**Comprehensive Examination: International Relations**

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Please answer one question from each section. You have eight hours to complete the exam.

Section I: IR Theory

1. A conventional wisdom in IR is that the world is organized around anarchy. Over the last several years, though, scholars from various perspectives have been challenging this wisdom and, instead, have been making the case for hierarchy. Please address the following: (a) What is the difference between anarchy and hierarchy? (b) How do scholars from different approaches understand hierarchy? What does hierarchy illuminate that anarchy does not? (c) What is at stake in this anarchy-hierarchy debate?

1. Power is a central concept in the study of international relations. Different theories operate with different understandings of power. What are the different conceptualizations of power? Are these different conceptualizations, in your view, designed to address different kinds of outcomes? What are the advantages and disadvantages of different conceptualizations of power?
2. One way to carve up the discipline is between those who contend, on the one hand, that the international system is insatiable in its capacity for bloodshed, violence, and war, and those, on the other hand, who argue for the possibility that reasoning and learning might produce peaceful change. In short, some international relations theories can be characterized as theories of pessimism and others as theories of progress. How do different theories come down on this debate, paying particular attention to the sources of progress and/or the sources of stasis.
3. What role does rationality play in the design or functioning of international institutions? Compare two or more theories that have contrasting views on this question. Define “rationality” under each theory and be sure to cite specific scholars or works that hold views you discuss.

Section II: International Political Economy

1. Does increasing international economic integration produce convergence (across countries) of domestic political institutions and policies? If so, how and to what extent? If not, why not?

2. How well does the field of international political economy address the rise of new economic powers (e.g., China, Brazil, and India), non-state actors (e.g., NGOs and multinational corporations), and new forms of technological development (e.g., internet and social media)? Discuss the strengths and weakness of competing IPE theories in addressing the roles of these evolving actors and technologies in the world.

3. Does your assessment of the prospects of further globalization depend on whether you are looking at trade, labor, or finance? Why or why not?

4. Comment on the following statement: “Different sectors and segments of society have benefitted unequally from globalization. In other words, there have been winners and losers.” Was it inevitable that there would be “losers” and those left behind? Could the state have done anything to cushion the blow? If it didn’t, what does this say about the nature of the contemporary state in the global economy?

Section III: International Security

1. The “rise of China” now preoccupies much scholarship and commentary on international relations. Which theory or theories do you think are most suited to understanding China’s rise, and why? Which theories are ill-suited? What does theory tell us about whether China’s rise will be peaceful, or conflictual? Discuss with reference not only to the major “isms” but also to theories of power transitions, leadership, and regime type and domestic politics.

2. Since the end of the Cold War there has been a proliferation of different approaches to security. How do they challenge realist-centered understandings of security? Is the field of security studies strengthened or weakened by the contestation over the meaning and practice of security?

3. Waltz argued that theories of international relations based on the characteristics of states were “reductionist” and not particularly useful because they could not explain how states with very different internal characteristics behaved similarly in the international arena. Since Waltz, a plethora of theories have challenged his assertion and argued for the importance of regime type: for example, the widely held claim that democracies possess advantages that enable them to prevail in crises and wars. More recent research, in turn, has taken aim at theories based on regime type and argued that democracies are not all that distinctive in their international behavior. Is this a return to Waltz? In what ways is the current state of the literature on regime type and international security similar to Waltz’ characterization of it, and in what ways is it different?

4. In recent years, security studies has turned (or returned) to a variety of independent variables within states, including civil-military relations, leaders, and fine-grained conceptions of domestic institutions. Evaluate this turn in the security studies literature with reference to at least two of these variables. Do you find this turn useful? Will it continue, or peter out? What is the most productive direction for the field?