

International Relations Written Comprehensive Exam

August 2016

Section 1: World Politics A

1. “Realism’s signal failure lies in its inability to deal with ideologies and ideological conflict.” Discuss.
2. “The British statesmen Lord Castlereigh said ‘morals were never well taught by the sword.’ One might wish he were correct, but he isn’t. Changes in norms in international politics are almost always deeply intertwined with coercion, if not force.” Discuss.
3. International relations, like political science more generally, is a field that often borrows basic insights from other social science disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology, and history. Discuss the benefits and pitfalls of such borrowing with respect to any two such adapted research programs.

Section II: World Politics B

4. Discuss the conditions under which states can most readily signal their capabilities and intentions.
5. Ethnicity and religion are often discussed as two forms of identity politics that affect international relations. Discuss both differences and similarities in the way these two forms of identity politics affect international politics.
6. International cooperation. States sometimes delegate authority to international organizations. Why do they do so, and how do they use institutional design to achieve their goals? Provide examples.
7. Treaties are at their most effective in international politics where states use them to help resolve simple coordination problems. They are far less influential when used in situations characterized by Prisoner's Dilemmas. Do you agree? In explaining your answer, please refer to specific examples and be clear about the mechanisms you are discussing.
8. One of the most robust, yet underexplored, findings in the quantitative literature on civil war is that new states are particularly prone to civil war. Why would new states be more likely than older states to experience civil war? Discuss with reference to at least two examples.

Section III: Security

9. “In the use of force coercion is cheaper than conquest, but far less likely to achieve its aims at acceptable cost.” Discuss.
10. “The biggest problem in military strategy is goal displacement.” Discuss.

Section IV: IPE

11. One goal of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is to ensure that governments comply with international trade law. How can the WTO support the enforcement of trade law? What are the roles of governments and exporting firms in the process?

12. A recent article claims that democracies attract greater foreign direct investment because they can more easily commit to not expropriate these investments. Please summarize and evaluate this logic, discussing the problem that this account claims that democracies solve. Why might the relationship between democracy and foreign investment be spurious, and what assumptions could make this argument more plausible?