

## Comprehensive Examination in International Relations May 2010

*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

1. "Formal modeling is necessary to progress in international relations theory. Any theory that makes clear predictions must be internally consistent, and formalization is the best way to make sure theories are consistent."

"The international relations subfield over-values formal modeling these days. It is moving our collective attention further and further away from the real stuff of world politics."

With which statement, if either, do you agree more? Why?

2. Identity and self-interest are mutually exclusive motivations in international affairs.

Discuss. The best answers will give examples from political economy, international security, and international cooperation.

3. Do grand theories of international relations facilitate high quality empirical research?

Why or why not? Support your response with examples from political economy, international security, and international cooperation.

4. "The revival of religion... provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations....As people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an 'us' /versus/ 'them' relation existing between themselves and people of different ethnicity or religion." (Samuel Huntington)

"Religious categories... cannot be presumed to obliterate other distinctions and other concerns, and even less be taken to be the only relevant system of classifying people across the globe. It is the plurality of our identities, and our right to choose how we see ourselves (with what emphases and what priorities), that the civilizational classifications tend to overlook..." (Amartya Sen)

To what extent, in your view, does the course of international relations since the end of the Cold War validate Huntington's conception of a 'clash of civilizations'?

5. Research in international relations theory was structured for several decades as a competition among "-isms," or competing broad paradigms for explaining international politics. In your view, in what ways has this competition been empirically and theoretically productive? In what ways has it been unproductive or obstructed progress in the field? Cite specific examples of research in your answer.

6. Which of the following statements is more accurate and why?

- a) "Theories are essential for trying to determine what the future holds for great power rivalry. The main reason is that we have no facts about the future, because it has not happened yet."
- b) "Prediction is impossible in international relations and scholars' efforts in this regard are poor. The only way to understand events is to study them in their unique holistic context and detail."

7. If "anarchy" is the predominant formative characteristic of the international system, how do you account for the fact that international law is observed in the overwhelming majority of international transactions?

8. "The concerns of so-called realists about anarchy have little place in modern IR theory. Not only have critics shown that the norms and institutions created through diplomatic practices can eliminate these concerns, but formal analysis reveals that private information, not power and interests per se, is the primary cause of conflict across space and time." Discuss this statement with reference to the relevant literature.

## Section II

1. From the initiation of hostilities without explicit UN authorization, to the recent allegations about abuse of Iraqi prisoners, the current war in Iraq demonstrates to all but the most naïve the irrelevance and impotence of virtually all international norms and institutions, including the just war tradition and the UN itself. States continue to act on their core national interests, even as they have become more adept at hypocritical, pseudo-ethical justifications." /Discuss./

2. How do the following (competing) versions of human rights norms interact with, or indeed confront, the sovereign independence of nation-states? What difference, if any, have human rights norms made in the structure of the international system or the content of the foreign policy of states?
  - a. A ..less controversial meaning of self-determination is the right of peoples to determine the internal structure and functioning of their societies without interference." (Rupert Emerson, "The Fate of Human Rights in the Third World,"1975.)
  - b. "Universality is, in fact, the essence of all human rights; all people are entitled to them, all state and civil actors should defend them. The goal is nothing less than human rights for all" (Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner on HR)
  - c. "...this normative conception of human capability is designed to make room for a reasonable pluralism in specification. The capabilities approach urges us to see common needs, problems, and capacities, but it also reminds us that each person and group faces these problems in a highly concrete context." (Martha Nussbaum)
  
3. "Nuclear weapons have fundamentally changed the nature of international relations and any theory that does not include their impact on global peace, economic progress, and the spread of democracy is flawed." Do you agree or disagree?
  
4. The causal impact of unipolarity has been overvalued because polarity often seems to be the product (not cause) of state choice. Do you agree? Discuss with reference to international relations (or U.S. foreign policy) since World War I.
  
5. "We do not need to imagine a scenario where non-state actors drive the international system, they already do. To the extent states serve the mobilized and organized interests of their societies, states already 'do the bidding' of non-state actors." Support this argument with examples from security, economics, and social issues while addressing counter arguments by "statists".
  
6. Why has economic regionalism been a trend since the 1990s? Why have some regions gone so much farther than others in integrating? What are the implications of regionalism, if any, for global cooperation?
  
7. "Foreign policy is not a game of percentages. The consequences of mistakes can be catastrophic. Aggregate models that describe what state behavior looks like 'other things being equal' are not useful for foreign policy practitioners, since errors considered small by conventional empirical standards can mean the difference between life and death. Given this reality, there is little prospect for bridging the gap between political science research on IR and real-world foreign policy practice." Discuss, referring to specific literature and data where appropriate.
  
8. The ideologies of great powers are often said to play a major role in the shaping of their foreign policies. To what extent do you believe this to be the case, and why? In your answer, please refer to at least two major cases over the last two hundred years.

9. Does the triad of economic interdependence, democratic regime-types, and international institutions provide a stable platform for peace between states?

### **Section III**

1. How did the Iranian revolution change the pattern of international relations in the Middle East region? Weigh the effect of changed power balances, ideology, and changing patterns of alliances.
2. Arab-Israeli peace negotiations seemed poised for breakthroughs in the 1990s, but ultimately failed. Assess the reasons for these failures – leadership, the role of the mediator, “facts on the ground”, power imbalances, lack of “ripeness”, etc.
3. Multiple reasons have been given for the Bush II administration’s decision to intervene in Iraq in 2003. What do you think the most convincing of these reasons is?
4. Are the United States and China heading toward a rivalry similar to the US-Soviet conflict during the 20th century? What insights can IR theory provide in answering this question? Discuss, referring to specific empirical research in your response.
5. “In my view, it is not the spirituality [of fundamentalist movements] that is unusual, but their ideas, cultural contexts, and world views—perspectives shaped by the sociopolitical forces of their times. These movements are not simply aberrations but religious responses to social situations and expressions of deeply held convictions. ” (M. Jurgensmeyer, 2002). In what ways, if any, does the phenomenon of modern terrorism challenge the task of theorists of international relations? What approach to theory, in your view, offer the best way to understand this phenomenon?
6. Boris Yeltsin’s administration (1992-1999) sought to transform Russia into a Western-style market democracy, while Vladimir Putin’s regime (2000-present) has largely rejected Western models of political development as inappropriate for Russia. How much difference has this divergence in conception of internal political development made for post-Soviet Russian foreign policy from 1992 to the present?
7. “Recent events in Europe underscore the notion that the euro was a failed project to begin with.” Discuss