

**PhD COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
September 23, 2015
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 IO and Security 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. The recent escalation of tensions between Russia and Western states, especially concerning Ukraine, have led many to speculate that a “new Cold War” has begun. From the perspectives of existing theories of international relations, how would we know if this is the case? Do any of the major paradigms help us in explaining and even predicting such escalation and if so, how? If not, how important is this failure?
2. Assessing developments in the broader field of Political Science over the last 15 years, one scholar has argued that “debates - fights, if you will - between quantitative and qualitative political scientists are largely a thing of the past.” Insofar as International Relations (IR) is part of the larger discipline of Political Science, would you agree with the latter characterization of the field? What are the implications of your response?
3. In the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, the principle of the inviolability of territorial boundaries was seemingly reinforced. However, to what extent is this “inviolability” relevant, in practice, to the conduct of international relations today?
4. There have been several arguments that the battle between the ‘isms’ is over in IR. To the extent that is accurate, who won the battle? Make an alternative case if you do not think that is an accurate characterization of the field. If you answer this question, avoid overlap with question #2 above if you answer #2 also, you need to have two distinct answers.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

1. To what extent do international organizations have legitimacy? To what extent do they have authority? Explain your responses, and illustrate with reference to at least two international organizations.

... over to page 2

2. “IR scholarship on international organizations is in crisis. While theoretical work suggests that as an organizational form, multilateralism is both efficient and stable, the empirical record of multilateral organizations suggests the opposite. Given the weakening of both trade and finance regimes since the end of the Cold War, it may well be that multilateral organizations can succeed only when one member of the group functions as an enforcer, credibly committing to protecting the rules of the organization, even when not in that members’ self interest.”
Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Refer to specific readings and evidence where appropriate.
3. In the 1990’s constructivists argued that certain state actions, like the non-use of chemical and nuclear weapons, the abolition of slavery, the end of apartheid and decolonization, among other developments, could not be explained by the material environment facing states. Two decades later, are ideational and moral concerns seen as significant factors in global politics? Whether you answer yes or no, please substantiate your argument with regard to more recent research.
4. Do regional organizations detract from, enhance, or otherwise have an impact upon the effectiveness of broadly multilateral international organizations? Are there general trends or influences that help or make more difficult the management of global issues? Illustrate your arguments with at least one regional and one broadly multilateral international organization.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

1. We are told we now live in a world of ‘Big Data’ (and the methodological approach it requires). Has access to large amounts of data in the last decade or so altered our understanding of war? Please cite relevant studies to substantiate your argument. What are the analytical gains and losses?
2. The existence and availability of natural resources is regarded as a key factor in explanation of civil wars. In simple terms, the relationship is captured in the phrase “the natural resources curse,” but recent research suggests that the impact of natural resources on conflict is quite complex. What do you regard as the key findings and conclusions of these studies? What do you regard as fruitful avenues for further research? Cite relevant authors and findings in your answer.

... over to page 3

3. Some years ago, Stathis Kalyvas pointed out that much of what scholars have 'discovered' about civil wars is not of much use to policymakers (that civil wars occur in poor countries, for example, is hardly surprising to government officials). Do you agree? You don't need to be familiar with Kalyvas' argument, just make your own argument as to why (or not) the last two decades of research on civil wars is unhelpful (or helpful) to policymakers. If the research is unhelpful, what would help? Or should scholars even want to help policymakers out?

4. Not surprisingly, most of our theories of international conflict were developed with conflict between states in mind. In what ways (if any) are these theories useful for understanding conflicts between state and non-state actors, such as terrorist organizations or rebel groups within states? And in what ways do or will they need to be modified for these sorts of conflicts?