

Political Economy Field Exam

January 2009

Instructions: Answer three of the following questions, choosing questions to show the breadth as well as the depth of your knowledge. Closed book exam, but feel free to refer to political economy reading list for spelling.

Question 1

A growing number of studies show that the size of natural resource exports, in particular that of crude oil, is correlated with retarded economic growth and democratization. Provide a few causal hypotheses regarding why exporting natural resources might delay economic growth and/or democratization. How can the validity of these statements be tested empirically?

Question 2

“Rich democracies tend to protect farmers at the cost of consumers whereas authoritarian regimes tend to subsidize urban residents.” Evaluate this statement. Provide a few hypotheses about why this might or might not be the case.

Question 3

When a federal and a unitary state are compared, which form of government does a better job in providing local public goods? Provide a few causal hypotheses and empirical examples.

Question 4

Some scholars have argued that among developed democracies “center-left governments dominate under PR systems, whereas center-right governments dominate under majoritarian systems; and that PR systems redistribute more than majoritarian systems”. a) Evaluate the possible strengths and weaknesses of this argument. b) Would you expect to see a similar relationship between these political institutions and redistribution among developing countries?

Question 5

A vast amount of political economy conceptualizes conflict along socioeconomic or class lines. Discuss several ways of thinking about the nature of political identities. How would the alternatives that you present challenge existing theories of political economy? Illustrate your answer with examples from the real world.

Question 6

During the past few months America’s government made its most dramatic interventions in financial markets since the 1930s. It has been suggested that the current crisis could redraw the boundaries

between government and markets. For some, “freer and more flexible markets will still do more for the world economy than the heavy hand of government” whereas for others “big banking crises are ultimately solved by early and decisive government action and financial regulation.” Evaluate these positions.

Question 7

Suppose you are trying to settle the debate between the swing and the core voter theories of distributive politics. What are the weaknesses of existing theories and empirical approaches? What alternative research strategies might you propose?