

**Comprehensive Examination in International Relations
May 2011**

*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 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. Many scholars argue that we should do away with discussions of "isms" -- realism, liberalism, constructivism, etc. -- and focus solely on the relative value of competing causal arguments in terms of their particular deductive logics and empirical validity. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of this position with reference to some of the traditional "big concepts" in the field (anarchy, security dilemmas, shared values and norms, institutions, regime-type, interests/intentions, institutions, etc.).
2. Some argue that international order results from the interests of dominant powers. Others contend that order is produced by bargains between powerful and weaker countries. Still others contend there is no thing such as international order. Who is right and why?
3. If leaders were rational wars would never occur and markets would be fully open. Do you agree or disagree?

Part II: Applications to Issues

1. The so-called "Kantian Peace" claim is that liberal-democratic, capitalist states are significantly more likely to cooperate in international relations -- to avoid war with one another, to join and stay in international institutions, to become more interdependent, and so on -- than other types of states. Evaluate this research, paying attention to causal mechanisms, empirical results, and questions of endogeneity. Overall, do you believe that there is a Kantian Peace?
2. There has been surprisingly little scholarship devoted to explaining the outbreak, diffusion and consequences of the financial crisis of 2007-2009. Create a research design that includes a hypothesis to be investigated, measures to be collected and techniques used for analysis. Explain the theoretical audience(s) that would be influenced by your findings if you were able to carry out this scholarship. Finally, reflect on why you believe political scientists have yet to invest time and energy examining this event.
3. A growing trend in the study of international relations is the use of quasi-experimental methods and "survey experiments" as strategies for empirical research. How successful have these methods been in improving our ability to generate reliable causal inferences about international politics? What are the limitations of these approaches? Which areas of study seem most promising for the use of these methods in the future? Discuss specific empirical literature in your answer.
4. "In the post-Cold War world, strategies of coercion based on military force are no longer useful. Indeed, economic globalization and the effectiveness of collective institutional approaches to conflict resolution make coercive strategies downright self-defeating, even before one considers the implications of nuclear weapons." Discuss this statement with reference to the relevant literature."

Part III: Regional and Area Foreign Policies

Answer the following question with respect to one of the following regions:

- 1) *East Asia*
- 2) *South Asia*
- 3) *Middle East/North Africa*
- 4) *Europe*
- 5) *Russia/former Soviet Union*
- 6) *Sub-Saharan Africa*
- 7) *Latin America*

To what extent do explanations based on ideology versus balance-of-power politics help us understand the regional dynamics of one of the above areas?