Examiners’ commentaries 2014

IR1011 Introduction to international relations

Important note

This commentary reflects the examination and assessment arrangements for this course in the academic year 2013–14. The format and structure of the examination may change in future years, and any such changes will be publicised on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

Information about the subject guide and the Essential reading references

Unless otherwise stated, all cross-references will be to the latest version of the subject guide (2012). You should always attempt to use the most recent edition of any Essential reading textbook, even if the commentary and/or online reading list and/or subject guide refers to an earlier edition. If different editions of Essential reading are listed, please check the VLE for reading supplements – if none are available, please use the contents list and index of the new edition to find the relevant section.

General remarks

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course and having completed the Essential reading and activities you should be able to:

• explain the relevance of key terms in International Relations
• identify the strengths and weaknesses of IR’s various theoretical approaches
• analyse international events from a variety of theoretical viewpoints
• describe the nature of units and social structures within the contemporary international system.

What are the Examiners looking for?

The Examiners are looking for the ability to understand the question as it appears in the examination paper. This means not merely understanding the material to which it refers but also the suggestions about how to use that material, so that the answer precisely responds to the question as set.

Since time for the examination is limited you should be careful to be relevant and resist going off on irrelevant digressions. This may involve being disciplined in the use of illustrative material: it is necessary but should not be over-used. Linguistic skills are important: a feel for the meaning and subtleties of words, as well as an identification of possible ambiguities in the wording. You can use such ambiguity to identify more than one way of answering the question. Doing this attracts good marks.

The best candidates will always be able to respond to the subtleties of a question in the examination hall and will therefore not rely on model answers. This capacity depends on knowing the material and, of course, having good linguistic and literary skills.
The Examiners also look for a familiarity with the relevant literature. This may be acquired through wide reading, but can be approached by remembering the people to whom ideas are attributed in the subject guide or in general texts such as the textbook by Baylis et al. (In the 2014 Examiners' commentaries the reference is always to the sixth edition of the textbook). You should always try to read as widely as possible.

**Key steps to improvement**

There is no simple way to improve. Immersing oneself in the literature is a good first step. Beyond that is the need to debate and discuss the subject with others including fellow candidates and tutors. A good candidate should also be an avid reader of newspapers and journals, and be familiar with ways of accessing these online if necessary. This is not always possible but should be attempted. The internet is one of the most important resources available to the candidate of international relations.

**A note on the Examiners’ commentaries**

The remarks made in the two accompanying commentaries (Comments on specific questions for Zones A and B) are not intended as indications of model answers but as suggestions about how a good answer might be produced. There could be other ways to achieve this. The literature recommendations proceed from the books which are most likely to be available to you, the subject guide and the textbook. Other recommendations are made which can easily be located from the information given.

**Question spotting**

Many candidates are disappointed to find that their examination performance is poorer than they expected. This can be due to a number of different reasons and the Examiners’ commentaries suggest ways of addressing common problems and improving your performance. We want to draw your attention to one particular failing – *question spotting*, that is, confining your examination preparation to a few question topics which have come up in past papers for the course. This can have very serious consequences.

We recognise that candidates may not cover all topics in the syllabus in the same depth, but you need to be aware that Examiners are free to set questions on any aspect of the syllabus. This means that you need to study enough of the syllabus to enable you to answer the required number of examination questions.

The syllabus can be found in the Course information sheet in the section of the VLE dedicated to this course. You should read the syllabus very carefully and ensure that you cover sufficient material in preparation for the examination.

Examiners will vary the topics and questions from year to year and may well set questions that have not appeared in past papers – every topic on the syllabus is a legitimate examination target. So although past papers can be helpful in revision, you cannot assume that topics or specific questions that have come up in past examinations will occur again.

*If you rely on a question spotting strategy, it is likely you will find yourself in difficulties when you sit the examination paper. We strongly advise you not to adopt this strategy.*
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Comments on specific questions

Candidates should answer **FOUR** of the following **TWELVE** questions. All questions carry equal marks.

**Question 1**

**What is distinctive, if anything, about the approach of ‘The English School’ to the study of international relations?**

**Reading for this question**

The English School is discussed in Chapter 1 of the subject guide, and again in Chapter 5. In both cases the discussion is particularly concerned with the ways in which the English School departs from various kinds of Realism, and stresses its distinctive characteristics. In the textbook this subject is addressed in particular in Chapter 2. Chapter 6 also contains relevant materials.

In the list of Further reading in the introduction to the subject guide, of particular relevance is


In the list of journal articles, also in the introduction to the subject guide

Little, R. ‘The English School vs. American Realism: a meeting of minds or divided by a common language?’, Review of International Studies 29(3) 2003, pp.443–60

is particularly useful.

**Approaching the question**

You should indicate a range of possible theoretical approaches to the study of international relations, which need not be the same as the one proposed in the subject guide. A good answer would consider the question of which of these approaches is closest to the English School.
The conclusion would probably be that the closest is Realism, and an outstanding answer might then discuss the nature of the additions to, or modifications of, that theory proposed by the English School. These would include the idea that international relations includes, as Bull (2002) has suggested, the idea of an international society. In contrast, in the realist view, order results from the dominance of the more powerful over the rest. The outstanding answer could argue that the notion of society rests on normative assumptions – that its accepted practices and institutions, such as diplomacy, negotiation, cooperation, law and formal institutions are the result of accepted norms and principles, which can change, emerge and solidify over time. An outstanding answer could conclude that though the states are the main structures in international society, the English School holds that the way in which they interact does not necessarily lead to conflict. The English School could be seen as a kind of soft Realism with an important additional constructivist ingredient.

Question 2

Which aspects of the modern international system can be traced back to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, and which cannot?

Reading for this question

Chapter 9 of the subject guide concerns the rise of the state, and the role played in that by the Peace of Westphalia. You could usefully compare points made in this chapter with those concerning the 20th century origins of international relations in Chapter 1 of the subject guide.

In the textbook useful materials may be found in Chapter 2, which explicitly discusses the contributions made by the Peace of Westphalia.

A very useful source is


mentioned in the list of Further reading for Chapter 9 of the subject guide. Similarly, there are a number of useful arguments concerning the question in


mentioned in the list of Essential reading in the introduction to the subject guide.

Approaching the question

This question gives you the opportunity to give a view about the emergence of the international system. An outstanding answer could reveal at the outset an awareness of the advantage of seeing that system as an international society, which leads into a discussion of emerging practices and arrangements. You could point out that 1648 is thought to be the date on which the secular realms of the princes/kings emerged from the religious realm of medieval Europe, which the Pope had claimed to lead. But there were important aspects of international society which emerged later, though dates could be disputed. This is the point at which an outstanding answer could propose a list. The list could include international law, which arguably rested on the perception that it was based on accepted practice between states, as reflected primarily in treaties. Even the idea of state sovereignty was developed later than Westphalia with the thinking of philosophers such as Hugo Grotius; and the related idea of non-intervention was firmed up in a modern form after the Napoleonic wars. International organisation was also an aspect
of international society which emerged more clearly in the second half of the 19th century. International courts were not set up until the end of the 19th century. The list of such additions to international society is lengthy. An outstanding answer could make the point that there was an emerging European practice after Westphalia which added a range of elements to what came to be called international society.

**Question 3**

**Why did the Cold War end?**

**Reading for this question**

Chapter 3 of the subject guide is focused on the end of the Cold War. There are several relevant articles by Michael Cox mentioned in the list of Further reading.

Collins, R. ‘Explaining the anti-Soviet revolution by state breakdown theory and geopolitical theory’, *International Politics* 48(4/5) 2011, pp.575–90, also has useful materials about the complexities of explaining the end of the Cold War.

Chapter 4 of the textbook is also concerned with this question.

**Approaching the question**

An outstanding answer could point to the periods of tension and occasional détente between the Soviet Union and the West as constituting the normal view of the Cold War, and that the disintegration of the Soviet Union necessarily ended the Cold War in this narrow sense. You could then go into the various factors which led to the decline of the Soviet Union, such as the failure of the Soviet system to keep pace with the new technologies originating in the West – a failure of government and the economic system – and point to the personal contribution of Gorbachev, and various Western leaders, in successfully opposing but also involving the Soviet leader. This explanation could include the growing weight of economic and social expectation among East European populations, which the Soviet system simply could not satisfy: the cost and scale of internal controls simply to contain the pressures for change became excessive.

An outstanding answer could also raise the question of whether there was a new Cold War, and indeed, whether there was not a long Cold War with tensions re-emerging between Russia and the West, the result of different attitudes towards the state and the requirements of leadership. In this view, the outstanding candidate could argue, what appeared to be the end of the Cold War was merely an intermission in a longer period of tension between the West and Russia.

**Question 4**

**Has globalisation made the state redundant?**

**Reading for this question**

Chapter 4 of the subject guide provides an excellent range of materials which are relevant to this question.


mentioned in the list of Further reading in this chapter also contains several relevant contributions.
In the textbook you should refer to the index for a large number of relevant materials. Chapter 1 in this volume is, however, directly concerned with the development of globalisation and its consequences for the state. Part Five of the same volume has two chapters on aspects of the future of globalisation, and these are Essential reading on this question.

**Approaching the question**

You could start by considering what constitutes globalisation: is it the increasingly dense network of transnational organisations, be they private corporations, or governmental and non-governmental organisations, or is it made up primarily of an increasing speed and range of communications, which means that what happens in one part of the world is quickly known elsewhere? An outstanding answer might argue that it includes all these elements and that this has consequences for the state.

These consequences include the difficulty of controlling global systems, or shaping global interactions, even for great powers such as the USA. An outstanding answer might consider the meaning of the word ‘redundant’ in the question, and point out that globalisation does indeed create problems in the way of effective control, but that this suggests courses of action which the state needs to follow in order to obtain that control, such as cooperation with other states. The fact that states are often slow to understand the need for such cooperation does not necessarily mean that they are redundant. You could add to these points that the state serves other purposes, which pre-date globalisation, and which remain pressing. These include the traditional implications of sovereignty, such as the governments’ right to make laws for peoples in their territories, which assumes the lack of any higher authority. Globalisation may require new ways of exercising these traditional functions of the state, but it does not follow that the state is, therefore, redundant.

**Question 5**

‘Realism and Liberalism are not contradictory theories about the nature of international society; they merge into each other.’ Do you agree?

**Reading for this question**

The subject guide has materials relevant to this question throughout, but Chapter 5 is perhaps the richest in such materials. In the list of Further reading for Chapter 5


is recommended, since it deals with liberal realism. A good critical account of realism is in the article by


in the same list.

In the textbook, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are of particular interest.

You could also draw on materials from


**Approaching the question**

You could begin by proposing key aspects of the two theories. Realism follows from the ideas of philosophers of a pessimistic nature, such as Hobbes, who see conflict between states as inevitable, while liberals, like
Locke or Kant, hold a more optimistic position. They hold that cooperation is the rational way for states to behave. You should look for the elements in both theories which could be held in common. These would include the idea that the state is the primary actor in international relations. Liberals and realists could both hold this view without either conceding the core arguments of the other. Liberals could stress sovereignty and power in international relations, but stop short of assuming that the search for power is always the dominant motivation of states, or that order results from the application of power by one or more states: power can be used rationally to promote higher aims. Realists, like liberals, do not all believe that what happens within states, whether they are democracies or not, is irrelevant to their behaviour towards each other. But they do believe that states have to be prepared for conflict and should always be prepared to resist other states which could exploit them for unilateral advantage.

Liberals, in contrast, stress that the character of states, the nature of their national ideologies – including views on law and human rights – is the primary determinant of their behaviour as states. For liberals, ideas can be shaped by forms of organisation within and between states which sustain cooperation between them. Realists do not necessarily deny this, but still hold that the arrangements seen as cooperative should be treated sceptically: because of human nature they are continuously available for exploitation by enemies for unilateral advantage. An outstanding answer would reveal a nuanced understanding of these two core theories about relations between states, revealing awareness of interpretations of each which cannot be reconciled with the other, but also of interpretations which are convergent.

**Question 6**

**Can a useful distinction be made between just wars and unjust wars?**

**Reading for this question**

Theories about just and unjust wars are discussed in Chapter 7 of the subject guide. There are several relevant readings in the list of Further reading here, particularly


Bull (2002).


The classic text on just and unjust wars is


In the textbook the relevant chapters are 13, on ethical aspects of international relations including war, 14, on the changing character of war and 18 on legal aspects of the conduct of war.

**Approaching the question**

You need to distinguish between the criteria applicable to just war, both in its origins and in its conduct, and the application of such criteria to the practice of war. The former may be stated with some confidence, and are reflected in the major religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The latter – the practice of just war – leads to two different objections: that the problems of starting and fighting just wars are insoluble, since a just cause for one is not just for another, and fighting
justly may prolong the killing, as avoiding unnecessary harm may lead to
the survival for longer of more enemies; or that, as a hard realist could
argue, what is important is to win rather than to seek the impossibility of
fighting justly in a just cause.

Nevertheless, an outstanding answer could argue, the idea of just wars has
to be recognised. It exists, and always produces arguments about whether
it was right to fight a particular war or to use particular methods. The
ideas of *ius in bello* (criteria to determine whether a war is being fought
‘in a just manner’) and *ius ad bello* (criteria to judge whether an actor’s
choice to go to war is justified) are behind the controversy over the use
of torture to prevent terrorism by the US government, and the numerous
UN conventions outlawing various weapons of war. In the terms of the
question the outstanding answer could conclude that the distinction can
be made and is made, though there is likely to be disagreement about how
to apply the principles of just war to a particular war.

Question 7

What conditions will have to prevail if the world is to become more peaceful?

**Reading for this question**

This question gives you the opportunity to draw from a wide range of
reading. In the subject guide Chapter 8 focuses on explanations of peace.
In the list of Further reading there, of particular importance is

Adler, E. ‘Condition(s) of peace’ in Dunne, T., M. Cox and K. Booth The Eighty Years’
Crisis: international relations 1919–1999. (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Gaddis, J.L. ‘The long peace: elements of stability in the post-war international

In the textbook Chapter 20 is concerned with the United Nations, while
many other chapters are relevant to the conditions which sustain peace.
For instance, Chapter 28 is concerned with problems of poverty and
underdevelopment, Chapter 23 discusses the origins of terrorism and
Chapter 29 concerns human security. Chapter 15 concerns international
and global security.

**Approaching the question**

You could attack this question on the grounds that the word ‘will’ seems
to imply that there is a definite list of such requirements, whereas the
best general judgement by international relations authorities is that the
best that can be done is to load the dice in favour of peace. The ways
of doing this proposed in the literature include the establishment of
liberal democracies, the creation of more equal societies, with general
prosperity, and effective governance, and the appearance of high levels of
interdependence between states. You could refer to the European Union as
one of humanity’s rare deliberate attempts to create a security community,
and many of the features of this Union illustrate ways to make the world
more peaceful. It is also arguable that there may be elements which
undermine peace within democracies, such as incompatible religions or
ideologies. The list is long.

On the other hand, the outstanding candidate could argue, the words
‘making the world more peaceful’ leave out the crucial element of time.
Does this imply perpetual peace, or just peace for a while? If the latter,
then it is possible that strong government, lacking liberalism, could
succeed in the short term, and when it disappears, conflict would erupt
Question 8

Are states becoming more equal, or less?

Reading for this question

You could begin reading for this question with Chapter 9 of the subject guide. Also see Chapter 4 on globalisation and Chapter 5 on the main theories, and

James, A. ‘The practice of sovereign statehood in contemporary international society’, Political Studies 47(3) 1999, pp.457–73

mentioned in the list of Further reading for Chapter 9 of the subject guide.

The textbook contains relevant material in Chapters 1–3 and Chapter 18 on international law. Extensive use could also be made of the index with regard to materials on the state, and on sovereignty.

Approaching the question

An outstanding answer could begin by criticising the wording of the question: is it possible to be more or less equal, or is equality necessarily neither more nor less? Or does the question imply that there are more states that are becoming equal in the sense that more of them are raising their game to become equal with the others? Or does the question transgress the assumption made about states that they are sovereign and therefore necessarily equal in international society, as actors, as subjects of international law and as participants in international diplomacy?

An outstanding answer could attack the question in this way yet conclude that it could be interpreted by way of common usage as an enquiry about the relative achievement of states in relation to a range of common indicators, especially military power, economic success and prosperity or social and political stability. The impressive answer could hazard informed guesses with regard to these indicators along the following lines: more states are achieving degrees of economic success; more states are acquiring more military technology, and a few of them are acquiring nuclear weapons; more states are acquiring some vestiges of democracy; the states that were great or superpowers see their leading position challenged (even the USA!). The conclusion from this range of impressionistic evidence could be, an outstanding answer might argue, that states have overall become more equal, though – another mark of an excellent answer – moving towards equality is not the same as becoming equal. There is still an enormous, continuing differential between the militarily powerful and economically successful states, and the least powerful and least developed states.

Question 9

Can soft power be a viable alternative to hard power?

Reading for this question

A starting point for reading on this question is Chapter 10 of the subject guide, where there is an explicit discussion of soft power. A discussion of soft power is also contained in Chapter 13 of the subject guide. Reference could also be made to

mentioned in the list of Further reading for this chapter.

In the textbook the sections on alternative ways of thinking about power and the constructivist concept of power are useful. Some other useful points are in Chapter 6, on realism, and Chapter 7, on liberalism.

**Approaching the question**

You need to begin by defining the two forms of power, and locating them in the literature. Marks would also be gained by referring to the contexts in which they are most frequently discussed, particularly the external relations of the European Union. The point could be made that the EU has underdeveloped military power, and that its soft power, including normative power, is developed and arguably effective. It can be seen in the use of so-called conditionality in negotiating trade or investment agreements with outsiders, such as pre-entry East European states, or African states.

The outstanding answer would, however, tackle the question posed in the question directly. Put at its sharpest can such soft power be an alternative to hard power in pursuit of the same goals of foreign policy? There are some targets of hard power which cannot be addressed by soft power, such as participation in the global strategic system, or achieving goals that require the use of extensive military force. There are a number of reasons for the failure of the EU as an international strategic actor, but one of them must be its shortfall with regard to various aspects of hard power, such as logistical capacity or possession of the most technologically advanced weapons. There are also, however, external goals that are available by using soft power rather than hard power. The EU has been a model and a magnet for new members because of its soft power, and it has been one reason for the EU's emergence as the world's biggest trading bloc. Soft power has also helped the EU to maintain good relations with states around its periphery in the neighbourhood policy. So the conclusion would be that soft power cannot achieve many of the goals that might be attained with hard power, but that it can achieve some goals that are less likely to be achieved by hard power.

**Question 10**

**Why have governments disagreed about the extent and costs of climate change?**

**Reading for this question**

This question is addressed in Chapter 11 of the subject guide. Useful reading is also

Pelletier, N. 'Of laws and limits: an ecological economic perspective on redressing the failure of contemporary global environmental governance', *Global Environmental Change* 20(2) 2010, pp.220–28

mentioned in the list of Further reading for this chapter.

Chapter 22 of the textbook, on environmental issues, has a useful discussion of the problems in diplomacy regarding the problems of climate change. Griffiths (2007), mentioned as Essential reading in the introduction to the subject guide, also has useful materials.

Dupont, A. 'The strategic implications of climate change', *Survival* 50(3) 2008, pp.29–54

in the list of Further reading in Chapter 12 of the subject guide, are also
directly relevant to this question.

**Approaching the question**

You should start by distinguishing between the extent of climate change –
the change of temperature over time, and its consequences in various parts
of the world (rising sea level, desertification, flooding and the melting
of ice caps etc.) and the costs of such changes (how much governments,
and other parties, will have to pay, and when, in order to cope with the
changes, and set in place responses to mitigate them).

An outstanding answer could divide the question into two parts in the light
of these distinctions. The extent and its pace, and where its effects will be
most severe, are vulnerable to disputes about the pertinent science. Such
an answer could point out that it is not just anti-science change deniers
who might disagree about how much and how fast. One key issue is that
of whether there is likely to be a tipping point beyond which the effects
cannot be mitigated as the changes have gone too far. This is related to the
second part of the answer: how long is it possible to postpone the costs of
climate change which arise from damaging activities such as the burning
of fossil-fuels? Not only can governments argue that they do not need to
take on the costs of coping yet, but even accepting that costs have to be
paid eventually, they disagree about the degree of responsibility. Should
some states, which have polluted heavily during their own development,
pay more to offset the pollution costs of late developers? Another source of
disagreement about who pays, which you could point out, are the games
of bluff and double bluff which arise from such negotiations: one state can
extract a fee, or, crudely put, a bribe from other states as a condition of
taking steps to reduce their own damaging emissions.

An outstanding answer could conclude that this is a highly complex
game, which gives scope for denying the extent of climate change, and
opportunities for high pressure bargaining among governments. These
opportunities arise largely from the very different circumstances of the
states affected.

**Question 11**

**Assess the contribution of the International Atomic Energy Authority to
upholding the Non-Proliferation Treaty.**

**Reading for this question**

Chapter 12 of the subject guide provides useful relevant materials on
this question, and there are a number of relevant readings in the Further
reading for this chapter.

Chapter 24 in the textbook directly addresses the question as set.
Particularly recommended is the study by Sagan and Waltz listed there.

**Approaching the question**

This question asks for an evaluation of the role of the IAEA in preventing
the spread of nuclear weapons. An outstanding answer could point to the
range of its activities in this connection, and distinguish such efforts from
success in eliminating proliferation. The conclusion of such an argument
could be: that the organisation is a key part of a set of arrangements
which emerged in the UN framework and elsewhere to prevent nuclear
proliferation; that the organisation has carried out operations in a number
of specific cases, in particular Iraq, North Korea and Iran, designed to
prevent these states from acquiring nuclear weapons, and has worked with
the UN to put sanctions in place when its work was impeded; and that
the agency has played a part in reinforcing the norm of non-proliferation, and of keeping up the pressure on the nuclear states to do what they committed themselves to do in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, namely reduce and remove their own nuclear weapons.

An assessment, as is required, could also present the failures of the organisation. It has not been able to deal effectively with states that have sought to evade its attempts to inspect and report attempts to go nuclear, though it has cooperated with the Security Council in putting in place sanctions when this has happened. It has not succeeded in closing various gaps in the Non-Proliferation regime, in particular getting the major nuclear powers to accept a binding ban on all nuclear testing, getting an agreement that nuclear states should not deploy their own nuclear weapons on the territory of non-nuclear allies; and getting all nuclear states, in particular India and Pakistan, to accept the Non-Proliferation Treaty and its various supporting agreements. You could conclude that the IAEA has carried out some useful work in the area, has strengthened the regime of non-proliferation, indeed has been an essential part of it, but that its efforts, perhaps inevitably, are a work in progress.

Question 12

Why has the United Nations come to depend increasingly on cooperation with regional organizations in its efforts to maintain international peace and security?

Reading for this question

Chapter 12 of the subject guide contains some relevant materials both on the United Nations and on regional organisations.

A substantial discussion of the role of the United Nations and its relations with regional organisations is in Chapter 20 of the textbook. In Chapter 26 you’ll also find a discussion of regionalism in international affairs. As usual you should use the index in this volume in search of relevant materials.

Approaching the question

You could agree that there has been an increasing involvement of the UN with regional organisations in maintaining peace and security, but add the caveat that the word ‘depend’ in the question could be too strong. There have been a dozen or so examples of UN–Regional organisation cooperation, especially with the African Union and with NATO, and this might be explained, as the question requires, by reference to a number of developments or lack of them. There has been some evidence of a drying up of resources to sustain UN peace-keeping operations, and a case for concentrating those resources more directly on humanitarian efforts, and such specialised activities as post-conflict rebuilding. Some regional leaders, such as Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, have also pressed for more formal consultation and cooperation between regional organisations, like the African Union, and the UN. It was felt that local regional organisations should play a much larger role in putting right their own problems. This could also be a context in which local regional leaders could exercise their leadership and enhance their power.

But the UN has also been anxious not to allow its role to be usurped by regional organisations. The Charter laid out the rules for UN–Regional cooperation in Chapter 8 and these stressed the primary role of the Security Council. Regional organisations should not act as gatekeepers between local conflicts and the Council. When they act they should do so with a Council mandate and provide detailed reports about activities to the Council. Although regular consultations between regional organisations
and the UN Council and Secretariat are being sought there has been disagreement about how many such regions should be involved and the level and scale of consultations.

There has been more mutual involvement, and cooperation, but ‘depend’ suggests a move of primary responsibility from New York to the regions, which has not happened.
Examiners’ commentaries 2014

IR1011 Introduction to international relations – Zone B

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Comments on specific questions

Candidates should answer FOUR of the following TWELVE questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Question 1

‘Many international actors are now more powerful than many states.’ Discuss.

Reading for this question

The question asks you to draw on a wide range of materials about international actors, the state and power. In the subject guide a good starting point would be Chapter 9, which includes materials on the state and on non-state actors. Also in the subject guide Chapter 10 focuses on the nature of power.


Another primary reference is Chapter 21 in the textbook which considers the role of transnational actors and international organisations.

Approaching the question

The answer to this question could start with an account of the international actors which are not states. These could include, among others, obvious candidates such as multinational corporations, but also inter-governmental organisations such as the United Nations, non-governmental organisations such as the major multinational humanitarian organisations, and the major multinational churches, such as the Catholic
Church. An outstanding answer, having presented this list, could point out that the question raises a difficulty: it appears to ask for a comparison of respective powers, which is near impossible since these bodies have different kinds of power and are concerned with different objectives.

An outstanding answer could also point to the difficulty of comparing different kinds of power: these might range from economic power (including the power to invest, or to develop), normative power (including the power to influence by promoting), and appealing to, common norms, as well as more diffuse power (such as the power to expose to massive public disapproval, as with Amnesty International). An outstanding answer could conclude that in relation to their various goals many international actors of necessity have greater power than many states, as they appeared to pursue goals that states could not achieve either by themselves, or often, even in alliance.

An outstanding answer could argue critically that the question is really about the nature of power and that makes it difficult to conduct the kind of comparison which it appears to invite.

Question 2

Compare and contrast the positive and negative consequences of the expansion of the European Union since 1992.

Reading for this question

Relevant materials are in Chapters 10 and 12 of the subject guide.

This question is also directly addressed in Chapter 26 of the textbook. The work by Telo mentioned in the list of Further reading is a useful reference. There’s also a useful discussion of European Union expansion in Chapter 4.

Approaching the question

This question invites you to consider the pros and cons of the expansion of the European Union to include the states of Eastern Europe, including many of those that had been a part of the Soviet Union. It therefore requires historical knowledge of this process, and an outstanding answer would reveal an impressive range of such knowledge. The positive and negative consequences could be set out in a straightforward list.

On the positive side could be the encouraging of candidate states to meet the Copenhagen criteria, according to which they should demonstrate support for democracy, a developed civil state, and a demonstrable respect for human rights. There should be no major internal conflicts. The EU has been able to use the promise of accession to encourage a process of internal reform, the consolidation of liberal systems. The EU has also been able to continue with the entrenchment of arrangements designed to underpin peace among the member states, which was a primary objective of the signatories of the Rome Treaty. It might also be said to be a positive that expansion has encouraged the Europeanisation of the Eastern states, and, of course, promoted the raising of living standards and of economic performance in those states.

Among the negative consequences are, arguably, the slowing down of the integration process, always one of the goals of Eurosceptics in Britain, since it meant more governments negotiating and approving, often in referenda, any deepening of integration. Expansion has led to the relaxation of the idea of the general applicability of agreements, as is illustrated by the idea of ‘subsidiarity’, and of the ‘open method of coordination’. An outstanding answer might also argue that expansion has been mistakenly linked with the enlargement of NATO which led
to the closer proximity of East and West, and which has contributed to the problems in Georgia and the Ukraine. The expansion of the EU, the outstanding answer could argue, acted as cover for a strategic game, despite agreements to the contrary, which has led the Russian President to fear enclosure by the West.

An outstanding answer could conclude that any overall evaluation of the process is as yet impossible. The jury is still out.

**Question 3**

**What are the merits of constructivism as an approach to understanding how states behave?**

**Reading for this question**

The theory of constructivism is discussed in Chapter 6 of the subject guide and Chapter 10 of the textbook.

In both chapters there is an evaluation of what constructivism adds to understanding how states behave. You could also read the work of the primary authority on this theory,

Wendt, A. 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics', *International Organisation* 46(2) 1992, pp.391–425,

mentioned in the list of Further reading for Chapter 6 of the subject guide.

Checkel, J.T. ‘The constructivist turn in international relations theory', *World Politics* 50(1) 1998, pp.324–48

in the same list is also recommended.

**Approaching the question**

You could stress that constructivism is different from the mainstream theories about relations between states, such as liberalism or realism, in that it stresses that there is no objective character of international society, such that it is essentially anarchic or cooperative. Rather the nature of international society is created by social beliefs which in turn are the product of our identity and the ideas and preferences we hold in common. It is a constructed society: anarchy is what states make of it.

An outstanding answer could comment that the range of constructivist approaches is wide, and could be seen to include, and be closely related to, the set of earlier theories developed by Krasner and Keohane known as regime theory. It also includes norms, principles, rules and decision making, pointing to ways in which rules and decision-making systems are shaped by our norms and principles, which may develop and change over time.

An outstanding answer could argue that constructivism has one big merit: that it counters the gloom of hard realists, such as Morgenthau or Waltz, that international society is necessarily conflictual and indeed violent. But it has a corresponding demerit: that new issues, because of changing beliefs and values, can be securitised and seen to be worth fighting over. An outstanding answer could argue that there is a sense in which constructivism takes us no further than Realism, in that if most statesmen believe that international society is violent then that is what it is. They will behave in a way that brings about the kind of international society which they believe exists. The question carries a hidden agenda: that constructivism implies progress. But, you could argue, this does not follow if the values embedded in the inter-subjective understandings are not specified.
Question 4

Who loses from globalisation?

Reading for this question

Globalisation is addressed in Chapter 4 of the subject guide.


Garrett, G. 'Global markets and national politics: collision course or virtuous circle?', *International Organization* 52(4) 1998, pp.787–824

in the list of Further reading there are particularly recommended.

Of course, it is also a major theme of the textbook, being considered in most chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the main themes, and points out some of the adverse consequences of globalisation. In Chapter 16 the adverse impact of globalisation on the third world is discussed. In Chapter 33 the causes of protests against economic globalisation are examined.

Approaching the question

You need to specify the main elements of globalisation, though, since the number of main concerns of those who have studied globalisation is very large, you could make a selection of those that seem more relevant to the question. Globalisation implies global interconnectedness in that what happens in one part of the world is likely to impinge upon the interests of those in other parts, and ideas cross state frontiers without hindrance. Trade and investment link increasing numbers of diverse and distant countries. Economic problems quickly spread, and crises are more likely to be global. What seems to be stressed, you could argue, is the increasing openness of frontiers, and the diminishing ability of governments to impose barriers, or to act independently.

The question asks who loses from this? You could argue that where there are losers there are also winners. A balance sheet is required. On the one hand benefits flow from greater openness, for instance with regard to reporting and responding to humanitarian crises, be they man-made or the result of natural disasters. There is greater awareness of the need for common action to deal with emerging problems such as climate control. For some, natural and social advantages can be exploited to attract inward investment from corporations, and ease of communications means that an older division of labour, skilled work for the developed and unskilled for the undeveloped, has been greatly challenged. But there are also losers, it could be argued, in that more open frontiers also give the more powerful greater opportunities to exploit the less well off. An outstanding answer could point out that this is the cusp of a dilemma: foreign investment in countries such as Bangladesh and Indonesia brings jobs, but these are often highly exploitative. The general argument could be that more open systems tend to help the powerful to become richer and this tendency has to be deliberately opposed. Sometimes this opposition can be achieved by the consumers of rich countries, or by the governments of poorer countries, acting together.

An outstanding answer could argue that the balance sheet of winners and losers from globalisation is a complex one.
Question 5

‘Collateral damage is inevitable in war so there is no point in trying to avoid it.’

Do you agree?

Reading for this question

You could begin your reading with Chapter 7 of the subject guide, where there is a helpful discussion of the subject of just and unjust wars which is key to this question. There are several relevant readings in the list of Further reading there, particularly those by Bellamy (2005), by Bull (2002) and by Freedman (2005). A classic text on the subject is that by Waltzer (2006).

There is also a useful discussion of this subject in Chapter 18 of the textbook. This chapter also contains a perceptive discussion of challenges to the traditional laws of war.

Approaching the question

An outstanding answer would recognise that this question is closely linked with that of how far it is possible to fight using just methods, *ius in bello*. You could distinguish between the criteria applicable to just war, both in its origins and in its conduct, and the application of such criteria to the practice of war. The former may be stated with some confidence, and are reflected in religious traditions of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The latter meets two different responses: that the problems of beginning and fighting just wars are insoluble, since a just cause for one is not just for another, and fighting justly may prolong the killing; or that, as a hard realist could argue, what is important is to win rather than to seek the impossible of fighting justly in a just cause.

The so-called development of modern weapons of war has made it increasingly difficult to limit collateral damage. All weapons are capable of killing innocent bystanders, but the greater the explosive power the more likely that this will be the outcome, with nuclear weapons being the least discriminating of all. Arguably, however, more sophisticated targeting technology allows higher degrees of precision and therefore the limitation of collateral damage. There is, therefore, the possibility of limiting collateral damage, and this is reflected in the increasing number of codes and conventions, agreed to this end in the United Nations.

An outstanding answer could argue that the idea of just war always produces arguments about whether it is right to fight a particular war or to use particular methods. The idea does indeed support an inclination to avoid unnecessary suffering, and the idea that this does not matter, as in the ideas of hard line realists, is abhorrent. The ideas of *ius in bello* and *ius ad bello* exist and cannot be wished away. They are behind the controversy over the use of torture by the United States government to prevent terrorism. Such methods may save lives, though this is disputed, but may also lead to the recruitment of increasing numbers of terrorists, and betray the very values they are intended to protect. In view of all these problems is there any alternative but to say that war is always terrible, and, as pacifists argue, can never be just? You could add that war might, nevertheless, sometimes be necessary, and that to dispute over the justness of its causes and methods is part of the human condition.
Question 6

Is the European Union a superpower, given the weaknesses in its military arrangements?

Reading for this question

A good place to start reading for this question could be Chapter 10 in the subject guide, which includes a discussion of Europe as a limited superpower.

In the textbook Chapter 5 contains discussions of the characteristics of superpowers, and Chapter 4 contains materials on the emergence, up to the world economic crisis, of the European Union. Also of relevance is Chapter 26, which includes materials on the process of European integration. In the list of Further reading for this chapter the book edited by Telo is recommended.

Approaching the question

You need to define the two forms of power available to the EU, and locate them in the literature. The point could be made that the EU has underdeveloped military power, and that its soft power, including normative power, is developed and arguably effective. It can be seen in the use of so-called conditionality in negotiating trade or investment agreements with outsiders, such as pre-entry East European states, or African states.

You could, however, tackle the question posed directly. Put at its sharpest: can such soft power be an alternative to hard power in pursuit of the same goals of foreign policy? Can the possession and use of soft power justify the label of superpower? There are some targets of hard power which cannot be addressed by soft power, such as participation in the global strategic system, or the achieving of goals that require the use of extensive military force. There are a number of reasons for the failure of the EU as an international strategic actor, but one of them must be its shortfall with regard to various aspects of hard power, such as logistical capacity or possession of the most technologically advanced weapons. There are also, however, external goals that are achievable by using soft power rather than hard power. The EU has been a model and a magnet for new members because of its soft power, and this has been one reason for the EU’s emergence as the world’s biggest trading bloc. Soft power has also helped the EU to maintain good relations with states around its periphery in the ‘neighbourhood policy’. So the conclusion would be that soft power cannot achieve many of the goals that are vulnerable to hard power, but that it can achieve some of the goals that are less likely to be achieved by hard power.

An outstanding answer might return to the point that it depends what is meant by ‘superpower’. If it means participation in the global strategic game then Europe is not a superpower. But Europe does have global reach and is capable of exerting considerable pressure to get what it wants. A nuanced judgment could be that the EU has an impressive range of incentives, but these cannot match the hard power which is generally thought to be central in the idea of superpower.
Question 7

Assess the problems that could occur in relations between states because of a shortage of either oil, or water, or food.

Reading for this question

Chapter 11 of the subject guide is relevant to all three of the references in the question. Pelletier (2010), mentioned in the list of Further reading is particularly recommended.


and Falkner et al. (2010), in the list of Further reading for Chapter 12 of the subject guide are also recommended.

In the textbook, Chapters 28, on poverty, development and hunger, and 29, on human security, are useful reading, again, for all three references in the question. Chapter 15 in this volume, on international and global security, is also relevant.

Approaching the question

This question gives you the opportunity to use the special knowledge you have with regard to one of the resources named. With regard to oil and food there could be comparable arguments. You could deal with conceivable responses to shortages, such as the search for substitutes, for the more efficient use of available inputs, for the diversification of suppliers and for market management of various kinds, such as the building up of surpluses. You could then go on to discuss the effects of these responses on relations between states. Successful counter-strategies could significantly alter the power relationships between suppliers and consumers, as is illustrated by the possible consequences of the introduction of extensive fracking in the USA and its possible impact upon the power of the major oil producing states of the Middle East. Shortages could also lead to increasing international tensions between suppliers and consumers, with an increasing suspicion of deliberate withholding of supplies, as well as the real reduction in their availability. These effects are evident in the pattern of relations between Russia and the consumer states of Western Europe with regard to oil and gas. One argument could be that the increasing militancy of the Japanese government in the inter-war period was the result of shortages of key raw materials, and the suspicion that the USA was prepared to exploit Japanese vulnerability.

In the case of water there are a number of illustrations of tensions arising because of its shortage. One focus of such problems is the exploitation of rivers such as the Jordan or the Mekong, with downstream consumers feeling a relative shortage because upstream consumers are taking too much. Sometimes the building of dams causes tensions because of their effects on flows and water levels, which in turn could impact on fishing (as is the case with the Mekong), or navigation. You could argue that in these cases the more severe effects of shortages are for the future, as the effects of climate change could severely damage the supply of water in several parts of the world. It remains to be seen whether in these circumstances states resort to violence, but the situation with water is arguably more dangerous than that with oil or food, since there are no substitutes. The use of desalination technology is expensive, and is unlikely to be available to the states which are worse affected. It would be very difficult to provide enough water from desalination to meet the needs of large populations.
Question 8
Why has the United Nations come to depend increasingly on cooperation with regional organisations in its efforts to maintain international peace and security?

Reading for this question
Chapter 12 of the subject guide contains some relevant materials both on the United Nations and on regional organisations.

A substantial discussion of the role of the United Nations and its relations with regional organisations is in Chapter 20 of the textbook, and in Chapter 26 is a discussion of regionalism in international affairs. As usual you should use the index in this volume in search of relevant materials.

Approaching the question
You could agree that there has been an increasing involvement of the UN with regional organisations in maintaining peace and security, but add the caveat that the word ‘depend’ in the question could be too strong.

There have been a dozen or so examples of UN-Regional organisation cooperation, particularly with the African Union and NATO, and this might be explained, as the question requires, by reference to a number of developments or lack of them. There has been some evidence of a drying up of resources to sustain UN peacekeeping operations, and a case for concentrating those resources more directly on humanitarian efforts, and such specialised activities as post-conflict rebuilding. Some regional leaders, such as Jacob Zuma, have also pressed for more formal consultation and cooperation between regional organisations, like the African Union, and the UN. It was felt that local regional organisations should play a much larger role in putting right their own problems. This could also be a context in which local regional leaders could exercise their leadership and enhance their power.

But the UN has also been anxious not to allow its role to be usurped by regional organisations. The Charter laid out the rules for UN–Regional cooperation in Chapter 8 and these stressed the primary role of the Security Council. Regional organisations should not act as gatekeepers between local conflicts and the Security Council. When they act they should do so with a Council mandate and provide detailed reports about activities to the Council. Although regular consultations between regional organisations and the UN Council and Secretariat are being sought there has been disagreement about how many such regions should be involved and the level and scale of consultations.

There has been more mutual involvement, and cooperation, but the word ‘depend’ suggests a move of primary responsibility from New York to the regions which has not happened, and which the UN has resisted.

Question 9
How would you reform either The World Bank or the International Monetary Fund?

Reading for this question
Both of these institutions are discussed in Chapter 12 of the subject guide.

In the textbook, Chapter 16 also discusses both institutions and the changes in their roles since the 1970s. Chapter 28 in this volume also includes relevant material. In the list of Further reading for Chapter 15, particularly recommended is the book by Abdelal et al. and that by Woods. In the corresponding list for Chapter 28 the work by Adams is recommended.
Approaching the question

You could choose to concentrate on either institution though the arguments often apply equally to both. The purposes of the chosen institution should be specified: the World Bank became primarily concerned with the provision of finance for development projects; the IMF became concerned with maintaining the stability of the international monetary system, and with providing assistance, usually subject to heavy conditionality, to states experiencing financial difficulties (as with developing states’ debt related problems of the 1980s).

An outstanding answer could focus on three different aspects of the chosen organisation. First the answer could discuss the set of assumptions which motivated them, and the challenges to those assumptions. Both institutions were captured by neo-liberal ideas, which in the case of the World Bank led to support for projects which ignored the interests of women, existing communities of people and sustainability. The IMF pursued policies which sought financial improvement by cutting back on government spending on welfare, and easing state controls on such matters as inward investment. In the later years of the 20th century this agenda was challenged, so that the World Bank began to attempt to meet with the range of social problems which its funding policies could generate, and the IMF began to be more sensitive to the political problems which the rapid removal of government support, and privatisation, could generate. This partial adoption of a new agenda was one aspect of reform, though the problem remained of how far the two institutions would take their new-found concern. Were they just marginal additions to the central themes of neo-liberalism, or could they become more central?

A second area of reform you could discuss is the structure of the institutions. The argument here could be that the controlling institutions should change their voting arrangements to bring in a stronger voice for emerging economies, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and there should be more economists appointed to the staff who are not orthodox neo-liberals. In other words, the recruitment procedures should be reformed. A third area of reform could be the mandate of the institution. One view of the IMF, promoted early on by ex-British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, was that it should be better equipped to spot emerging financial crises, with powers to act prior to the crisis rather than after. The mandate of the World Bank, a reformer could argue, could be changed to extend its concern with sustainability, or with social justice, and to accept the failure of trickle-down economics.

Question 10
‘In the modern world no state can be completely sovereign.’ Discuss.

Reading for this question

Chapter 9 in the subject guide is strongly recommended as the starting point for reading about this question. Relevant materials may, however, be found throughout the subject guide, though the main theoretical Chapters 5 and 6 are particularly important. In the list of Further reading for Chapter 9 useful material is to be found in the Special Edition of International Politics, and in the volume of Political Studies which includes the article by James (1999), which is mentioned in that list.

Similarly, Part two ‘Theories of world politics’ in the textbook contains relevant chapters. There are also relevant materials in Chapters 19 and 18.
Approaching the question

An outstanding answer could begin by criticising the wording of the question: is it possible to be more or less sovereign, or is sovereignty necessarily neither more nor less? Or does the question transgress the assumption made about states that they are sovereign and therefore, necessarily, equal in international society as actors, as subjects of international law and as participants in international diplomacy? If they are states they must be completely sovereign. There can be no graduation of sovereignty as is implied by the question, which wrongly implies that if no state can be completely sovereign some states must be more sovereign than others.

An outstanding answer could attack the question in this way yet conclude that it has to be interpreted by way of common usage as an enquiry about the relative involvement of states with other states and the extent to which they have become more vulnerable in the modern world to influences from outside their territory. The response to this question could be that some states are less vulnerable than others with regard to a variety of criteria. Some states are dependent on other states for military support in the face of perceived external threats, or some states are vulnerable in their dependence on others to supply energy, gas or oil or food, etc. This argument reveals a pattern of states which are more or less vulnerable. The outstanding candidate could then conclude that though no state can be completely sovereign in this peculiar sense, nevertheless, if the degree of vulnerability is taken as an indicator of sovereignty, some states are more sovereign than others.

Question 11

Why is the system of relations between states sometimes referred to as a society?

Reading for this question

The notion of international society is linked with what became known as the English School, which is discussed in Chapter 1 of the subject guide, and again in Chapter 5. In both cases the discussion is particularly concerned with the ways in which the English School departs from various kinds of realism, and stresses its distinctive characteristics. In the list of books for Further reading in the introduction to the subject guide, of particular relevance is Bull (2002). In the list of journal articles, also in the introduction to the subject guide Little (2003) is particularly useful.

In the textbook this subject is addressed in particular in Chapter 2. Chapter 6 also contains relevant materials.

Approaching the question

A good answer could recognise that this question could be interpreted as referring to the elements which the so-called English School added to the realist theory of international relations, and which constructivists have acknowledged. You could point out that the answer to the question is not about what international relations is in fact like, but about what some theorists think it is like. High marks could be earned by recognising this point, rather than seeking some general objective condition of relations between states.

An outstanding answer could therefore explain the concerns of constructivists or English School scholars: as Bull (2002) – one of the main exponents of this view – has pointed out, states may be the primary actors in the international system, but the way they behave is as much a
product of the conventions of behaviour which have emerged between them, as it is of the fact that they are states. English School scholars and constructivists would both insist that the internal arrangements of states, their ideologies, identity, and habits, are profoundly important in explaining their mutual relations. Similarly, conflict between states is not inevitable, as hard realists or neo-realists would insist, but could be mitigated by values, norms and principles which underpin cooperation rather than conflict. The idea that such relations form a society is of key importance, you could argue, in motivating those who created the European Union. The EU was intended to change relations between Germany and its neighbours, particularly France, to reduce the prospect of war between them.

An outstanding answer could also point out that such views may also be better seen, not as a general theory, but as a description of actual relations between some states at some times: relations between the USA and the USSR certainly had some elements of society, even at their worse, whereas relations between North Korea and the West are very close to being non-societal. But these views are incompatible with the views of hard realists or neo-realists who assume that states behave as they do because of unavoidable aspects of human nature or because such behaviour is induced by membership of the international system rather than by internal or external social conventions.

**Question 12**

**What were the consequences of the First World War for the development of the modern system of states?**

**Reading for this question**

Chapter 2 of the subject guide is a good start for reading about this question.


Dunne, T., M. Cox and K. Booth (eds) The Eighty Years’ Crisis: international relations 1919–1999. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) [ISBN 97805216667838], mentioned in the list of Further reading for the introduction to the subject guide, has a number of useful chapters.

In the textbook, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are useful.

**Approaching the question**

A good answer could stress the various narratives about the development of modern international relations which emerged out of the First World War. These included the following:

- The changing patterns of statehood, including the breaking up of at least two empires, the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empires, but the growth of the British and the French Empires. The emergence out of the collapse of empire of a number of new states. But, an outstanding answer could argue, the First World War also gave a push to the modern discrediting of Empire, and its associated impulses of colonialism and imperialism.
• The introduction of the broad movement concerned to mitigate the horrors of war by setting up the League of Nations (which led to the somewhat more successful United Nations), the attempts to achieve disarmament which later led into the successor movements concerned with arms control, and the new concern with the rights and interests of individuals, in the early social international organisations such as the International Labour Organization.

• The acceleration of the process of building a stronger array of inter- or trans-state connectivities now represented by the range of intergovernmental and non-governmental international organisations. The First World War arguably raised general consciousness of global connectivity, and strengthened the realisation of mutual dependency, and for some, the irrationality of war. Arguably, before that, war was a perfectly rational way of pursuing diplomacy by other means.

This is an indication of the kind of territory in which you could seek the consequences of the First World War for the modern state system. An outstanding answer could score high marks according to the degree to which the various narratives are sharply defined and distinguished.