

IR/FP Comprehensive Examination
Fall 2010

Instructions: Ph.D. students must answer the mandatory and three (3) optional questions (in 8 hours). M.A. students must answer the mandatory and two (2) optional questions (in 4 hours). Note — you may answer only one (1) question from any optional group. Be sure to provide the corresponding number to the questions you answer.

MANDATORY:

M. The failure of International Relations (IR) theory to theorize the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the subsequent asymmetrical integration of Russia and the newly independent states within a global capitalist economy has triggered a re-theorization by some IR scholars. In some instances the reassessments have involved revisions of existing schools of thought (e.g. Offensive neo-realism) as well as the generation of new theories by borrowing analytics from other disciplines (e.g. social constructivism, feminism, post-colonial theory, post-structuralism).

Discuss in-depth two new directions within the field of International Relations/Global Politics in the post-Cold War era. In your answer: A) Compare and contrast these new directions to prior theories; B) Discuss the main advantages and disadvantages, in your estimation, of these approaches in helping us to explain or understand recent global trends; c) Draw conclusions as to whether these new directions signify either: fundamental changes for the field; a refinement/improvement of existing theory; a passing fad; or an unfortunate detour; D) Cite relevant literature throughout.

OPTIONAL (Select no more than one (1) from each sub-section)

IR Theory:

1. Post-positivist (or described as post-contemporary) approaches to IR provide a radical critique of conventional IR analysis (e.g. focus on the rational unitary state, conceptions of power and so forth). Contrast two post-positivist (or post-contemporary) approaches and be certain to discuss the epistemological and ontological divergences and political implications. Cite relevant literature.

2. The use of the term “structure” in IR is not without controversy. How is structure defined in structural realism? What was meant by structure in the “agent-structure” debate? What do constructivists understand by the term? How about world system theorists?

Foreign Policy Analysis:

3. What is foreign policy analysis? How does it fit into IR theory, if at all? What, if any, is the relationship of foreign policy analysis to comparative politics? From your perspective, what are the principal "schools" or approaches to foreign policy analysis? Which approach, or combination of approaches, do you find most useful for the study of specific issues in foreign policy? Explain.

4. Discuss how the US strategy in the "Global War on Terrorism (GWOT)" has evolved from the G. W. Bush administration to the Obama administration. What are the major points of continuity? What changes has the Obama administration introduced into the US anti-terrorism strategy, if any? Examine at least two concrete examples in your analysis. Be certain to cite relevant literature and authors in your response.

Security Studies:

5. Copenhagen School authors Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Japp de Wilde have coined the term "securitization"? Define the term. Provide examples of how specific issues or problems become "securitized." Does this same approach help explain how issue become "de-securitized"? Discuss. Does securitization, as an IR analytic, contribute to a better conceptualization of the notion of "security" among IR theorists? If so, how? Does it provide a useful methodology for studying security issues? If so, how?

6. The concept of security has undergone significant evolution in the post-Cold War era. Compare and contrast the conceptualization of the notion of security dominant during the Cold War with those that have surfaced in the relevant IR literature since the end of the Cold War, particularly those which stress "identity" and "endogenous factors" influencing national interests. What are the principal factors that led to the present efforts at reconceptualization common among various scholars dealing with contemporary security issues? What analytical benefits or advantages do you perceive in these efforts at reconceptualization? What conceptual costs or dangers can you identify in such efforts? On balance, how would you characterize the current "state-of-the-debate" over security studies in IR?

Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism:

7. The increase in the frequency and intensity of ethnic conflicts in a number of states and regions of the world challenges existing IR theories. What are the implications of these new types of conflict for IR theories and their main theoretical assumptions? Be certain to cite relevant literature and authors in your response.

International Law:

8. Answer two (2) of the following:

A. Article 38(1) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice requires that the Court decide disputes in accordance with international law by applying, among other things, “international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law.” Now: (i) explain your understanding of “customary international law;” (ii) illustrate how customary international law has been used to settle disputes between states; and (iii) respond to the suggestion that the very idea of customary international law is suspect because international law is binding on states only to the extent that they consent to the formation of that law.

B. Assess the legality of the military action undertaken by the United States and its allies in Afghanistan.

C. Does international law significantly modify the way states behave?

Global Health Threats:

9. Public health threats, such as the spread of the H5N1 (avian) and H1N1 (swine) flu, dengue, food borne illnesses to just name a few, have generated new international challenges for the prevention and control of cross border disease spread often associated with trade, travel and tourism.

The controversy on how best to respond to the rising global health issues and policies generate the following questions: 1) who is ultimately responsible for controlling the spread of disease across geographical borders? Equally important, (2) what are the international and ethical responsibilities of states to report emerging disease threats within their own geographic borders? In your answer, 3) discuss the role of foreign policy and global health cooperation and 4) examine what changes have been made to promote greater health diplomacy in the 21st Century. Use specific examples to support your answer.

European Integration:

10. The final ratification of the EU Reform (Lisbon) Treaty has opened a new chapter in the evolution of European integration. EU leadership has claimed the appearance of a stronger, more practical integration organization with an expanded external face, including the new posts of President of the EU Council and the High Representative. Summarize some of the most important changes, their rationale, and potential consequences. In view of the latest developments, suggest a regional integration theory that best fits the current shape of the EU and its origin.