

Comprehensive Examination in International Relations May 2013

*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 your 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. IR Minors should answer one question from Part I and one from either Part II or Part III. Majors have six hours, and minors four, 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) What are the benefits of seeing war and peace as outcomes or processes of international bargaining? What are the costs of using a bargaining framework? All in all, is bargaining theory the best available for analyzing war?
- 2) "Recent scholarly attention to transnational phenomena -- banks and corporations, NGOs, terrorist groups, etc. -- has not yielded enough insight to alter the time-tested state-centric approach to international relations." Comment.
- 3) "The field of international relations is now so fragmented by competing paradigms and sub-theories that there is no possibility of an overarching framework emerging that can serve to focus debate and to unify theoretical analysis. Rationalist approaches looked for a time that they might achieve this coveted goal, but challenges by constructivist and psychological schools have made any such rationalist quest a pipe-dream. Yet constructivist and psychological theories also hold out no hope of providing a unifying foundation for the field. We are stuck with fragmentation, and we will have to learn to live with it, for better or worse." Discuss.

- 4) "Despite the popularity of constructivism as a research paradigm and the salience of religion in current geopolitical conflicts, the world remains ineluctably material. The geopolitical analysts of the past would instantly recognize that our current global conflicts are driven by states' efforts to secure scarce resources and control militarily critical bits of territory. Ideas and ideology have nothing to do with these underlying realities." Do you agree? Pay close attention to structural rather than contingent factors.

II. APPLICATIONS TO ISSUES

- 1) To what degree can factors such as the ideological and social differences between states and their unwillingness to accept these differences explain the major military conflicts of the last one hundred years? Discuss with reference to at least two of these conflicts.
- 2) "The American Empire is in terminal decline. Its elites are thoroughly corrupt; its populace, a rabble; its economy, well into what will be at least a decade of slow or no growth; its government, paralyzed; its military, totally unsuited for the security challenges of the foreseeable future. Rising global instability is inevitable." Do you agree? Pay close attention to structural rather than contingent factors.
- 3) Are we wiser to talk about an "economic peace" rather than a "democratic peace" when considering the relative lack of militarized conflict in international relations since 1945?
- 4) "The trade policies of states can only be explained by an 'inside-out' analysis of causal factors, that is, by examining the domestic divisions within any particular country. Systemic theories have little or no explanatory value relative to such unit-level forces." Discuss with reference to at least two separate countries or, alternatively, at least two separate time-periods for a single country.
- 5) Globalization arguments contend that the pace and quantity of international interactions are remaking nation states *and their foreign policies*. Many state centric arguments view nations as unchangeable billiard balls or entities unaffected by any broader rules or institutions. Which is it? Please answer this question with regard to ***two*** of the following issue areas (law, national security, immigration, finance, trade).

III. REGIONAL AND AREA FOREIGN POLICIES

Answer either of the questions below ([1] or [2]) with respect to one of the following regions:

Latin America

East Asia

South Asia

Middle East and North Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa
Former Soviet Union
Europe

1. To what extent are the foreign policies of the key states in the region driven by economic ends rather than by ethnic-nationalistic ends?
2. "The limited impact of the recent free trade agreements show yet again that the world capitalist system inexorably forces all states, especially those in the developing world, to organize markets in ways that serve the interests of global capital." Do you agree? What resources can developing countries deploy to promote their own economic growth? Refer to at least two developing countries in your answer.
3. "Countries now are much more engaged in regional organizations than in international organizations with universal (or near-universal) membership. International institutions really don't matter." With reference to one of the regions above, discuss whether this statement is true and what that answer suggests about the relative plausibility of at least three contending arguments about international order.