

# International Relations Prelim Exam Notes

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## 1 Outline of International Relations

### 1.1 General Concepts

#### 1.1.1 Levels of Analysis

##### 1. Individual Level

###### (a) Human Behavior

- i. Classical IR (Carr, Morgenthau, Neibuhr) focused on “human nature” as *the* cause of war. Rejected as reductionist by Waltz and structural theorists.
- ii. Structuralism’s strength from 1980ff waning in light of evolutionary psychology, GT, constructivism
- iii. Renewed interest of individual levels and their interaction with state and system suggests potential for dynamic models of IR (IPE, systems theory, etc.) ::need citation::

###### (b) Human Nature

###### (c) Criticisms

- i. Arguments of human nature (cf. Morgenthau, Neibuhr) are reductionist
- ii. Individuals are not the essential actors in IR

##### 2. State Level

###### (a) Domestic politics pushing upward into the system

###### (b) Examples included

- i. Open Economy Politics
- ii. Neoclassical realism

### 3. System Level

- (a) Anarchy is a material variable, creates incentives and constraints on state behavior
- (b) Criticisms
  - i. Waltz relies on theoretical reductionism, treating the state as a microeconomic firm.

#### 1.1.2 Agent-Structure Problem

- Statement of problem
  - 1. Who influences who, *agents on structure* or *structures on agents*?
    - (a) Constitutive Theorizing: mutually dependent ontology (constructivism).
      - i. Wendt 1999
      - ii. Kowert and Legro 2006: possible to separate as matter of theory and empirics across time, context, or process.

#### 1.1.3 Principle-Agent Model

#### 1.1.4 Strategic models

- Interests vs. Preferences
  - 1. Not identical
    - (a) Preferences are *what* individual actors want.
    - (b) Interests are *why* they want.
  - 2. Norms, morality, or interest may drive interests (Wagner 2010; Frieden 1999 [Lake and Powell])
    - (a) preferences and the conflict between them are what drive strategy.
    - (b) NB: Hobbes on the causes of war: competition, diffidence, glory *vs* Thucydides' fear, pride, interest.

#### 1.1.5 Institutions

- Rationalists Definitions
  - 1. International regimes

- (a) Laws of War
  - (b) International Organizations
- 2. Institutions as human made constraints and economic models
  - (a) “Institutions are the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consist of both informal constraints... and formal rules. ... Together with the standard constraints of economics they define the choice set and therefore determine transaction and production costs and hence the profitability and feasibility of engaging in economic activity” (North 1991).
- 3. Actors (states, non-states) behave in predictable patterns and seek utility maximizing strategies for any given strategy space (Lake and Powell 1999).
- Normative Definitions
  - 1. The rules and patterns of behavior Keohane (1987).
  - 2. Cultures of anarchy and norm dynamics
    - (a) Multiple “cultures” of enmity, competition, friendship that form a path dependency between any two (or groups) of nations (Wendt 1999)
    - (b) Change within and between cultures depends on entrepreneurs who bring about change in state behavior, ultimately changing the path dependency of relationships between actors (Finnemore and Sikkink).
  - 3.

#### 1.1.6 Cooperation

- Cooperation *vs* Anarchy
  - 1. Anarchy frustrates cooperation because states are preoccupied with security (Waltz, Mearshimer, etc.)
  - 2. Anarchy *predicts* cooperation because self-help suggests outsourcing what cannot be accomplished internally (Keohane, etc.)
  - 3. Anarchy is called into question because cooperation suggests hierarchy and order and not Hobbesian system.
- Cooperation and state behavior

1. Harmony and Discord require no change in behavior on the part of actors.
2. Cooperation is *contingent* change in behavior interdependent on the actions of other partners in the deal.

## 1.2 War and conflict

### 1.2.1 Why War?

- Misreading of capabilities.

## 1.3 International Political Economy

### 1.3.1 OEP

- Method and approach
- Key findings
- Criticisms
  - Oatley 2011. Methodological reductionism produces inaccurate knowledge. Most OEP seems to drop the final step (model the system with necessary) by assuming rather than showing that the system does not have an effect.

## 1.4 International Organization

## 1.5 Foreign Policy

# 2 Annotated Readings

## 2.1 Blainey, Geoffrey, (1988) [GB88]

Blainey's *The Causes of War* surveys every major war from 1700 to roughly 1970, showing how much of the conventional wisdom about the causes of war are misguided or outright false. War occurs because of power imbalances and misperceptions about any given nation's position in the world. Although Blainey lacks the rigor of formal or empirical models, his findings approach conclusions found by political scientists: that war is bargaining problem of sorts, a part of the political process between nations. One notable line of inquiry is his study of the Manchester creed of the late-19th and early-20th century. Cooperation in this period was at least as deep and broad as modern

globalization, then as now, the conventional wisdom was that economics and cultural openness were making war obsolete. But then, as now, politics rather than economics proves to be sovereign.

## **2.2 Bennett, Andrew (2013) [Bennett2013]**

## **2.3 Broaumoeller, Bear F. (2012) [Broemoeller2012]**

## **2.4 de Marchi, Scott (deMarchi2005)**

Examines the limitations of quantitative and formal models in political science, arguing that computational models can compliment and improve traditional empirical and formal research designs. Following Achen (2002), de Marchi argues that empirical modeling too often includes an over abundance of variables, thereby overfitting their model and producing spurious findings (p. 11). Formal theorists are not immune to this problem because an abundance of logically consistent models exist that can be fitted to the empirical observations such that whatever the researcher wishes to show, *a priori* can usually be shown. Computation models, however, can adjudicate between various models by allowing researchers to test a model against a closer approximation of the Data Generating Process (DGP) before doing so on the actual empirical data. This approach, along with *out-of-sample* (OOS) testing helps researchers avoid the pitfalls of overfitting or underfitting their models.

## **2.5 Keohane, Robert O. 1988**

Survey of two emerging approaches to the study of international institutions, rationalist and constructivist. Rationalist approaches rely on game theory and neoclassical economic theory to develop models of utility maximizing strategies. Rationalist approaches assume actors are self-aware they are in institutions—often even self-conscious that they constructed the institutions that constrain themselves. Institutions, in this view, rely on *exchange theory* positing that (a) there are gains to be made from cooperation but (b) cooperation is costly: thus, institutions help manage those costs. Constructivist approaches, conversely, point out that actors are often unaware they are acting under the constraints of the institution and that institutions contain and promote *norms* as the primary constraint mechanism on actors.

## 2.6 Oatley, Thomas (2012) [TO12reduct]

Oatley critiques the methodological reductionism of OEP because it risks producing false or inaccurate knowledge. According to Oatley, OEP assumes—rather than shows—that the system under study can be studied without consideration of system level effects. In at least three issue areas he shows that modeling the system level effects produces different findings from a strict OEP method that only models domestic level variables.

## 2.7 Wagner, R. Harrison 1986

Using noncooperative game theory, Wagner models balancing theory in systems between 3–5 states. He shows that a core ‘realist’ (scare quotes original) assumptions like exogenous change in preferences—i.e., no state can be sure another’s preferences will not change tomorrow—uncertainty, and the possibility of conflict can lead to stability within a given system. Stability, however, is defined as the non-death of states; that is, war and conflict can occur, but the system is considered stable if all states remain. Peace, in contrast, is defined as the absence of war. Although it is possible for there to be stability without peace, Wagner is silent on the possibility of peace without stability.

## 2.8 Waltz, Kenneth N. 1959

*Man, the State, and War* from Waltz’s dissertation, examines the levels of analysis (individual, state, system) and the causes of war and peace among nations.

## 2.9 Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979

*Theory of Internat’l Politics* lays the foundation for nearly all contemporary IR research either by critiquing, extending, or modifying Waltz’s basic definitions of theory, reductionist/systemic approaches, and philosophy of social science. Waltz’s microeconomic method and systemic approach recast classical realism into its neorealist, or structural, formulation found in Mearshimer and others. Waltz stresses the material forces of the international system because he finds the analysis produced by first-image or second-image approaches wanting. The goal of any theory is *parsimony*; systemic theory building allows him to derive elegant “theories” about international politics when states are treated like firms in microeconomic theory. Statistics, for example, “are simply description in numerical form” (p. 3).

What matters is not the quantitative (or formal) model and evidence, but the theory building. However influential *Theory of International Politics* proved to be, his prescriptions were not uniformly received. Neoclassical-Realism and Open Economy Politics, for example, marked a turn toward second-image analysis and attempt to look at variables within states as causes for international political phenomenon.