

Comprehensive Examination: International Relations

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Department of Political Science

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

IR Theory

1. The journal IO is planning a 75th anniversary issue organized around the rise and decline of the liberal international order. You have been asked to serve as a guest co-editor and identify 5 topics that you believe should be commissioned for the issue, two of which must pivot around how the global south fits into that order. Please propose five topics, being specific about the topics and justifying their inclusion.
2. Please review the literature on interdependence with regard to the debate about its relationship to international peace and security.
3. A major debate in the state of the field concerns whether it has split into separate islands and whether this split is good or bad for progress in the study of international relations. What are the different sides of the debate and where do you stand?
4. International relations theory, American-style, emphasizes the importance of explanatory over normative theory. What is gained and what is lost -- and be sure to cite specific materials to illustrate and support your argument.

International Security

1. The bargaining model of war has become enormously influential in the literature on the causes of interstate conflict. Yet this model has also been used extensively to explain the onset of civil conflict. After briefly sketching the basics of the bargaining approach to war and describing its application in the interstate setting, explore rationalist explanations for

civil war. In your view, which is the strongest rationalist explanation for interstate war? For civil war? Why?

2. Over the past decade the Stanton Foundation has invested substantial sums of money to promote the study of nuclear strategy and the causes and consequences of nuclear proliferation. Outline and assess the contribution of at least two strands of this new literature. In your view, has the “renaissance of nuclear studies” improved our understanding of the role of nuclear weapons in international politics?
3. A fundamental question in international relations is how states can influence the behavior of other states, both allies and adversaries alike. States have a variety of tools at their disposal that vary in their levels of coerciveness and invasiveness. Discuss and assess the efficacy of at least three such tools of influence.
4. Are U.S. alliances a force for peace in East Asia, or do they in fact increase the probability that the United States will become involved in a war in the region? Based on your analysis, should the United States maintain or even strengthen its alliances in East Asia, or should it consider withdrawing from some or all of its commitments?

International Political Economy

1. Robert Keohane recently said that IPE scholars like himself share “some responsibility for the rise of populism. We demonstrated that an institutional infrastructure was needed to facilitate globalization, but this infrastructure was constructed by and for economic elites. ... Global finance and global business had a privileged status, and there was little regard for the interests of ordinary workers.” In a short essay, describe how the IPE literature on institutions has developed, drawing on the literature to provide an analytic account of whether it did or did not have the biases that Keohane suggests.
2. Much recent work on IPE emphasizes the role of economic interests. In a short essay, draw on the relevant literature to explain the various accounts of how economic interests arise, and how they influence the policy process, analyzing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches.
3. The dominant Open Economy Politics approach to IPE is rationalist rather than constructivist. How does this shape the topics that IPE covers? Are there important questions that are left underexamined, or even unasked? In a short essay, draw on the literature to examine how debates between rationalism and constructivism in international political economy have evolved, identifying both areas of success and possible blind spots as appropriate.

4. Much recent public commentary focuses on how President Trump is dismantling the global trade regime. What does the IPE literature have to say about the relationship between US hegemony and the global trade? What would different approaches to IPE, (some examples might include: Open Economy Politics, liberal institutionalism, or economic power based approaches such as Susan Strange's) have to say about the likely consequences if the US no longer supports the global trade regime? Write a short essay exploring these questions, drawing on the appropriate literature.