

Comprehensive Examination in International Relations
January 7, 2014

Instructions

This examination is designed to test your knowledge of, and ability to synthesize, the complete field of international relations. The best answers will demonstrate a broad understanding of the literature on international relations. They also will respond directly to the questions – mere literature reviews will not do – and will deploy both analytical rigor and relevant evidence in support of their arguments. Theoretical or empirical overlap among answers will diminish their overall quality; avoid answering two or three questions for which your answers would be redundant. Gratuitous citations of UVa faculty will not help your grade. Please note that the examination is “closed-book” – i.e., any use of notes, books, computer files, or internet sources constitutes an Honor violation.

- **IR majors** should answer one question from each of the three parts of the exam, and will have six hours to complete the exam.
- **IR minors** should answer one question from Part I and one from *either* Part II or Part III, and will have four hours to complete the exam.

You may either type your answers or write them by hand. If you choose the latter, make a clear photocopy and give Bonnie Bragg the original at the end of the allotted time. Then type up your answers word-for-word from the handwritten version (correcting spelling and minor grammatical errors) and hand in the typed version within twenty-four hours. Include a signed pledge that the typed version is identical to the handwritten version.

Section I: Theories of International Relations

1. “States are run by leaders, and leaders are politicians whose primary goal is to retain office, not promote the prosperity of their state. Any analysis of international phenomena that does not begin with leaders’ domestic political interests therefore is bound to be flawed.” Discuss.
2. Beginning with *Man, the State and War*, international relations scholars have relied explicitly or implicitly upon Waltz’s distinction between systemic and state-level phenomena in international relations. Has this division promoted or hampered meaningful progress in international relations scholarship?
3. Is the international system ordered in an anarchical or hierarchical fashion (or something else)? Explain.
4. “The security dilemma is not an immutable property of the international system; it is endogenous to the behavior and ideological orientation of the actors within that system.” Discuss.

Section II: Applications to Issues

1. If current trends continue, China will soon surpass the United States as the world’s largest economy. When this happens, will international cooperation be harder, easier, or unchanged? Why?
2. “We are rapidly approaching the limits of observational data in international relations. In both qualitative and quantitative research, our data are contaminated by problems of strategic self-selection and endogeneity. Without the ability to conduct experiments or identify ‘natural’ randomized treatments, our inferences about world politics will never amount to more than impressionistic guesses.” Discuss.
3. International relations is remarkably rule-driven. Most international interactions (e.g., trade, financial, consular, etc.) are governed by international law. How can we reconcile this fact with the dominant scholarly description of the international system as anarchic?
4. “In the final analysis, democracies are scarcely different from autocracies in international relations. Throughout history, when democracies have perceived serious threats or smelled opportunities for geopolitical gain, they have behaved just like autocracies.” Evaluate this statement with reference to at least two empirical cases from the last two hundred years.
5. How do divergent domestic interests affect international economic policy? In other words, who wants open markets and who does not – and why? Answer this question with reference to either monetary or trade policy.

Section III: Regional and Area Foreign Policies

1. What have been the effects, if any, of the Arab Spring on the international politics of the Middle East? Explain.
2. “There are no universal laws in international politics. Each region has its own set of unique, preferences, beliefs, and historical legacies that impact the behavior of its members. Theories that apply to one region thus do not necessarily apply to others, and it is quixotic to imagine that our theories of foreign policy describe the entire international system.” Evaluate this statement.
3. Some observers fear that if the United States significantly curtails its global security commitments, overseas military presence, and leadership of international institutions, the result will be a severe depression and/or major war. Drawing on theory and historical comparisons, explain why this argument is correct or incorrect.
4. Assess the relative weight of domestic regime type versus individual leaders in determining the foreign policies of the key states in **one** of the following regions since the end of World War II:
 - East Asia
 - East Europe and Russia
 - Latin America
 - Middle East and North Africa
 - South Asia
 - Sub-Saharan Africa
 - Western Europe