

IR in Action

Assessment Questions

Chapter 7: Alliance Politics

1. Which alliance (North Placidic Treaty Organization or New Politican Bloc) was more successful in attracting members? Why?
2. Are military alliances more apt to be a source of protection or insecurity for member states? What was your country's experience in this scenario?
3. The concept of polarity refers to concentrations of power in a given system. What type of polarity (unipolarity, bipolarity, and multipolarity) characterized the state system in Politica at the beginning of the simulation? Did system polarity change by the end of this scenario? How so?

Assessment Questions

Chapter 8: Territorial Disputes

1. Was Industriael successful in reacquiring the disputed territory of Centralia?
2. Why are territorial disputes so difficult to resolve? Think about the notion of a 'zero-sum game' when formulating your answer. What steps would you take to broker an agreement between two states that both claimed the same piece of land?
3. Should the concept of self-determination determine the way in which political boundaries are drawn? In what cases might the concept of self-determination be unwise or even impossible?

Assessment Questions

Chapter 9: Nuclear Proliferation

1. Did Petropol or Refugia (or both) achieve nuclear capability in this scenario? If so, how was the decision justified by the actors involved? If not, what was the most important factor in preventing proliferation?
2. Would Politica be a safer place if every state had a significant nuclear arsenal? Why or why not? Relate your answer to the realist and liberal schools of thought.
3. Explain - from your country's perspective – when it would be acceptable for a sovereign, nuclear-armed state to use nuclear weapons against another state.

Assessment Questions

Chapter 10: Ethnic Conflict

1. What are the primary differences between ethnic conflict and genocide? Use recent events in the Darfur region of Sudan to focus your answer.

2. What kinds of methods can the outside world use to investigate potential cases of genocide when the country in question (e.g. Tundristan) claims that such an investigation is a violation of its sovereignty?

3. When exactly is “international intervention” justifiable? Clearly, the international community has an obligation (which is not always met) to take action in cases of outright genocide, but what about other scenarios that might involve a government that: harbors terrorists, fails to feed its population, cannot quarantine a growing pandemic, or is simply hostile to the international community at large?

Assessment Questions

Chapter 11: Free Trade vs. Protectionism

1. How is a national economic policy guided by the philosophy of protectionism related to the general international relations theory of realism? On the other hand, please explain why liberals tend to emphasize the benefits associated with free trade.

2. The reduction of barriers to trade is generally accepted as a way to increase global efficiency. But increases in global efficiency do not benefit all countries equally. Use the logic of *Dependency Theory* to provide an example of the vastly uneven benefits that sometimes result from free trade arrangements.

3. Would a trade agreement that generated 200 factors in wealth for you and 300 factors of wealth for the other party be viewed favorably by your country? Why or why not? Be sure to pay attention to the concepts of relative and absolute gains when constructing your answer.

Assessment Questions

Chapter 12: Natural Resources

1. Water supplies often cross international boundaries. How should ownership be defined in such situations? Do countries that control the headwaters of a river (like the Kohridor River in Paxony) have the right to control the flow of water downstream to other countries?

2. How did your country’s natural resource endowment influence your behavior throughout the simulation? If you had an abundance of resources, did you use them as a bargaining chip in negotiations with other countries? If you had few resources, were you forced to compromise in other areas in order to meet your natural resource needs?

3. Is it possible to argue that oil-rich countries in the Middle East have actually suffered as a result of their resource endowment? In your answer, be sure to look at both long term and short term consequences of oil wealth in this region.

Assessment Questions

Chapter 13: Currency Crises

1. What factors determine the *supply of*, and *demand for* a currency? Why do currencies rise and fall in value relative to others?

2. How does the value of a country's currency affect the relative price of its goods on the global market? Why might a country want its currency to be undervalued?
3. What is the electronic herd? How might it be related to the outbreak of currency crises? What tools are available to governments when it comes to maintaining the value of a currency that is rapidly dropping in value?

Assessment Questions

Chapter 14: Foreign Aid

1. Are rich states obligated to send monetary, food, and other aid to countries in need? Why or why not?
2. Should donor countries be able to attach conditions like economic liberalization, human rights reform, and political democratization to the foreign aid that they send? At what point, if any, do these conditions violate the sovereignty of the recipient country?
3. Compare the foreign aid record of Northern European countries with that of the United States. What are the key differences? Why might these differences exist?

Assessment Questions

Chapter 15: Global Security Organizations

1. How did the voting structure of the Politican Security Forum affect any attempts at reform?
2. Other than any objective points that may be achieved, what incentives do countries have when it comes to becoming a permanent, veto-wielding member of the Politican Security Forum?
3. Consider the outcome of this scenario in your course – was the result more supportive of realist or liberal theories of international relations?

Assessment Questions

Chapter 16: International Criminal Courts

1. Why is the concept of "universal jurisdiction" so difficult for some countries to accept?
2. Should the international system be governed by laws reflecting an absolute truth, or by the notion of moral relativism? Why do many realists (e.g. Thucydides, Hans Morgenthau) suggest that the only absolute truth is power?
3. Can a truly international criminal court (with jurisdiction over the entire system) ever exist without a world government? Why or why not?

Assessment Questions

Chapter 17: Collective Action Problems

1. What defines a public good? In this scenario, does prevention of the Bovine Fever meet the definition you have outlined?
2. What is the free-rider problem? Explain, from a rational choice perspective, why it often prevents the provision of public goods.
3. Did your country donate factors to fight the outbreak of the Bovine Fever? How many? How did you arrive at your decision?

Assessment Questions

Chapter 18: Environmental Challenges

1. What is the “Tragedy of the Commons?” Why is it most acute in situations where a number of actors are sharing a single, finite resource?
2. Consider the Kyoto Protocol. What is the connection between rapid economic growth in China and India, and the United States’ refusal to make the changes outlined by the Protocol?
3. Does environmental change pose a national security threat to states in the international system? Provide examples in support of your answer.