

International Relations Field Exam

August 2011

Please answer one question from each section. Keep in mind that you will be evaluated not only on your knowledge of the relevant literature, but also on your ability to think independently and make a compelling argument.

Section 1

A. What justifies the existence of IR as a separate field of study? For decades, its existence was justified with the different operating principles of international and domestic politics, namely, anarchy and hierarchy. But over the last two decades many have questioned anarchy as an accurate description of international politics. At the same time, the emergence of a vast civil-war literature demonstrates the existence of domestic conditions that often resemble anarchy more than hierarchy, further blurring the distinction. Should we abolish the international/domestic distinction entirely? If not, on what should that distinction be based? Discuss with reference to at least two issue areas.

B. Summarize the main tenets of Waltz's (1979) and Gilpin's (1981) theories of the international system and inter-state war. Can these two theories be reconciled and are they still useful in explaining post-Cold War patterns of war and peace in the Middle East? (Focus on the recent wars in Iraq and Lebanon as examples.) To what extent does the influence of non-state actors like Al Qaeda or Hizbullah require a reconsideration of theories of international order and inter-state war?

Section 2

A. Summarize the theory of audience costs, identifying its premises and assumptions. Critically review the empirical evidence in favor and against the theory with attention to the research design and analytical methods used in the studies that you review. What are some of the open questions in that literature and how can they be studied (i.e. propose a feasible research design to address at least one of the questions that has not yet been satisfactorily answered in the existing literature).

B. Deterrence theory features among the most prominent literatures in international security developed during the Cold War. Ever since the security landscape changed with the demise of the Soviet Union, however, many have argued that deterrence can no longer be the basis of sound security policy. Discuss and criticize the major contributions to deterrence theory, with an emphasis in comparing and contrasting rational deterrence theory with psychological approaches. Are these two approaches irreconcilable or is there any way to integrate them? Furthermore, discuss the applicability of deterrence theory to the post-Cold War environment, where threats are perceived as including nuclear proliferation and global terrorism. Does deterrence theory need to be updated? In what direction should scholarship evolve?

Section 3

A. Has economic globalization changed international politics? If so, how? If not, why not? Include a discussion of how increased economic integration influences policy-making within states.

B. Some argue that international institutions play an important role in the governance of cross-border flows, including money, goods and people. Evaluate this claim with reference to at least two types of cross-border flows, and include references to approaches that have been or could be taken to study the effects of international institutions.