid-2024, PNG's Minister for International Trade and Investment Richard Maru said that PNG is 'determined to grow and deepen [its] relationship with China and anchor it through a Free Trade Agreement' (PNG Business News, 2024). This arrangement mirrors Australia's approach, with its free trade agreement with China and security alliances such as AUKUS with the United Kingdom and the United States.

Support for PNG on Bougainvillean independence

The 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement has been highly successful in preventing a return to civil war in Bougainville. However, for the ABG their continued observance of the Agreement seems likely to hinge on recognition of the results 2019 independence referendum. Australia's primary goal has been to maintain PNG's continued sovereignty over Bougainville, with some degree of additional autonomy. Certainly, the **prospect of independence for Bougainville would itself represent a significant change for Australia and the broader region**. The possibility that the ABG would unilaterally declare independence in response to refusal by the PNG parliament to accept the result of the referendum has forced Australia to consider how else it might manage the issue.

Concerns about increasing Chinese influence appear to have made Australia more committed to lend public support to PNG's approach to Bougainville, which in turn has led to passionate rebukes from ABG President Ishmael Toroama. In light of complex developments surrounding the question of independence of other countries in the region (such as Taiwan, West Papua and Kanaky/New Caledonia), Australia may need to adopt a new strategy that considers the aspirations of locals, particularly as their frustrations over official delays and obfuscation continue to grow.

Voices within PNG's parliament point to a lack of institutions and the economic resilience needed for Bougainville to be truly autonomous or independent. This may be demonstrated by the fact that just a fraction of the powers available to the ABG have been used since the peace agreement was signed. Adding to Australian concerns is the fact that the island boasts the best deepwater port in the region, capable of hosting large naval vessels, as well as significant mineral resource and fisheries wealth — **assets that Australian policymakers would be loath to see under the control of Chinese interests**.

Former Australian High Commissioner to PNG Ian Kemish noted that Australian strategic commentators widely view the prospect of Bougainville's independence as opposing Australia's interests. For Kemish, the policy of neutrality must be replaced by more active engagement with the state. This includes:

- recognition that the current positions of both parties present risks for Australia
- a need for Australia to work with trusted international parties to support dialogue on alternative models for Bougainville's political status
- a need for greater personal links with Bougainville's leaders
- a need for Australia to work with like-minded international partners to plan for Bougainville's economic development.

The agreed deadline for official recognition of Bougainville's independence referendum is 2027. How Australia and other regional and international powers respond to this process remains to be seen as of the time of writing, but will have a significant impact on stability and change in the region.

Credit: ANU, 2019. constitutionnet.org/news/bougainvilles-independence-referendum-and-constitutional-implications-papua-new-guinea

Activity G – Impact of actions on political stability and/or change

To help you assess the impact of Australia's actions on political stability and/or change, complete the following review tasks using information from this chapter.

1 Gathering evidence: Copy the table modelled here in your exercise book or in a spreadsheet.

First, identify the main actions Australian has taken to establish political stability and/or change in the Pacific. Use information from this chapter, quotations and other data to support whether each action has led to political stability/and or change.

Action	Impact on political stability and/or change
Bougainville Peace Agreement (2001)	

2 Class discussion: As a class, use your tables to discuss the extent to which Australia has contributed to political stability and/or change in the Indo-Pacific Discuss the political significance of Australia's actions regarding its relationship with PNG.

3 Extended response: Using information from the chapter, assess the extent to which Australia's relationship with PNG has led to political stability and/or change in the region.

4 Discussing political significance: Using information from this chapter, discuss the political significance of Australia's actions in the Indo-Pacific region. Reflect on the following concepts in your discussion:

   a political stability and/or change

   b causes and consequences

   c competing interests and differing perspectives

   d the effectiveness of responses and their impacts and outcomes

   e whether the interests of political actors involved were achieved.

Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: www.sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/pol34

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🔍 Relationship study: The United States

Why Australia prioritises the United States

Australia's relationship with the United States is, in many ways, its most significant tie with any foreign power. In 2024, when Trade Minister Don Farrell dared to suggest during Parliament Question Time that he was 'not sure the US is our most trusted ally', there were howls of outrage from the Opposition (Manfield, 2024). Farrell later withdrew his comments. It has been this way since Australian Prime Minister John Curtin declared in 1941 that 'Australia looks to America' as its foremost ally. Subsequent Australian governments have tried to navigate a course between strategic independence and maintaining the closest possible strategic alliance with Washington. The historical and cultural ties between Australia and the United States run so deep that many Australians consider it taboo to question the importance of the relationship.

History of US involvement in the Indo-Pacific

1848	The United States annexes California, giving it access to the Pacific Ocean for the first time.
1892−98	Queen Liliʻuokalani of Hawaii illegally deposed and placed under house arrest by American businessmen, with support of the US Marines. The territory is administered briefly as the Republic of Hawaii before it is annexed by the United States and becomes the Territory (and later US state) of Hawaii in 1898.
1898	The United States invades and takes over administration of formerly Spanish-held territories in the Philippines and Guam in the Spanish-American War. This marks the beginning of three years of guerilla war against Filipino independence fighters, leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos.
1917−18	The United States enters World War I.
1941−45	The United States enters World War II after Japan bombs Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in 1941. This campaign includes dropping two nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as the establishment of Naval Base Okinawa. US military engagement during World War II is vast, with fighting occurring across South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands, among other locations.
1945	The United States and Australia, with others, serve as founding members of the UN with the signing of the UN Charter. This is followed by the establishment of other key institutions of global governance, such as the IMF and World Trade Organization (WTO).
1950	The US Navy assists Chinese nationalist forces in fleeing to Taiwan as the CCP gains control over mainland China following its victory in the Chinese Civil War.

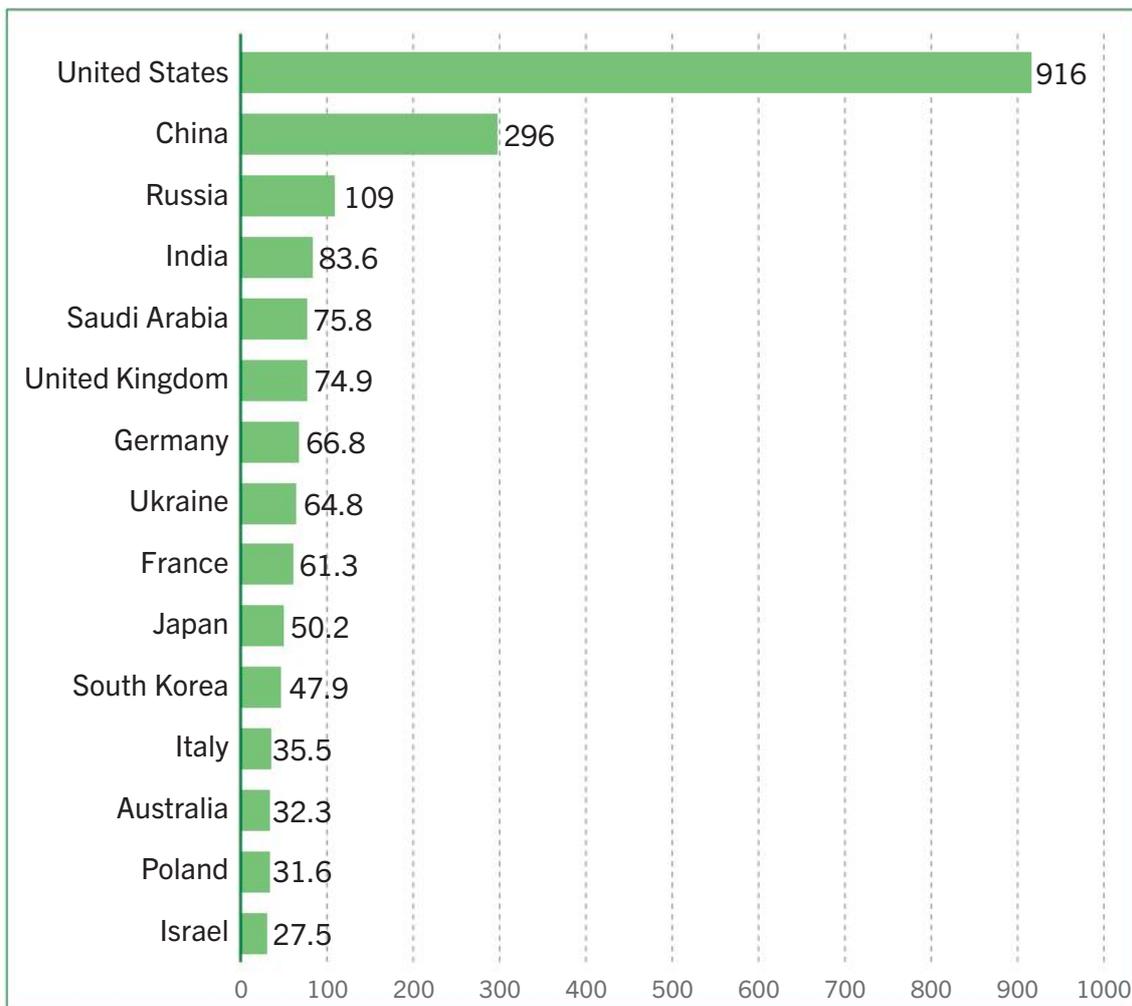|	
1950–53	The United States and Australia join the Korean War, in which the Chinese and Soviet-supported North fights against the US- and UN-backed South.
1951	The ANZUS Treaty is signed as a collective security agreement between Australia, New Zealand and the US.
1954	Establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a security partnership including countries such as the US, France, Australia, Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand and the UK – primarily focused on halting the spread of communism in Southeast Asia.
1965–66	The Indonesian government under General Suharto massacres approximately 500,000 to 2 million Communist Party members and sympathisers, with the support of the US, Australian and British governments.
1966	The Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap (JDFPG) (previously the Joint Defence Space Research Facility) is established in Central Australia.
1962–75	Australia joins American intervention in the Vietnam War in support of the government of South Vietnam, committing some 60,000 Australian military personnel over the course of the conflict. Australia's withdrawal in 1973 precedes the 1975 defeat of the South Vietnamese government and US withdrawal.
1972	US President Richard Nixon visits the People's Republic of China in an attempt gain more leverage over the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the 'Sino-Soviet split'. The normalisation of ties culminates in 1979, when the United States establishes full diplomatic relations with the PRC.
1989–91	The Cold War ends, and is followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of a period of relatively unchallenged US geopolitical dominance.
1990–91	Australia supports the US-led invasion of Iraq and liberation of Kuwait in the First Gulf War.
2001	The September 11 attacks mark the beginning of the US 'war on terror'.
2001–21	The US invades and occupies Afghanistan, seeking to topple the Taliban government which had sheltered the planners of the September 11 attacks.
2003–11	The US, Australia and allies embark on an invasion of Iraq ('Second Gulf War') motivated by claims (later discredited) that the Iraqi government was developing weapons of mass destruction.
2005	The free trade agreement between Australia and the US (AUSFTA) enters into force.
2014– ongoing	The Islamic State (known as IS, ISIS or ISIL) conquers large parts of Iraq and Syria, spurring the creation of a US-led combined military operation (including Australia) setting out to 'degrade and destroy' the organisation. Most of ISIS's territorial gains are reversed by 2019.

Security

> " Australia's alliance with the United States of America is our most important defence relationship. It is central to Australia's security and strategic arrangements. "
>
> Department of Defence, 2024. 'United States Force Posture Initiatives'. Australian Government. defence.gov.au/defence-activities/programs-initiatives/united-states-force-posture-initiatives

The majority view among policymakers in Australia is that it is **shielded from foreign challenges to its interests by the United States' hegemonic power** in the Indo-Pacific region. America spent US$916 billion on defence in 2023, the most of any state in the world — and indeed more than the combined military expenditure of the next nine biggest spending states, including China (SIPRI, 2023). This enormous investment in military power ensures the US military remains by far the most powerful on Earth. Its possession of nuclear weapons, and the promise of conventional military support if Australia were ever threatened militarily by a foe, makes this relationship the ultimate security alliance from Canberra's perspective.

A **hegemon** is the dominant power or leader in a region; for example, the United States has been thought of as the global hegemonic power since the end of World War II.

Country	Spending
United States	916
China	296
Russia	109
India	83.6
Saudi Arabia	75.8
United Kingdom	74.9
Germany	66.8
Ukraine	64.8
France	61.3
Japan	50.2
South Korea	47.9
Italy	35.5
Australia	32.3
Poland	31.6
Israel	27.5

Countries with the highest military spending worldwide in 2023 (in billions of US dollars). Credit: SIPRI and Statista, 2024. statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending

Australia's support of US dominance in the Indo-Pacific and beyond

The United States is willing to offer Australia shelter under its 'security umbrella', partly because, in exchange, **Australia helps America maintain its dominance in the Indo-Pacific**, including in the face of an increasingly assertive China. The United States has been the dominant (or 'hegemonic') power in the region since the end of World War II, with a network of military bases established across the region, including two in Australia: a naval base in Exmouth in Western Australia, and an intelligence facility in Pine Gap in the Northern Territory.

> "We would be deaf and blind without Pine Gap."
>
> Former deputy prime minister Kim Beazley, 2017. 'Pine Gap at 50: The paradox of a joint facility'. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. aspistrategist.org.au/pine-gap-50-paradox-joint-facility

With China becoming more assertive in the Indo-Pacific, the support of key US partners, like Australia, is central to Washington's efforts to remain the most powerful force in the region. The 2021 AUKUS deal has been perceived by many analysts — particularly in the United States — as less about submarines and more about cementing the ongoing support of Australia for US regional dominance. This has also been supplemented with technological and material support from the United Kingdom, which has itself otherwise largely withdrawn from the region.

Case study: The Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap

The Joint Defence Facility in Pine Gap, 18 kilometres south of Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Credit: Kristian Laemmle-Ruff/ABC News, 2022. abc.net.au/news/2022-03-03/pine-gap-base-gathering-information-russia-ukraine-conflict/100878478

The arrangement concerning the JDFPG, just south of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, has been one of Australia's most important security agreements with the US and demonstrates the closeness of the relationship. Established as a US space research facility in the 1950s, the JDFPG is now a shared intelligence-gathering facility with Australian personnel involved in every area of operation. Some analysts argue the facility is 'the CIA's most important technical intelligence collection station in the world' (Nautilus Institute, 2017). The work conducted at the facility is not publicly available, but is known to include:

- intelligence gathering and military support functions via the facility's 38 satellite dishes and spherical 'radomes' (visible in the image provided), which protect radar antenna from weather
- electronic signals interception to detect when ballistic missiles are launched early, enabling timely military responses
- identifying the targets of nuclear weapons
- providing live battlefield data to active armed forces
- aiding in the operation of missile defence systems for the US and certain other allies
- verifying compliance with international agreements on arms control
- providing targeting data to facilitate drone operations.

The JDFPG also allows the United States to project its power beyond the Indo-Pacific region. The location of the facility in the Southern Hemisphere allows for the complex task of managing a world-spanning network of satellites. Notably, communications between Pine Gap and other US intelligence facilities allow for highly specialised surveillance technology like thermal imaging to detect the sudden flare of heat associated with unexpected missile launches or nuclear activity. This information can also be shared strategically with other allies. For instance, the JDFPG has likely been integral to current intelligence gathering about Russian military activity, assisting the US (and possibly NATO members and/or Ukraine) in their decision-making in response to the Russian invasion (Brash and Haskin, 2022). This type of activity would not be possible without a strong Australia-US relationship centred around security.

US support for Australian border control measures

The Australia—US security relationship includes assisting one another with issues relating to people movement and border control. A 2016 resettlement deal with the United States outlined that up to 1250 arrivals with refugee status granted by Australia would be taken by the United States. As of March 2023, the Australian government reported 1106 individuals had been resettled in the United States under this arrangement (Department of Home Affairs, 2024).

This relationship is so remarkably resilient that **politically contentious agreements like the refugee resettlement program have withstood changes in government**. This was illustrated in 2017 by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's colourful phone call with US President Donald Trump, who was very unhappy to learn that he had inherited a refugee resettlement agreement with Australia from Barack Obama's administration. Trump told Turnbull that the agreement was 'a stupid deal' that would 'make [him] look terrible'. Turnbull responded, 'I am asking you as a very good friend. This is a big deal. It is really, really important to us that we maintain it.' Although Trump had repeatedly voiced strong opposition to the resettlement deal, stating 'I do not like this at all', he conceded that the US would honour it. Considered in context — noting there were other agreements such as the Paris Agreement, from which the Trump administration was willing to withdraw — the decision to honour this resettlement demonstrates the importance of the Australia—US relationship to both states. Nonetheless, as new US administrations come to power, the resettlement arrangement with Australia may come under increased scrutiny or review.

Activity A – Security ties that bind Australia and the US

1 Several security arrangements between the United States and Australia underpin both states' national security goals. Undertake your own research into some of the most significant goals and key details of those listed in the table modelled below.

Security agreement	Member states	Details of the agreement (e.g. commitments, meetings, significant events, quotations, etc.)
AUKUS (2021)		
United States-Australia Force Posture Agreement (2014)		
Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or 'Quad') (2017)		
Five Eyes alliance (1956)		
ANZUS Treaty (1951)		

Economic prosperity

The United States and Australia have a 'close and cooperative' trade relationship, as demonstrated by AUSFTA, established in 2005.

What the United States and Australia like to buy from one another

Trade between the two was worth a total of $115 billion in 2022, around 5.5 per cent of Australia's annual GDP of $2 trillion.

This included a trade surplus in the United States' favour (meaning it sold a greater total value of goods than vice versa) by approximately US$27 billion.

In 2023, the United States imported $22 billion in Australian goods, placing it in Australia's top five export markets.

United States' biggest imports from Australia in 2023

Meat: US$2.7 billion

Pearls, precious stones, metal: US$2.3 billion

Pharmaceuticals: US$1.2 billion

Australia's biggest imports from the US in 2023

Machinery: US$7.5 billion

Vehicles: US$4.3 billion

Electronics: US$3.0 billion

Credit: Trading Economics, 2024. tradingeconomics.com/australia/imports/united-states

The AUSFTA has seen the value or 'volume' of trade *double* between the United States and Australia since it came into effect in 2005. The fact that 96 per cent of Australian exports currently enter the US market **tariff**-free indicates that the relationship is largely motivated by mutual economic self-interest. It is important to avoid overstating the significance of Australia's trade relationship with the US, however — **the value of Australia's trade with the US is far smaller than that with China**, as illustrated by the graph provided. Japan and South Korea are notably much more lucrative export markets than the United States is for Australia. This demonstrated that while trade with America is important, there are other factors — notably shared values and perspectives on security — which can be considered more fundamental drivers of Australia's closeness with the US.

> A **tariff** is a tax or duty to be paid on a particular type of imported or exported good, usually calculated as a percentage of the value, weight or physical quantity.
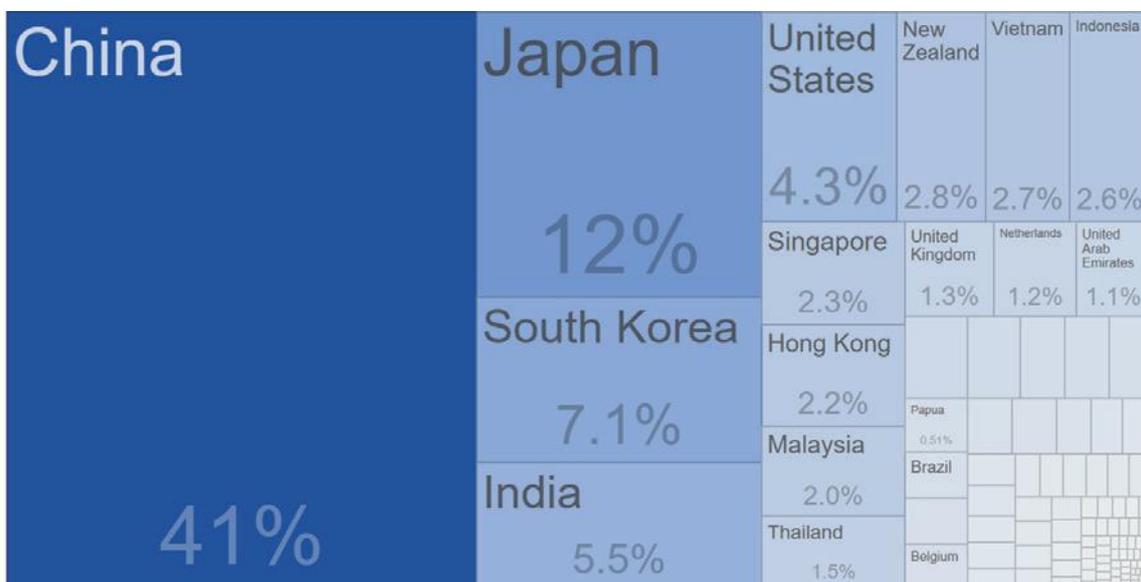
Proportion value of Australian exports by destination country. Credit: Trading Economics, 2023. tradingeconomics.com/australia/exports-by-country

Activity B – Economic ties to the US

1   View the Lowy Institute's poll results on the following question: 'Which relationship (the United States or China) do you think is more important to Australia?'

   'Relations with superpowers: US and China'. Lowy Institute, 2024. poll.lowyinstitute.org/charts/relations-with-superpowers-us-and-china

   Use the information provided, supplemented by your own research, to answer the following questions.

   a   Which relationship did Australians think was most important?

   b   Find the latest trade figures valuing Australian exports to China and to the US. Record the figures and note which is larger, and by how much.

   c   Using the information you have collected, explain which national interest you think Australians consider more important: economic prosperity or security.

Shared values

When Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visited Washington in late 2023, he was honoured with a White House state dinner and a welcoming ceremony with US President Joe Biden. Both leaders made warm remarks about the shared values and common goals of their two states.

> "This is at the heart of our alliance, the soul of our partnership. Not a pact against a common enemy, a pledge to a common cause. A shared belief that freedom, peace, and equality are not just American ideals or Australian values, they belong to all humankind."
>
> Anthony Albanese, 2023. 'Remarks by President Biden and Prime Minister Albanese of Australia at arrival ceremony'. The White House Briefing Room. whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/26/remarks-by-president-biden-and-prime-minister-anthony-albanese-of-australia-at-arrival-ceremony

> "As two proud Pacific nations, we're ensuring the Indo-Pacific remains free, open, and prosperous and secure. … The alliance between Australia and the United States has never been more important than it is today. And we have never been more committed than we are today."
>
> Joe Biden, 2023. whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/26/remarks-by-president-biden-and-prime-minister-anthony-albanese-of-australia-at-arrival-ceremony

There are many commonalities between the operation of the United States and Australia. As liberal democracies, both share many political characteristics:

Representative democratic institutions underpinned by regular elections

Capitalist economies where profit-making entities are highly influential in decision-making

Federal systems that distribute power between national, state and local governments

Media is relatively free of censorship and so able to hold governments to account

Strong cultural ties between the two states are informed by shared experiences as former British colonies and settler societies, a shared dominant language in English, and significant ongoing 'cross-pollination' across various areas, including popular media and social trends. Alongside these shared attributes are histories of dispossession of first peoples, and of oppression and discrimination against people of colour.

Wars in which Australia has fought alongside the United States	
'War on terror' including operations against IS	(2001—ongoing)
Afghan War	(2001—21)
Second Gulf War	(2003—11)
First Gulf War	(1990—91)
Vietnam War	(1962—75)
Korean War	(1950—53)
World War II	(US enters 1941—45)
World War I	(US enters 1917—18)

The US and Australia have fought alongside one another in a range of major conflicts since World War II. This shared history of support during conflict is often noted in prime ministerial and presidential remarks, and is one reason why the US leaders and institutions view Australia as such a loyal partner.

The **soft power created by the influence of US culture** is also significant in creating the common ground that binds the two states. The attractive quality of US entertainment and technological achievements remain aspirational cultural touchstones that Australians recognise as symbols of US achievement. The iPhone, the NBA, Hollywood, Taylor Swift, California, US national parks — these all translate to a certain degree as symbols of success, freedom, opportunity and the 'good life' in an Australia context. The positive feelings these cultural products evoke often transfer to positive feelings about the US itself. Even the US-based transnational corporations that are entirely familiar to Australians and weaved into everyday life — Google, Facebook, Apple, Netflix — create a shared culture that underpins a degree of trust. This soft power helps decision-makers in Canberra empathise more easily with those in Washington than those in Beijing, Moscow or even Paris.

Activity C – Emotional ties to the United States

1   Watch the C-SPAN broadcast of Anthony Albanese's arrival ceremony in Washington on 23 October 2023.

Australian Prime Minister Arrival Ceremony. C-SPAN, 2023 (35 minutes). c-span.org/video/?531381-1/australian-prime-minister-arrival-ceremony

Using the following table model, collect three short quotations from each leader that demonstrate the shared values of the United States and Australia. One example from Joe Biden is provided.

Joe Biden	Anthony Albanese
Example: 'During World War II, when we fought the forces of fascism, side by side in the Pacific, cementing a mateship between our people.'	

Challenges to Australia's relationship with the US 4.2.5

Balancing relationships with the US and China

There are significant challenges to Australia's capacity to maintain strong relations with the US. First, prioritising the relationship with China, which is vital to the Australian economy, sometimes makes balancing the security relationship with America difficult. Despite the relative improvement of US–China relations under the Biden administration since 2021, this relationship remained marred by mistrust, with even relatively minor incidents having the potential to send the relationship off course.
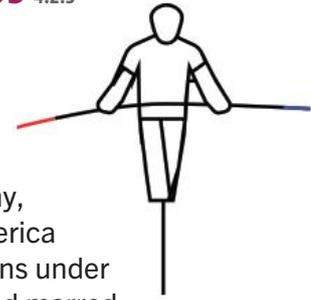
Both Beijing and Washington are prepared to prompt Australia on how it should manage its relationships with them. Chinese state media outlets regularly accuse Australia of lacking independence from the US when it comes to foreign policy. In the same way, Washington may prefer that Australia – its major ally in the Asia-Pacific alongside Japan – were unencumbered by its economic entanglements with China.

An example of these difficulties emerged in 2020 when the US publicly invited Australia to participate more vigorously in its 'freedom of navigation operations' (FONOPS) in the South China Sea. Australia found itself juggling two competing expectations:

- **the US perspective** – wanting Australia to 'muscle up' by demonstrating its disapproval of Beijing by manoeuvring its naval assets through the South China Sea (Dziedzic and Greene, 2020)
- **the China perspective** – demonstrating a willingness to use 'hard' economic power to punish Australia for rebuking .

Australian governments' capacity to balance the expectations of their primary security partner and their primary trading partner represents a distinct and growing challenge to its foreign policy goals, including the ability to sustain the close relationship with the US.

> "We would always like to see more like-minded countries participate because then it builds that international consensus and puts pressure on the PRC."
>
> Senior US official, quoted in Stephen Dziedzic and Andrew Greene, 2020. 'US official urges Australia to participate in South China Sea freedom of navigation operations'. ABC News. abc.net.au/news/2020-07-27/australia-pressured-to-participate-in-south-china-sea-operation/12496326

> "What the US wants is not equal partners, but loyal followers. Forcing other countries to choose between Washington and Beijing, it is the current US government that is coercing and threatening."
>
> Yu Ning, 2020. 'Pompeo promotes US interests at Australia's cost'. Global Times. globaltimes.cn/content/1189097.shtml

Read further analysis about this example here:

📍 'Is Australia in danger of becoming the US's 'deputy sheriff' in the South China Sea?'. The Conversation, 2022. theconversation.com/is-australia-in-danger-of-becoming-the-uss-deputy-sheriff-in-the-south-china-sea-189314

Political dysfunction in the United States

The political dysfunction in America poses another challenge to the relationship with Australia. Washington has become fractured by a highly polarised debate between the two major parties – the traditional Democratic Party, and the Republican Party – which became increasingly dominated by the relatively extreme 'MAGA' (Make America Great Again) movement, aligned with Donald Trump. Recently, policy debate in the US (and perhaps to a lesser extent in similar liberal-democratic political systems like Australia and the UK) have been increasingly influenced by the spread of, and reactions to, misinformation and disinformation, with the media landscape is increasingly dominated by emotive, entertainment-style political commentary. As a result, many argue Australia's 'great and powerful friend' has **less capacity, energy and focus to continue as a functional global hegemon**, and so is less desirable as a close ally for Australia.

One relevant example of shifting sands in the US political landscape are the figures and influences of right-populist MAGA movement who seem increasingly hostile to US democratic norms and institutions. They are similarly **suspicious of, and likely to promote withdrawal from, multilateral institutions and treaties**, even including US-led alliances like such as NATO. This was exemplified by US House member and far-right Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene's misinformed claims in the context of a US House Committee debate about the global issue of climate change in 2023, where she argued the US should not fund climate action because 'people are not affecting climate change. … Back in the ice age, how much taxes did people pay, and how many changes did governments make to melt the ice?' (Baio, 2023).

The US media appears to be, on the whole**, a weaker force for scrutiny and informed discussion about shared policy challenges such as climate change**, which have obvious and grave implications for Australia, with increasingly more time and energy being spent on engaging with and reporting on elements of political life that are trivial, shallow or mired in disinformation. This impact on Australia is illustrated by Erwin Jackson, director of NGO Climate Analytics Australia, who stressed the importance of US involvement in a path forward on the climate. 'A Harris presidency would likely see the US continue to exert pressure on all countries, including Australia, to set a strong 2035 target as soon as possible. A Trump presidency would see the US leave the field and create a climate leadership vacuum internationally' (Guardian, 2024).
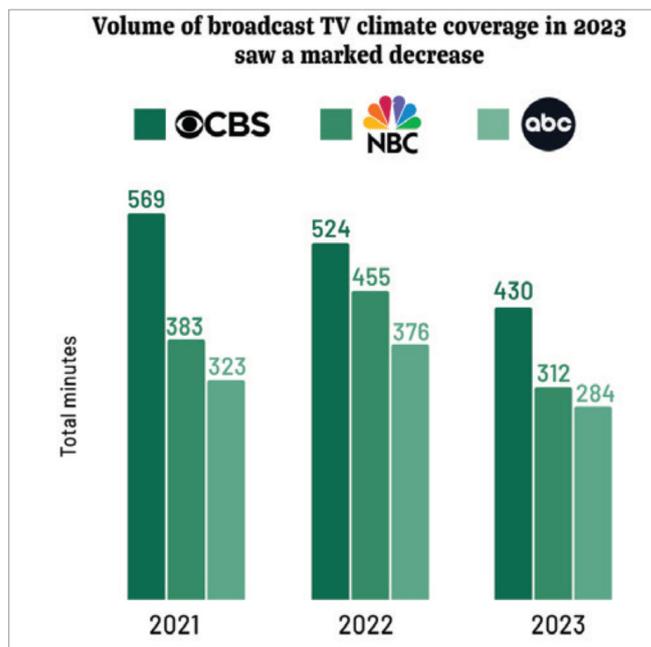
Graph showing the decreasing amount of airtime dedicated to climate change by leading US TV networks. Credit: Media Matters, 2024. mediamatters.org/broadcast-networks/how-broadcast-tv-networks-covered-climate-change-2023

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Political dysfunction makes any country — even one as powerful as the US — a less predictable ally, and may erode the perceived value of the US as a security partner by Australian decision-makers.

Cultural differences

Another challenge to Australia's relationship with the US is the possibility of weakening cultural similarities and shared values.

For instance, the matter of **how to approach international trade** has at times been a growing point of difference, which has both challenged the relationship in recent years and had considerable regional implications. The Trump Administration's protectionism saw it impose a 25 per cent tariff on foreign steel entering US markets in 2018, a measure Australia was initially exempt from, but felt the full measure of several months later when the US declined to extend the exemption. Australia, meanwhile, has maintained a relatively strong, consistent and bipartisan commitment to advancing the cause of international free trade, exemplified by ongoing reductions in its tariffs and other trade restrictions.

Some cultural shifts in the US are not reflective of Australian culture, which complicates the relationship and often has regional implications. For example, **attitudes to reproductive rights** are very different in Australia and the United States. In America, women's experiences of their reproductive rights are heavily influenced by the political strength of the religious right, which tends overwhelmingly to pursue policies to restrict access to abortion services. In 2022 the US Supreme Court decided to overturn *Roe v. Wade* — a 1973 court decision which had for 50 years significantly expanded women's access to abortion in the US. While 63 per cent of Americans support access to abortion, the US political system more generally is, for various reasons, seemingly incapable of reflecting this majority preference in law. Australians' views on the matter are more strongly favour of abortion access for women, with 76 per cent of Australians supporting women's right to access the procedure (Ipsos, 2021).

Demonstrators marching on the Minnesota Capitol to demand that abortion remain legal in the state following the US Supreme Court's decision to effectively make abortion illegal in many states. Credit: Fibonacci Blue, 2022. flickr.com/photos/fibonacciblue/52223331029

American political positions on reproductive rights have wider implications because they **impact how the state allocates foreign aid in the region**. US decision-makers regularly take steps to ensure that US aid is prevented from going to organisations that provide family planning and abortion services to women in the Indo-Pacific. This policy, known as the Mexico City policy, was first introduced in 1985 under a US Republican administration, and has been rescinded and reinstated by every subsequent Democratic and Republican US President since. Most recently the Trump administration's prohibition was rescinded by President Biden as one of the first acts of his presidency in early 2021 (The White House Briefing Room, 2021). The US ban on providing aid to medical NGOs offering abortion services includes Nobel Prize-winning organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and MSF, both of which operate in states like Haiti and provide a range of family planning health care, including abortion, to women and girls.

Australian aid programs, meanwhile, do not prohibit the use of foreign aid for abortion services. While this was only made government policy in 2019, the fact that the initiative was passed under a Liberal-National government suggests that **this commitment is much more likely to be bipartisan** (and therefore *consistent*) compared with that of the US.

While these differences may not have clear or dramatic geopolitical ramifications, they do illustrate meaningful differences on fundamental values between the two countries, which may very well form part of Australians' rationale for any future move 'away' from the US alliance.

Case study: Julian Assange and the US-Australia relationship

The pursuit of Australian citizen Julian Assange for breaches of the United States' *Espionage Act* has been an ongoing thorn in the United States—Australia relationship. This is because there is a clash between certain priorities of the US government (prosecuting threats to its national security apparatus) and the Australian government's (assisting its citizens when pursued by foreign governments, particularly where the death penalty is a possible outcome).

The US alleged that when Assange's website WikiLeaks published classified US national defence material, he breached the US *Espionage Act*, which Washington applies 'extraterritorially' (to crimes not committed in the US, and to individuals who are not US citizens).

A sign used by protesters in Canberra calling on the Australian government to stop the prosecution of Assange in early 2024, prior to his eventual release in June that year. Credit: Mick Tsikas/AAP, 2024. theguardian.com/world/gallery/2024/jun/26/julian-assange-prison-release-wikileaks-life-in-pictures-ecuador-embassy-belmarsh-prison

Supporters of Assange argued he acted in the public interest as a journalist by publishing material revealing the extent of civilian casualties in the United States' Iraq War. For example, a CIA video which WikiLeaks published under the name 'Collateral Murder' contained graphic footage from a US Apache helicopter involved in gunning down and killing down of a group of civilians (including two Reuters journalists). The US Defense department argued Assange was not a journalist, and that his choice to publish over 400 000 documents (the largest leak of US classified documents in history) endangered those working with US intelligence agencies (who might be identified as a result), as well as US national security more broadly.

The ongoing pursuit of Assange was a challenge for the United States—Australia relationship because the Australian government felt its behind-closed-doors attempts to push for a resolution to the case were being resisted by US decision-makers. Over the course of the 13-year period Assange spent detained – eight years in the United Kingdom's Ecuadorian embassy and a further five in London's Belmarsh prison awaiting US extradition – different Australian governments adopted a range of approaches to the Assange issue. Following the election of the Albanese government, a multi-party delegation of Australian parliamentarians visited Washington in 2023 to push for the case against Assange be dropped. These negotiations were described as 'confronting' and even 'aggressive' at times, with the Australian delegation reportedly accused the US' of 'extra-territorial overreach … that cannot stand' (Cananne, 2024).

The resolution of the Assange case in July 2024 represented conclusion to a matter that has troubled the US—Australia relationship for over a decade, and the outcome has significant regional implications. Assange's deal with the US government required him to plead guilty to breaches of the US *Espionage Act*, and to accept a prison term of 5 years. That time already having been served meant, in effect, immediate release to Australia. This can broadly be understood as having been a mutually agreeable outcome for both governments, with the US being able to point to the serious consequences facing those who might think to engage in similar activities in future, and the Australian government being able to point to its role in freeing a citizen held in detention for an extended period, who might otherwise been at risk of the death penalty.

Australian MPs Tony Zappia (ALP), Barnaby Joyce (NAT), Monique Ryan (IND), Peter Whish-Wilson (GRN), Alex Antic (LIB) and David Shoebridge (GRN) formed the delegation that visited Washington DC in 2023 to push for Assange's release. Credit: ABC News/Bradley McLennan. abc.net.au/news/2024-06-27/inside-the-us-australian-delegation-us-to-free-wikileaks-assange/104024172

In spite of the benefits to the relationship, critics of the Assange plea deal have nonetheless expressed concern that it would have a chilling effect on future whistleblowing and free journalism, and that it set a precedent that may strengthen the US' ability to pursue foreign nationals for breaches of US law.

Australia's response to a regional issue or crisis 4.2.6

An increasingly assertive China

As China's economic, diplomatic and military power grow, it has become increasingly assertive in its exertion of influence on other states in the Indo-Pacific it pursuit of its interests. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Australia has sought to respond to this by strengthening its support for the US in its attempts to retain its hegemonic power in the region.

The competition for influence in the region can be observed by how the PRC prosecutes its territorial claims in the South China Sea. It is also evident in the arrival of China as an alternative 'patron' from which Pacific Island states can seek diplomatic partnership, aid and other assistance, such as the security agreement Beijing signed with the Solomon Islands in 2022.

Case study: The PRC-Solomon Islands security agreement

Australian diplomats were surprised when the Solomon Islands and China announced a formal agreement on security in 2022. As part of the agreement, the Solomon Islands would be provided with support from China's police, armed forces, and other law enforcement agencies regarding internal security.

The Australian government expressed it was 'deeply disappointed' with the agreement, particularly because the Solomon Islands had chosen to seek assistance from outside 'the Pacific family', despite receiving support from Australia for past security troubles. Canberra also lamented the agreement's 'potential to undermine stability in our region' (Payne, 2022).

The announcement sparked concern in Australia about the possibility of a Chinese military base being established on the Solomon Islands, which occupies a strategic position in the heart of the Pacific. Such a base could allow Beijing to position Chinese military personnel close to crucial maritime routes, just over 2000 km off Australia's mainland.

The agreement also concerned US officials, who dispatched Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell to meet in person with then Solomon Islands' prime minister Manasseh Sogavare. Campbell stated publicly he had warned Sogavare the United States would 'respond accordingly' to a Chinese military base in the Solomon Islands (Macmillan, 2022).

The prospect of Beijing seeking further influence in other Indo-Pacific states by way of aid, trade, even security agreements and military installations — and of displacing Australia and the US in these respects — is a concern for both states.

Australia's response: The AUKUS deal

The AUKUS security partnership launched in 2021, and featured a deal (technically a 'memorandum of understanding') for the US (and later the UK) to **eventually equip Australia with nuclear-powered submarines** as a replacement for its ageing Collins class conventional submarine fleet. The deal differed from existing security agreements, in that it explicitly focused on building Australia's military capacity. Because they require less frequent refuelling, nuclear-powered submarines have far greater capacity to travel beyond Australia's territorial waters – foreshadowing the possibility of Australia participating in future naval conflicts in far-flung regions, alongside the US.

This announcement was noteworthy for a number of other reasons:

- the US and UK undertook to share nuclear technology with Australia for the first time

- it strengthened and supplemented existing military cooperation between the three states

- Australia cancelled a pre-existing $90 billion contract for 12 conventional submarines from France (Australia would eventually agree to pay $830 million in exit penalties)

- the enormous price Australia would pay for its nuclear-powered submarines – estimates in 2023 were up to a total of $368 billion spread over the next 30 years

- the extended timetable of the AUKUS project, with completion of Australia's first nuclear-powered submarine forecast for 2038–40, and delivery of all submarines completed as late as 2059 (United States Studies Centre, 2022).

Although China was not mentioned in the 2021 AUKUS announcement, nor in any subsequent official statements on its progress, **the purpose of the project was widely understood to be to 'contain' China's growing influence int he Indo-Pacific** (BBC, 2021). Political analysts saw AUKUS as a strategic manoeuvre by the US, UK and Australia, letting Beijing know its ambitions in the region would not be allowed to expand unchallenged (Khalil, 2023). Australian experts in Indo-Pacific strategy and security, like Dr Nishank Motwani (2024), agreed, saying AUKUS aimed to 'build deterrence that could alter Beijing's cost-benefit calculus and restrain its aggressive behaviour'.

Importantly, AUKUS went beyond a simple capacity-building project in case a military threat arises. It also served as a more explicit demonstration of joint resistance by like-minded liberal-democratic, Western and English-speaking powers to China's ascendence in the region (as explored earlier in this chapter).

> " This is a very significant transformation of the nature of our alliance with the United States. … They [the US) don't really care about our submarine capability. What they care deeply about is tying Australia into their containment strategy of China. "
>
> Professor Hugh White, 2023. 'AUKUS and the US alliance with Hugh White'. *Democracy Sausage with Mark Kenny* (55 min). reporter.anu.edu.au/all-stories/democracy-sausage-aukus-and-the-us-alliance-with-hugh-white

Plans for the future of Australia's submarine fleet

If it runs to schedule — and Defence contracts almost never do — AUKUS would see Australia using three different classes of submarine over the next 30 years.

Collins-class

- Australian built (1990—2003)
- eight in service as of 2024
- powered by on-board diesel engines
- can remain submerged for ~70 days
- due for retirement in 2030s
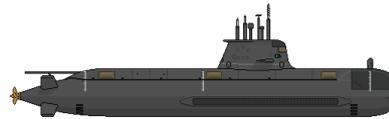
2030s

Virginia-class

- US-built (2004—ongoing)
- powered by on-board nuclear reactors
- can remain submerged for ~3 months
- three to five planned to be purchased to replace Collins-class models as they retire (2030s)

2040s

SSN-AUKUS class

- UK built (late 2020s), later also Australian built (late 2030s)
- powered by on-board nuclear reactors
- three to five planned to be purchased to replace Virginia-class models as they retire (2040s—2050s)

2050s

Image credits: Shipbucket (various).

The submarine portion of the AUKUS deal is just one part of a raft of security measures aimed at strengthening the Australia-US security relationship, in particular, and constraining the power of China in the region

Activity D – China as the 'target' of AUKUS

1 Watch or read the transcript of the AUKUS announcement by President Biden, prime minister Johnson and prime minister Morrison in 2021. Although the PRC is never explicitly named, gather quotations that suggest concern about China's increasing power is part of the reason for the AUKUS deal.

   ▷ 'Biden, Johnson and Morrison announce AUKUS alliance, nuclear-powered submarine deal'. The Guardian, 2021 (12 min). youtu.be/O9OSbXjuqUU

   ▷ 'Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS'. White House, 2021. whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aukus

2 Conduct your own research to determine the PRC's reaction to the creation of the AUKUS alliance. Compile a short list of quotations that capture Beijing's perspective on the deal.

3 Use the table modelled here to detail other elements of the AUKUS deal, and what importance they might have to Australian and to the US interests.

AUKUS agreement terms	Importance to US	Importance to Australia
In 2022 Australia agrees to host US nuclear-capable B52 bombers at Tindal airbase in the NT.	Enhances the ability of the US to threaten or target PRC with nuclear weapons in a nuclear conflict.	

Critiques of the AUKUS deal

Students looking to deepen their understanding of critiques of AUKUS (beyond what has already been provided in the first section of this chapter) might like to listen to two relevant episodes of the *Democracy Sausage with Mark Kenny* podcast.

'AUKUS and the US alliance'. Democracy Sausage, 2023 (55 min). reporter.anu.edu.au/all-stories/democracy-sausage-aukus-and-the-us-alliance-with-hugh-white

'Labor's AUKUS moonshot with Bob Carr'. Democracy Sausage, 2023 (52 min). reporter.anu.edu.au/all-stories/democracy-sausage-labors-aukus-moonshot-with-bob-carr

Cooperation and conflict in the Australia–US relationship

Public conflict (even public *disagreement*) between Canberra and Washington is minimal, so much so that journalists and observers have to work hard to source even off-the-record comments from insiders to identify friction between the two.

An example of how minor publicly acknowledged conflict is between the two allies occurred in late 2023, when the US requested that Australia send a warship to the Red Sea to help a US-led security mission intended to secure shipping lanes from attacks on international shipping by Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Australia declined,

citing the prioritisation of security efforts in the Indo-Pacific region. Prime Minister Albanese played down the significance of this, telling journalists that the Biden administration was 'very satisfied' with Australia's response (Brown, 2023).

Australia seeks stability in its relationship with America, as well as the stability that brings to the Indo-Pacific. Canberra's rationale appears to be that if US dominance in the region can remain, then the **predictable conditions conducive to international trade** – which have allowed for many Australians to prosper in past decades – will continue. The following section examines the extent to which this approach has been successful.

The extent to which Australia has impacted stability and change in the Indo-Pacific 4.2.7

We might reasonably conclude that Australia's actions generally seek to maintain stability, because the status quo – a relatively peaceful Indo-Pacific in which it is a regional leader, backed by the hegemonic power of the United States – aligns with the interests of Australian policymakers, and seeks to maintain the significant trend of relative peace and prosperity experienced since World War II. However, as a middle power, **Australia's ability to influence and shape change is limited – especially when it comes to key issues like Taiwan's status**, which seem the most likely to snowball beyond simply heightened tensions between the US and China and into conventional warfare. Nonetheless, a generally careful foreign policy approach has been used by Canberra to promote both the case and necessary conditions for continued US dominance.

Impacts of Australia's participation in AUKUS

Under AUKUS, an Australian navy equipped with nuclear-powered submarines (sometimes referred to as an 'SSN', where 'SS' is a hull code for submarine and 'N' stands for nuclear) would be capable of operating further away from Australian shores, staying submerged for up to six months at a time, carrying out more complex surveillance and intelligence-gathering work, and travelling at greater speeds.

AUKUS has also had a broader impact on the status quo, in that it helps to maintain US dominance by acting as a close ally that can participate fully in 'containing' a rising China. AUKUS sees Australia providing a range of other security support to the US beyond just the operation of nuclear submarines – all of which would extend the operating areas of Australian and US submarines. Notably, Australia has agreed to host US nuclear-capable B-52 bombers at Tindal air base in the Northern Territory, host more US nuclear-powered submarines in Western Australia, and build an SSN base at Port Kembla in New South Wales.

All this support for US operations in the Indo-Pacific may deter Beijing, even if only marginally, from seeking more regional influence, while maintaining the stability of US dominance in the region. In this view, the stronger the US presence is, the less likely Beijing will be able to acquire security deals (as seen in the Solomon Islands in 2022) or convert its territorial claims in the South China Sea into control of the lucrative trade routes the area includes. The map provided demonstrates just how dominant the US military presence is in the Indo-Pacific region.

US ALLIANCES AND MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

South Korea consistently hosts up to 28.5 thousand US military personnel to help defend the country.

Thailand is the United States' oldest formal treaty partner in the Indo-Pacific, signing an agreement in 1833.

SOUTH KOREA 26,045

JAPAN 53,660

LEGEND
- US Treaty Allies
- Troop Presence

Japan hosts the largest number of US troops in the Indo-Pacific. Japan alone is estimated to host over 32% of the United States' overseas troop presence globally.

THAILAND 303

PHILIPPINES 305

GUAM 6,071

SINGAPORE 209

The Philippines plays an important role in cooperating with the United States on maritime security and counterterrorism. In recent years, the United States delivered over $100 million worth of defense equipment to the Philippines.

BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY 284

July 4th, 2018 marked "100 Years of Mateship" for the US and Australia, honoring their shared sacrifice as allies in every war involving the United States over the last century. Australia holds several annual and biennial military exercises with the United States, that focus on coordinating responses to emergency situations and security threats.

AUSTRALIA 1,509

In 2018 the United States had nearly 87,000 active-duty troops in the Indo-Pacific region, stationed at over 180 US military installations and bases. Credit: Asia Matters for America/The East-West Center, 2018. asiamattersforamerica.org/asia/publications

Since its inception AUKUS has drawn the attention of Beijing as a project designed to obstruct China from pursuing its interests. It has also drawn the attention of like-minded states such as Japan, which has shown an interest to involve itself in the technological partnership elements of the AUKUS deal (Kwan and Kwon, 2023).

Activity E – Will AUKUS advance regional stability?

1 Analysts debate whether AUKUS will achieve its goal of regional stability by ensuring that China is deterred from its assertive rise in influence. Many detractors argue the deal is destabilising and makes regional conflict and profound change more likely.

The following articles analyse the AUKUS deal. Each argues either that AUKUS is an instrument that creates stability or that it is a deal that will result in change or even conflict. Form groups of six and assign each member one article to read and extract the key arguments and evidence for AUKUS being an instrument of stability or change. Then, each student will report back to their group as the expert on their article, using their notes to collate their own 'stability v. change' tables.

AUKUS will ensure stability	AUKUS will lead to change/conflict
Example: 'Weakness invites adventurism, it is said. This [AUKUS] high-stakes and high-risk plan is about reducing the prospects of adventurism.' (Blaxland, 2023)	

Articles to examine:

- 'Aukus will bolster stability in the Asia-Pacific, not undermine it'. The Guardian, 2023. theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/mar/13/aukus-will-bolster-stability-in-the-asia-pacific-not-undermine-it

- 'The AUKUS expansion: A step towards bolstering security and stability in the Indo-Pacific'. Australian Institute of International Affairs, 2024. internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-aukus-expansion-a-step-towards-bolstering-security-and-stability-in-the-indo-pacific

- 'AUKUS commits Australia to fight China if America does, simple'. The Interpreter (The Lowy Institute), 2023. lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/aukus-commits-australia-fight-china-if-america-does-simple

- 'View from Beijing as AUKUS subs deal formally announced'. ABC radio RN Drive (8 min). abc.net.au/listen/programs/radionational-drive/1717/102094752

- 'AUKUS plan looks to shore up deterrence, promote stability'. US Department of Defense, 2023. defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3328430/aukus-plan-looks-to-shore-up-deterrence-promote-stability

- 'AUKUS submarine deal highlights a tectonic shift in the US-Australia alliance'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2023. carnegieendowment.org/posts/2023/03/the-aukus-submarine-deal-highlights-a-tectonic-shift-in-the-us-australia-alliance?lang=en

2 Plan and write a response to the following extended response-style question. Your finished response should include quotations and evidence your group has gathered from the table above.

Assess the extent to which Australia's relationship with the United States contributes to stability or change in the Indo-Pacific.

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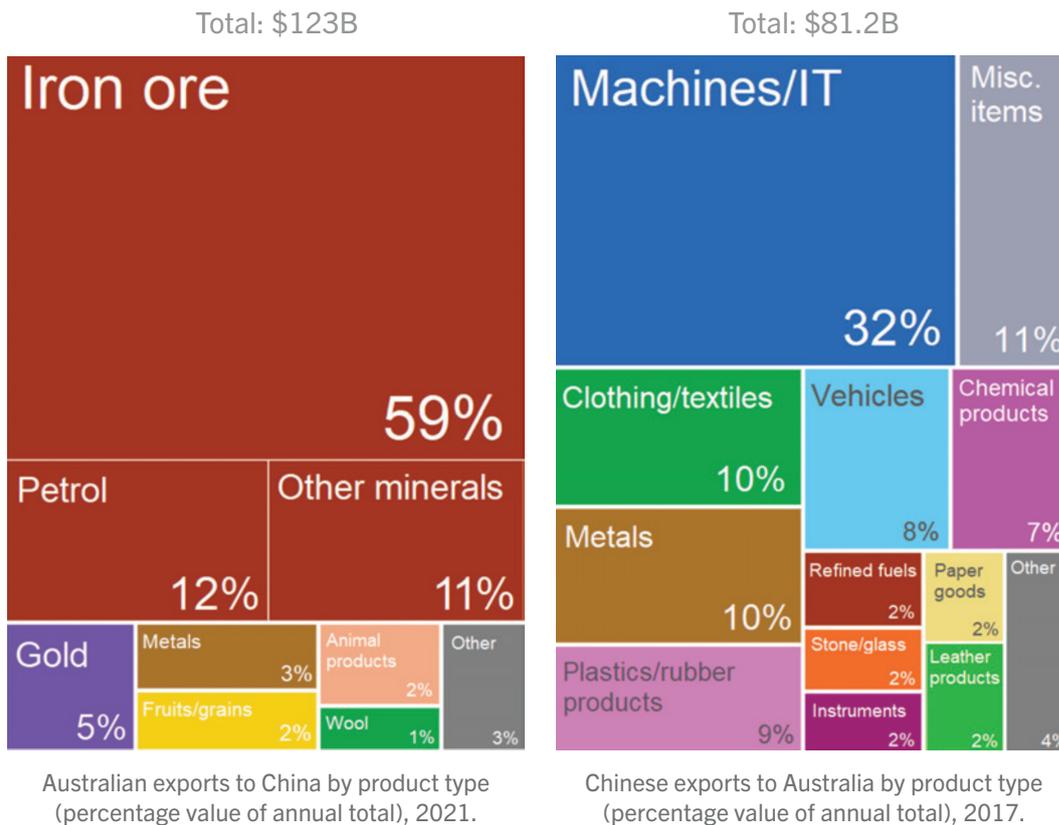
The case studies in this chapter have already explored several interactions between China and Australia. Evidently, Australia finds itself in a difficult position within this relationship — given the strong economic ties between the two — while simultaneously maintaining a strategic alliance with the US and other Western states. It also holds values and perspectives that significantly contrast those of China's ruling Communist Party, even despite its move towards market liberalisation since the 1980s. These include different interpretations of sovereignty, international law, human rights and democracy. As such, Australian policymakers have to chart a path between close adherence to the country's stated values and principles on the one hand and moderating their commitment to those principles in order to maintain the stability of the trade relationship with China and resulting economic prosperity on the other. However, as we've learnt earlier in this chapter, the work of balancing competing priorities in this is hardly *unique* to the Australia–China relationship — but in some ways, it is the most consequential for Australia's future in the region.

China is Australia's largest trading partner, responsible for 27 per cent of trade in 2023, worth $326 billion. The majority of Australian exports to China are iron ore and coal, while major imports from China include mobile phones, computers and electrical appliances. In 2019 China was also Australia's largest source of international students, at 210 000, worth $12.1 billion. International students studying in Australia are considered an 'export', because funds travel from students' home country to Australia in the same way more traditional forms of export occur. At the time, international students were Australia's third largest export earner (DFAT, 2024).
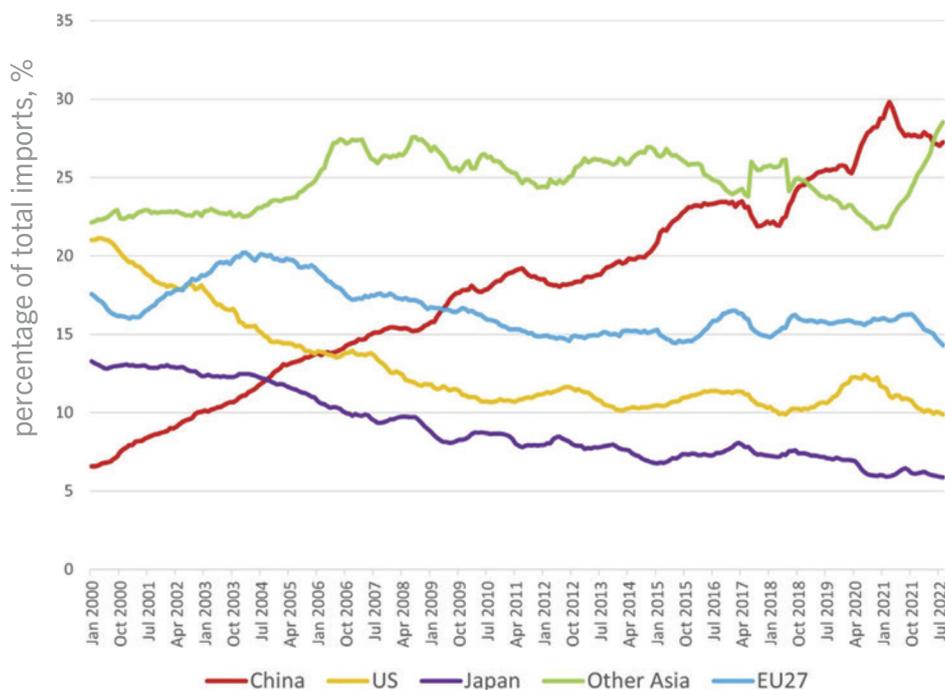
Places of origin for all of Australia's imported goods and services between 2000 and 2022.
Credit: ABS trade data/Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2022. aspistrategist.org.au/
australias-trade-diversification-away-from-china-picks-up-pace

Total: $123B

Total: $81.2B

Australian exports to China by product type
(percentage value of annual total), 2021.

Chinese exports to Australia by product type
(percentage value of annual total), 2017.

Credit: OEC. oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/aus/partner/chn

The relationship between the Australian and Chinese governments during the Turnbull (2015–18) and Morrison (2018–22) governments was, for the most part, acrimonious. Both states accused each other of unfriendly actions and retaliated with their own displays of power. The examples provided in this section illustrate some of Australia and China's 'tit-for-tat' exchanges during this time. Despite this, the **strong trade relationship continued** in a substantial sense between the two, with neither state being inclined to entirely abandon it. Under the Albanese government (2022 onwards) there was some improvement in relations, but major tensions remained.

The beginnings of the breakdown in China—Australia relations occurred in 2018, when the Turnbull government introduced a range of **laws targeting foreign interference in Australia.** These measures:

- established a ban on foreign donations
- created a register for lobbyists working to advance the interest of another foreign country
- expanded the definition of espionage and made receipt of classified material a criminal offence.

In doing so it was widely understood that the government was targeting China (if only *implicitly*) as the main source of actual and potential foreign interference in Australia's political system. China had been accused of a range of actions, including making donations to Australian political parties, much of which was outlined in a high-profile *Four Corners* (2017) report titled 'Power and Influence'.

At the time, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) had identified up to 10 political candidates at state and local government levels who had close connections to Chinese intelligence services. More prominently, in 2017, former Labor senator Sam Dastyari resigned after it was revealed that he had accepted payments and gifts from Chinese companies and was closely linked to Chinese businessman Huang Xiangmo. There had also been attempts by the CCP (through its 'United Front Work Department') to censor Chinese language radio in Australia and to monitor and harass Chinese students at Australian universities.

Read more about Australia and China's exchanges here:

- 'Turnbull says Australia will 'stand up' to China as foreign influence row heats up'. The Guardian, 2017. theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/dec/09/china-says-turnbulls-remarks-have-poisoned-the-atmosphere-of-relations

- 'How China interferes in Australia'. Foreign Affairs, 2018. foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-03-09/how-china-interferes-australia

- 'Sam Dastyari resignation: How we got here'. ABC News, 2017. abc.net.au/news/2017-12-12/sam-dastyari-resignation-how-did-we-get-here/9249380

- 'China rejects report alleging 'important magic weapon' wielding covert influence in Australia'. ABC News, 2020. abc.net.au/news/2020-06-17/china-communist-party-australia-united-front-aspi-report/12334498

> " Foreign powers are making unprecedented and increasingly sophisticated attempts to influence the political process, both here and abroad. "
>
> Malcolm Turnbull, quoted in Henry Belot, 2017. 'Malcolm Turnbull announces biggest overhaul of espionage, intelligence laws in decades'. ABC News. abc.net.au/news/2017-12-05/turnbull-announces-foreign-interference-laws/9227514

In a 2017 speech, Turnbull described China as engaging in 'covert, coercive or corrupting' activities and argued that to address this, both Australia and other Western states needed to adopt the 'four pillars' of 'sunlight, enforcement, deterrence and capability'.

That year also saw Australia become the first state to **ban Chinese telecommunications provider Huawei from accessing its 5G network**. This was done as a result of national security concerns that the company would provide a 'back door' for espionage to the CCP's intelligence services, allowing them to unauthorised access to key systems.

Particular attention was drawn to China's 2017 National Intelligence law, which requires that 'any organisation or citizen should support, assist and cooperate with state intelligence work according to the law'. The Australian government, alongside several other Western states, interpreted this to mean that Huawei might be compelled by requests from Chinese intelligence services, despite notionally being a private company independent from the CCP. However, this independence was questionable, with Huawei having received at least $US1.6 billion in Chinese government funding (Yap, 2019).

Read more about Huawei's ban in Australia here:

- 'Huawei banned from 5G mobile infrastructure rollout in Australia'. ABC News, 2018. abc.net.au/news/2018-08-23/huawei-banned-from-providing-5g-mobile-technology-australia/10155438

- 'Huawei? No way! Why Australia banned the world's biggest telecoms firm'. The Sydney Morning Herald, 2021. smh.com.au/national/huawei-no-way-why-australia-banned-the-world-s-biggest-telecoms-firm-20210503-p57oc9.html

Activity A – China-Australia relations

1 Watch the Four Corners (2019) episode 'Interference' (45 min) and then answer the following questions.

youtube.com/watch?v=7T_Lu1S0sII

    a How has China attempted to influence the Australian political system?

    b Why does China seek to influence Australian politics?

    c What can be done about this?

2 Which actor can be said to have 'caused' the antagonism between Australia and China? Consider both sides of this argument.

3 To what extent does China represent a threat to Australia's national interests?

4 How does the relationship with China support Australia's national interests?

5 In terms of balance, is Australia's relationship with China a net positive or a net negative for Australia?

Australia's responses to a regional issue or crisis 4.2.6

Trade restrictions following the COVID-19 pandemic

In 2020, China placed trade restrictions on a range of Australian products, including:

- ceasing importation of Australian coal
- imposing an 80 per cent tariff on barley
- imposing a 200 per cent tariff on Australian wine
- applying unofficial bans on both lobster and timber.

As a result, exports to China declined from 46 per cent of Australia's total exports to 27 per cent. This was estimated to have cost the Australian economy $24 billion between 2020 and 2023 (The Economist, 2023). Tellingly, though, China chose not to impose tariffs on iron ore or LNG, and exports of these products remained strong during this time.
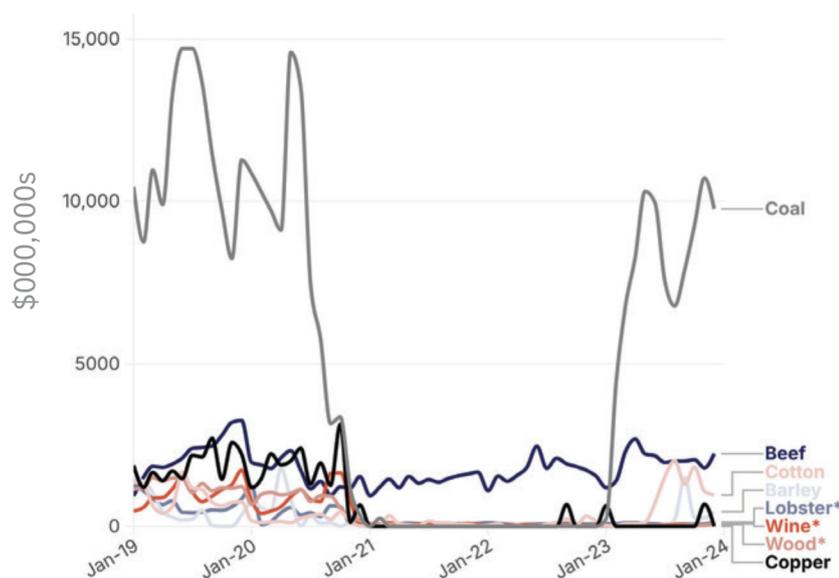
Monthly Australian exports to China of goods targeted by Chinese trade restrictions, 2019–23 (in millions of $AUD). Credit: United States Study Centre, 2024. ussc.edu.au/chinas-trade-restrictions-on-australian-exports

These actions were directly attributed to the **Morrison government's call for an independent investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic**. The Chinese government did not accept the assertion that COVID-19 originated in China and was sensitive to criticisms of its response to the pandemic — including to accusations of an initial cover-up. At the time the economic restrictions were being implemented, China's ambassador to Australia predicted a boycott of Australian products, stating, 'maybe the ordinary people will say, 'why should we drink Australian wine? Eat Australian beef?'' (Wiggins and Fegan, 2020). Similarly, the editor of state-run Chinese newspaper Global Times wrote on Weibo (a popular Chinese social media platform) that 'Australia is always there, making trouble. It is a bit like chewing gum stuck on the sole of China's shoes. Sometimes you have to find a stone to rub it off' (Kuo, 2020).

The Morrison government refused to withdraw or apologise for the inquiry proposal, with Morrison himself describing the inquiry as 'reasonable and sensible'.

> " This is a virus that has taken more than 200 000 lives across the world. It has shut down the global economy. The implications and impacts of this are extraordinary. Now, it would seem entirely reasonable and sensible that the world would want to have an independent assessment of how this all occurred, so we can learn the lessons and prevent it from happening again. "
>
> Scott Morrison, 2020. pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-42802

At the time, Morrison suggested that World Health Organization (WHO) inspectors be given powers akin to weapons inspectors, such as the ability to enter countries without invitation. Australia also chose to weather Chinese trade restrictions and not to impose reciprocal sanctions of their own. Morrison stated that his government sought to 'resist and not provoke' China.

In the meantime, of the range of Australian companies impacted by the restrictions, **many were able to diversify away from China** — for instance, Australian cotton and barley exports shifted to Vietnam, while coal exports shifted to India and Japan. However, wine and seafood suppliers were less able to adapt and so suffered the most, with wine exports plummeting from a peak value of $1.2 billion in 2020 to $10 million by early 2024. Wine producers estimated that China's restrictions had led to their stockpiling of over two billion litres (Field et al., 2024).

According to government modelling, the impact of China's trade sanctions was to reduce the total value of Australian exports to the world by just 0.2 per cent. This suggests that **while Australia's trade is heavily 'exposed' to China, it is not entirely dependent on it**, especially when other potential buyers and markets for Australian goods can be found (Rajah, 2023).

The government also successfully appealed to the **World Trade Organization** over China's actions. In 2023, when the WTO indicated that it would rule in favour of Australia regarding barley, China dropped its tariffs and exports resumed. The same occurred in 2024 for wine exports. In both cases, China ended its restrictions *prior* to the full decision of the WTO being released. This is notable, as it meant that Australia achieved its aims while minimising the potential embarrassment for China that would be associated with a formal ruling. Australia also benefited from China's desire to join the

The **World Trade Organization** is an intergovernmental organisation that determines and enforces many of the global rules that facilitate the international trade of goods, services and intellectual property between different countries; it generally seeks to reduce barriers to trade, such as tariffs and quotas.

Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, an enormous regional trade deal, which (as a member) Australia had the ability to block.

Read more about China's trade restrictions here:

- 'WTO trade policy review of China trade 2021: Australia statement'. DFAT. dfat.gov.au/trade/organisations/wto/trade-monitoring-and-reviews/wto-trade-policy-review-china-trade-2021-australia-statement
- 'Australia suspends WTO case against China on barley tariffs'. The Diplomat, 2023. thediplomat.com/2023/04/australia-suspends-wto-case-against-china-on-barley-tariffs
- 'China's economic sanctions made Australia more confident'. The Interpreter (Lowy Institute). lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/china-s-economic-sanctions-made-australia-more-confident
- 'The data that reveals the truth about Australia's China ties'. Financial Review, 2024. afr.com/world/asia/australia-s-china-ties-at-record-lows-despite-diplomatic-fix-20240331-p5fgen

There was also a **reduction in international students from China**, down from 212 000 in 2019 to 157 000 in 2022 (Department of Education, 2024). At the time, Chinese media outlets increased reporting of stories claiming that Chinese students had been subjected to racist attacks in Australian cities. The Chinese Ministry of Education said that students should 'exercise caution' if travelling to Australia for study (Global Times, 2020). Similar warnings had also been issued to tourists the previous year, although this sector had already been significantly impacted by travel restrictions due to COVID.

Another notable low point in China and Australia's relationship was the doctored image incident on X (Twitter), posted in 2020 by China's then-foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian. The image showed an Australian soldier holding an Afghani child at knifepoint seemingly referencing investigations into suspected war crimes committed by Australian SAS officers, including Ben Roberts-Smith in Afghanistan. The image was associated with the rise of '**wolf warrior diplomacy**', in which a range of Chinese officials made highly assertive and nationalistic statements in support of China's national interests.

> **Wolf warrior** diplomacy describes a period between 2017 and 2021 in which Chinese diplomats adopted a confrontational and nationalistic tone on the world stage; wolf warrior diplomats often strongly asserted Chinese national interests and reacted angrily to criticism of the CCP.

Read more about the doctored image incident here:

- 'Doctored image of Australian soldier described as China's attempt to win over conspiracy theorists, other Beijing bureaucrats'. ABC News, 2020. abc.net.au/news/2020-12-01/china-doctored-image-of-australian-soldier-reaction/12936688

Zhao Lijian's post, showing a doctored image depicting an Australian soldier holding an Afghani child at knifepoint. x.com/zlj517

Arrests of Australian citizens in China

In 2020, journalist Cheng Lei was detained while working as a business reporter for the Chinese state-run network CGTN. She was imprisoned for three years before being released in October 2023. Shortly after Cheng's 2020 arrest, two Australian journalists working in China, Bill Birtles and Mike Smith, were investigated by security agents before fleeing the country to avoid potential arrest themselves. At the time, this meant that **no Australian media agency had correspondents working in China**. Cheng was held in 'residential surveillance at a designated location', a system in which an individual is detained at a prison-like facility without formal charge and without access to lawyers or family. In 2021, Cheng was formally charged for 'sharing state secrets overseas', although it remains unclear to what actions this refers. The Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that she was released after serving her (previously unannounced) sentence.

The Australian government responded to Cheng's detention by publicly condemning the legal process and conditions in which she was said to be held. They also attempted to provide consular assistance, but access was largely denied.

> The Australian Government respects the sovereignty of China's legal system. However, Ms Cheng's case has lacked transparency and the Australian Government has never been provided with details of the charges.
>
> Australia's Ambassador to China and officials were present at the court entrance, reiterating Australia's support for Ms Cheng and our concerns with what has been a closed and opaque process.
>
> Regrettably, the Ambassador was not permitted entry to the court. The continuing lack of transparency is concerning and further undermines confidence.
>
> Since Ms Cheng was detained in August 2020, the Australian Government has consistently stated the fundamental importance of procedural fairness, basic standards of justice and China's international legal obligations.
>
> Following Ms Cheng's trial, we renew our calls for China to uphold these principles and to allow Ms Cheng unimpeded access to her lawyer.
>
> We will continue to provide consular assistance to Ms Cheng under the terms of our bilateral Consular Relations Agreement, and to advocate for her rights, including for her to be able to speak to her two young children in Australia, with whom she has had no contact since her detention in 2020.
>
> Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne, 2021. foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/statement-cheng-lei-1

Despite occurring during a period of heightened antagonism between Australia and China, then Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne refused to link Cheng's arrest with antagonism between the two countries, describing the suggestion that Cheng was being used to pressure Australia as 'speculative at best'. However, this was likely a tactical diplomatic decision and not the true opinion of the government, as they preferred to deal with each problem separately rather than as aspects of the same issue.

On coming to power in 2022, **the Albanese government continued to exert public pressure on China to release Cheng.** The government was also more willing to link the issue to trade.

> " Our position on China has been to engage constructively, but to continue to put forward that the impediments to trade should be removed, to say very directly to President Xi, that Australians such as Cheng Lei, need to be given proper justice, and that they're not receiving that at the moment. "
>
> Anthony Albanese in 2023 (three months before Cheng's release).
> pm.gov.au/media/television-interview-piers-morgan-uncensored

Detained Chinese-Australian writer Yang Hengjun (left) and Chinese-Australian journalist Cheng Lei (right), who returned to Australia in 2023. Credit: AAP.

Similarly, **Chinese-Australian Yang Hengjun was arrested for espionage** while visiting China in 2019. Yang had formerly worked for China's Ministry of State Security before moving to Australia, where he became a pro-democracy blogger and writer. After five years in prison, he was sentenced in 2024 to a suspended death sentence. This gave Yang a two-year reprieve — or stay of execution, temporarily halting the punishment — which could then be commuted to either a fixed term or life sentence (Needham and Chen, 2024).

Scott Morrison denied that Yang had engaged in espionage, saying that 'suggestions that he's acted as a spy for Australia are absolutely untrue'. Similar to Chang, consular assistance to Yang was restricted by the Chinese government; Australian officials were denied access to Yang's trial in 2021 but *were* permitted to attend his sentencing in 2024. At the time of writing there had been no further movement on Yang Hengjun's situation, and while it seemed unlikely that the death sentence would be carried out, the most likely scenario seemed to be that Yang would face life imprisonment in China. On the announcement of Yang's sentence, Penny Wong said:

> " we have consistently called for basic standards of justice, procedural fairness and humane treatment for Dr Yang, in accordance with international norms and China's legal obligations. All Australians want to see Dr Yang reunited with his family. We will not relent in our advocacy. "
>
> Quoted in Tom Crowley and Stephen Dziedzic, 2024. 'Chinese court sentences Australian Yang Hengjun to death with two-year good behaviour reprieve'. ABC News. abc.net.au/news/2024-02-05/australian-yang-hengjun-sentenced-to-death/103428060

Wong later spoke directly to China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who visited Australia in early 2024:

> " I told the foreign minister Australians were shocked at the sentence imposed and I made clear to him the Australian government will continue to advocate on Dr Yang's behalf. "
>
> Quoted in Daniel Hurst, 2024. 'Australians 'shocked' at death sentence imposed on Yang Hengjun, Penny Wong tells Chinese counterpart'. ABC News. theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/mar/20/australia-writer-yang-hengjun-china-death-sentence-penny-wong

Yang's family criticised the government's response, arguing that the government adopted different and more assertive approaches to Cheng Lei's case, demonstrated by choosing to speak publicly regarding her, but downplaying Yang.

> " It's a morally indefensible position for Australia to put commercial interest before the dignity, basic human rights and life of an Australian citizen. "
>
> Feng Chongyi (Dr Yang's PhD supervisor in Australia), quoted in Tom Crowley and Stephen Dziedzic, 2024. 'Chinese court sentences Australian Yang Hengjun to death with two-year good behaviour reprieve'. ABC News. abc.net.au/news/2024-02-05/australian-yang-hengjun-sentenced-to-death/103428060

Arguably, the reason for this difference in approach was because the government believed it was possible to resolve Cheng's case but was more pessimistic when it came to Yang. In particular, it seems that linking Cheng's case to trade negotiations was significant in causing her release, as she was set free shortly before China announced that trade restrictions had been lifted. Conversely, Yang's case was more difficult to pursue because of his background in the Chinese government and his public advocacy for democracy. The latter is a serious crime in China, and has resulted in life sentences for many (Rothwell, 2024).

Activity B – Navigating China-Australia tensions

1 Consider the Morrison government's call for an inquiry into the origins of COVID-19.

   a What were the consequences of this action for the Australia-China relationship?

   b With this in mind – should they have handled the issue differently?

2 Compare the responses of the Morrison Liberal government with the Albanese Labor government in regard to the relationship with China.

   a To what extent are their approaches similar?

   b How do they differ?

   c To what extent can the Australian perspective towards China be considered 'bipartisan'?

3 Discuss the detentions of Cheng Lei and Yang Hengjun. Should the government have put more pressure on China in these cases?

4 What forms of power does Australia have at its disposal regarding China? Which of these do you think is most effective?

5 Outline the Australian government's *perspective* and *interests* regarding both the issue of trade restrictions and that of detention of Australian citizens.

   a Do perspectives and interests align in these cases?

   b Which of the two – perspectives and interests – should take precedence, when they don't align?

Relationship challenges 4.2.5

The central challenge to Australia's relationship with China is their **competing security interests**. China seeks to achieve security, in part, through expansion, both in terms of controlling territory in the South China Sea and in fostering alliances with Indo-Pacific states. Australia instead broadly seeks to maintain the current regional order, an important feature of which is freedom of navigation, which aligns with Australia's understanding of its own trade interests.

The response of Australian governments has largely been to try to find a middle ground between China's vision for the Indo-Pacific and the Western rules-based order. However, **many see these two visions as being mutually exclusive**. In this view, China does not give due regard to the universality of sovereignty and international law, tending towards prioritising sovereignty as a means of promoting its own power and territorial claims, but not respecting the territory of others. The same argument is made with respect to international law — that China will point to international law where it coincides with its national interest but will disregard it when it does not. Others, however, see these approaches by China as far from unique — because arguably all states are to some extent opportunistic and even hypocritical in promoting their own interests.

Some key questions where the two countries have conflicting preferences may include:

- Whether trade between China and Australia is relatively 'free' and based on mutual economic benefit or it is shaped by the political priorities of the CCP.

- Whether Australian citizens can freely report on China (along with any newsworthy issue), or whether critical reporting is curtailed to avoid embarrassment for the Chinese government.

- Either freedom of navigation in the South China Sea is guaranteed for all, or China's navy can exercise effective and exclusive controls over it as part of its claimed territory.

A stark example of China's perspective came in 2020, when officials from the Chinese embassy gave an Australian journalist a list of its '14 grievances' (as explored earlier in this chapter). Key sore points included:

- the proposal of an independent investigation into COVID-19

- banning Huawei from Australia's 5G network

- 'incessant wanton interference' in Xinjiang, Taiwan and Hong Kong

- unfriendly reports on China by the Australian media.

The official who provided the document was quoted as saying, 'China is angry. If you make China the enemy, China will be the enemy.' In contrast, Australia appeared to seek a more conciliatory approach, as 'it would be conducive to a better atmosphere' (Kearsley, 2020).

Journalist Peter Hartcher argued that the 14 grievances were significant in that they could be seen as a blueprint for the sort of order China wanted to build. If China were upset at each of the points on this list, then it would, in theory, approve of Australia doing the opposite. However, doing so would have a dramatic impact on Australia's interests. In Hartcher's view:

> To meet the regime's demands, Australia would have to hand Beijing control of its foreign investment regime, telecommunications laws, anti-interference laws and visa policy; muzzle its free press, censor its members of parliament, suppress free speech, and surrender its voice to speak on world affairs; abandon its international treaties guaranteeing freedom of navigation and overflight, and stand silent when China commits human rights outrages or makes demands on the sovereign rights of other countries.
>
> Peter Hartcher, 2021. 'Red Zone: China's Challenge and Australia's Future'. Black Inc.

In this view, **China's uses of power are unacceptable to Australia's national interests** – a perspective that many Australian politicians in both major parties appear to share. Nonetheless, all recent Australian governments have sought to balance its disagreements over these issues with the country's economic interests, seeking to avoid degrading the relationship to outright hostility.

Conversely, several high-profile figures in Australia advocated for greater ties with China and that the Australian government accommodate many of China's demands. As discussed earlier in this chapter, former prime minister Paul Keating provided forthright criticisms of the AUKUS agreement and argued that China's trade restrictions should not be considered a 'threat' to Australia in a conventional sense. In this view, **Australia's actions did not serve its national interests**, but instead constituted an ultimately self-defeating attempt to prop up US hegemony in in the region.

> In the friction of international politics these things turn up, but they're not threats. You can't impute threat – meaning invasion – with putting a tariff on wine.
>
> Paul Keating on the AUKUS pact and Australia's relations with China, 2023. youtu.be/VmgxAoa1n-8

> No mealy-mouthed talk of 'stabilisation' in our China relationship or resort to softer or polite language will disguise from the Chinese the extent and intent of our commitment to United States's strategic hegemony in East Asia with all its deadly portents.
>
> History will be the judge of this project in the end. But I want my name clearly recorded among those who say it is a mistake. Who believes that, despite its enormous cost, it does not offer a solution to the challenge of great power competition in the region or to the security of the Australian people and its continent.
>
> Paul Keating, quoted in Brett Worthington, 2023. 'Paul Keating savages AUKUS nuclear submarine deal as Labor's worst since conscription'. ABC News. abc.net.au/news/2023-03-15/ paul-keating-anthony-albanese-penny-wong-aukus-nuclear-china/102098142

Normalisation of relations

To some extent, the meeting between Prime Minister Albanese and President Xi in Beijing in 2023 – the first visit by an Australian leader to China since 2016 – signalled the end of the period of heightened tension between China and Australia. There had been an unprecedented freeze in diplomatic relations between the states – with **no ministerial meetings held from November 2019 to June 2022**, despite requests from a range of Australian government ministers. During the meeting Albanese stated that Australia recognises that each state comes from 'different political systems, very different values arising from that and very different histories, but we deal with each other on face value'.

Subsequently, in 2024, Chinese Premier Li Qiang made a state visit to Australia. In a press conference after the visit, Prime Minister Albanese explained his government's strategy.

> " Our approach has, of course, been patient, calibrated and deliberate. I've said repeatedly we will cooperate where we can, disagree where we must, but engage in our national interest, and that is in the interest of Australia and in the interest of China, as well as in the interest of regional stability. "
>
> Anthony Albanese, 2024. pm.gov.au/media/press-conference-canberra-10

The degree to which this approach to diplomacy played a role in dismantling trade restrictions, the release of Cheng Lei and the resumption of talks between China and Australia is not necessarily clear-cut. It is possible that the Labor government — and/or Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong in particular — was able to successfully persuade the PRC to normalise relations in behind-the-scenes discussions. Conversely, it might be that Chinese decision-makers themselves simply recognised that **trade restrictions had already achieved their desired effect in persuading Australia to change its approach**, and that continuing them may have simply imposed an unnecessary drag on Chinese access to Australian goods beyond what was useful. In this view, Australia's change in government may merely have served as a useful pretext for a China's change in policy.

This latter perspective may be supported by looking at China's approach to other disputes. Cheng Lei's release was arranged prior to Albanese's first meeting with Xi Jinping in late 2022, seemingly to minimise source of tension between the countries. A similar dynamic appears to have played a role in China's offer to replace Adelaide Zoo's two pandas prior to their scheduled returned to China in late 2024. Either example may be interpreted as the result of successful diplomacy by the Australian government *and/or* China's recommitment to fostering positive relations — and of both countries exerting influence through attraction rather than coercion (Pestrin and Mason, 2024).

Read more here:

'Beijing offers pandas as ties with Australia thaw'. BBC News, 2024. bbc.com/news/articles/c2vv2v6v4vvo
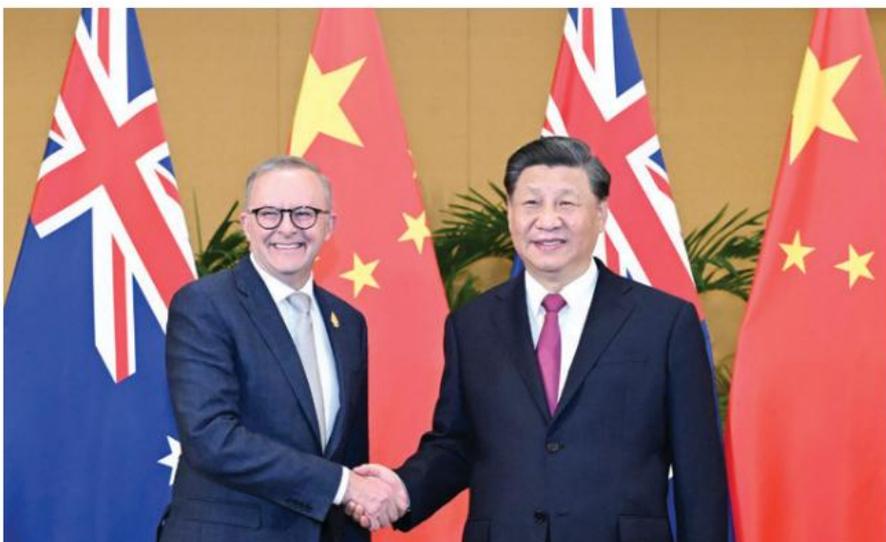
Albanese and Xinping meeting at the G20 summit in Bali in 2022.
Credit: x.com/SpokespersonCHN/status/1592526645982040065

How Australia's responses have contributed to cooperation and/or conflict with China

This relationship study has featured discussion of a range of responses by Australian governments to conflict with China. From Australia's perspective these actions have mostly been *reactive*, each a response to transgressive actions initiated by China. In the cases of both trade restrictions and the imprisonment of Australian citizens, **the Australian government has sought to induce some level of cooperation with China**, insofar as its sought to resolve these issues without damaging the relationship further. In this sense, the Australian government sees itself as a 'friendly' state, acting pragmatically and in good faith to pursue a mutually beneficial relationship with China.

Conversely, the opposite perspective may be true for the Chinese government. Key figures do appear to have seen Australia's foreign interference laws, the banning of Huawei and the proposed inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 as **unjustifiable and aggressive challenges to China's interests**. These actions may have been particularly harmful because they were also seen as insults to China's national pride (which in turn in shaped by historical memory of invasion, occupation and humiliation at the hands of Western powers in the 19th and 20th centuries). The fact that China did eventually accept an investigation into the pandemic, co-sponsoring a resolution at the World Health Assembly in 2020, may be seen as lending some support China's position (Galloway and Bagshaw, 2020). This is because the WHO, not China, was the focus of the inquiry, and in sponsoring the resolution China sought to set the agenda rather than be the 'target' of interventions by foreign powers (Hartcher, 2021). From China's perspective, Australian actions were more likely to be seen as the cause of these conflicts between the two states.

The AUKUS deal is another example of the problem with China's and Australia's conflicting 'chicken and egg' causal interpretations of international affairs. The mainstream view in Australia has been that the AUKUS agreement is an understandable and *proportionate* reaction to the growth of Chinese naval power and an increasing willingness to project this power into the South China Sea. As such, even though this area is undoubtedly far from Australia's *own* territorial waters, AUKUS is understood as a means of securing Australia's interests in freedom of trade in the region, but with no intention of threatening China's legitimate security interests. Advocates understand AUKUS as a safeguard against a military threat for which Australia must prepare — even if it never actually devolves into outright armed conflict.

From China's perspective — in which its naval growth and assertion of territorial control in the South China Sea are entirely legitimate — it is Australia's actions that are considered provocative. **The Chinese government sees itself as having no intention of challenging Australia's territorial waters,** only to secure what it believes to be its own. In light of its increased range, there is little trust that Australia would only use nuclear-powered submarines to protect its own territory.

Effects on stability and change in the Indo-Pacific 4.2.7

Chiefly, Australian governments aim to maintain the status quo of an Indo-Pacific that corresponds to the rules-based international order. They attempt to limit China's influence by:

- supporting the UN Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling on the South China Sea

- continuing to call for a peaceful solution to the dispute over Taiwan

- raising human rights issues surrounding Hong Kong and Xinjiang

- seeking to match and counter China's campaign to increase its influence over Pacific Island states

- drawing attention to Chinese intelligence activities, both within Australia and abroad

- locking Huawei out of Australia's 5G network

- deepening its own security ties with regional powers with similar priorities, such as the US, Japan and India.

Each of these examples involves an attempt by China to alter the current regional order, while Australia (among other states) tries to restrain it. This should be unsurprising, as the current regional order — for the most part — serves Australia's interests, whereas little guarantees that the same would be true for a China-led order.

However, at the same time, Australia aims to maintain a positive relationship with China, as this supports regional stability in the medium term, which in turn also serves its broader trade interests. In the view of observers like Hartcher (2021), however, Australia may be 'left with little choice' when presented with a conflict between its own economic and security interests, as this is ultimately a false dichotomy:

> "The economy is best protected by not surrendering national sovereignty. That's a false trade-off. Once sovereignty is lost, Australia's control of its economic and commercial decision-making is soon lost too. In fact, sovereignty and the economy are complementary. Australia can only protect its economic interests by keeping a robust national independence."

Activity C – Analysing and evaluating the Australia–China relationship

1 Should Australian governments pursue a greater degree of cooperation with China? Why/why not?

2 Are China's and Australia's interests mutually exclusive? What does this mean for the relationship between the two states?

3 Does the Albanese government deserve credit for normalising relations between Australia and China, or have other factors played a role? Explain your response.

4 Watch Paul Keating's criticism of the Australian government's approach to China.

'Former PM Paul Keating criticises AUKUS pact and discusses relations with China'. ABC News, 2023 (59 minutes). youtu.be/VmgxAoa1n-8

   a Which of the points Keating makes do you find the most persuasive?

   b Construct an argument either supporting or opposing his perspective.

5 Undertake your own research into any important developments that have taken place since 2024 in regard to the China-Australia relationship. Do recent events demonstrate a move towards greater antagonism between Australia and China, or reconciliation?

6 Is China the most significant relationship Australia has with another state? Discuss why/why not, with reference to the other two states you have studied in this area of study. How is your conclusion reflected in the case studies featured in this section?

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Revision questions

Test your understanding of your selected issue by answering the following questions.

Short-answer questions

Australia's national interests and perspectives on them

1   Explain one perspective on security as an Australian national interest.

2   Explain one perspective on economic prosperity as an Australian national interest.

3   Explain one perspective on regional relationships (and/or regional standing) as an Australian national interest.

4   Analyse Australia's pursuit of one of its national interests.

5   Evaluate the effectiveness of Australia's pursuit of one national interest.

Forms of power

6   Outline an example of economic power.

7   Give an example of cultural power.

8   Analyse an example of political power.

9   Discuss one use of military power by Australia to achieve a specific national interest.

10   Explain the difference between political and diplomatic power.

Australia's use of foreign policy instruments

11   Provide an example of the Australian government's use of diplomacy used as a foreign policy instrument.

12   Explain how Australia uses trade to influence another actor in the Indo-Pacific region.

13   Analyse Australia's use of foreign aid to achieve a national interest.

14   Evaluate the degree success of Australia's use of one foreign policy instrument in achieving one of its national interest.

Australia's relationships with other states in the region

15   Provide an example of Australia seeking to build a positive relationship with another Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) member state.

16   Explain the role of one national interest in Australia's pursuit of a specific regional relationship.

17   Analyse one key challenge facing Australia's relationship with another state in the Indo-Pacific .

18   Analyse how its relationship with one Indo-Pacific state helps Australia achieve a national interest.

19 Discuss how Australia's pursuit of a national interest has impacted a Pacific Islands Forum member state.

Stability and change

20 Outline how Australia's pursuit of a national interest seeks to create stability or change in the region.

21 Discuss whether Australia seeks stability or change in the Indo-Pacific region.

22 Analyse how Australia seeking stability or change has impacted a regional relationship.

    a To what extent has one Indo-Pacific state you have studied contributed to political stability in the region?

    b To what extent has a different Indo-Pacific state you have studied contributed to change in the region?

Extended response questions

1 Evaluate the impact of Australia's response to a regional issue or crisis on its relationships with other states.

2 Discuss differing perspectives on two of Australian national interests.

3 Discuss how Australia's response to a crisis or issue has affected its relationship with two other states in the Indo-Pacific region.

4 To what extent does 'the strategic competition for power and influence in the Indo-Pacific' influence Australia's pursuit of its national interests?

Sample response

Explain one perspective on security as an Australian national interest.

The Albanese government sees the rise of China as a threat to Australia's national interest of security. This viewpoint recognises Beijing's efforts to displace Washington's dominance in the Indo-Pacific, which is not in Australia's security interests. As such, the Albanese government chose to endorse the 2021 AUKUS deal to procure nuclear-powered SSN submarine technology from the United States and the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Albanese (2023) has called AUKUS 'the biggest single investment in Australia's defence capability in all of our history, strengthening Australia's national security'.

Exam preparation

Congratulations for making it here and (unless you're reading ahead) for making it to the end of the Units 3 and 4 Politics course! Throughout the year you will have worked hard and engaged with some challenging content. Now it's time to turn your attention to exam revision, so you can show the examiners the understanding you've developed.

Your teacher is the best resource you have. Be sure to ask them lots of questions and actively engage in the feedback you receive(d) throughout the year. They will have developed a revision program for your class that will best suit your timetable and your cohort.

this hedgehog is cheering for u bc u can do anything

Here are some additional suggestions to help you start your preparation.

Tips for organisation

- Plan your time by creating a study timetable that allows you to manage your exam preparation for all your subjects as well as the rest of your life − including work, time with friends and family, sleep and leisure.

- Go back to the reference copy of the study design you have been using all year and make sure you feel comfortable with and understand what is being asked of you. Do you understand all the key knowledge dot points? Do you know what you need to do to display the key skills? If you don't, now is a great time to review your understanding with your teacher and make sure your notes are as strong as they can be.

Consolidating content and your understanding

- Work through each area of study (choose the one you find most challenging first!), revising your understanding through the following process.

  − Double-check that your notes cover the relevant key knowledge and key skills in the study design.

  − Highlight any dot point of key knowledge you don't feel confident with and seek help to clarify this; this could include revisiting the content from class or scheduling time to see your teacher.

  − Revisit your SACs for this area of study and reattempt any questions that you did not get full marks for, seeking feedback from marking guides or other resources provided to you by your teacher and troubleshooting your understanding as you go.

  − Complete some trial exam questions for this area of study, seeking feedback from marking guides or other resources provided to you by your teacher and troubleshooting your understanding as you go.

- Search for recent news related to an area of content and read to make connections with your knowledge.

- Summarise and re-summarise your notes so that you have a condensed 'master document' for each area of study, referencing the study design.

- Search for academic perspectives and commentary related to an area of content and read to make connections with your knowledge.

- Use flashcards to test yourself on key concepts.

Working on short-answer-style questions

- Rewrite completed questions and enact feedback.

- Write and rewrite sample exam questions.

- Create your own questions, using the study design to generate every question possible.

- Work on specific skills by rewriting the same question using different content.

- Review tricky questions covered in class by checking the mark allocation, finding the command term and checking for tricky prepositions.

Tips for working on your essay writing

- Write, write, write.

- Mark your own essays and identify issues (consider swapping with a classmate).

- Be selective about which practice essays you provide to your teacher for feedback. (Don't just hand them a stack that you haven't taken the time to read over carefully yourself!) You'll often get the most value if you ask them specific questions about your essay (e.g. 'Is this the best way to tackle this part of the question?').

- Reflect on and incorporate feedback by rewriting specific paragraphs as needed.

- Write and rewrite introductions to sample exam questions.

- Create your own questions using the study design.

Glossary

Adaptation refers to adjusting to, and developing protections from, the current and anticipated future effects of climate change.

Al-Qaeda is a transnational Sunni Islamist militant group that orchestrated the September 11 attacks in the United States, among others; it seeks to establish a global caliphate through force, operating through decentralised networks of affiliated groups worldwide.

Anthropogenic refers to things made by people or resulting from human activity.

Authoritarianism is an approach to politics that favours using strong, centralised power to enforce the status quo and ensure obedience to authority, typically at the expense of personal freedoms.

Authority is the degree to which the use(s) of power by particular actors are considered rightful or legitimate.

Capacity is the potential or ability to do something or influence an outcome.

Capitalism refers to a social and economic system where privately owned and operated businesses produce goods and services for a profit; it usually features systems of private property, wage labour, market competition and the accumulation of capital (wealth).

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns; on Earth, these have been accelerated by human activities including the burning of fossil fuels since the 1800s, which have released heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere.

Coercion is the practice of persuading someone using threats or force.

Constitutional monarchies are those in which a monarch serves as the head of state within the parameters of a constitution, with limited powers, while an elected government (typically a parliament) is the primary political authority.

Cosmopolitanism is the idea that all human beings are members of a single moral community that transcends national boundaries; this leads them to prioritise cooperation to reach common goals and meet challenges faced by the global community.

Democracy is a system of government where power and the ability to make rules rests with, and is exercised by, the people to whom those rules apply.

Deterrence, in a military context, refers to the ability of one actor to convince another actor to refrain from initiating some form of provocative action, using real or implicit threats to respond through means.

Discrimination refers to the process of making unfair distinctions or prejudgements between or about different types of people, such as those based on skin colour, religion and/or ethnic background.

Disinformation involves deliberate attempts to mislead, such as hoaxes, phishing and propaganda.

Domestic policies are the strategies and decisions that a government makes that relate primarily to its own population and/or to matters within its own borders.

Economic resources are physical or intangible 'things' that have value to other actors within a system and can be combined and transformed in ways that produce more; they can typically be exchanged between actors.

Elections are the formal process by which a population decides which individual(s) will hold particular positions of authority.

Entities are organisations founded for a particular cause or purpose, such as religion, government, education, professions or social purpose.

Foreign policy refers to a government's decisions and strategies in dealing with other global political actors and/or any matters beyond its own borders.

The **European Union** (EU) is a political and economic union with many unique features, made up of 27 member states, with a combined population of around 450 million people and 15 per cent of the world's GDP.

The **European Parliament** is a 720-member legislative body that forms one of the EU's seven key institutions; members are directly elected every five years by EU citizens and are tasked with considering and adopting EU-wide legislative proposals from the primary executive arm of the EU, the 27-member European Commission.

Federalism is a system of government where power is divided between a central national government and more geographically dispersed subnational governments that administer smaller regional or local jurisdictions.

A **free trade agreement** is one that significantly reduces the barriers or disincentives to trade between two or more countries; they often include complex conditions that are a result of negotiating and balancing the interests of various producers, consumers and businesses across those countries.

The **G20** (or Group of 20) is an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 countries, the EU and the African Union, making up the world's largest economies; it focuses on key global economic issues, including international financial stability, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development.

Globalisation refers to the relatively sustained increase in global interconnectedness between individuals and communities – particularly that driven by innovations in communications and transport technologies since the 1990s.

Global interconnectedness refers to the intricate web of interactions and interdependencies that link countries, societies and individuals across the world.

Government leaders are holders of the most powerful offices in national governments, including heads of state, Cabinet ministers, special advisers and other high-ranking government officials; generally, their most senior are termed prime minister or president.

Hard power refers to power exercised through coercion or economic incentives.

A hegemon is the dominant power or leader in a region; for example, the United States has been thought of as the global hegemonic power since the end of World War II.

Hegemony refers to the capacity of a superpower state to dominate the global political order.

Humanitarianism is the active belief in the value of human life, where individuals assist each other to improve the conditions of humanity for moral and unselfish reasons.

Ideology refers to interrelated sets of values and beliefs around how things are and how they should be.

An **institution** is an established framework for structuring and regulating certain aspects of human social life.

Integrity refers to public officials acting in ways that reflect 'good faith' attempts to advance the common good, in line with due process and accountability measures and in a way that is detached from their own personal interests.

International law refers to a body of rules established by custom or written legal agreements that are accepted as binding upon the international community and that apply to all global actors; written legal agreements, such as treaties, are only binding to those who give consent through explicit ratification.

The **Islamic State of Iraq and Syria** (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or by its Arabic acronym Daesh, is a transnational Salafi Muslim militant group and an unrecognised quasi-state that began as a branch of al-Qaeda; at times it has exercised control over significant parts of Iraq and Syria.

Legitimacy is the perception that an act, actor, group or institution is justified in its exercise of power; legitimacy is thought to transform power into authority.

Liberal democracy refers to a form of democracy in which the power of government is limited and counterbalanced by the rights and freedoms of individuals, which are protected by constitutions, established norms and institutions.

Liberalism is a political and moral philosophy based on the rights of the individual, liberty and political equality.

Lobbying refers to the practice of attempting to influence the actions, policies or decisions of government officials.

Local integration refers to states allowing asylum seekers and refugees entry into their state without necessarily verifying their claim to refugee status or offering any official resettlement scheme.

Media is the means by which communication happens between large groups of people.

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, where they intend to settle, permanently or temporarily, at a new location.

Militarism is the substantial investment in military arms and personnel to bolster national security and project power through military means.

Military capacity refers to an actor's ability to exercise power through organised violence.

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information, such as rumours, insults and pranks.

Mitigation, in the context of climate change, refers to reducing the flow of greenhouse gases and/or finding ways to remove them from the atmosphere.

Monarchy refers to a political system in which one person is the head of state for life, or until they abdicate the position.

Multilateralism refers to a system of coordinating relations between three or more global actors, usually in pursuit of specific objectives.

Mutually assured destruction refers to two or more actors being deterred from using their nuclear weapons against each other because of the high likelihood that doing so would lead to the total annihilation of all actors.

National interests are the objectives and priorities pursued by states to safeguard their security, economic prosperity, sovereignty and influence through diplomatic, military, economic and cultural means; they are often multifaceted and changeable, depending on the interests of the domestic political actors that influence state policy.

Nationalism refers to identifying with one's own state and support for its interests, particularly to the exclusion or detriment of other states' interests.

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are commitments that states have made to particular policies and measures that reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

Non-government organisations are non-profit or charitable groups whose purpose is to address a social or political issue, and who are independent of government.

Norms refer to shared and commonly accepted ways of doing things; in global politics these are often associated with justice and ethical concerns.

Nuclear apocalypse, also known as nuclear holocaust, refers to a theoretical scenario in which the mass detonation of nuclear weapons causes widespread destruction and radioactive fallout that leads to the death of most life on Earth.

The **Paris Agreement** is an international treaty on climate change adopted in 2015, which notionally committed its 195 signatory states to take measures to mitigate climate change (to prevent more than 2 degrees Celsius warming compared to pre-industrial levels), as well as commit to climate change adaptation and financing.

Parliament is a supreme lawmaking (legislative) body where elected representatives debate, create and modify laws that govern activity within their jurisdiction, as well as scrutinise the actions of the executive government.

Patriotism is a strong sense of loyalty, pride and devotion towards one's own country or nation, often involving a deep, emotional connection to its culture, history and interests.

Persecution refers to prolonged oppression or unjust treatment through the excess use of authority, and may extend beyond discrimination to include explicit punishment for political dissent.

A **policy** is an agreed-upon set of ideas or a plan for how a government or other group will respond in particular situations, typically expressed in statements, laws or other rules.

Prevention, in this context, refers to stopping the release of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere 'in the first instance'.

Protectionism refers to measures that restrict imports on goods from other countries, such as charging taxes or duties on them ('tariffs') or setting physical limits on quantities of imported goods ('quotas'), usually motivated by a desire to shield local businesses from foreign competition.

The **public interest i**s the primary goal of good decision-making, whereby decisions increase the overall wellbeing of the people affected by them.

Realism is the idea that global actors prioritise their own interests over the needs of others, often seeking to maximise their own power to safeguard their own survival.

A **referendum i**s a direct vote in which the entire electorate is invited to vote on a particular proposal (typically a significant constitutional or legislative issue) to determine public support for or opposition to the proposed measure.

Regional groupings are groupings of states based on a particular geographic territory.

The **rule of law** refers to the principle that laws will be applied equally to all and that anyone will be held accountable for wrongdoing, regardless of their power.

Recession refers to a period of economic decline, as measured by the value of goods and services produced in a particular area over a period being less than in the immediately preceding period.

Refoulement means the forcible return of refugees or asylum seekers to a country where they are liable to be persecuted.

Resettlement refers to the process by which those who have had their claim for refugee status accepted come to remain and build a life in another country.

The **Rome Statute** is the 1998 treaty that established the ICC, which came into force in 2002; as of 2024, the ICC had 124 member states.

The rules-based international order refers to the set of structured relationships, expectations and behaviours that have evolved and dominated the operation of global politics since World War II; it is rooted in economic and political liberalism and extends into international law, regional security arrangements, trade agreements and immigration protocols.

Secession is the act or pursuit of becoming independent of or withdrawing from a state or other territorial entity.

Separatism refers to a political or social movement that advocates for the separation or independence of a particular region, group or community from a larger political entity, often seeking to establish its own distinct political, cultural or social identity and forms of governance.

Sinicisation is a process by which people or groups are acculturated or assimilated into Chinese (particularly Han Chinese) culture, language, social norms and/or identity.

Social movements are groups of individuals who, through some organised effort, seek to achieve a certain social change or political goal.

Soft power refers to power exercised through attraction, such as through diplomacy or cultural ties.

Sovereignty is the legitimate or widely recognised ability to exercise effective control over matters in a particular area, or within particular borders.

Stability refers to a political system's ability to maintain things as they are, and/or where decisions and changes do not substantially affect the current distribution of power among actors (particularly institutions and governments) within that system.

A **stakeholder** is an individual or entity that has a particular interest in an organisation, process or outcome.

A **state** is a political unit that has a permanent population, defined territory, a distinct government and recognised sovereignty; states are traditionally considered the central actors in global politics.

Strategic nuclear weapons are designed to be used against the 'interior' of an opposing force, such as cities or major production centres, to reduce their ability to wage war; generally, they are larger and less targeted.

Tactical nuclear weapons are usually smaller and more 'targeted' nuclear weapons that are designed for use on a battlefield against opposing 'frontline' military forces; these include aerial bombs, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery munitions.

A **tariff** is a tax or duty to be paid on a particular type of imported or exported good, usually calculated as a percentage of the value, weight or physical quantity.

Terrorism refers to the use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, for political aims; the exact scope of what classifies as terrorism is contested and politicised, but it generally carries the implication that the behaviour is immoral and/or unlawful.

Trade imbalances occur when the value of a country's imports significantly exceeds the value of its exports, or vice versa; this can lead to economic issues such as currency instability, excessive debts or poor trade competitiveness.

A **third country** refers to one that is not a refugee's 'first' country (their country of origin) or a 'second' country (where they first sought asylum); third countries may offer permanent resettlement opportunities for those unable to settle in the latter or return to the former.

Transnational corporations are entities that conduct their operations across multiple states and, due to their size, can have a significant influence on flows of global production, trade, commerce and investment.

Transparency refers to the idea that the operation of government should be visible to the people.

The **Treaty of Lisbon** is the international agreement that, since 2009, has formed the constitutional basis of the EU; it formally outlines the various mechanisms used to make EU policy decisions and includes binding requirements on member states to protect certain human rights.

The **United Nations** is the world's largest international organisation and institution of global governance, founded in 1945 and consisting of 193 member states; its stated goals (as set out by the UN Charter) are to maintain peace, cooperation and friendly relations between states.

A **veto** is the power or ability to unilaterally stop a proposal, decision or action.

Wolf warrior diplomacy describes a period between 2017 and 2021 in which Chinese diplomats adopted a confrontational and nationalistic tone on the world stage; wolf warrior diplomats often strongly asserted Chinese national interests and reacted angrily to criticism of the CCP.

The **World Trade Organization** is an intergovernmental organisation that determines and enforces many of the global rules that facilitate the international trade of goods, services and intellectual property between different countries; it generally seeks to reduce barriers to trade, such as tariffs and quotas.