

2025 SAJC H2 Prelims P1 Suggested Approaches (ESSAYS)

2. To what extent did protectionism pose a more serious challenge to the global economy from the 1970s to the 1990s than the debt crisis?

Theme / Topic: Post-1945 Global Economy — Challenges to International Economic Stability

Background Info on the Topic

- From 1971: Collapse of Bretton Woods fixed exchange system → greater exchange rate volatility.
- Oil shocks (1973, 1979) → inflation, balance of payment issues, and stimulated protectionist pressures (e.g., US steel quotas, Japanese auto VERs).
- Newly Industrialised Economies (NIEs) such as South Korea and Taiwan were rising exporters, provoking protectionist backlash.
- 1980s: Latin American nations (e.g., Mexico 1982, Brazil 1987, defaults in repayment of loans) triggered a global **debt crisis**, prompting IMF/World Bank interventions.

Time Frame(s)

1970s to 1990s

Definition of Key Words

1. **More serious** – suggests that this is a binary (2 factors) question and essay to focus on severity and impact as the main criteria for comparison.
2. **Protectionism** — Government actions like tariffs, quotas, and non-tariff barriers to restrict imports.
3. **Debt Crisis** — Situation where countries could not meet debt obligations, leading to financial instability and IMF-led bailouts.

Essay Scope with the Given and Alternative factor

- **Given Factor:** Protectionism
- **Alternate Factor:** Debt Crisis

Criteria for Evaluation / Lines of Argument

- **Scope:** How many countries/sectors were affected.

- **Severity/Difficulty of Resolution:** How deeply the factor threatened systemic stability and how feasible solutions were.

Stand

Protectionism posed a serious challenge by affecting many economies, but **the debt crisis was ultimately more serious** because its severity and lack of immediate solutions destabilised the global financial system.

Body Paragraph 1 – Protectionism

Topic Sentence: Protectionism posed a serious challenge by its **broad scope**, disrupting trade flows across many regions.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** Post-oil shock stagflation led the US and Japan to adopt tariffs and quotas; US steel tariffs and Japan's Voluntary Export Restraints on automobiles affected global supply chains.
 - **Examples:** Asian NIEs (South Korea, Taiwan) faced US textile and electronics quotas; OPEC price hikes incentivised countries to shield domestic industries.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Despite its breadth, protectionism often coexisted with ongoing liberalisation (e.g., GATT Tokyo Round), indicating it was disruptive but manageable.
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Body Paragraph 2 – Debt Crisis

Topic Sentence: The debt crisis was **severe**, with few immediate solutions and significant systemic risk.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** Latin American states borrowed heavily during petrodollar recycling; rising US interest rates (Volcker Shock) made repayment impossible.
 - **Examples:** Mexico's 1982 default threatened major US and European banks; Brazil and Argentina followed, prompting IMF conditional loans. Asian NIEs largely avoided default but faced credit tightening.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** The crisis undermined confidence in global lending and required coordinated international action, showing a deeper systemic threat.
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Paragraph 4 – Evaluation (By Scope)

Topic Sentence: By scope, protectionism appeared more widespread, but its impact was less destabilising than the debt crisis.

- **Evidence:** Protectionist measures occurred in the US, Japan, and Europe, affecting NIE exporters and OPEC-related sectors.
 - **Elaboration:** However, GATT mechanisms and bilateral negotiations (e.g., US-Japan agreements) limited long-term damage.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** The debt crisis, while concentrated in Latin America, had **global spillover effects on banking and credit systems**, proving more dangerous despite affecting fewer regions directly.
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Paragraph 5 – Evaluation (By Severity)

Topic Sentence: By severity, the debt crisis was more damaging as it offered **fewer solutions** and threatened systemic collapse.

- **Evidence:** IMF conditionality and structural adjustment were politically and socially costly but necessary; no quick fixes existed.
 - **Elaboration:** Protectionism, by contrast, was reversible through negotiations and economic recovery.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** The depth of financial instability from sovereign defaults outweighed trade frictions caused by tariffs or quotas.
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Conclusion (Final Evaluation)

Topic Sentence: While protectionism's broad scope disrupted global trade networks, **the debt crisis posed the more serious challenge** to the global economy between the 1970s and 1990s.

- **Evidence:** Debt defaults in Latin America risked triggering a worldwide banking collapse and required IMF-led coordination to prevent contagion.
- **Link:** Protectionist pressures were significant but manageable within existing trade frameworks, whereas the debt crisis fundamentally tested global financial stability.
- **Stand Restated:** Therefore, protectionism was less serious than the debt crisis overall.

3. 'An exemplary case of state intervention.' How accurate is this depiction of Japan's economic transformation from 1947 to 1991?

Theme / Topic: Post-war Japan — Economic Transformation

Background Info on the Topic

- Japan's post-WWII economy was devastated (industrial output ~10–15% of pre-war levels).
- By the 1980s, Japan became the world's second-largest economy.
- Strong government planning, USA's Cold War support, and keiretsu networks all contributed.

Time Frame(s)

1947–1991

Definition of Key Words

1. **State Intervention** — Direct government planning (strategies and direction) and industrial policies.
2. **Economic Transformation** — Structural shift from agrarian/manufacturing industries to a global industrial and technological leader.

Essay Scope with the Given and Alternative factors

- **Given Factor:** Japanese Government Intervention
- **Alternate Factor 1:** External (US) Intervention and Support
- **Alternate Factor 2:** Private Sector (Keiretsu and corporate networks)

Criteria for Evaluation / Lines of Argument

- **Strategic Direction & Coordination**
- **Sustainability** (long run vs short run)
- **Stand:** Japanese government intervention was **most crucial**.

Stand

Japan's transformation was indeed an **exemplary case of state intervention**—government leadership outweighed external aid or private sector roles.

Body Paragraph 1 – Japanese Government Intervention (Given Factor)

Topic Sentence: Government planning was central to Japan's post-war transformation.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** MITI industrial targeting; five-year plans; Ikeda's income-doubling plan.
 - **Examples:** Credit to Toyota and Sony; protection of steel and auto sectors.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Provided the overarching framework for growth.
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Body Paragraph 2 – External (US) Intervention

Topic Sentence: US support stabilised Japan's early economy but was less decisive over time.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** Dodge Plan (1949), Korean War procurement, US security umbrella.
 - **Examples:** Reduced defence spending → more for industrial investment.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Crucial in early years but influence waned as Japan's autonomy grew.
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Paragraph 3 – Evaluation (By Strategic Direction & Coordination)

Topic Sentence: By strategic direction, government intervention was paramount.

- **Evidence:** MITI's targeted policies vs. reactive US aid and profit-driven keiretsu.
 - **Elaboration:** Only the state ensured coherence across sectors.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Confirms Japan as an exemplary case of state-led transformation.
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Body Paragraph 4 – Private Sector (Keiretsu)

Topic Sentence: Keiretsu networks and entrepreneurial culture contributed significantly.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** Mitsubishi and Sumitomo keiretsu; vertical integration and R&D sharing.
- **Examples:** Honda's global expansion; Toyota's just-in-time system.

- **Evaluation/Link:** Dependent on government credit, protection, and guidance.
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Paragraph 5 – Evaluation (By Sustainability)

Topic Sentence: By sustainability, government leadership ensured long-term autonomy.

- **Evidence:** Post-1960s growth—bullet train, semiconductor leadership—occurred as US influence faded.
 - **Elaboration:** Keiretsu thrived within a state-protected environment.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Without adaptive government policies, Japan could not have weathered oil shocks or global competition.
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Conclusion (Final Evaluation)

Topic Sentence: Japan's economic miracle was **accurately described** as an exemplary case of state intervention.

- **Evidence:** US aid and private dynamism mattered, but the state's planning, protection, and guidance were decisive.
- **Link:** Government leadership integrated external inputs and private enterprise into a coherent national strategy.
- **Stand Restated:** Japanese government intervention was the most crucial factor from 1947–1991.

4. To what extent were territorial disputes the primary cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict between 1948 and 1979?

Theme / Topic: Arab-Israeli Conflict

Background Info on the Topic

- 1948: Creation of Israel and first Arab-Israeli War → Palestinian displacement.
 - 1956: Suez Crisis heightened regional tensions.
 - 1967: Six-Day War led to Israeli occupation of Gaza, West Bank, Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights.
 - 1973: Yom Kippur War intensified hostilities
 - 1979: Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel.
 - Conflict driven by competing ideologies, territorial claims, and Cold War dynamics.
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Time Frame(s)

1948–1979

Definition of Key Words

1. **Primary Cause** — First and foremost driver shaping actions and policies.
 2. **Territorial Disputes** — Conflicts over Palestinian land and four Occupied Territories post-1967 (Gaza, West Bank, Golan Heights, Sinai).
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Essay Scope with the Given and Alternative factors

- **Given Factor:** Territorial Disputes
 - **Alternate Factor 1:** Competing Nationalisms (Arab nationalism vs. Zionism)
 - **Alternate Factor 2:** Cold War Allegiances and Superpower Intervention
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Criteria for Evaluation / Lines of Argument

- **Depth of Influence:** Which factor most consistently underpinned actions.
 - **Continuity:** Which factor persisted across all phases of the conflict.
 - **Stand:** Territorial disputes mattered, but **Competing Nationalisms** were the **primary cause**, with Cold War dynamics as a secondary amplifier.
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Stand

The Arab-Israeli conflict (1948–1979) was driven **first and foremost by competing nationalisms**, not territorial disputes, while Cold War alignments intensified existing hostilities.

Body Paragraph 1 – Territorial Disputes (Given Factor)

Topic Sentence: Territorial disputes triggered multiple flashpoints but were symptoms of deeper ideological conflict.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** 1948 war over partition; Palestinian refugee issue; Israeli occupation of territories after 1967.
 - **Examples:** Six-Day War territorial gains; Egypt's reclaiming of Sinai in 1973 Yom Kippur War.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** While critical in sparking wars, disputes over land often reflected underlying nationalist ambitions.
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Body Paragraph 2 – Competing Nationalisms (Alternate Factor 1)

Topic Sentence: **Competing nationalisms**—Zionism and Arab nationalism—were the primary drivers shaping conflict.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** Arab League's rejection of Israel's legitimacy (Khartoum Resolution, 1967); Zionist insistence on a Jewish homeland and security.
- **Examples:** Nasser's pan-Arabism; Palestinian groups like the PLO (founded 1964) sought liberation beyond territorial lines.

- **Evaluation/Link:** Nationalisms dictated policy, making territorial disputes more a consequence than the root cause.
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Paragraph 3 – Evaluation (By Depth of Influence)

Topic Sentence: **By depth of influence**, competing nationalisms permeated all conflicts, while territorial disputes were episodic.

- **Evidence:** The 1948 war was fundamentally about state legitimacy; later land battles stemmed from the same ideological divide.
 - **Elaboration:** Even after Israel's withdrawal from Sinai (1979), Arab-Israeli hostility persisted.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Nationalism's continuity confirms it as the primary cause.
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Body Paragraph 4 – Cold War Allegiances and Superpower Intervention (Alternate Factor 2)

Topic Sentence: Cold War rivalries exacerbated the conflict but were secondary to regional dynamics.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** US support for Israel (e.g., vetoes at UN Security Council); Soviet arms to Egypt and Syria.
 - **Examples:** 1973 airlift of US military aid to Israel; Soviet advisors in Egypt pre-1973.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Superpowers amplified tensions but responded to pre-existing nationalist hostilities.
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Paragraph 5 – Evaluation (By Continuity)

Topic Sentence: **By continuity**, Cold War intervention waxed and waned, while territorial disputes consistently shaped hostilities.

- **Evidence:** US and USSR shifted strategies over time, but Arab-Israeli disputes over the rightful owners of the territory (given/taken by the Israelis) pre-dated superpower involvement.
- **Elaboration:** Even détente-era diplomacy (e.g., Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy) could not resolve nationalist rivalries over the disputed territories within Israel.

- **Evaluation/Link:** Territorial disputes was a tangible manifestation of the continuing discrimination against the Palestinians, whom the Arabs claimed to be fighting for. As a constant reminder, territorial disputes were the mainstay as compared to fleeting superpower / external (eg. UN) interventions.
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Conclusion (Final Evaluation)

Topic Sentence: Territorial disputes were significant but not the **primary cause** of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

- **Evidence:** Repeated wars (1948, 1967, 1973) began over land but were rooted in competing national visions.
- **Link:** Cold War involvement magnified but did not originate hostilities.
- **Stand Restated:** Competing nationalisms—Zionist and Arab—were the first and foremost drivers of the Arab-Israeli conflict between 1948 and 1979.

5. How important was superpower involvement in shaping the development of the Congo Crisis from 1960 to 1965?

Theme / Topic: The Congo Crisis

Background Info on the Topic

- The Congo gained independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960.
 - Almost immediately, mutinies in the army and secessions in Katanga and South Kasai destabilised the new state.
 - Amid Cold War tensions, both the USA and USSR became deeply involved.
 - The UN intervened (ONUC), but superpower rivalry increasingly shaped events.
 - Crisis culminated in Mobutu's consolidation of power by 1965.
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Time Frame(s)

1960–1965

Definition of Key Words

1. **Superpower Involvement** — Direct and indirect actions by the USA and USSR (e.g., military aid, political pressure, covert operations).
 2. **Development of the Congo Crisis** — The escalation, prolongation, and ultimate resolution of instability in the Congo during these years.
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Essay Scope with the Given and Alternative factors

- **Given Factor:** Superpower Involvement (USA & USSR)
 - **Alternate Factor 1:** Role of Local Leaders (Lumumba, Kasavubu, Tshombe, Mobutu)
 - **Alternate Factor 2:** Legacy and Role of Belgian Colonisers
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Criteria for Evaluation / Lines of Argument

- **Extent of Influence:** Which factor most decisively shaped the course of the crisis.
 - **Sustainability of Impact:** Which factor's influence persisted throughout the crisis.
 - **Stand:** Superpower involvement was **most important**; local and Belgian roles were secondary or fading.
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Stand

The development of the Congo Crisis (1960–1965) was shaped **primarily by superpower involvement**—without Cold War rivalry, local divisions and colonial legacies would not have escalated to a full-scale international crisis.

Body Paragraph 1 – Superpower Involvement (Given Factor)

Topic Sentence: US and Soviet intervention decisively escalated and prolonged the Congo Crisis.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** The USSR provided aircraft, military equipment, and advisors to Lumumba; the USA backed anti-communist factions and supported Mobutu.
 - **Examples:** CIA covert operations, including support for Lumumba's removal and assassination (1961); US financial and military support for Mobutu's coups.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Superpower actions turned an internal instability into a Cold War battleground.
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Body Paragraph 2 – Role of Local Leaders (Alternate Factor 1)

Topic Sentence: Congolese leaders influenced events but were empowered and constrained by superpower intervention.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** Lumumba's appeals to the USSR alienated the West; Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba; Tshombe declared Katanga's secession; Mobutu staged coups.
- **Examples:** Mobutu's 1960 and 1965 coups would not have succeeded without US backing.

- **Evaluation/Link:** Local rivalries mattered, but their significance stemmed from Cold War patronage.
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Paragraph 3 – Evaluation (By Extent of Influence)

Topic Sentence: By extent of influence, superpower involvement dwarfed local or Belgian factors.

- **Evidence:** CIA's orchestration of Lumumba's removal; Soviet airlifts of troops and supplies.
 - **Elaboration:** Superpowers framed the crisis within global ideological conflict, determining its trajectory.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** The Congo Crisis became a proxy battleground rather than a purely African affair.
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Body Paragraph 4 – Belgian Colonisers' Legacy (Alternate Factor 2)

Topic Sentence: Belgium's colonial legacy created initial instability but its direct influence waned after withdrawal.

- **Evidence/Explanation:** Lack of trained Congolese administrators; Belgian officers' hasty departure; initial support for Katangan secession.
 - **Examples:** Belgian mining interests (Union Minière) in Katanga initially sustained Tshombe but could not prevent superpower overshadowing.
 - **Evaluation/Link:** Belgian actions laid groundwork for instability but no longer shaped the crisis once Cold War dynamics dominated.
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Paragraph 5 – Evaluation (By Sustainability of Impact)

Topic Sentence: By sustainability, Belgian and local influences faded, while superpower rivalry sustained the crisis through to Mobutu's consolidation.

- **Evidence:** US economic and military aid secured Mobutu's long-term rule; Soviet influence diminished after Lumumba's death but spurred US entrenchment.
- **Elaboration:** Without Cold War stakes, Congo's instability might have stabilised sooner.

- **Evaluation/Link:** Superpower involvement was the enduring force shaping outcomes.
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Conclusion (Final Evaluation)

Topic Sentence: Superpower involvement was the **most important factor** in shaping the Congo Crisis.

- **Evidence:** Cold War interventions transformed local instability into an international proxy conflict.
- **Link:** Local leaders acted within superpower-defined limits, and Belgium's influence quickly waned.
- **Stand Restated:** The Congo Crisis (1960–1965) was fundamentally a Cold War episode driven by superpower rivalry.