General Paper Notes

By Aalden Tnay

Last Update: 28 January 2019

Go to GP.sg for most updated version

More content to be added. Paper 2 notes coming soon.

Preface

General Paper, like many subjects, is winced at by some, but intriguing to others. Some get catapulted to the top with seemingly minimal effort, while others, despite pouring in painstaking efforts, find themselves only crawling their way up the ladder or worse. In my two years in junior college, I was at the 100th percentile for the subject a total of three times (and hung around 99th percentile for the other exams), and ultimately held the best record—in fact, on multiple occasions, I was the only one in the cohort of over 700 students to attain an 'A' grade due to the stringent internal marking. I was awarded the 'Academic Award for H1 General Paper' for the 14th College Day Awards Ceremony for 'outstanding performance', was a top-scorer in English back in my secondary school, and also an awardee at the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition.

Due to a lack of GP resources available online for free, I have decided to type out some of my techniques, ideas and examples, as well as what has been imparted to me. Of course, we stand on shoulders of giants and this would not have been possible without my former English teacher, Mr Zulhilmi, who ignited my interest in English and argumentative writing, as well as the General Paper tutors who taught me in JC, namely Ms Huda, Mrs Varella and Ms Belinda Lin.

Format and Techniques (Paper 1)

General Format

Introduction

OV1 (opposing view to your stand)

+   Rebuttal

OV2 (opposing view to your stand)

+   Rebuttal

SV1 (supporting view of your stand)

SV2 (supporting view of your stand)

SV3 (supporting view of your stand)

Conclusion

Note: Opposing Views may come at the end instead of the start, and the need to rebut an 'opposing view' depends on your stand. Generally, you rebut so your 'opposing view' does not contradict your stand. More info under [rebuttal]*.*

For double-barrel questions

e.g. 'Consider the view that most work these days <u>could</u>, and <u>should</u>, be done from home.'

Such questions are often asking you two things at one go, as in this case, 'could' (ability) and 'should' (morally right). Your stand can be that work these days *could and should/ could but should not/cannot and should not/cannot and should* be done from home. You are free to mix and match.

If your stand is **'could** but **should not'**, you will have one or more SV on why it **'could'**, and one or more SV on why it **'should not'**. There will also be OVs on why it 'cannot' or 'should'.

Note: Cambridge has never specified the number of points required, so there is no need to be overly worried about how many SVs/OVs are required especially for double-barreled questions. Most schools encourage about 4-5 body paragraphs.

==

How to write an introduction:

[Hook] + [Link to topic] + Define (if needed) + [Stand]

Start off with a hook to capture the marker's attention. This is something interesting. It may be slightly sensationalist, a major recent event, a historical anecdote, an apt quote by a renowned individual, or if you are adept at language, a well-written piece on today's state of affairs. Ultimately, aim to be unique and show you are at a tier above the rest. An example used for the introduction should not be rewritten in the body paragraphs.

Hook

Types of hook (not extensive)

- Historical event/information
- Significant current event
- Hyperbolic (sensationalist writing)
- Quote
- Myths, books and films (e.g. starting off an 'arts' essay with the Greek myth of Orpheus, whose woeful singing following the death of Eurydice touched the gods–even Hades, to link to your stand on the importance of the arts)

How to write an example as your hook (and not overlap with examples in body paragraphs):

1. Use a historical example in your introduction; examples in your body paragraphs need to be current anyway, so there is no overlap.

2. Use a general example that's related to the theme, but not directly to the question. If the question is 'Discuss the view that most natural disasters are the result of human activity,' the theme is clearly 'environment'. You can thus start off your introduction with an example related to the environment (e.g. the landmark signing of the Paris Agreement, the United States withdrawal from it, or Trump's refusal to believe The National Climate Assessment Report).

3. Use an example that is not included in the question's scope. E.g. if the question specifies *'in your society'*, use an example *outside* your society; if the question specifies 'developed countries', use one from one of the developing countries/ LDCs.

4. If you do have to repeat the example you used in your introduction (alongside fresh examples) for a point in your body paragraph, consider using the word 'aforementioned' to call back to it.

Link hook to topic

(so that hook appears relevant to the topic): You need to transition from the hook to the actual question. At the most basic level, this could be done using a rhetorical question as follows. "(hook)...This takes us to a rather urgent question: has the Trump administration truly blindfolded themselves from the ramifications of human activity, or are their doubts in fact warranted? In this discourse, I shall expound on why I resolutely believe that natural disasters, despite being naturally occurring as its name suggests, is greatly exacerbated by man."

Define (only when needed): You may want to state your own definition of *subjective/vague* words in the question. If they are already obvious then it is unnecessary to do so. E.g. 'developed country' may refer to those officially classified by a government and the UN as developed, or your own definition of 'developed countries' as simply those of high GDP per capita. Singapore, for instance, classifies itself as a 'developing country', despite it often regarded as a 'developed country'.

Stand

A stand should be clear and well-qualified (if necessary). If the question is "is regulation of the press desirable?", the stand may be that "regulation of the press is usually/not always *undesirable/desirable*", or better put as "some regulation of the press is usually desirable, but there are times when it is excessive and objectionable". It may also take the form of "*X* should be done unless *Y*", where *Y* would actually encompass your 'OV' (no rebuttal required). Another form is "A should be done *only when/as long as* B", where B would encompass your SVs. Your stand does not have to be binary: it does not have to be a full agreement or full disagreement; a middle-ground can be taken.

Even though a question may ask 'Discuss the view that most natural disasters are the result of human activity,' you are free to highlight that human activity does not necessarily cause these natural disasters, but do make them worse in terms of frequency, intensity and predictability. This is a qualified stand. A non-qualified stand may simply say 'human activity causes most natural disasters', which is technically

incorrect since natural disasters occur even without humans. Note that the word 'most' alone does <u>not</u> automatically make it a qualified stand. There is no need to give blind 'yes' and 'no' answers especially when the question begins with 'Discuss'.

==

How to write body paragraphs
[Point] + [Example + Explanation]x2 or 3 + [Link]

<u>Point</u>

There is a strong preference for the point to be a reason rather than an area, even for 'to what extent' and 'how far' questions. Even for questions that seem to be expository in nature, it is encouraged that you use reason-oriented points. Even essay questions like "In your society, how well are the demands of the economy and the environment balanced?" need points that are reasons to <u>why</u> the demands of the economy and environment are balanced/well-balanced. Notice how the 'how' in the question is addressed by your essay's stand, but your points are always reasons <u>why</u> your stand is as such. In many questions, candidates are marked down for giving area-driven points that are not reasons.

If the question specifies any condition, e.g. 'when government finances are limited', ensure this is taken into account in your point. In this case, all your points should be reasons related financial difficulty. E.g. "A country should still be allowed to host international sporting events when her finances are limited as it provides an opportunity to <u>generate revenue it needs</u>" or "A country should not be allowed to host international sporting events when her finances are limited as it may be <u>unable to fund </u>sufficient security for the event, making it a prime target of terrorist groups."

Note: Addressing 'How far is it' and 'To what extent' only needs to done in the stand in your introduction (e.g. to a large extent); they do not need to be repeated in each topic sentence.

Can/Possible: reasons why there is *ability* to do so

Should/Justified: reasons–especially *moral* ones

Adequate: reasons why the situation is satisfactory at current level (if adequate)/not satisfactory at current level (if inadequate)

Desirable: reasons why having it is attractive/useful/necessary (reasons why we should have)

For **COMPARISON** questions ('than', 'more', 'less', 'should A, not B' etc.): for each point, give a reason why **A** more/less than **B** in a <u>particular aspect</u>.

E.g. Human actions should be based on scientific fact (**A**), not religious faith (**B**), for the former can be <u>proven and eventually agreed upon</u>, while the latter cannot and will <u>remain controversial</u>, sowing discord.

E.g. The arts should focus on local talents (**A**) who can strengthen our <u>national identity</u>, rather than foreign talent (**B**) which cannot do the same.

Elaboration

More often that not, one sentence of your point does not sufficiently explain what you are saying. Add more details and explanations to strengthen your point.

Examples

Examples do not need to be statistics; they can be events or circumstances that support your claim. If you want to show that Singapore has high quality healthcare, you do not need to memorise a bunch of specific UN or WHO statistics and reports. What you can write is something like this: "*Singapore's healthcare system and medical expertise stands proudly on the international stage; this is perhaps accentuated by foreign leaders, such as Robert Mugabe, who choose to receive medical treatment in Singapore. Singapore was also the destination of choice for treatment in several high profile emergencies, such as the 2012 Delhi gang rape that shook a nation.*"

Examples should be as relevant to the point made as possible. Two to three examples are generally recommended per point. Similar examples may be grouped together for evaluation at one go. To aid in brainstorming of examples, you may consider the positive form and negative form. For the topic on the desirability of competition, examples for a point may be that <u>presence</u> *of* competition between Apple and Samsung led to constant progress in technological innovations, such as the advent of facial and fingerprint recognition, virtual assistants, and augmented reality; <u>absence</u> of competition between Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the United States has caused the U.S. to fall behind in internet speed rankings despite her being its prime architect. For credibility, you may want to cite your sources. Sometimes, in an examination, if you are unsure and really want to take a gamble, just mention that the founder (*insert name here*) said it in an interview. In this case, we could go with Andy Rubin (founder of Android OS) [who did in fact talk about cycles of innovation shifting in a saturated market.](#) While you may 'smoke' some news corporation as your source, do not over do this as it gets obvious. If you do, at least use credible and believable sources. One way is to use sources specialised in the area (e.g. [PISA](#) reports for questions related to education).

Examples should not be too broad; in the example above, one cannot stop at mentioning that competition between Apple and Samsung led to greater technological innovations—specific examples of these innovations should be mentioned.

When reading articles, try to link it to useful topics—one example can often be used for a multitude of themes, saving quite a bit of 'memory space'. Here's one we all know of: **2018's incident where twelve young football boys and their coach were tapped in a cave in Thailand.** On the surface, it seems like there are barely any topics you can use this for—but if you try to mentally link this to possible topics, one example becomes many. Try doing that based on what you know about the incident, then flip to the next page to see how many you got!

- **Globalisation/Cooperation**: the rescue team consisted of thirteen international divers. The cave diving team included divers from U.K., Australia, Denmark and many more.

- **Businesses**/Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Tesla chief Elon Musk notably ordered two engineers to design a kid-sized submarine to aid in rescue efforts (**Technology**), although this was rejected by the Thai government. Some called this a publicity stunt.

- **Media**: The ordeal captured the media's attention from around the world. Over a period of three weeks, articles relating to the incident dominated the top stories section at many major news publications and many followed the news closely via social media.

- **Nationhood**: Three of the boys and their coach were actually stateless, and highlighted the plight of many stateless people in Thailand who come from areas where national borders have changed, leaving their nationality in question. They were granted citizenship after the ordeal.

- **Sports**: Even while trapped in the cave, the boys were asking for World Cup updates, highlighting sports' role as an entertainment source. Football players and associations around the world voiced messages of support, such as FIFA, the Japanese men's national team, and Cristiano Ronaldo, proving that sports unites people without boundaries.

- **Religion**: Amid uncertainty, many of those concerned about the lives of those trapped were in prayer; religion has a role in giving at least temporary comfort. After the rescue, eleven members of the football team were ordained as Buddhist novices, a gesture to honour those who took part in their rescue. The boys' families had made the pledge to ordain the Wild Boars footballers to show thanks for the efforts that went towards saving them and also to pay respect to the Thai navy Seal, Saman Kunan, who died in the rescue operation.

A list of useful examples per theme can be found under the 'content' section.

Link

The Cambridge Examiners' report (which can be found [at this online source](#)) stated that "the closing sentence should leave the Examiner firmly convinced of its logical development. Whilst many do this, others rely on a formulaic repetition of the wording of the question, irrespective of its link to what has gone before."

Rebuttal (only for opposing view of sweeping stands)

A common mistake is to rebut the opposing view at times you should not.

If your essay's stand is already highly qualified or is a **middleground** (e.g. 'some', 'not always') such that your "opposing view" is already covered by your stand, then a rebuttal is not needed. In fact, doing so may lose you marks. This is because when you take a **stand** that is in the middle, you are saying that there's **truth to both sides** of the argument. By rebutting (i.e. rejecting) one of the two sides of an argument, you would be <u>left with only one side</u> you still support. This contradicts your stand which supports two sides. A concession (preferably with evaluation) can be made instead. If your stand is "some regulation of the press is desirable, but there are times when it is excessive and objectionable", you will have paragraphs showing its desirability, and paragraphs showing its undesirability (which you do not need to rebut).

In most cases, writing an opposing view contrary to an absolute stand (e.g. 'always', 'all') will require a rebuttal. An example of such a stand is '**<u>all</u>** countries have an **<u>equal</u>** responsibility to counter terrorism'. The SV would be reasons why countries have equal responsibility. The OV would be reasons why some countries have **<u>more/less</u>** responsibility than others. You <u>must</u> rebut this OV. If you do not rebut, your OV contradicts your stand and weakens your essay's argument (if you can't rebut, then you should take a different stand in the first place).

Tl;dr: absolute stand= OVs need rebut; qualified stand= OVs don't need rebut

Ways to write a rebuttal

Precisely (highest level): Flip the OV argument; use it to show that precisely because of it, your stand is true.

OV: The media can no longer be trusted as outlets are <u>concerned only about profits</u>, and are willing to <u>propagate mistruths</u> if that gains them greater readership.

R: It is <u>precisely because</u> some media outlets are <u>profit-oriented</u> that they would <u>stick to the truth</u>; jeopardising their credibility could cause readers to turn to other sources, threatening their revenue.

Untrue: Consider that the OV is simply false; there may be [logical fallacies](#) in place. It may also be incorrect simply because it fails to properly consider <u>stakeholders</u> or the <u>context</u>. It may have made a false <u>assumption</u>.

Even if: Consider that even if the OV is true, it does not actually change your stand (i.e. the OV is actually irrelevant to your stand). This could be because the OV puts forth a [straw man argument](#), is an exaggeration, or only *weakens* your stand but does not ultimately change it

OV: There should not be regulation of scientific research in less developed countries as it is difficult to enforce.

R: Even if enforcement is challenging, some successful enforcement is better than none.

Limitations/Applicability: Consider the OV is only true for some areas. However, if your stand is an absolute agreement, such as for questions with the word 'always', trying to rebut the OV by claiming it is an 'exception' is illogical (since any exception present makes it no longer an 'always').

How to write a conclusion:

A restatement of your stand, a general overview of your points discussed, and ending off with an impactful statement (often a call to action) makes up a typical conclusion. Quotes may also be used if apt. Avoid bringing forth anything new that you did not validate in your body paragraphs.

How to write a <u>high-level conclusion</u>:

Cambridge's markers' report has explicitly stated that they like conclusions that link back to the introduction. It stated that 'a number of candidates refer back to their introduction in a highly effective way, giving a sense of planning and organisation based on sustained clarity of thought and argument. This is a technique worth bearing in mind.'

A simple way to achieve this is to have an 'uncertainty' or rhetorical question in your introduction, that you finally close/give an answer to in your conclusion. The answer to an introduction's rhetorical question may even be used to start off a conclusion directly, sparing the need to use clichéd ways of doing so (e.g. 'in conclusion').

For example, an introduction that highlights the decisions made by the Trump administration may have a conclusion that condemns these particular decisions by the administration.

Content (Paper 1)

Global Affairs (politics, history, war, terrorism, foreign aid)

Useful concepts (for developing sophisticated arguments):

Foreign intervention and [Responsibility to Protect (R2P)](#) vs Sovereignty

Should one country be allowed to intervene if another commits human rights abuses?

Nationalism vs Globalism

Should people serve their own countries' interests or that of the world at large?

[Protectionism](#) vs Free Trade

Should countries shield local businesses from foreign competition?

[Thucydides Trap](#): when a rising power causes fear in an established power which escalates toward war.

Interdependence

Globalisation

Soft power vs hard power

Diplomacy

- International arbitration and conferences
- [Debt-trap diplomacy](#): one country is financially indebted to another and is compelled to support it
- [Public diplomacy](#) and the [role of social media](#)
- Economic diplomacy

Defense

Deterrence

- [Mutually Assured Destruction](#) (nuclear weapons) and the [stability-instability paradox](#)

Realpolitik (pragmatism)

[Populism](#), [gerrymandering](#) and fake news as a threat to democracy

----

Events in Recent Years:

- **Duterte** is elected Philippines President in 2016 and launches the '**War on Drugs**', involving extra-judicial killings of drug-users and peddlers. Duterte ignored and insulted the International Criminal Court and foreign detractors.

- **Brexit** referendum results in a 'leave' victory

- United States pulls out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (**TPP**) following **Trump's election**, as he deemed it as an unfair trade deal, disappointing partnering countries.

- **North Korea-US** become increasingly hostile following Trump's **threats** to attack and constant insults on Twitter

- **Catalonia** declared **independence** (from Spain) following a 2017 referendum, but this was **not recognised** by the international community; Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy dismissed Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and his cabinet, and in 2018, five Catalan ministers were jailed by the Spanish court.

- **Battle of Marawi** (in Philippines) occurred from May to October 2017 between government forces and ISIS-linked militants such as those in Abu Sayyaf and Maute. The city was restored.

- 2017 **Zimbabwe coup d'état**: Dictator Robert Mugabe was overthrown by the Zimbabwe Defence Force.

- **Dismissal of FBI director James Comey** who was investigating the Trump campaign's purported links to Russia; Robert Mueller later took over the role

- **Poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal** in the UK: a former Russian military officer and double-agent for the UK's intelligence services and his daughter were poisoned by a Novichok nerve agent, and Russia was accused of attempted murder. The US agreed with the UK assessment and put forth sanctions against Russia.

- In late 2017, the Donald Trump announced recognition of **Jerusalem as Israel's capital**, shifting the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This sparked tensions and international criticism as Jerusalem is **disputed territory**: Palestine claims East Jerusalem, as Jerusalem's status is of

significant importance in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Hopes of a two-state solution by the international community were diminished.

- In 2018, **Kim Jong Un** meets South Korea's Moon Jae-In, and later meets Donald Trump in Singapore, making significant strides **towards peace**. **No concrete agreemen**t was made with regard to denuclearisation, and peace is still fragile.
- **Canada-Saudi Arabia relations sour** after Canada's call for release of two human rights activists, prompting Saudi Arabia to expel Canada's ambassador, suspend new trade, froze flights to Canada, and cancelled scholarships of Saudi students studying in Canada.
- **Ethiopia and Eritrea made peace following two decades of hostility, reopening borders and diplomatic relations.**
- **U.S.-China Trade War**: Trump, believing China's trade practices to be unfair, put forth tariffs. In response, China did the same; this went on for several months. On December 1, 2018, planned increases in tariffs were postponed. The White House stated that both parties will "immediately begin negotiations on structural changes with respect to forced technology transfer, intellectual property protection, non-tariff barriers, cyber intrusions and cyber theft.
- 7,000 Central American migrants arrived at the **US-Mexico border** after crossing Mexico and parts of Central America. More than 5,000 troops are deployed to the border and a controversial tactic that limits how many people can seek asylum each day called metering is employed.
- **Democrats** win the House in the U.S.
- The **Yellow Vests movement** started in the later half of 2018; rising fuel prices, high cost of living, and claims that a disproportionate burden of the government's tax reforms were falling on the working and middle classes led to protests that have yet to end.
- **Canada arrests Huawei's Chief Financial Officer** (CFO) Meng Wangzhou at the U.S.'s request for violating sanctions on Iran; **in response, China detained several Canadians** without revealing the reason.
- The Malaysian Attorney General's Chambers extends **Johor Bahru's port limits**, and several Malaysian vessels repeatedly intruded Singapore's

territorial waters off Tuas. Singapore's Ministry of Transport stated that the extension was a serious violation of sovereignty and international law and unconducive for good bilateral relations.

- 2019 Venezuelan presidential crisis: thousands protest in favour of disputed interim President Juan Guaidó. Several people are killed, and President **Maduro** severs diplomatic ties with the United States.

Five Eyes: an umbrella agreement between US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand allows free sharing of intelligence and information for the sake of each nation's security.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (**NATO**): an international alliance of 29 countries which agree to come to each other's aid should one be attacked. This was also used after September 11 to declare a 'War on Terror'.

Financial aid: Altruism or Pragmatism?

Marshall Plan : U.S. economic assistance (over $12 billion/nearly $100 billion in 2016 US dollars) to rebuild Western Europe post-WWII; financial aid was in the form of grants that did not have to be repaid. It also aimed to reduce communist influence in countries aided.

China's Debt-Trap Diplomacy:
- Loan given to the Sri Lankan government by the Exim Bank of China to build the Hambantota Port: state-owned Chinese firms were hired to build the Hambantota Port. Due to Sri Lanka's inability to service the debt on the port, it was leased to the Chinese state-owned China Merchants Port Holdings Company Limited on a 99-year lease in 2017. This caused concern in the United States, Japan, and India that the port might be used as a Chinese naval base to contain China's geopolitical rivals.
- US$2.5 billion to state-owned South African electrical utility Eskom arranged during the Jacob Zuma government, and a R370 billion loan during the presidency of Cyril Ramaphosa.

Belt and Road Initiative: A development strategy adopted by the Chinese government involving financing of infrastructural development in countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. It is seen by some as China's push for dominance in global affairs, and debt-trap diplomacy.

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF):
Loans often have attached conditionalities based on what is termed the 'Washington Consensus', focusing on liberalisation—of trade, investment and the financial sector—, deregulation and privatisation of nationalised industries. A state may thus lose its authority to govern its own economy as national economic policies are predetermined under IMF packages. **[Aid vs Sovereignty]** World Bank and IMF policy decisions are made by leading industrialised countries—the G7—because they represent the largest donors, without much consultation with poor and developing countries.

Political Systems

Scandinavian and Nordic countries: Ranked first in the Democracy Index, Norway comes in third place in the IMF per capita nominal GDP list. Among the top democracies, Iceland, New Zealand and Denmark rank highly too in terms of nominal GDP per capita. These countries often top rankings in many other areas as seen in the Human Development Index.

2016 US Presidential Election of Donald Trump: The rise of the controversial Donald Trump who had a campaign driven by fear-mongering and the pushing of anti-Islam and anti-migrant views may to some, be a sign of democracy's perils. A large proportion of a population may not necessarily make the best decision, and fake news could influence votes. To others, it showed society's impatience with political correctness and the typical politician, and thus a desire for a change. Trump's withdrawal from agreements by earlier governments such as the Trans-Pacific

Partnership and the Paris Agreement also show that <u>promises made by one government may be broken when another takes its place</u>.

2016 Brexit referendum: The victory of the the 'Leave' camp despite academics warning of the economic ramifications and difficulty (Brexit has yet to occur) may be a sign that the majority cannot be trusted to make the best judgements. Brexit was driven largely by a desire for greater sovereignty and reduction of immigration, but seemed to ignore the fact that the European Union would throw up trade barriers against Britain and cause business uncertainty.

US Government shutdowns: The US government shutdowns in 2018/2019 over Congress's refusal to support and fund the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy and the proposed US-Mexico border wall may be seen as an issue with the [separation of powers](#).

Removal of GST in Malaysia: The 2018 triumph of Mahathir's Pakatan Harapan over Najib's Barisan Nasional, while driven by frustration over Najib's government which was also marred with the 1MDB corruption scandal, involved an election promise by PH to scrape GST. The abolishment of Goods and Services Tax for a country in debt is seen by many as a populist move to garner votes and not ideal.

Thailand: When Thailand was a democracy under Yingluck Shinawatra (till 2014), a plan to buy rice from local farmers above market prices was launched to support them. This is said to have cost Thailand billions of dollars, and is seen by some as a populist move: since rural Thailand made up the majority, they would be appeased maintaining Yingluck in power, despite opposition in the rest of Thailand. In 2014, the military overthrew her and Thailand is today under a military junta.

Venezuela's collapse: has been the [mismanagement of the economy](#), first by [Hugo Chávez](#), and then by [Nicolás Maduro](#). Both men also attacked and dismantled Venezuela's democratic institutions. Maduro [won reelection in May](#) 2018 in a rigged

vote and shows no signs of retreating from policies that have brought Venezuela skyrocketing inflation, water and electrical shortages, and growing rates of malnutrition.

China's ruling Communist Party under President Xi Jinping: The Chinese State Council runs all ministries and the Central Bank, with President Xi given overwhelming authority. In 2018, China even rewrote its constitution to abolish term limits, which is seen as a sign Xi Jinping will remain in power for many more years to come. China's clear central leadership with extensive authority is credited for the country's stability and China's economic strides.

- **Human rights abuses and the lack of free speech:** Censorship of critics online (e.g. Weibo), [kidnapping of booksellers (Causeway Bay Books)](), and infringement of human rights of Uyghers are just some instances. Before Xi Jinping's time, the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests (June Fourth incidents) involved the massacre of thousands of demonstrators. In 1999, the Communist Party initiated the persecution of Falun Gong, and there were reports of systematic torture, illegal imprisonment, forced labour and organ harvesting.

Absolute monarchies: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have royalty in power: the West often paints them as countries that substantially limit freedoms. These countries are nonetheless wealthy nations with high GDP per capita; of course, this is more often credited to oil as their natural resource. Eswatini (Swaziland) is an absolute monarchy and among the poorest in the world.

Some older but notable events:

Iraq War (2003-2011)

- The United States' original intent was to remove a regime it believed to possess weapons of mass destruction, harboured and supported terrorists, committed outrageous human rights abuses, and 'defied just demands of the UN and the world'. The U.S. led [a coalition]() to oust Saddam Hussein.

  [International cooperation] No evidence of possession of weapons of mass

destruction were found, and supposed ties to Al-Qaeda were discredited, prompting criticism of the war. The main rationale of the war thus shifted to focus on Saddam Hussein's human rights record and promotion of democracy in Iraq. **[Foreign intervention]** United Nations Secretary-General Kofi-Annan said in a 2004 BBC interview that the war from their point of view and the Charter's was that the war was illegal. **[Lack of UN authority]** Once the Ba'ath Party was removed, no local figures were on hand to immediately assume the now-vacant administerial posts. **[Power vacuum]** Paul Bremer, head of the newly formed Coalition Provisional Authority, dissolved the entire Iraqi military and most civilian employees of the old government, and pledged to build a new military and government from scratch. This sparked rioting among former Iraqi soldiers who later allied with the surviving Ba'ath loyalists and formed guerrilla units, igniting an eight-year insurgency against Coalition forces. Religiously motivated Jihadists soon joined and grew in influence, such as Al-Qaeda. This also indirectly led to the formation of ISIS **[Unintended consequences]**.

Arab Spring (Dec 2010-2012)

- The Arab Spring was a series of violent and non-violent anti-government uprisings that spread across the Middle East in late 2010 in response to oppressive regimes and a low standard of living. It first started in Tunisia. Social media has been heralded as the driving force behind the swift spread of revolution throughout the world, as new protests appeared in response to success stories shared from those taking place in other countries. **[Media]** Governments suppressed discussion in those forums through accusing content creators of unrelated crimes or shutting down communication on specific sites or groups, such as through Facebook. **[Censorship]** The effects of the Tunisian Revolution spread strongly to five other countries: Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain. The early hopes that these popular movements would end corruption, increase political participation, and bring about greater economic equity quickly collapsed in the wake of the regional and international military interventions in Bahrain (which requested Saudi Arabia

and the United Arab Emirates to help suppress the revolt) and Yemen, **[Foreign intervention]** and the destructive civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. Only the uprising in Tunisia has resulted in a transition to constitutional democratic governance.

- Part of the Arab Spring was the Libyan Civil War which involved forces loyal to Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and those seeking to oust his government. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 formed the legal basis for the 2011 military intervention of Libya demanding "an immediate ceasefire" and for the establishment of a no-fly zone and to use all means necessary short of foreign occupation to protect civilians. **[foreign intervention on humanitarian grounds/ responsibility to protect]** However, NATO and the West were accused of imperialism, such as by Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme leader. In its aftermath, there was a power vacuum which gave way to proliferation of weapons, Islamic insurgencies, sectarian violence, and lawlessness till date.

- Likewise, in Syria, there was the Syrian Civil War. Dictator Bashar al-Assad ordered a crackdown on the Arab Spring protesters and committed several war crimes in the process. Some of the earlier discussed rebels from the Iraq War entered Syria to aid the resistance, and this group led to the formation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The Syrian Civil War is still ongoing. In 2018, the Syrian government allegedly launched a chemical attack in Douma where rebel groups (Jund Al-Aqsa) are, implicating hundreds of civilians. In response, the United States, France and the United Kingdom carried out a series of military strikes against multiple government sites in Syria. **[International cooperation/intervention/responsibility to protect]**

European Migrant Crisis (2015)

Wars such as the Syrian Civil War led to an increase in asylum seekers who fled to countries in the European Union. Though the refugee crisis is mostly discussed in Europe, the countries with the most refugees are actually Middle Eastern and African countries (Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, Ethiopia). When countries such as Italy made a deal with Libya to allow her to turn back refugees, the European

Court of Human Rights ruled in 2012 that Italy had violated the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) in doing so. The EU Refugee Relocation Scheme was launched, setting refugee quotas for various EU members to more fairly share responsibility since the bulk land on frontline states (Greece, Hungary, Italy). In the wake of [November 2015 Paris attacks](#), Poland's European affairs minister-designate Konrad Szymański stated that he saw no possibility of enacting the EU refugee relocation scheme without security assurances. German Chancellor Angela Merkel is notable for accepting large numbers of refugees.

===

Media

Concepts:

Traditional media vs [new media](#)

- new media is more <u>empowering</u>(discussion/anyone can post), <u>convenient</u>, <u>faster</u>, has greater <u>reach/accessibility(?)</u>, and is more <u>engaging</u>; these could be <u>cons if under the wrong hands</u> (falsehoods for political and commercial gain, or publicity). Of course, new and traditional media may be <u>complementary</u>.

Media freedom vs fake information (not just news; documentaries etc. too)

- [Yellow journalism](#) (exaggerated news stories)

Censorship (for national security, prevent obscenity and hate speech/to prevent opposition)

[Echo chamber](#): a situation in which people only hear opinions of one type, or opinions that are similar to their own.

Independent media (free of government influence or corporate interests)

Mainstream media and alternative media

[Citizen journalism](#): public citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. This is supported by *new media* such as social networking and media-sharing sites.

Media as the [Fourth Estate](#)

- [Watchdog journalism](#): media's role in uncovering the truth (a contrast with media's role in spreading fake news)

Effects of the media

Events:

- In 2015, **China lifted** her 14-year **ban on gaming consoles**; the ban on their sale in 2000 had occurred amid fears games could have adverse effects on Chinese youth. It had been **ineffective**, with imported grey market consoles sold openly in China. **[regulation of the media and challenges]**

- 2015 **Charlie Hebdo shooting**: 12 staff members were killed by two Al-Qaeda-affiliated brothers following Charlie Hebdo's <u>controversial depiction of Prophet Muhammad</u>. **[media freedom consequence]**

- In Singapore, Amos Yee was found guilty in May 2015; he was charged for the intention of wounding the religious feelings of Christians, obscenity and 'threatening, abusive or insulting communication'. **[media freedom]**

- "**Save The Day**" released a <u>video</u> before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, starring celebrities such as Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansson, Julianne Moore, Don Cheadle and Mark Ruffalo, calling on viewers to vote. It was clear from the video they were pushing for voters to go for Hillary instead of Trump.

- The **Paradise Papers**, a set of 13.4 million confidential documents related to offshore investments were leaked to two German journalists who shared the information with the <u>International Consortium of Investigative Journalists</u>, a network of over three-hundred journalists. It revealed how many corporations such as Apple and Nike avoided or reduced taxes paid through shifting assets to tax havens or areas with large tax incentives. This was similar to the larger-scale <u>Panama Papers</u> released the year before. **[watchdog journalism]**

- In October 2017, **Panama Papers** journalist **<u>Daphne Caruana Galizia</u>** was **murdered** in Malta; a bomb blew up the car she was in. She had earlier reported on Malta's political system being rife with corruption and bribery, and her belief that criminal interests had turned Malta into a mafia state. **[watchdog & independent journalism]['censorship' by opposition]**

- In 2018, the **Select Committee On Deliberate Online Falsehoods** was formed in Singapore to recommend strategies to deal with online falsehoods.

Singaporean historian **Thum Ping Tjin** submitted a paper arguing that any legislation made would also apply to the government; Thum argued that Operation Coldstore and Operation Spectrum provided no evidence that detainees were part of a Marxist conspiracy, and such justifications for detaining were falsehoods by PAP politicians for political gain. Minister K. Shanmugam said Thum fell short of being an objective historian. Civil activists such as Terry Xu of The Online Citizen criticised the hearings for not being held in a 'open and consultative manner'.

- Following China's Communist Party's removal of president term limits, several phrases for **discussion** such as 'proclaiming oneself emperor', 'constitution amendment' and 'Winnie the Pooh' (a somewhat derogatory reference to President Xi) were **censored** on **Sina Weibo**. **[censorship]**

- In 2018, **Cambridge Analytica** was revealed to have harvested over 50 million Facebook users' data since 2014 and assisted Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. This unauthorised access to data enabled the company to sway views of voters in a targeted manner. Cambridge Analytica also played a role in the Brexit referendum. **[privacy and data exploitation as a new media consequence]**

- **Facebook** was implicated in the Cambridge Analytica scandal, and privacy issues were raised; Mark Zuckerberg was made to testify before the US congress and the UK Parliament. Singapore, likewise, had a Facebook representative, Simon Milner, questioned for hours by the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods, and pushed to agree to take down posts at request. **[media freedom]**

- In June 2018, the **Capital Gazette shooting** occurred, killing five staff members, mainly journalists. The newspaper had previously published an article related to the shooter's harassment of a high school acquaintance; his motive was thus believed to be an act of vengeance. In seemingly resolute defiance, Capital Gazette's journalists insisted on putting out its next edition only hours after the shooting, knowing that the shooter had specifically targeted the newspaper and editing team.

- In 2018, **Tencent** announced that it will verify the identities of all its videogame players to sharply **restrict online playtime for youths** in China, including limiting children 12 and under to one hour of play daily.

- **Jamal Khashoggi**, a Saudi Arabian dissident and columnist for The Washington Post, was sharply critical of Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed Bin Salman. Khashoggi had entered the Saudi Arabia consulate in Istanbul, Turkey and was assassinated there; he is said to have been dismembered. Jamal Khashoggi was made Time Person of the Year for 2018.

- In late 2018, two **Reuters journalists** who were investigating the Rohingya massacres were sentenced to seven years of **imprisonment** for 'breaching the official secrets act'; the journalists claim they were framed. **[watchdog journalism/censorship]**

- Blogger **Leong Sze Hian** shared an article which said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had helped launder money from Malaysia's 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) state fund; in response, PM Lee filed a defamation suit. **[falsehoods]**

- In December 2018, Netflix dropped a Hasan Minhaj episode in Saudi Arabia at the government's request, due to the comedian's criticism of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.

Note that you can turn almost any event covered significantly by the media into a 'media example' where appropriate.

This also includes **viral trends** (especially for questions linking media and youth). These may include 2014's **Ice Bucket Challenge** to raise awareness on ALS, 2012's viral "**Kony 2012**" video which had over 100 million views within six days and its accompanying viral hashtag #Kony2012 which sought action against Joseph Kony who abducted and used thousands of children as soldiers or sex slaves. It also includes other viral hashtags such as **#BlackLivesMatter** calling for an end to police brutality, and 2017's **#MeToo** movement which involved victims of sexual harassments opening up and calling out perpetrators. On the other side of the coin, perilous trends emerged, such as 2018's "**Tide Pod Challenge**" which involved

teenagers recording themselves chewing and gagging on pods and daring others to do so (Facebook and Youtube later removed these videos). Even for the seemingly positive trends, they may fall behind in effectiveness: they call for attention but may lack action. Some, such as the #MeToo movement, created the risk of false accusations and vigilante action.

Here are some notable facts and examples:

- The Great Firewall of China: blocks access to selected foreign websites and slows down cross-border traffic.
- Laws against Holocaust denial are present in sixteen European countries, but have been criticised by some in support of freedom of expression.
- Info-communications Media Development Authority (IMDA) blocks several piracy, pornography and gambling websites in Singapore and other illegal content.
- Singapore's government owns Temasek Holdings which owns Mediacorp and indirectly has a significant stake and influence over Singapore Press Holdings (SPH). SPH owns much of Singapore's mainstream media.
- Sinclair Broadcast Group, the largest owner of local television stations in the U.S. forces stations to air "must-run" segments, which tend to promote conservative viewpoints.
- In 2013, Edward Snowden exposed the National Security Agency's global surveillance activities to the public, which sparked a public debate on privacy.
- Bobo doll experiment shows children as prone to imitation (thus a need to regulate media exposure)
- Numerous films and documentaries have had historical inaccuracies: First Man, a film about Neil Armstrong, excludes the planting of the American flag on the moon, which critics argued was a way to 'play down America's superiority'. The Theory of Everything was also said to have misrepresented Stephen Hawking's marriage. There are plenty of other examples, so it's best to find others on your own.

- False information may be spread by corporations; this could be in the form of falsified or biased scientific reports. The tobacco industry, for instance, is infamous for false advertising before its link to cancer was public knowledge. As part of a 2006 ruling which sought to punish cigarette manufacturers for decades of deceiving the public about the dangers of their product, the corporations were ordered to disseminate "corrective statements" centered on the health risks and addictive nature of smoking.

==

Environment

Concepts:

Climate change (and whether it is even meaningful to attempt to diminish it)

Energy

- Renewable energy as a solution (or not)
- Energy security

Pollution (air, water, land, noise, etc.)

- Global waste trade: international trade of waste between countries for further treatment, disposal, or recycling. Toxic wastes are often exported from developed countries to developing countries.

Responsibility (everyone equally, only the wealthy nations, each to carry only one's own weight?)

Tragedy of the Commons: acting in self-interest in damaging to all

Maintaining the environment vs financial interests

Consumerism

- The repercussions of growing consumerism may include increased wastage due to a "throw away" mentality and environmental damage in the process of manufacturing of products (e.g. obtaining natural resources or pollution).
- **Green marketing** of products presumed to be environmentally safe through product modification, changes to the production process, sustainable packaging, as well as modifying advertising. The appeal of environmentally-friendly products may attract consumers who are concerned

about the environment. However, there may be false marketing of products to make them appear as environmentally friendly when they are not.

Examples:

- Tesla and SolarCity, companies under Elon Musk that focus on clean energy. Clean alternatives remain generally pricier.

- Norway plans to completely ban the sale of petrol cars by 2025, and 37% of new vehicle sales are currently electric vehicles which are exempt from acquisition tax and from the 25% value-added tax (VAT) on car purchases. This, coupled with a large number of waivers on fees such as road tolls and ferries, continues to provide a favorable environment for electric car uptake. 98% of Norway's energy production is from renewable sources—hydropower being the main source.

- 95% of Singapore's electricity is derived from natural gas, a nonrenewable source, thus the positive effect of using an electric vehicle instead of one with an internal combustion engine is less.

- The Paris Agreement: each country must determine, plan, and regularly report on the contribution that it undertakes to mitigate global warming. A pair of studies in Nature have said that as of 2017, none of the major industrialized nations were implementing the policies they had envisioned and have not met their pledged emission reduction targets, and even if they had, the sum of all member pledges (as of 2016) would not keep global temperature rise "well below 2 °C". James Hansen, a former NASA scientist and a climate change expert, voiced anger that most of the agreement consists of "promises" or aims and not firm commitments; there is no binding enforcement mechanism.

- In August 2017, Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement

- Trump's election rally had involved promises of bringing coal-mining jobs back and supporting the industry.

- In June 2018, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) announced that the U.K. Government would reject the €1.3 billion proposal to construct the Tidal Lagoon Swansea Bay. It would have become

- the world's first tidal lagoon power plant. The main reason for rejection was financial: the cost per unit of electricity would be twice that of nuclear. Another reason is that the monthly variation in tides made energy generation unpredictable.

- Billionaire mining magnate, Gina Rinehart, was revealed to be a key donor to Australian right wing think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs – a consistent promoter of climate science scepticism.

- In July 2018, the U.K. government announced the closure of the feed-in tariff (FIT) by April 2019. The FIT has encouraged more than 800,000 households to install solar panels since its launch in 2010. Anyone who generates excess unused power will no longer be paid for energy exported to the grid. A BEIS spokesman said it was only right to "protect consumers and adjust incentives as costs fall, with solar having fallen by 80%." The decision to end the scheme was criticised by green groups and the renewables industry, such as RenewableUK and Greenpeace UK. Sadiq Khan, the major of London, also urged the government to keep the subsidies for household solar power going.

- In September 2018, Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele spoke at the Lowy Institute, a think-tank based in Australia. He called on Australia's leaders to do more to reduce their carbon footprint, and singled out the U.S., India and China as countries "responsible for all this disaster". He referred to leaders who do not believe in climate change as "utterly stupid", and that climate change is the "single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and well-being" of peoples of the Pacific. Samoa and other Pacific islands are already feeling the effects of global warming, with several smaller islands in the region recently swallowed up by rising sea levels.

- In September 2018, the world's largest offshore windfarm, the Walney Extension, opened off the Cumbrian coast. This was amid warnings that Brexit could increase costs for future projects.

- Maya Bay, one of the world's most popular beaches, was temporarily closed from 1st June. While intended to be for only four months, it was announced that the closure was last at least a year due to the extent of destruction

caused by thousands of day-trippers. Pollution from litter, sun cream and boats has destroyed over 80% of coral around Maya Bay.

- In October 2018, thousands in Hong Kong protested a plan to build new artificial islands that meant to tackle the city's housing shortage. Conservationists argued that the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision" project would destroy fisheries and marine habitats.

- In November 2018, UK renewable energy capacity surpassed fossil fuels for the first time. The growth of the former has tripled in the past five years.

- To prevent pollution, China's ban on importing foreign waste came into force at the end of 2018. This policy is also known as China's "National Sword". Many countries that had been somewhat reliant on exporting waste to China responded by looking into other countries willing to import or boosted efforts to promote recycling. The New South Wales government and the Environment Protection Authority, for instance, responded specifically to the move by introducing a $47 million package to support recycling.

- BlueSG is Singapore's first electric car-sharing firm.

- In October 2018, The Guardian wrote an article on how China's demand for the durian fruit has threatened endangered tigers. Forests in the region of Raub in Malaysia are burned and cleared to make way for plantations that grow the Musang King variety of durian.

- New York sued Exxon for misleading investors on climate change risk

- In October 2018, scientists in Canada warned that massive glaciers in the Yukon territory are shrinking even faster than would be expected from a warming climate.

- Japan faced international condemnation after confirming it will resume commercial whaling for the first time in more than 30 years. Japan confirmed in December that it would leave the International Whaling Commission and defy the 1986 global ban on commercial whaling. Supporters of eating whale meat say that it is an important part of Japanese heritage, and accuse western critics of cultural imperialism.

- According to the World Economic Forum, by 2050, oceans are expected to contain more plastics than fish.
- The use of plastic bags was banned in Rwanda in 2008 in response to plastic pollution. It is today renowned for her clean streets.
- Japan is well-known for its recycling system. There is a recycling rate of 77%, around double that of the U.K. and much greater than the U.S. figure of 20%.

==

Diversity, Inclusion, Equality

Concepts:

Equality vs equity /equality of outcome vs equal opportunities

Equality of treatment

Affirmative action: policy of promoting the education and employment of members of groups that are known to have previously suffered from discrimination. E.g. quota systems

Tokenism: practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of minority groups, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of racial or sexual equality within a workforce.

Diversity
- Ensuring diversity via affirmative action may conflict with equity
- Melting pot vs salad bowl arguments

Economic inequality
- Capitalism and the free-market *vs* government intervention and socialist policies
- Progressive tax: the wealthier are taxed more than those of lower income
- Education as a solution; flaws and strengths of meritocracy, and rise of elitism

Gender inequality

- In the workplace, education, etc.
- Also includes victimisation in cases involving sexual harassment
- Also includes transgenders (unless argued otherwise)

Ageism and discrimination based on race, religion, political views

Equal rights

- Universal suffrage (equal right to vote)
- LGBT rights to e.g. marriage
- Right practice religion may conflict with the above

Eugenics: a set of beliefs and practices that aims at improving the genetic quality of a human population by excluding certain genetic groups judged to be less desirable and promoting other genetic groups judged to be superior.

Technology as a solution: to enable the disabled, and to remove to counter general differences in physical strength between male and females.

NOTE: It is extremely important to not make sweeping statements for inequality questions, especially when you touch on gender. Do not make statements like "some jobs are more suited for males because they are stronger" or "some jobs are more suited for females because they have better sensitivity". Clearly state that you are generalising and back these up.

Examples:

- In 2017, it was announced that Singapore's Presidential Election would be reserved for those of the Malay community, a minority group which has not had an elected president before. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said this was in support of multiracialism, and admitted that Singaporeans were not

truly 'colour-blind' and a candidate of a minority group was unlikely to stand and win in an open election.

- The Time's Up movement was founded at the start of 2018 by Hollywood celebrities. It created a legal fund for lower-income women seeking justice for assault or sexual harassment, advocated legislation punishing companies that tolerated workplace sexual harassment, and pushed for greater gender parity in studio and talent agencies.

- In 2018, Tokyo Medical University—one of Japan's most prestigious schools—admitted deliberately altering entrance exam scores for more than a decade to restrict the number of female students and ensure more men become doctors. It vowed to prevent it from happening again.

- In September 2018, Thailand's Royal Police Cadet Academy (RPCA) announced that from 2019, it will only admit men, sparking outcry from female-rights groups.

- Upon the release of the film Crazy Rich Asians, the BBC wrote an article focussing on the region's inequality.

- According to a 2016 Oxfam report, the wealth of the poorest 95% dropped by 38% between 2010 and 2015, despite an increase in the global population of 400 million. In the same period, the wealth of the richest 62 people between the World's Billionaires increased by $500bn (£350bn) to $1.76tn.

- Oxfam claimed that in 2017, the world's richest 1% own as much wealth as the bottom 82%.

- In August 2018, the Trump administration accused Harvard of 'outright racial balancing' and sided with Asian-American students who alleged the school discriminated against; it is contended that Harvard artificially capped the number of qualified Asian-Americans from attending the school to advance less qualified students of other races, and subjective methods such as a 'personal rating' could have involved racial bias.

- In September 2018, India's Supreme Court ruled that gay sexual intercourse is not longer a criminal offence, overturning a 2013 judgement that upheld section 377.

- This event sparked public debate in Singapore over her own Section 377A, with notable figures such as Professor Tommy Koh calling for the law to be questioned in court. The government later announced that this would be an issue to be dealt with in Parliament. There were petitions from those in support and those against repeal, in which the latter held a majority. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced that Section 377A would not be repealed so as to reflect the values of Singapore's mostly conservative society.

- In the later part of September 2018, India's supreme court ruled against the ban on females of menstruating age from entering the Sabarimala temple, a highly prominent Hindu temple in Kerala. The temple's authorities argued that the ban was essential to the rites of its chief deity, Ayyapan, who is considered eternally celibate and is part of tradition.

- In October 2018, California became the first state to require at least one woman on corporate boards.

- The Boy Scouts of America decided to drop "boy" from its name, after its board of directors voted unanimously to open the programme to all children, regardless of gender. Following this, the Girl Scouts of the United States of America chose to sue the Boy Scouts of America, saying the change could erode their brand—it stated that "only GSUSA has the right to use the Girl Scouts and Scouts trademarks with leadership development services for girls".

- In October 2018, Professor Alessandro Strumia was suspended from working with the European nuclear research centre, CERN. In a presentation, he rejected the idea that physics suffers from gender bias against women and claimed that it was in fact male scientists who were victims of discrimination;

this sparked outrage from other scientists and feminist groups. Strumia cited previous research which points to observations that countries that score higher on measures of gender equality have a lower proportion of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) fields. Physicist Sabine Hossenfelder provided an alternative analysis, arguing that after accounting for [disproportionately higher rates of women leaving the field](), the sex differences Strumia claims to have found become negligible.

- Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong proposed that employers could perhaps be offered double the tax deduction on salaries of workers with disabilities.

- In 2018, the candidates in the U.S. midterm elections were the most diverse in history; two states elected the first Native American women, Debra Haaland and Sharice Davids to Congress. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib became the first Muslim women elected. Massachusetts and Connecticut also got their first African-American women in Congress, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Latina, became the youngest woman to ever get elected to Congress. Seventeen black women in Texas were elected judges in Harris Country.

- An estimated 1.2 million Florida residents who served time in prison regained the right to vote, due to a new state constitutional amendment which previously took away voting rights from ex-convicts.

- Representation: "Black Panther" broke box-office records, and "Coco," a Pixar film set in Mexico with an almost entirely Latino voice cast, won two Academy Awards. **[MEDIA]**

- Naomi Osaka captured the U.S. Open title, becoming the first Japanese-born tennis player to win a Grand Slam championship. With a Haitian father and Japanese mother, she has helped challenge Japan's cultural preference for racial purity.

- In 2018, unemployment rate for black Americans hit its lowest point on record, but their *joblessness* was still twice the rate for whites.

- SG Enable is an organisation set up by the Ministry of Social and Family Development that supports the disabled, such as by integrating them into the workforce.

- The economists Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez wrote that decreased progressiveness in US tax policy in the post World War II era has increased income inequality by enabling the wealthy greater access to capital.

- Sheryl Sandberg is Chief Operating Officer of Facebook

- Medalists of the Paralympic Games receive less cash awards from the Singapore Government than their counterparts of the Olympic Games. In 2016, this sparked debate when Yip Pin Xiu was awarded around $200,000, approximately of a fifth of Joseph Schooling's $1 million prize.

- India's reservation system tries to benefit those of lower castes who had been discriminated in the past (and arguably still are by some), by using a quota system. A 16% Maratha caste reservation was allowed for educational institutions and government jobs in Maharashtra in November 2018.

- Bumiputra policies in Malaysia lead to Malays receiving special treatment, such as a 7% discount on houses or property, including luxurious units, quotas in favour for admission into educational institutions, and companies listed on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange must have 30% bumiputra ownership of equity.

===

Arts

Concepts:

Critic of government and society; test boundaries of society

Build national identity

Revenue (tourists, patrons)

Develops creative thinking: transferable to other fields in the economy such as design and entrepreneurship

Entertainment

Self-expression

Helps us to think through our moral values

Preserve heritage and culture

Examples:

- 1984 by George Orwell: Lessons on privacy, manipulation of language and the media, tyranny and truth. The book is commonly referenced by opposition when political actions are reminiscent of the dystopian world.

- The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood: Lessons on gender equality, particularly women's rights. [Women's rights protestors wore the famous red cloak and white bonnet in Argentina](#) and so did [pro-choice (the right to have an abortion) activists in Northern Ireland.](#)

- To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee provides lessons on racism

- The World Set Free by H.G. Wells: The 1913 novel is based on a prediction of a weapon more destructive and uncontrollable than ever before; using some knowledge of atomic physics, he called it the atomic bomb. [The fantasy author is said to be the first to think of the atom bomb.](#)

- Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand: Atlas Shrugged depicts a dystopian US where irrational government officials work with greedy socialist corporate heads to impose draconian regulations and taxes on those who have achieved success through hard work and natural talent. Her brand of free-market

fundamentalism and advocacy of a philosophy she called "the virtue of selfishness" has garnered support from many conservatives. As Republican speaker of the US House of Representatives, Paul Ryan was known to give every new member of his staff a copy of Rand's gargantuan novel

- Ai Weiwei: A contemporary artist and activist who has been highly critical of the Chinese Government's stance on human rights and democracy. More on his usage of art to send a political message can be found here.

- Banksy: an anonymous England-based street artist, vandal, political activist, and film director. His satirical street art and subversive epigrams combine dark humour with stencil graffiti. His works of political and social commentary have been featured on streets, walls, and bridges of cities throughout the world. For instance, to confront the growing public opinion that accepting migrants is a drain on a country's resource, his graffiti, *The Son of a Migrant from Syria,* depicts Steve Jobs as a migrant.

- Petr Pavlensky: Pavlensky first became known for sewing his mouth shut in political protest against the incarceration of members of the Russian punk group Pussy Riot. On July 23, 2012, Pavlensky appeared at Kazan Cathedral, St. Petersburg with his lips sewn up holding a banner that stated, "Action of Pussy Riot was a replica of the famous action of Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:12–13)".

- Pussy Riot: a Russian feminist protest punk rock group based in Moscow. The group staged unauthorized provocative guerrilla performances in public places, performances that were filmed as music videos and posted on the Internet. The collective's lyrical themes included feminism, LGBT rights, and opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom the group considered to be a dictator.

- Dying to Survive: The film is based on the real-life story of Lu Yong, a Chinese leukemia patient who smuggled cheap but unproven cancer medicine from India for 1,000 Chinese cancer sufferers in 2004. The film sparked debate

about the cost of medical care among Chinese people. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang cited the film in an appeal to regulators to "speed up price cuts for cancer drugs" and "reduce the burden on families"

- Rafiki: A film about a lesbian relationship was banned in Kenya, but the ban was lifted temporarily so the movie could be submitted for the Oscars.

- The Korean Wave: refers to the global popularity of South Korea's cultural economy exporting pop culture, entertainment, music, TV dramas and movies. This is also said to have improved South Korea's public diplomacy.

- The singer, Rihanna, was appointed as ambassador by her home country, Barbados. The role involves promotion of education, tourism and investment.

- "We Shall Overcome" is a gospel song which became a protest song and a key anthem of the Civil Rights Movement.

- In 2017, the BBC reported on how Russian authorities use pop music on YouTube to ridicule young protestors. A music video uploaded by singer Alisa Vox this week features her posing as a schoolteacher and lecturing a teenager for going to a rally with a placard with "no fewer than four spelling mistakes".

- In Singapore, songs such as "Home" by Kit Chan evoke a sense of patriotism, and successes by Singaporean singers abroad such as JJ Lin and Stefanie Sun are often referenced. The deaths of those conscripted into National Service (NS), such as the most recent case of Aloysius Pang, often spark public outrage and the spread of poems regarding the matter. One example is "Singaporean Son" by Low Kian Seh.

- Several instances of "art" or creative work were dismissed as vandalism. One instance is Miss Priyageetha Dia who turned the staircase on the 20th storey of her Housing Development Board (HDB) block in Jalan Rajah from grey to gold using foil. An older example from 2012 involved a Samantha Lo, who added amusing stickers to traffic light buttons, labelled with phrases like

"Press until shiok", "Press to time travel", "Press for Nirvana" and "Press to teleport". She also painted the words "My Grandfather Road" on Robinson Road and Maxwell Road.

===

Science and Technology

Concepts:

Ethics: ends justify the means (Utilitarianism) vs ends do not justify the means

➔ Utilitarianism: the doctrine that actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority.

➔ This typically covers areas such as human testing of medicine, use of human embryos in stem cell research and genetic editing (CRISPR).

Commercialisation: when science and technology are developed for financial gain, ethics are more likely to be undermined, and availability may be only for those who are wealthier. Patenting may also prevent further development by other parties.

Regulation: common questions tend to involve asking whether there should be regulation. This is often for ethical purposes, to counter commercial interests, or to reduce possible dangers (e.g. Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) development, as well as technology for warfare).

● Laissez-faire: an economic system in which transactions between private parties are *free from government intervention* such as regulation, privileges, tariffs and subsidies.

Security: a decrease or an increase? Consider the incidents of data breaches, hacking, and the technology falling under the wrong hands, and not only the positives.

Sharing economy: sharing of underutilised assets or services in ways that improve efficiency, often by means of the internet. (e.g. Airbnb, oBike, GrabShare)

Other impacts on society: convenience, quality of life (for the better or worse?), equity.

Examples:

- **Net neutrality**: the principle that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should treat all data equally and not discriminate or charge differently based on user, content, website, platform etc. When net neutrality is required, ISPs may not intentionally block, slow down, or charge money for specific online content, such as Netflix. Net neutrality laws were **repealed in the U.S.** in 2018, following opposition by broadband companies like Comcast, AT&T, Verizon and FCC commissioner Ajit Pai. Meanwhile, in July 2018, **India** decided to put **net neutrality into effect**; any form of data discrimination is banned and violators have licenses cancelled.

- **China's facial recognition A.I.** is used for surveillance.

- **Cashless payments**: the rise of e-payment methods has brought greater convenience and security (prevents theft and robberies). **WeChat** and **Alipay** are highly adopted in China, replacing cash in many areas. Digital payments are much more easier to track, preventing crimes like tax evasion.

- Technological **vulnerabilities**: Chips made by Intel, AMD and ARM were found to have serious security flaws at the start of 2018. These vulnerabilities were called **Spectre** and **Meltdown**. These would allow hackers to read memory and potentially access information such as passwords or encryption keys. Firms such as Microsoft and Google which use such chips rolled out security updates and details on what should be done.

- In March 2018, information that **Google** was working with the **Defense Department** on **Project Maven** which involves [analysing drone footage](#) using "artificial intelligence" techniques emerged, causing unhappiness among employees who saw that the technology could plausibly help target people for death. More than 3,000 employees signed a letter to CEO Sundar Pichai,

demanding that the company scrap the deal. In June, Google announced that it would not renew its partnership in 2019, and released a new set of ethical guidelines for its artificial intelligence.

- **Amazon**'s Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bezos said his company would continue to support the U.S. Defense Department, unlike Google, saying that if U.S. is a great country that needs to be defended.

- In July 2018, personal information of 1.5 million **SingHealth** patients were stolen in a **cyber attack**. The National Electronic Health Record underwent 'rigorous security checks' following this.

- In 2018, the US and UK governments called for **mandatory backdoors** in encrypted chats, with the intention of countering terrorist threats and crime. This was a call by the Five Eyes, and sparked privacy concerns.

- **Monsanto** was ordered to pay $289 million as the jury ruled that its weedkiller caused a man's cancer. The jury was convinced that Monsanto was aware or should have known of that the product was dangerous.

- Brazil's new President, Bolsonaro, vowed to **relax gun laws** in a bid to combat a homicide epidemic that claimed nearly 64,000 lives the year before.

- Seoul got its [first ever deaf taxi drivers](#) thanks to new **software** launched to help reduce the stigma of **hiring hearing-impaired people**. This includes voice-to-text conversion.

- In September 2018, France **banned** all children under fifteen years old from using their **phones in school**, including mealtimes. This is due to concern over students becoming too dependent on and distracted by phones.

- In September, some clinics across Singapore were hit by a computer glitch that changed prescription units on labels. About 400 patients received wrongly labelled medicine.

- Apple Inc banned the Infowars app from the App Store, belonging to popular U.S. conspiracy theorist Alex Jone, after finding that it had 'defamatory,

discriminatory, or mean-spirited content about religion, race, sexual orientations, gender, ethnic origin, or other groups'.

- **Gene editing:** Professor He Jiankui, reportedly under house arrest, claimed to have altered twin girls' genes so they could not get HIV. He was fired by the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen. Xi Nanping, vice minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology denounced He's work as "extremely abominable".

- Mylan, a pharmaceuticals company that owns the **EpiPen**, increased the price of the product by over 400%. The base price of an EpiPen two-pack was raised from $100 in 2009 to more than $600 in 2016. As a patented life-saving device, this sparked tremendous outrage; another reason for the lack of alternative products is said to be the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) slow and tight regulatory processes for new products to be allowed.

- In 2016, Facebook had a plan to provide rural India free Internet access, known as 'Free Basics'. However, it would only limit access to a suite of platforms, such as Facebook. The lack of neutrality caused India's regulators to reject it.

- In March 2017, **SpaceX**, a private corporation, became the first to successfully re-launch and land the first stage of an orbital rocket. The aim would be to reduce the cost of space travel. Elon Musk is also noted for his ambition to colonise Mars.

- British firm, Xeros, started selling specially designed washing machines under the name of Hydrofinity, which uses nylon polymers to replace most water in a laundry cycle. It is said to reduce water usage by up to 80%.

- In May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (**GDPR**), an EU law on data protection and privacy for individuals, came into force. It gives individuals control over their personal data. Some international websites such as the Chicago Tribute and Los Angeles Times blocked EU users entirely on

the effective date so as to avoid liabilities. It had been argued that smaller businesses and start-ups might not have financial resources to adequately comply with GDPR, unlike large firms like Facebook and Google.

- In October 2018, Roger Kneebone, a professor of surgical education at Imperial College London, said that the decline in hands-on creative subjects at school and practical hobbies at home means students often lack basic understanding of the physical world, and that hours in virtual worlds are no substitute for real-world experiences. He stated that medical students and trainee surgeons are often not so comfortable with doing things with their hands than they used to five to ten years ago.

- Donald Trump's administration pushed allies to block **Huawei** from fifth-generation wireless networks, citing fears that China could use its equipment for spying. In August 2018, the Australian government said companies "who are likely to be subject to extrajudicial directions from a foreign government" would no longer be allowed to provide 5G technology, which was clearly directed at the Chinese telecom company. Other countries are till date, still considering similar action.

==
[to be continued]
Follow **@generalpaper** on Instagram, add your email to GP.sg or visit the site frequently for updates.

Tuition: Tuition is often unnecessary due to free resources available and teachers who are willing to take consults. However, if you decide you need a crash-course or extra personalised help, feel free to sign up for tuition at http://bit.ly/gptuition, at much more affordable rates. I am only free until April due to NS, so lessons will be condensed and go straight to what you need to know. Various questions, unique arguments, current affairs and any issues in your work will definitely be covered. I may be offering tuition after I enlist whenever I book out, so if you are interested, do still check for updates :)