

## **Comprehensive Examination: International Relations**

The George Washington University

Department of Political Science

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### **Instructions**

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

Keep the following in mind when composing your essays. First, read the questions carefully and answer all parts of the questions you select. Second, articulate a coherent argument in answering each question. Merely demonstrating that you have read the literature is insufficient for answering questions satisfactorily. To this end, it is strongly recommended that you outline your essays before beginning to write (you do not need to include any outlines as part of your responses). Third, citation format is up to you, although author-date citations (e.g., “Waltz 1979”) are recommended for speed and brevity. Rough or approximate citations to prominent works (e.g., “Rodrik’s 2011 book on globalization”) are acceptable. Please do not include a bibliography or list of references.

### **Section I: IR Theory**

1. Sovereignty has long been a foundational organizing concept for international politics but its meaning and implications have always been contested. Define sovereignty and explain the best way to understand the concept. Have our understandings of sovereignty changed over time? If so, how and why? Is sovereignty still useful in 2022 for understanding world politics and political behavior? How and why? Be sure to support your argument by drawing on relevant literature and providing empirical examples.
2. What theoretical tools does IR have to understand the diverse array of “non-state actors” in world politics? Pick two types of non-state actors and discuss available theoretical tools for understanding their behavior and effects. Is IR better equipped to understand some non-state actors than others? If so, how so and why? Be sure to reference scholars whose work has informed our understanding of these actors.
3. States worry a great deal about changes in the foreign policies of other states. States often agonize about foreign policy decisions they, themselves, confront. How good are various theories of IR at explaining the actual foreign policies and foreign policy decisions of states? Are some IR theories better at this than others? Which ones are better (or worse) and why? Do we need a different array of theories to explain foreign policymaking (as opposed to theories explaining international politics)? What theories might be promising? Pick two foreign policy decisions, either by the same state or by two different states, to support your claims about IR theory’s role in understanding foreign policy decision making. Be sure to define terms and reference relevant scholarly literature in your answer.

### **Section II: International Security**

1. Before and during Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the United States and Russia have been engaged in what might be called “dual deterrence.” Before the war, the United States threatened to impose economic sanctions on Russia if it attacked. On the day of the Russian invasion, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a veiled nuclear deterrent threat, warning that anyone who “tries to stand in our way” will face consequences “such as you have never seen in your entire history.” Finally, the United States and its NATO allies have warned Russia against any further territorial expansion to the west by deploying additional forces to frontline NATO members. Has deterrence succeeded or failed in these cases? Begin by defining deterrence and laying out the different strategies of deterrence. Which strategies have been employed in these three cases? How credible have the respective threats been? How effective have they been and why? Be sure to draw on relevant literature in your response.

2. In the post-World War II era, and especially since the end of the Cold War, economic sanctions have become perhaps the favorite tool of states hoping to compel other states to change some objectionable behavior. Yet arguably today's sanctions look much different from those in the past. How have economic sanctions evolved over time, and have they become more effective? Be sure to define economic sanctions before explaining how they have evolved over the years. Evaluate the relative effectiveness of the older style of sanctions versus the newer style. What are the implications of your analysis for the use of this type of economic statecraft and whether it should be the "go to" instrument of compellence? Be sure to discuss specific scholars' work and specific cases of sanctions in your essay.
3. Although scholars of civil war have often treated such conflicts as if they occurred within hermetically sealed borders, third-party intervention—as demonstrated in recent civil conflicts in Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, Mali, and elsewhere—has been the norm rather than the exception. Since 1945, roughly two-thirds of civil wars have experienced some form of military or economic intervention; in one-third of all conflicts, foreign troops have been deployed (this figure reached nearly 50 percent in 2020 and 2021). What have scholars found about the effects of external interventions in ongoing civil wars? How successful have these interventions been at achieving their objectives—whatever those objectives may be? How do these findings apply to recent prominent cases of intervention? Be sure to discuss the work of specific scholars and specific interventions in your answer.

### **Section III: International Political Economy**

1. Multilateral economic institutions (e.g., the IMF, World Bank, and WTO) continue to enjoy considerable support among most governments but they have often been the target of nationalist backlash over the last half decade. Discuss these critiques of multilateral economic institutions. Who are these critics, what are they unhappy about, and why? How can supporters of these institutions best address these challenges? Is it possible to satisfy the concerns of developing countries and rising economic powers (such as Brazil, China and India) while still meeting the requirements of major developed shareholder states?
2. This summer, the U.S. Senate passed legislation authorizing \$280 billion, an amount exceeding the inflation-adjusted spending on the Apollo program, to support semiconductor manufacturing and R&D in advanced technology. To what extent does this public investment reflect a revival of national industrial policies within developed countries? What are the implications of such a revival for states, markets, and national competitiveness? How might such sizable public investments by liberal market economies like the United States change the landscape for rules and regulations in international organizations, including the World Trade Organization (WTO)?
3. In response to rising inflation globally, the U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank (ECB) have hiked interest rates. What is the effect of tighter monetary policy on competition for capital internationally and the stability of national currencies? What does the scholarly literature tell us about whether the higher cost of capital will compel developing countries to enact austerity? According to the political economy of finance literature, under what conditions does a shift toward austerity reflect structural, partisan, ideational, or historical forces and how do higher interest rates fit into that literature? In your view, which factors might best describe the roots of austerity pressures in the current global environment?