

Comprehensive Examination in International Relations

May 2007

*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 and processes of 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. Since international law is almost always observed and interstate wars are rare (and increasingly so), why doesn't “society” rather than “anarchy” best characterize the structure and functioning of the international system?
2. In opposing a clash of opposing paradigms, Katzenstein and Sil argue for “analytical eclecticism”, or explanations that feature a combination of forces and factors, including those typically considered as diametrically opposed from a paradigm perspective. Are they right? Please answer drawing broadly from the literature and with specific examples.
3. A number of scholars believe that international order is best understood as a patchwork of regional orders. Considering alternative explanations of international order, to what extent do you agree?
4. Some scholars analyze international relations in terms of interests, others do so in terms of ideas. Fearon and Wendt have argued these two distinct approaches are not mutually exclusive. Can ideas and interests be usefully combined? At what cost?

Part II: Application to Issues

1. “Relations between the key powers in the international system no longer revolve about 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”.
2. Europe seems to have a developed system of international institutions while Asia appears to suffer from an (international) institutional deficit. What answers might international relations theory offer for this divergence? Which answers, if any, do you believe are right?
3. “The basic intuition from which the capability approach starts, in the political arena, is that human capabilities exert a moral claim that should be developed....We believe that certain basic and central human endowments have a claim to be assisted in developing and exert that claim on others and especially, as Aristotle saw, on government.” (Martha Nussbaum) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the “capabilities approach” to human rights advocated by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum? Does it succeed in transcending the debate on “negative” versus “positive” rights? And how well does it balance the universality inherent in human rights claims against the “highly concrete context” of nation-states and local practice?
4. In “Governance and the Global Economy”, Miles Kahler and David Lake write, “Governance is politics by other means....Since institutions shape the politics of choice and the outcomes observed, concerned parties will attempt to align governance structures with their interests.” Selecting either the domain of trade or finance, discuss different analytical approaches to understanding the impact of politics on the evolution of global economic governance.
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 debt. Is this a sign of US hegemony or of US decline? How would we know?

Part III: Regional and Area Foreign Policies

1. 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 1918? Please make your case with reference to at least one other great power.
2. To what extent has Russian foreign policy been “re-Sovietized” under the presidency of Vladimir Putin?
3. Why have the states of East-Central Europe been so anxious, having abandoned the imperial sovereignty of Moscow, to exchange it for the imperial-like sovereignty of Brussels?
4. Compare and contrast the foreign policies of TWO of the states for the periods listed below in terms of (a) origins of foreign policy trends, (b) predominant foreign policy characteristics, and (c) international consequences of the given foreign policies:
 - A. Japan, 1867-1905
 - B. USSR, 1938-1953
 - C. China, 1979-present
 - D. USA, 1894-1916
 - E. Germany, 1890-1913
 - F. France, 1797-1815
 - G. Russia, 1700-1721
5. Assess the relative influence of system-level and unit-level influences, respectively, on foreign policies in one of the following since 1992:
 - A. Russia
 - B. Middle East
 - C. Latin America
 - D. South Asia
 - E. Sub-Saharan Africa
 - F. China
 - G. Japan
6. “The European Union has reached its maximum size just as its utility has been waning. The EU, as an international project based on law rather than force, is unable to command respect from other major powers (i.e., outside the Union) as well as non-state actors for whom violence represents the only viable currency of international politics.” Discuss.