

Exam Questions By Year IR 214

2005

How important was 'soft power' in ending the Cold War?

What does the concept of an international society add to neo-realist or neo-liberal approaches to international relations?

Which theory of international relations best explains the development of the international system since 1985?

Why do scholars of international relations disagree on the nature and meaning of globalization?

What constrains democracies from going to war?

Does unipolarity or multipolarity best describe the balance of power in the international system today?

'The concept of "human security" demonstrates just how far the United Nations has moved beyond traditional ideas of sovereignty'. Do you agree?

'Despite its noble past, NATO has become an increasingly irrelevant institutions since the end of the Cold War.' Discuss.

Why do most states obey international law?

How important is nationalism as a source of conflict in the post-Cold War period?

Is the idea of a clash of civilisations 'dangerous nonsense'?

Why has the experience of the European Union been so difficult to replicate elsewhere?

Is EITHER China, OR Japan, OR Germany best thought of as a regional or global power?

Does it still make sense to talk of a North-South divide in international relations?

2006

'The continued centrality of international security concerns demonstrates the abiding relevance of realism.' Discuss.

'The deepening of globalization demonstrates the ever-increasing relevance of theories of international society.' Discuss

To what extent is bureaucratic politics a US invention to explain a specifically US reality?

Does the efficacy of international law depend on the degree to which it reflects immediate state interest?

Why has NATO been more successful and adaptable than any other regional security organization?

Which theoretical approach best explains the process of EU enlargement?

If the WTO did not exist, would governments need to invent it?

Does the application of the principle of self-determination promote justice in international relations?

When did globalization begin?

Is culture relevant to the understanding of terrorism in international relations?

Is it democracy or liberalism that accounts for peaceful relations between liberal democratic states?

What problems does the practice of humanitarian intervention pose for developing countries?

What do relations between the US and UN suggest about the nature of power in international relations?

Is gender relevant for our understanding of global security?

2007

'Neorealists can explain how states react to an insecure world; but they cannot explain the sources of insecurity.' Discuss.

To what extent do EITHER constructivists OR international society theorists underestimate the importance of material forces?

Is globalization changing the balance of power?

Is soft power the instrument of choice for all Great Powers?

To what extent are the terms 'Third World' or 'Global South' useful for analysis of international relations in the period since 1990?

Do you agree that ideology plays a more important role in the foreign policy of the United States than it does in the case of China?

'To view the United Nations as the core of a collective security system is to misunderstand its role in world politics.' Discuss.

Under what conditions does religion become a source of international conflict?

What are the limits of rational-choice explanations of ethno-nationalist conflicts?

Does liberal institutionalism provide a convincing explanation of the durability and success of NATO?

'For all the trappings of supranationalism the EU remains a creature of states.' Discuss.

Does democratic peace theory have imperialist implications?

In what ways does EITHER the WTO OR the international human rights system illustrate the nature and limits of international law?

In what ways does economic globalization influence arguments for global redistributive justice?

2008

Can neorealism provide a convincing account of how states have responded to international terrorism?

In what ways and how successfully do theories of EITHER constructivism OR international society address the question of progress in international relations?

Does international law do more to reinforce or to restrain the exercise of power in international relations?

A system designed in good times to cope with bad times should be judged in terms of the bad times rather than the good times'. Is this a fair way to evaluate of the role of the United Nations in international security since 1990?

Is the EU anything more than a set of inter-state bargains?

Assess the utility of liberal institutionalism for explaining the evolution and impact of any ONE of the following institutions: NATO; the WTO; ASEAN; NAFTA; Mercosur.

What light does the experience of particular regions of the world shed on democratic peace theory?

Is 'ethnic conflict' a helpful way of explaining the changing patterns of violence and insecurity in any TWO of the following areas: the former Yugoslavia; the former Soviet Union; Africa; the Middle East?

How has globalization affected the exercise of state power?

Did 2001 mark a turning point in US foreign policy?

What does the evolution of German foreign policy since the end of the Cold War tell us about the nature of power in the contemporary international system?

Is China a status quo or a revisionist state in the international system?

Assess the utility of the concept of 'North/South' for understanding international bargaining in ONE OR MORE of the following issue areas: trade, finance, climate change, nuclear non-proliferation, global health.

What is the most convincing argument for global distributive justice?

2009

'Disagreement over the notion of anarchy is the main dividing line between the major theories of international relations'. Discuss.

Which of the main approaches to International Relations best explains the constraints to US power in current world affairs?

Do ideas trump interests in foreign-policy making? Discuss with reference to concrete foreign policy choices of any ONE OR MORE countries since 1990.

Has the United Nations been a conservative or innovative institution in managing global security since the end of the Cold War?

How does the concept of human security affect the principles of collective security?

The relevance of international law depends entirely on the willingness of leading states to comply with it. Discuss

Is 'globalisation' a catch-all-concept that actually prevents us from understanding the diversity and complexity of the current global order?

Are culture and religion instruments rather than causes of conflict in international relations?

Has NATO actively defined a new role for itself in the post-Cold War era or has it merely reacted to a rapidly broadening agenda?

Are theories of European integration applicable to regional integration processes in other parts of the world?

Who has benefited most from the creation and operation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)?

How useful is realism in explaining state responses to new sources of insecurity and new forms of organised violence?

Does the analytical distinction between 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalism help to assess the validity and results of self-determination claims?

Has the liberalisation of financial markets reduced or enhanced the dependency of less developed states?

Is 'Democratic Peace Theory' western hegemonic ambition in disguise?

2010

It is claimed that neorealism explains only a small number of big and important things about international relations. Even if it does, is it a useful theory?

Is the international society approach just a 'better packaging' of realist principles?

Under what conditions does globalization strengthen or weaken the state?

What contribution (if any) does international law make to international order?

'The attempts to re-fashion the world on national lines have not brought greater peace, but rather have created new conflicts and brought catastrophe to countless innocent people.' Discuss with reference to events since 1990.

'War between major states is now obsolete.' Discuss.

Has the United Nations' role in international security since 1990 conformed to the provisions of the Charter?

Is the neoliberal faith in international institutions misplaced?

How has the international political context affected multilateral efforts toward trade liberalization?

Which theoretical perspective in international relations helps us understand best why NATO has survived the end of the Cold War?

On what basis should we argue that wealthier states have duties of justice toward less wealthy states?

Is hegemony a force for stability or instability in world politics?

Is religious extremism the cause or effect of contemporary international conflict?

Is the influence of domestic political structures more important than the beliefs of foreign policy-makers in the shaping of foreign policy? Discuss with reference to ONE state of your choice.

'Enlargement and constitutionalism have made the European Union into an incipient state rather than an advanced form of international cooperation.'
Discuss.

2011

Do you agree that US power is too great to be challenged by others but not great enough to solve serious global problems?

'Democratic peace theory suggests that relations between the West and parts of the Middle East would become much more peaceful if the states in the latter region democratized.' Discuss.

Debates about globalization's effect on state power often hinge on the distinction between delegated and transferred state authority. What is meant by this distinction and which concept better captures reality?

'Realist theory is obsolete.' Discuss.

'The strength and the weakness of the UN Security Council is that it depends on agreement among the five permanent members.' Discuss.

Does the growth of international interdependence strengthen the case for global distributive justice?

Does the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention depend on who is intervening?

Does the principle of national self-determination strengthen or undermine international order?

Are culture and religion instruments rather than causes of conflict in international relations?

'For all the trappings of supranationalism, the EU remains a creature of states.'
Discuss.

'All the UN's post Cold War achievements in the area of international security were negated by the Iraq War of 2003.' Do you agree?

How successfully do theories of EITHER constructivism OR international society address the question of progress in international relations?

2012

What, if anything, does Waltz's neo-realism add to classical realism?

'The insights of the English School combined with an ambiguous ontological claim.' Is this a fair judgment on constructivism?

How far do domestic politics explain foreign policy? Answer with reference to ONE or MORE states since the Cold War.

Since the end of the Cold War is there any evidence that international law has influenced the behavior of states?

'The UN Security Council veto serves only to protect the interests of the permanent members of the Council.' Do you agree?

What have been the consequences of NATO's expansion since the end of the Cold War?

'The current crisis in the European Union exposes the limitations of theories of integration'. Discuss

'Since the end of the Cold War conflict has been about identity more than about ideology or economics'. Do you agree?

Is it possible to liberalize international finance and trade while retaining effective sovereignty?

'Nationalism is a problem for international order only when demands for national self-determination are suppressed.' Discuss with reference to the post-Cold-War era.

'In a globalized world, security is indivisible.' Discuss.

'"Soft power" can never count as true "power".' Do you agree?

2013

About what do the major theoretical approaches to international relations disagree?
Answer with reference to AT LEAST TWO of: realism; liberalism; the English School;
constructivism.

Can Foreign Policy Analysis explain international relations without reference to a broader
theoretical framework?

In the absence of an international legislature, how is international law made?

Has the United Nations been faithful to its original principles?

'NATO has ceased to be a collective-defence organization.' Do you agree?

Do we need a theory of disintegration to understand the European Union since the Lisbon
Treaty?

Can changing conceptions of security be explained merely by changing patterns of
conflict since the end of the Cold War?

Is nationalism a threat only to status quo powers?

Has Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis of 1993 stood the test of time?

Has globalization decreased inequality?

Should the IMF and the World Bank be concerned about the distributive effects of their
policies?

Are rising powers undermining US hegemony?

How do international institutions constrain power?

2014

What is the most important purpose of a theory of international relations, and which theoretical approach best fulfills that purpose?

Is the post-Cold War world a more secure world or just a world with new insecurities?

Do international institutions promise more or less cooperation than they can actually deliver? Answer with reference to ONE OR MORE of the WTO, NATO, and the EU.

Has the UN demonstrated that it can deal effectively with cases where sovereign states fail to meet their responsibilities to their own citizens?

‘The persistence of unipolarity since 1990 shows that balance of power theory is wrong.’ Discuss.

Has international law improved since the end of the Cold War?

What actors or forces shape a state’s foreign policy choices?

Whose interests have been best served by the liberalization of EITHER international trade OR finance?

Is the principle of national self-determination just?

What have been the most significant changes in the character of international conflict since 1990?

To what extent has globalization transformed the international society of sovereign states into a cosmopolitan world society?

How should we measure the power of international actors?

2015

Which theoretical framework or approach best explains the nature of power in the international system?

Has globalization made the world more or less cohesive?

'The liberalization of international finance and trade has strengthened the haves and weakened the have nots.' Discuss.

'The European Union experience indicates that the state remains the central theoretical player in international relations'. Discuss.

Which theoretical approach can take greatest comfort from NATO's survival since the end of the Cold War?

How can we know that a state's behavior is influenced by norms?

'A pious justification for the defense of western interests.' Is this a fair comment on the UN's R2P doctrine?

'The nature of international conflict since the early 21st century has vindicated Huntington's clash of civilizations these'. Discuss.

'Democratic peace theory is so deeply flawed that it has lost any explanatory value'. Discuss.

'The impact of ethnic nationalism on the international order since the end of the Cold War has been much exaggerated'. Discuss.

Does the international society approach offer a coherent approach to international law?

'Realism's greatest failing is its incapacity to take domestic politics into account'.
Discuss.

Has the proliferation of non-state actors strengthened or destabilized the international order?