

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
CANDIDACY EXAM  
2013

DAY TWO

ANSWER THREE QUESTIONS FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST OF SIX QUESTIONS. YOU MUST ANSWER AT LEAST ONE QUESTION FROM EACH PART. YOU HAVE EIGHT HOURS TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION OF THE EXAM.

PART A: SECURITY

1. Uncertainty is central in structural realist thought, where it plays a key role in the security dilemma. Yet the concept is under-theorized and there is debate over its precise role in causing conflict and war. In your essay, characterize the types of uncertainty and show how they lead to the security dilemma and conflict; and assess the extent to which, in extant realist thought, the problem of uncertainty can be overcome. Are states as uncertain as realists suggest they are?

2. If alliances are formed not only for the purpose of capability aggregation but also as a way to coopt, restrain, and manage enemies—consistent with the terms “binding” (Grieco, Ikenberry), “tethering” (Weitsman), and “alliances as tools of management” (Schroeder, Pressman)—and if we extend this “alliance management” logic from simple dyadic relationships to triadic ones, do we thereby undermine the familiar “balance-of-power” logic captured by the Arab proverb: the friend of my enemy is my enemy?

3. In the past few years, Joshua Goldstein, Steven Pinker, and others have advanced arguments that the rate and severity of interstate war (and armed conflict more broadly) have declined precipitously over the past few centuries. Consider various explanations scholars have proposed. In your view, why have we seen a decline in the rate and severity of interstate war and will this continue? What are the implications, if any, for American foreign policy?

PART B: FOREIGN POLICY

1. Scholars disagree about the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy. Characterize these debates. What are the most important ways, or most likely conditions under which, mass opinion influences foreign policy? To what extent are political leaders able to reverse the causal arrow, i.e., to manipulate public opinion through their own actions? Use concrete examples to illustrate your arguments.

2. Strategic thinking requires anticipating how developments today will affect the choices made by other states in the future. This is often done by assuming that through some political process states determine what is valuable, develop expectations of how likely it is

that certain moves will advance these interests, and then update these expectations in light of experience. How do rational models expect each step of this process to work? What are the most important findings from psychologists and behavioral economists that speak to how these processes do work? What do these findings imply regarding expectations about strategic interaction?

3. States sometime choose to act unilaterally and other times act multilaterally. Offer a definition of these concepts. What does the literature say about the costs and benefits of each strategy and the factors that cause leaders to choose one or the other? Does the evidence point to some factors as being particularly important?