

Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam in Political Economy

August 2020

Instructions: Please answer one question from each of the following three parts. Choose three questions that demonstrate the depth and breadth of your knowledge. This is an individual open-book exam.

Part 1

1. Modernization theorists are optimistic about the prospects for democratization as societies became richer and/or more diverse. What causal mechanisms do they assume, explicitly or implicitly, between economic development and political outcomes? How would they explain democratic deconsolidation or backsliding on display today? What are some critiques of modernization theory and what would they say about populism?
2. Kuznets thought that new technologies would exacerbate wealth disparities only temporarily. Is the current shift towards capital-intensive production such a technological shift? How would we know? Sketch out a research design to study the problem.
3. Why does income/wealth inequality vary across countries? Discuss in the context of several different analytical approaches. Which is most useful, in what ways? What are some trade-offs across different approaches to understanding this variation?

Part 2

4. How do voter-based and interest-group-based theories of politics conceptualize the role of money in politics? How should we judge between them? Holding constant the supply of campaign contributions, how and why might politicians' demand for money vary?
5. What accounts for variation in women's "exit options" to their marriages? What effects might this variation have on family work, labor market participation, and/or voting behavior? Lay out a research design to study this in two or three different country contexts.

Part 3

6. The Heckscher-Ohlin, Stolper-Samuelson (HOSS) model of world trade suggests that global integration exacerbates wealth inequality within rich countries while reducing it in poor countries. Does this explain the politics of trade in today's world? Why or why not? Give several examples to illustrate your answer.

7. Does trade openness reduce government corruption? Discuss two or three theoretical arguments that link these two variables, and empirical strategies to understand this relationship.
8. Education and support for trade liberalization are positively correlated. Why? Discuss at least two mechanisms that can account for this correlation, and the empirical evidence at hand. What new areas of empirical research do you think are necessary to gain a deeper theoretical understanding of the relationship between education and support for globalization?