



2003

International Studies GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

There was an overall improvement in standards, reflected in the increase in the ‘mean’ from the previous three years. In general terms the essay sections rather than the short-answer sections were the main discriminators in terms of excellence. The short-answer section provided several challenging questions but it was the essay section in which results spread further. Excellence in essay writing techniques is essential. When students direct their answers to set questions and attempt to develop an argument with appropriate evidence, better results will, generally, be gained.

One aspect that should be encouraged in essay writing is the attributing of views to academics and political commentators in the essays. While there is no examination criterion for such a practice (other than implied with the reference to evidence), encouraging students to include a few broader perspectives can assist in recognising the many controversial aspects of course content. For instance, to just identify a political leader’s view of what is in the national interest, without some wider reflection, provides a fairly one-dimensional portrayal of ideas and issues. Furthermore, highlighting differences of interpretation of events should assist in producing a more impressive argument; something expected when noting the fifth criterion.

Essays that could reflect the prescribed criteria (as highlighted below) achieved very good marks:

- excellent knowledge of international relations, particularly when focused on contemporary developments with solid historical references
- preparedness to analyse an issue/s
- recognition of the strengths and limitations of various power resources and evaluation of their application to meet perceived national interests of states
- understood an effective application of political concepts such as: national interest, nationalism, nation and state; collective security and balance of power; brinkmanship; interdependence and/or globalisation; separatism and self-determination; regionalism; unipolar, bipolar and multipolar; unilateral, bilateral, multilateral
- arguments presented in relation to the question attempted, with **relevant** evidence.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Sections A and B: Short answer

Generally students recognised the requirements of the question’s initial verb; **list**, **explain** and **describe**. More challenging was the language required in **comparison** questions.

Section A

Question 1

a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	32	62	1.55

List two ways in which the sovereignty of any nation state can be threatened.

Successful answers provided two clearly different ways. For instance, military invasion, hostile economic decisions by other states (sanctions), separatist movements leading to civil war, and external financial institutions setting restrictive policy options. In addition, referring to just globalisation and terrorism was accepted. Problems arose with references to the UN, and refugees. With regards to the UN, ignorance of the voluntary nature of national enlistment to conventions has become confused with internal interference threatening sovereignty.

b

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	15	26	59	1.44

Explain how one of these threats could undermine the sovereignty of a nation state.

To obtain the 2 marks, the quality of the explanation was vital. For example, military invasion ... ‘an invasion that succeeds in either taking territory or seizing the capital and thereby annexing the invaded state’ ... clearly undermines the sovereignty of a state (examples are Iraq/Kuwait, Morocco/Spanish Sahara, Indonesia/East Timor).

c

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	31	63	1.56

List two ways in which nation states may attempt to protect their sovereignty.

Successful answers provided two clearly distinctive ways (e.g. building military capacity; forming alliances with powerful states; protectionist economic policies; implementing policies to tackle terrorist groups; diplomatic initiatives to build cooperation between states; managing population flows across borders). Whatever the subjective nature of the ways selected, it was in the possible identification with a threat to sovereignty that mattered for the assessment.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	7	25	40	26	2.81

Select **two** of the following terms and explain how each is used in the study of international relations.

More than a simple dictionary response was expected because of the requirement to *explain* how they are used in international relations. A simple dictionary answer would usually achieve the first mark but fall down in the second. Of the four terms, globalisation (unsurprisingly) produced the greatest range of responses.

National Security: A successful answer stressed that this is a term applied to the protection of citizens and state borders from external or internal threats. In recent times it has often been invoked to combat terrorist activities.

Alliance: A successful answer highlighted that when two or more states have a common perception of their respective national interests, a formal commitment between them can be established in terms of meeting security, economic or international principles. For instance the formation of the Cairns group to improve economic outcomes for members at WTO negotiations, or to achieve mutual security needs such as the NATO alliance.

Diplomacy: A successful answer emphasised that diplomacy is communication between states that can occur at bilateral and multilateral levels. It is frequently invoked as a better approach to resolving conflict than through military action, or as a means to halt armed conflict once commenced.

Globalisation: A successful answer could be established with a focus on its broader economic dimension than just trade and/or in espousing a broader definition/explanation (technological advances in communication, cultural convergence, and global governance). In terms of its application to international relations it is generally projected by western political commentators in narrow, uncritical economic terms, as a conduit for progress. Yet this present historical phase of globalisation has also been recognised as a vehicle for increasing inequality across the globe. Challenges to 'globalisation' can be identified from two broadly different camps, particularistic protectionism (e.g. al Qaeda) and universalistic protectionism (aims to challenge the perceived effects of neo-liberalism on the distribution of power and wealth).

Section B (Conflicts of Cold War and Post-Cold War eras)

Question 1

a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	20	26	54	1.33

List two characteristics that were used to classify a nation state as a member of the 'free world' during the Cold War.

Two distinctive aspects were required for membership of the 'free world'. Memberships of a western alliance system, a liberal democracy, or a capitalist economy were standard answers. Acceptance of the inverse was also acceptable (i.e. not a member of the Warsaw pact, or Comecon, or hostility towards communist regimes.) But if an answer just had 'anti-communist, pro-democracy', the characteristic was regarded as too similar to achieve full marks.

bi

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	9	19	72	1.63

Name two events after 1945 that the US used to justify its argument that the Soviet Union was aggressive.

Events needed to be distinctive and not conceptual to achieve full marks. References to any Cold War conflict or near conflict were accepted, along with identifiable features of competition between the superpowers such as those associated with the arms race, of which the space race was a part.

bii

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	16	24	34	26	1.69

Explain how the United States presented the Soviet Union as aggressive in regard to one of these events.

This challenging question was not well answered. Often answers just referred to what the Soviet Union did, rather than how the US perceived (real or imagined) the act of the Soviet Union. For instance in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, local communists are promoted as part of Soviet Union global hegemonic drive (monolithic). In the Cuban missile crisis, the US presents the Soviets as seeking to achieve a first strike capability and to shore up the Castro regime to spread communism throughout the Americas. Or in Afghanistan, Soviets are presented as seeking to gain access to warm-water ports and Persian oil fields. Or in the Berlin blockade, Soviets are presented as seeking to curtail the freedom of West Berliners by subjugating them to the yoke of communism. Relevant US Government views to the selected context were essential.

biii

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	16	20	32	32	1.81

Describe the United States response to this event.

Three distinct responses of the US was the standard way to achieve full marks (e.g. in Afghanistan, the US aided and supplied the mujaheddin fighters inside and outside Afghanistan, boycotted the Moscow Olympics, froze agricultural exports to USSR).

Many answers struggled to find a third type of response or wanted to evaluate the nature of the conflict or simply did not display sufficient knowledge of the event. There was also a common reference to the Bay of Pigs as a US response in to the Cuban Missile Crisis when it was something that preceded the crisis.

Question 2

*In your study this year you have compared the nature of international conflict in the Cold war and post-Cold War periods. Name the **two** conflicts from the respective periods*

No mark was awarded to the selection of event; however, sometimes students did not select conflicts from the separate periods. If this occurred there was no alternative but to give zero to their responses to 2a and 2b. Acceptable was the China/Taiwan dispute or Indonesia/East Timor if they referred to events in the nineties rather than 1958 or 1975 respectively.

The 'War on Terror' was accepted, but students had trouble drawing the contrast if they did not identify it with either US actions/responses in Afghanistan or in Iraq. It is better if students clearly identify a specific conflict with short-answer questions. Note that the Gulf war is now a confusing title – Iraq/Kuwait war and the War in Iraq might be better (Gulf War I and II is not a good idea, particularly that the Iran/Iraq War was initially called the Gulf War).

a

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	15	15	30	40	1.96

Outline one difference or one similarity between the causes of these two conflicts.

The sophistication in the answer was usually evident when students applied effective connecting words between sentences/ideas such as 'however', 'while', or 'common to both'. Some answers struggled to explicitly contrast causes, just making a statement about each or discussing the nature of the conflict rather than a recognisable *cause*. Some impressive answers noted that what appears to be a difference in a cause actually reflected a similarity as well. Simple answers often just noted that the US involvement was a common cause – correct but not explaining the cause of their involvement as for similar or different reasons.

b

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	13	14	34	39	1.97

Outline one difference or one similarity between the methods used in attempting to resolve these two conflicts.

Like cause, *resolution methods* are highly contestable terms. Some students identified with war as a method of resolution, yet others avoided this as a method for resolution (particularly if armed conflict did not occur as in the Cuban Missile crisis or Berlin blockade crisis), instead contrasting the extent of negotiation and diplomatic efforts. Teachers should consider discussing ... 'Is resolution ever really achieved by war? Or is war a legitimate avenue to address perceived grievances to achieve resolution?' ... as a way to better prepare students for this type of question.

c

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	28	22	22	28	1.48

Why did the United Nations play an increased role in international conflicts during the period between the end of the Cold War and the end of 2002?

This was a rather poorly answered question. Many students appeared not to understand how the UN Security Council actually functions. Reference to the 'veto' power was not frequently made. Instead, many responses assumed the UN was a completely independent actor, rather than an institution dominated by the prevailing power struggles of international relations. Some successful answers noted that the efforts in the UN's name, while initially more prevalent after the Cold War, began to abate from the middle of the nineties, well before the recent deadlock over US/UK military intervention in Iraq.

Question 3

Name the post-Cold War conflict that you will use to answer the following questions

This question was successful answered, although a small minority selected a Cold War conflict rather than a post-Cold War conflict, resulting in poor results for this question.

a

Marks	0	1	Average
%	14	86	0.86

Name one major goal of one of the nation states or groups involved in this conflict.

Most students had little problem gaining the mark. Students should be strongly encouraged to read ahead before selecting their example.

b

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	14	21	65	1.50

Explain the extent to which this goal was achieved.

Students needed to explain the reason for the achievement or failure to achieve a goal. Some qualification, even if in the example of US goal to liberate Kuwait from Iraq was effectively achieved, resulted in full marks.

c

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	19	24	57	1.37

Describe **one** other significant consequence of this conflict.

This was an interesting question, as the reference to consequence opens the content to broader commentary in linking conflicts to each other whether from the cold war or post-Cold War eras. Some students struggled with this question by simply saying that the consequence was many people were killed etc. But more successful responses noted the implications for international relations in general or suggested that even if a goal was achieved the unintended effects were such and such.

Sections C and D: Essays

Section C (Power and National Interest)

The international relationships/situations and nation states most frequently applied to questions on Power and National Interest were the China/Taiwan/US situation; Korean Peninsula tensions; Indonesia and its various separatist struggles (along with role of military in the State and economic pressures); and a smaller contingent on PNG, Burma (which were generally impressive) and Vietnam. East Timor emerged in Indonesia case studies, but rarely as the prime focus, despite the fact that it is now a sovereign state. Some responses inappropriately focused on Australia, which is specifically excluded in the area of study (given that the examination questions did not mention this exclusion, some leniency was shown). An argument can be made that if East Timor is the focus, actions by Australia are highly pertinent given the controversial nature of the 'shared' gas-fields agreements, but this was not really covered.

Some students attempted to cover two distinct states, often China and Indonesia. Generally, this did not work with only a paragraph on the second example tacked on with no significant effort of comparison. This does not mean it could not be attempted if responses tried to examine a theme such as internal independence struggles, and evaluating why East Timor was successful, Taiwan partially, and West Papua, Aceh, Tibet and Xianjiang presently unlikely.

Understandably, the Korean peninsula tensions were a much more prevalent context this year, given the debate about policy options for dealing with the North's efforts to develop a nuclear capability. There was a real effort to focus on developments from the 90s onwards, rather than spend too much time on the 1950–53 conflict. But one aspect that was missing was the lack of analysis of the effects of Bush citing the North as a part of the 'axis of evil'.

What also emerged was that students could achieve good results whether they were overwhelmingly focused on China's goal with Taiwan or instead selected a wide range of issues that a state like China has pursued (such as spy-plane crisis, relations with North Korea, ASEAN, trade disputes with US, WTO entry, international image problems, economic and political reform issues) and not just Taiwan. Ultimately it hinges upon utilising the various possible contexts in addressing the selected question in a relevant manner.

Question 1 (8.6/15)

*A nation state's power is not simply its resources, but also the ability to use these resources to promote its own national interests. Discuss with reference to **at least one** international relationship or situation within the Asia-Pacific region that you studied.*

The prime expectation of this question was for a brief coverage of a state's power resources, and then an evaluation of the level of success in applying these resources to achieve a particular goal (national interest). Some responses spent a considerable amount of time on describing power and resources in a generic sense before specifying the relationship/situation/state they were discussing. This can be over done, particularly if there is no explicit connection between the general description of power resources and the specific context selected for analysis. In addition, narratives of situations/relationships that did not explain why a state chose a particular course of action, and often provided a simplistic explanation of success and failure, produced fair essays. Responses which recognised that a state had competing national interests that could be assisted or damaged by a particular course of action usually produced more successful essays.

Many students took the path of comparing resources of two or more states as they explored a relationship between each other. This was certainly a legitimate approach, but sometimes produced superficial responses without recognising factors external to the relationship (e.g. China v Taiwan without mentioning the role of the US, or North and South Korea without mentioning the role of China, Japan and the US in the relationship).

Question 2

(8.8/15)

*Debates over the national interest within a state can effect both its domestic situation and its power to influence the outcome of international relations. Discuss with reference to **at least one** Asia-Pacific nation state.*

It was generally considered that this was the most difficult question, given that internal tensions over the national interest had to be linked to external relations of the state. Students had little problem identifying internal debates, but some struggled or avoided discussing effects of the effects on influencing international relations. A case in point was the situation in Aceh where its' effects on Indonesia's external relations is hard to define, particularly as the province is largely cut off from international scrutiny. Acceptable was reference to Indonesia's (and TNI's) invoking the US's 'war on terror' as a justification for applying military force. Some impressive essays on Burma emerged where students identified hostile ethnic communities to the SDPC and the effects on relations with Thailand and ASEAN in general. Sometimes Taiwan was selected, and while there was discussion about its relationship with China and the US and its progress for international recognition, there was often an absence of discussion of divisions *within* Taiwan – whether historical or contemporary. One aspect that might have been recognised is the closer economic relations with China. Over a million Taiwanese have moved to China causing much debate in Taiwan as to whether their separate identity is being eroded due to economic interdependence.

Question 3

(8.2/15)

Discuss how the use of power in the specific relationship or situation in the Asia-pacific region that you have studied this year enhanced or threatened the national interest of at least one of the nation states involved.

This was the most frequently attempted question in this section (**43%**). The focus of the question was on the progress to achieve a States specified national interest and was similar to the first, but with a greater concentration on the idea of national interest. Successful responses kept coming back to whether a state's use of power (military power, economic influence, diplomatic/political power) advanced or threatened their goal. More could be expected in terms of assessing the value of a state's perceived national interest than in the previous question. Historical background to national interest of a state was an advantage if it was then assessed in the light of contemporary developments.

Fewer students are recognising the subjective value of the national interest. It might be advisable to refer to the work of Damien Kingsbury on separating the National Interest from State Interest, particularly in regards to Indonesia separatist movements.

Section D (Australian Foreign Policy)

Question 1

(7.7/15)

Australian support for the United States Government's policy on Iraq is further evidence of the substantial emphasis Australia has placed on its relationship with the US since 1950. Discuss.

This was the most popular essay question (54%), and produced the lowest mean result. More successful responses recognised fluctuations in relationship over the past 50 odd years by noting variation between eras, such as noting the end of the Cold War or even earlier (Guam doctrine and rapprochement between US and China) for Australia's re-evaluations of the primacy of the alliance in security planning (Dibb report). Less noted were the different party traditions in foreign policy on the importance of the alliance, although many 'defended' the previous Labor governments involvement in the alliance from the present government criticism. For many, the Keating era was either ignored or regarded as a distraction. This ignored the broadening of Australia's security architecture of this period in which the US alliance was not abandoned – continuity crosses all eras since the late 60s with presence of 'joint facilities' – but was regarded with less prominence.

The question's reference to Australia's support for the US in Iraq was sometimes noted as controversial. When this occurred, some cost/benefit analysis of the emphasis in the relationship lifted the quality of an answer. (Such as leverage for a FTA with the US, military procurement and intelligence sharing vs. relations with Asian states, damage to reputation in the UN, and a general sense that an independent voice was being threatened.) But what was often missed was the realisation that the Australia-US relationship is today probably more synchronised than any other era including Menzies or Holt times (Camilleri). The list of policy similarities and imitations is somewhat breathtaking and yet most students accepted this development as not much more than in the past, or they sheeted the reason entirely to the new war on terrorism. This misses the point that the Howard Government was seeking to strengthen ties before September 11, evident in the expansion of military exercises such as Tandem Thrust, support for US missile defense shield program, and reference to 'deputy sheriff' in the wake of the East Timor vote on independence. According to Burchill, September 11 provided the *raison d'être* for the alliance that was struggling for relevance in the post-Cold War era.

Another feature of student responses was the extensive explanation/justification for US policy initiatives in the war against terror or in Iraq. While often part of an argument for the support of the alliance, the coverage was far too lengthy given that Australia's foreign policy was being examined. More successful responses noted in defending the alliance emphasis in recent AFP (Australian Foreign Policy) had not been at the abandonment of engagement with Asia by highlighting Hu Jintao's recent visit and the signing of a massive gas deal, or noting FTAs with Thailand/Singapore.

Question 2
(7.9/15)

Events over the last five years have forced Australia to concentrate on the Asia-Pacific region to a greater extent than at any time since the end of the Vietnam War. Discuss.

This turned out to be a challenging question, which many students struggled to effectively address and was the least attempted. More successful responses were able to recognise the implied assumption in the question that security and stability in region ('arc of instability') was again prominent in AFP as it was during the Vietnam War era. More successful answers argued that Australia had continued to concentrate its efforts in the Asia-Pacific region between the two periods, which the change is in emphasis from an economic concentration to a security focus. Of course this characterisation could still be debated, with many anomalies being identified. But it was the way examples were utilised to strengthen the argument that was crucial in lifting the mark.

A factor in contributing to lower marks appeared to be a weakness in chronological knowledge. Given that this question had two points of time to consider, this made constructing an effective response problematic for many students. Improving students' chronological knowledge would help, particularly as many AFP examination questions assume an awareness of this aspect.

Question 3
(9.9/15)

Economic factors have been the dominant concern in Australian Foreign policy over the past 25 years. Discuss.

This question generally produced more successful responses because students more immediately generated an argument recognising the stress on *the* dominant concern. Some latitude was given to the reference of 25 years if students struck up a comparison with the Hawke/Keating eras to that of the Howard period in government, without acknowledging the Fraser period.

What was considered more important was the weighting attributed to economic factors over physical security or aspects of internationalism in AFP (human rights and refugees disarmament, environment and foreign aid). Some students were able to argue economic factors were apparent, if not the real motivation behind most AFP initiatives or reactions. Others adopted the view that economic and security concerns are too closely integrated to nominate one or the other as the dominant concern. And a general third position was that economic concerns were consumed by the dominant security element of national interest. For this latter position, responses usually stressed the particular importance of the US alliance rather than the broader security priority. In addition, students took different paths when stressing the pre-eminence of the US alliance as to whether this displayed the dominance of economic issues or was at the expense of economic considerations. Then there were the answers that recognised changes in what has dominated over the 25-year timeframe.

Whatever tack was taken it was in the quality of the evidence cited that made the difference. Evidence of economic concerns included APEC, Cairns Group, the integration of the Foreign Affairs and Trade departments, the urgency to improve relations with the Asian 'tiger' economies, assistance to Indonesia in the aftermath of its economic meltdown, the efforts to develop FTA with the US – in wake of agreements with Singapore and Thailand, support for China's entry into WTO, invoking economic arguments against signing the Climate Change Treaty, the tied nature of foreign aid, and the general commitment to advance a neo-liberal globalisation agenda.

Whether this list is compelling needed to be contrasted with other non-economic concerns and/or directly challenged to produce an argument for the essay to perform well.

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