

**Comprehensive Examination in International Relations  
August 2012**

*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. A number of scholars of recent years have argued that security dilemmas between regional and global powers can be mitigated and perhaps even eliminated through such things such as costly signaling, the construction of compatible identities and interests, and the creation of effective international institutions. Discuss the validity of such arguments.
  
2. Legitimacy would seem to be an important asset for a state to have for exercising influence in international politics. Important arguments, however, suggest that legitimacy is simply an artifact of international power or the by-product of dominant domestic interest groups. Does legitimacy matter in world politics? To what extent is it connected to the ever-expanding legalization (in the sense of: “governed by law”) of interstate relations. Please answer with regard to alternative theoretical arguments and with examples.
  
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.

There is a 4<sup>th</sup> question... →

4. Beginning with *Man, the State, and War*, international relation scholars have relied explicitly or implicitly upon Waltz's conception of second and third images. Does this division promote or hamper meaningful progress in international relations?

## II. APPLICATIONS TO ISSUES

1. Discuss the ways in which the globalization of the international political economy after 1990 differs from or is similar to the global political economy of the 1945-1990 period. What are some of the implications of your argument for the trade or monetary policies of modern states?

2. "The rise of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda demonstrates the increased and increasing importance of non-state actors in international affairs. In this emerging new world, the traditional tools of diplomacy become irrelevant, or worse, counterproductive to effective foreign policy." Do you agree?

3. State responses to the financial crisis that began in the United States in 2007 were many and varied. Describe and detail a research design that can help social scientists gain leverage on the variation in state responses to this crisis. Be sure to identify testable hypotheses. To what extent do the assumptions/priors central to an open economy politics or other positivist approaches affect what we can learn about the causes and responses?

4. To what degree can factors such as the ideological and social differences between states and their unwillingness to accept these differences explain the major conflicts of the last one hundred years? Discuss with reference to at least two of these conflicts.

5. 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?

## III. REGIONAL AND AREA FOREIGN POLICIES

Latin America

East Asia

South Asia

Middle East and North Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa

Former Soviet Union

Europe

1. Pick **one** of the regions above, and answer the following:

Are the trade and monetary relations between the key nations of the region driven largely by "pressures from below," by the autonomous decisions of political elites, by the logic of great power politics, or by international networks of business elites?

2. Pick **one** of the regions above, and answer the following:

"The likelihood of war or peace in the region is driven more by domestic factors and the personal interests of leaders than by traditional "realist" factors such concerns for relative power, fear of the future, and the offense-defense balance."

3. Pick **two** of the regions above, and answer the following:

Does integration in to the world economy lead to economic specialization of technology and skills or does increased economic specialization lead to pressure for increased integration? Compare and contrast evidence that supports and evidence that refutes one of these statements.

4. The on-going Euro-zone crisis means that grand regional integration of the kind pursued in Europe is likely to drop off the political agenda for a generation. Compare Europe to at least **one** other region and assess the prospects for integration on **two** of the following issues: monetary policy; currency; trade; migration; investment; security.

5. Chinese leaders in recent years have repeated the mantra that their nation is engaged in a "peaceful rise." Does the actual record of Chinese foreign policy over the past decade fit this claim? Evaluate as well the regional security policies being pursued by the United States, Japan, and other Asian neighbors. Do their actions show that they believe the Chinese claim? What does the behavior of China and its interlocutors tell us about the nature of contemporary international relations?