

Comprehensive Examination in International Relations August 2009

*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 overall quality. (Note as well that citing UVa faculty, especially gratuitously, 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.***

“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) 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. “World opinion matters in international relations. Everyone knows that what people think about other actors’ attractions and aversions has consequences for domestic political action and outcomes. The same is true of international politics, as Obama’s internationalism makes clear.” Do you agree?
2. “We can never test empirically the core differences between rationalism and constructivism. Thus the so-called Third Debate in IR theory – over which of these approaches is superior – cannot be decided on scientific grounds, and has been a waste of time.” Comment.
3. In your graduate training you have read literature from scholars using qualitative analysis, formal deduction (game theory), and statistical analysis to develop and test theories about international politics. In your judgment, which methodologies have produced the most valuable insights? Which have proven less useful, and why? Compare and contrast at least three empirical works in your answer.

4. “There is no security dilemma in international politics, since security-seeking states can always use diplomacy and institutions to overcome any misunderstandings that exist or arise between them.” Discuss using the relevant literature.

SECTION II: APPLICATIONS TO ISSUES

1. Countries join international agreements of varying membership sizes. Consider the relative costs and benefits of different membership sizes of international agreements. Your answer should include a detailed discussion of relevant theoretical issues, and illustrative examples of each point drawn from *both* security and economic agreements. If a theoretical issue is only relevant to one of these two areas, discuss why this is so.

2. John Ikenberry views contemporary international order as a U.S.-led set of international institutions dominated by great powers. Andrew Hurrell depicts it as “extensive and intrusive inter-state governance and complex governance beyond the state.” Which of these views is right, and why? Be sure to deploy both theory and specific examples to back your answer.

3. To what extent does commerce, or at least certain forms of commerce, reduce the likelihood of war? Discuss with reference to at least two different decades or important periods over the last 150 years.

4. Literature in international political economy tends to take either an “inside-out” or an “outside-in” approach to understanding political and economic change. Focusing on either (a) trade or (b) money, examine the domestic and international determinants of a hypothetical country’s policy decision. Which set of variables is more significant? What variables require more study in future research?

SECTION III: REGIONAL AND AREA FOREIGN POLICIES

1. Address the relative importance of balance-of-power politics versus ideology or ethnic identity in the shaping of the policies of states in one of the following regions:

- i) Latin America
- ii) Sub-Saharan Africa
- iii) The Middle East/North Africa
- iv) South Asia
- v) Europe
- vi) Russia and its immediate neighbors
- vii) East Asia

2. “In the post-Cold War world, regions have become the most important units of analysis in international politics.” “Thanks to instantaneous communication and fast, low-cost transportation, regions matter less to international affairs than they once did.” With which

claim do you more closely agree? Answer with reference to at least three issue areas in international relations and at least one of the regions listed in question III.1 above.

3. Does the current economic crisis spell the end of the euro in either the EU as a whole or in specific countries? Why or why not?

4. Is China seeking to build an order in East Asia that excludes the United States, or at least in which the United States is subordinate to China? Would such an order be better for China than the current one? Answer also for two of the following: Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Australia. Be sure to cite evidence as well as theory.