

Comprehensive Examination in International Relations
August 18, 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. Realist scholars like Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt have often been found advocating for and against particular U.S. foreign policies. Yet if state agents are largely driven by systemic forces, why would policy advocacy make any difference? Is all policy advocacy an implicit acknowledgment that the world is socially constructed?
2. In 1999 Legro and Moravcsik argued that very few IR scholars were actually realists. Does that imply that most IR scholars are liberals? Would that be a problem, if true? Who are the realists today, and what distinguishes their arguments?
3. “Great powers worry far too much about maintaining balances of power and their reputations for resolve. Typically the resulting policies end up making things worse, not better.” Discuss.
4. Are economic or non-economic factors relatively more important in explaining individuals’ international economic policy preferences?
5. Just how important is the polar distribution of power in explaining the chief behavioral characteristics of the international system? Compare two historical international systems in your answer.

Section II: Applications to Issues

1. Do traditional theories of coercion apply to the modern age of nuclear weapons and instantaneous electronic communication? How have these factors changed the logic of deterrence and compellence, if at all?
2. “Woodrow Wilson has been proven right by the history of the last 100 years: when nations foster the growth of international institutions and global trade, they become more peaceful; when they do not, they tend to fall back into conflict and war.” Discuss with reference to at least two empirical cases.
3. “The trade policies of the United States before and after World War II were driven by self-interest rather than a concern for cooperation in the global system. They were designed to maximize U.S. wealth and security, pure and simple.” Discuss.
4. Some argue that the United States is overextended in the global arena and must retrench. Others argue that the United States must engage in order to structure a global arena that serves its interests. What are the theoretical commitments behind each of these arguments, and which view is right?

5. “The increasing disorder that we have seen in 2013-14 – Chinese bullying of its maritime neighbors, Russia’s annexation of Crimea and threats to go further, the possible collapse of Iraq and Syria – vindicate the general thesis that hegemony is necessary for global order. The relative decline of the United States has presented actors the world over with new opportunities and threats, and they are responding accordingly.” Discuss.
6. Under what conditions might states develop foundations of international power that are considerably less than what they are actually capable of achieving?

Section III: Regional and Area Foreign Policies

1. “The key to understanding Chinese foreign policy, and the future of Asia, is 7% annual economic growth.” Do you agree or disagree?
2. The globalization of production presents opportunities and constraints for policymakers. Explain which effect dominates with regard to at least one world region.
3. Evaluate how effectively “soft power” has been used to serve the foreign policy interests of one country other than the United States.
4. Discuss the relative importance of systemic versus unit-level factors for explaining the foreign policies of the main states in one of the following regions:
 - East Asia
 - East Europe and Russia
 - Latin America
 - Middle East and North Africa
 - South Asia
 - Sub-Saharan Africa
 - Western Europe