

May 2012

### Comprehensive Examination: International Relations

**Major Field Exam:** Answer FOUR questions; you have EIGHT hours to do so.

**Minor Field Exam:** Answer THREE questions; you have SIX hours to do so.

All answers will be given equal weight. Be sure to refer to the relevant literature in your answers and watch the time.

1) Power is a central concept for many IR theories, but notions of power and its role in international politics vary widely. Briefly review three understandings of power prominent in the field, and compare the kinds of research programs that each has yielded. Given changes in the world, do some of these notions look more useful for 21<sup>st</sup> century politics than others?

2) How do states' interests vary (if at all), what causes them to vary, and what implications do different approaches to international interests have for different accounts of international politics? In a short essay, discuss these differences in accounts of state interests, and their practical implications for our understanding of state's actions and interactions.

3) Are macro-level theories like realism, liberalism, and constructivism useful for the study of foreign policy decisionmaking? If so, how? If not, why, and what tools would be better?

4) Some scholars argue that increasing trade and capital mobility have important homogenizing effects on the national policies of countries. Others argue that governments maintain considerable flexibility in setting domestic economic policies, even in the face of increased economic interdependence. Critically assess these arguments and the evidence for such constraining effects on national policymaking.

5) Scholars of international political economy have increasingly moved away from theories centered in international interactions among states to theories that seek to build up from domestic accounts of politics within states to explain international outcomes. Which kinds of causal relationships are highlighted by this change in focus, and which de-emphasized? In your answer, you should both provide a critical assessment of domestic level explanations of how the international political economy works, and briefly survey possible alternatives from past or present international relations theories.

6) The international security literature does not provide a single view on the dangers posed by nuclear weapons. On the one hand, some analysts see nuclear weapons providing very effective deterrent capabilities and therefore reducing the probability of war. Some even believe that nuclear weapons are the key to understanding why the Cold War was peaceful. On the other hand, some analysts believe that nuclear proliferation brings great

dangers and some see it as the greatest danger facing the United States. Discuss these perspectives, laying out their key arguments; then explore whether they are actually inconsistent with each other.

7) States can pursue their national security interests through a variety of approaches. Waltz argues that states have a choice between building military forces (internal balancing) and gaining allies (external balancing). However, states have other possible options, including arms control (military cooperation), appeasement, and war. Discuss the advantages and disadvantage of these different means and the factors that should influence a state's choice between them.