

**PHD COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION  
IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
MARCH 31, 2014**

**MAJOR FIELD EXAMINATION**

You are required to answer a total of **three questions** in this examination. You must answer **one question from the IR theory section and one question from each of your two pre-designated subfield sections**. You have **five hours** in which to write your answers. Please remember to *save your work frequently* on the computer you are using. This examination has 3 pages.

Your answers should, at a minimum, demonstrate breadth and depth of knowledge of the relevant literature and familiarity with the main perspectives and debates in each area. You should choose and construct your answers to avoid repetition with respect to content and literature.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY**

1. To what extent does it make sense to speak of an international community in contemporary world politics? Discuss with reference to the major theoretical perspectives of international relations, citing relevant authors and literature.
2. Contemporary international relations theory offers a wide range of explanations for how international norms are created. Describe three kinds of such explanations, citing relevant theoretical literatures. Discuss which, if any, explanation you find most convincing and explain why?
3. Non-state actors, independent of their governments, play increasing roles in global politics. To what extent do the major international relations theoretical frameworks account for non-state actors? What new theoretical developments are necessary to better understand the role of non-state actors in global politics? Describe and discuss, citing relevant examples and literature.
4. “There is no longer any question that the old order dominated by the United States and Europe is giving way to one increasingly shared with non-Western rising states.” What do you regard as the impact of these emerging powers on the international system to date? To come in the next decade? How are your answers informed by international relations theories? Cite relevant examples, authors, and literature.

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## **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION**

1. Do contemporary Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) reduce power inequalities among states or amplify them? Discuss with reference to the relevant theoretical literature and illustrate your answer with examples drawn from at least two contemporary IGOs.
2. When, if ever, would you expect secretariat members in contemporary Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) to play a significant role in shaping the decisions made by their member states? Discuss with reference to the relevant theoretical literature and provide specific examples of secretariat influence or lack of influence in at least two IGOs.
3. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), transnational advocacy networks, epistemic communities, and multinational firms all engage in international interactions, though not necessarily through the traditional channels of inter-state diplomacy. How has this trend affected the relevance of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)?
4. “The authority and capacity of the UN Security Council is eroding more and more.” Is this an accurate statement, in your view? What are the key arguments made by those who advance these claims? What counterarguments are advanced against this statement? Develop your answer through consideration of two crisis situations within the last two decades.

## **INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY**

1. When considering the “intellectual history” of IPE, do you see distinctive American, British, or Canadian traditions and contributions? Is there a distinct Third World perspective in IPE? Explain your answer with reference to relevant IPE authors and literature.
2. Under what conditions do states successfully cooperate to create agreements and institutions that help govern the global economy? Please apply your argument to at least one case of success and one case of failure. Cases can be taken from any arena of the global economy. Cite relevant authors and literature.
3. Does the gradual accumulation of global, regional, and bilateral trade agreements constrain domestic politics and national democracy? Why or why not? Can such constraints lead to backlash and a negative feedback loop on the global trade regime? Cite two examples and relevant authors and literature.
4. Why have states chosen to liberalize both domestic finance and capital flows since the late 1970s? Take a position and contrast alternative hypotheses and frameworks. Is the process irreversible? Has it generated a new stable equilibrium? Why or why not? Cite relevant authors and literature.

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## **INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

1. The incidence of major armed conflict – interstate war and intrastate war-- seems to have diminished significantly over the last decades (with some notable deviations). What explanations are usually provided for this, and do they vary across types of violence? Which do you find most convincing? Cite examples and relevant literature.
2. So-called ‘civil’ or ‘intrastate wars’ are, on the one hand, internationalized in many ways, and on the other, a localized set of disputes. Is the territorial nation-state (e.g. Syria), the most relevant unit of analysis for a civil war? What sorts of theoretical and methodological tools can help us to a better job? Cite relevant authors and examples.
3. Attempts to account for the onset of civil war focus on three main stylized arguments, these centred on ethnic antagonism, presence of natural resources, and weak states, respectively. We have moved on from seeing them as competing explanations, but we lack a unified theory of how they combine. How would you combine these arguments to provide such a unified theory of civil war onset? Cite relevant examples, authors, and literature.
4. “Focusing attention on the nature and strategies of ‘asymmetric conflict’ is key to advancing our understanding of how to end both contemporary interstate and intrastate conflicts.” What have researchers achieved to date in their study of asymmetric conflict? What important questions remain? How might they be investigated?