

Final Exam Questions, Political Science 12
International Relations (Summer 2015)
Professor Gartzke

1. The international human rights system has expanded in the last several decades with most countries now having ratified at least some human rights treaties. Yet not all states that have ratified these treaties actually abide by them. Why do states that sign agreements sometimes fail to ratify them? Why do states that ratify treaties fail to follow the terms of an agreement? In your answer, consider both individual (national) and international reasons that countries might fail to obey the terms of a treaty. Provide suggestions about how compliance can be improved.
2. ISIS/ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) has been accused of widespread terrorism. Define terrorism. Why do people or groups engage in terrorism? Is this “rational”? What are the strengths and weaknesses of terrorism as a strategy? How might targeting terrorism succeed or fail? How does terrorism relate to the bargaining logic of war outlined in the textbook?
3. Economists overwhelmingly agree that free trade is better at the national level than obstructing trade, yet trade barriers remain popular in most countries. Explain the liberal economic argument for free trade (specialization, comparative advantage, etc). Why then does Japan protect rice and the United States subsidize sugar (industries in which these countries do not have a comparative advantage)? In your answer, explain why trade is often compared to the prisoners’ dilemma.
4. August 4, 2014 marked the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War in which security alliances played a large role. Why do countries form alliances? What are the key tasks and goals in forming and maintaining alliances? How do countries achieve these goals? Discuss the success or failure of alliances in WWI, WWII, and the Cold War. Consider also the role of security as a public good and what it means to say that security is under provided.
5. Israel and the Palestinians have experienced recurrent warfare. If wars are costly, why then do countries and other actors fight? What do they fight over? What are some ways to make war less likely? Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the main explanations for war provided in the textbook in terms of recurrent conflict in Palestine. Provide examples to support your argument.
6. Russia recently annexed Crimea through military force. Yet the United Nations has not taken any action toward Russia, other than to adopt a resolution. Explain the UN’s failure to take more vigorous action. What institutional feature of the United Nations prevents it from becoming more proactive concerning Ukraine? Does this mean that the United Nations is generally ineffective in preventing or limiting the use of force? In what context(s) has the United Nations demonstrated greater effectiveness? Provide examples of successful military action by the United Nations.