

Comprehensive Examination in International Relations August 2008

*This examination is designed to test your knowledge of, and ability to synthesize, the complete field of international relations. The best answers will respond directly to the questions chosen and demonstrate a broad understanding of the literature on international relations. They will show the commonalities across, and gaps between, the different theoretical approaches, and the evolution of debates in and across those approaches. They will deploy relevant historical evidence in support of their arguments. Theoretical or empirical overlap among your answers will diminish their quality. (Note as well that citing UVa faculty, especially gratuitously, will not necessarily 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.***

“Majors” should answer one question from each of the three parts of the exam. “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 Cassandra Thomas 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, as you wish) and hand in the typed version within twenty-four hours. Include a signed pledge that the typed version is identical to the handwritten version.

Part I: Theory of International Relations

1. “The battles between ‘isms’ in world politics are no longer intellectually productive. The future of the study of international relations lies in generating synthetic theories and explanations that draw off of different traditions.” Do you agree?
2. Is the international system better thought of as anarchical or hierarchical? Why?
3. “Offensive realism, defensive realism, structural realism, neoclassical realism, hegemonic stability theory ... it’s time for a bit of realism about IR theory: We can state clearly neither (1) the locations of the conceptual boundaries dividing all of these theories, nor (2) how we would know which realism is most adequate to explaining international relations. This obscurity casts serious doubt on IR’s social-scientific credentials.” Comment
4. How can we best explain the sources of international order – that is, the dominant institutions, rules, and norms that structure world politics? Please distinguish at

least three alternative arguments and provide your own argument about which is most persuasive.

Part II: Applications to Issues

1. “International order is falling apart.” Agree or disagree with reference to three international institutions or norms. Please consider alternative arguments and provide an explanation for what you see happening in international order.
2. Discuss the ways in which the current globalization of the international political economy differs from or is similar to the global political economy of the late nineteenth century. What are some of the implications of your argument for the trade or monetary policies of modern states?
3. “Relations between the key powers in the international system no longer revolve around deterrence, coercion, power and other such increasingly outdated realist concepts. To truly understand the increasingly cooperative basis for great power relations in the post cold war and especially post-9/11 world, we must turn to domestic-level arguments.” Discuss this statement with reference to at least TWO of the following issue areas: great-power security, regional security, trade relations, and the “war on terror”.
4. “Since World War I, ideology and its manifestations in domestic politics have been more important than power in determining when and why wars occur.” Discuss with reference to at least two important cases.
5. The most astounding fact about the current international political economy is the inversion of normal economic patterns: capital poor countries in Asia are systematically lending to the richest and most capitalized large country in the world (the USA) by holding nearly \$3 trillion in US public and quasi-public debt. Is this a sign of US hegemony or of US decline? How would we know?
6. Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (2005, 2) contend, “Since E. H. Carr, realists have tended to treat power as the ability of one state to use material resources to get another state to do what it otherwise would not do. The tendency of the discipline to gravitate toward realism’s view of power leads, ironically, to the underestimation of the importance of power in international politics.” Critically assess this statement by discussing the role of power in shaping global economic governance. Consider at least two empirical examples to support your arguments.
7. “Dramatic changes in states’ foreign policies rarely occur. Systemic pressures provide the best explanation for this fact.” Comment on this statement, being sure to use evidence from at least two cases to support your argument.

Part III: Regional and Area Foreign Policies

1. “The fundamental battle in the future of international relations in the Pacific is not between countries but between nationalisms within countries.” Is that true within China? What will decide that battle?
2. How would Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons change the dynamics of the regional politics of the Middle East? Develop what you consider to be the most likely scenario and explain your reasoning.
3. Need we look beyond structural realism to explain the U.S.-led war in Iraq that began in 2003? Why or why not?
4. Discuss the relative influence of system-level and unit-level influences, respectively, on the dynamics of one of the following regions since 1990:
 - i) Europe
 - ii) Middle East
 - iii) East Asia
 - iv) South Asia
 - v) Central Asia, including Russia
 - vi) Latin America
5. The USA is often portrayed today as the hegemon or unipole that shapes the world. Yet at the same time international politics is considered to be characterized by globalization that shapes and constrains all states. Which of these views is more accurate for the USA since 1945? Please make your case with reference to at least one other great power.
6. Discuss were the driving forces behind Russian foreign policy in the Putin era versus the Yeltsin era. What changes in the future, if any, do you foresee?
7. Analyze the causes of deteriorating U.S.-European relations since 2000. What, if anything, can be done to repair the damage?