

Advanced Political Philosophy: Empirical Foundations

Political Philosophy · Answer Key · 12 Questions

1. Which empirical finding from comparative politics most directly supports the 'liberal peace' thesis, suggesting that democratically governed states are less likely to engage in war with each other?

- A) The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact's effect on inter-war alliances.
- B) The correlation between economic interdependence and conflict avoidance in the late 20th century.
- C) The zero-casualty conflicts between established liberal democracies since World War II.**
- D) The prevalence of civil wars within authoritarian regimes.

2. The 'Tragedy of the Commons' concept, widely applied in political philosophy to understand collective action problems, is empirically demonstrated by which real-world scenario regarding resource depletion?

- A) The successful management of global fisheries through strict international quotas.
- B) The overfishing of North Atlantic cod stocks due to open access and competition.**
- C) The proliferation of private property rights leading to efficient land use in developing nations.
- D) The voluntary conservation efforts by indigenous communities in the Amazon rainforest.

3. Experimental studies in behavioral economics, often informing political philosophy, have shown that individuals in 'dictator games' (where one player unilaterally decides resource allocation) most frequently act in a way that deviates from pure self-interest by:

- A) Always keeping the entire endowment for themselves.
- B) Splitting the endowment equally with the recipient.**
- C) Attempting to maximize their own gain regardless of fairness.
- D) Returning the endowment to the proposer.

4. Which scientific explanation of political behavior, foundational to theories of rational choice, posits that individuals make decisions by weighing the potential benefits against the costs, seeking to maximize their utility?

- A) Behavioral economics
- B) Sociological determinism
- C) Rational choice theory**
- D) Psychological egoism

5. Empirical research on the formation of political coalitions frequently highlights the importance of 'minimum winning coalition' strategies. This phenomenon is best explained by which game theory concept?

- A) The Prisoner's Dilemma
- B) The Shapley Value
- C) The Core**
- D) The Pareto Frontier

6. The empirical observation that societies with more robust social capital (trust, networks, norms) tend to have more effective governance and economic development is a key finding in the work of which political theorist and sociologist?

- A) Karl Marx
- B) Robert Putnam**
- C) Max Weber
- D) Michel Foucault

7. Which of the following scientific hypotheses, tested through historical analysis and game theory, suggests that states are more likely to engage in cooperation when facing a common, external threat?

- A) The security dilemma hypothesis
- B) The democratic peace theory
- C) The balance of power theory**
- D) The hegemonic stability theory

8. The concept of 'bounded rationality,' as developed by Herbert Simon and crucial for understanding political decision-making, empirically acknowledges that human decision-makers are limited by:

- A) Perfect information and unlimited computational power.
- B) Incomplete information and finite cognitive resources.**
- C) Purely emotional responses and irrational biases.
- D) The absence of any prior knowledge or experience.

9. Empirical studies on the impact of institutional design on political outcomes often show that electoral systems significantly influence party systems. For instance, proportional representation systems are empirically linked to:

- A) A two-party dominant system.
- B) Higher levels of political polarization.
- C) Multi-party systems and coalition governments.**
- D) Winner-take-all political dynamics.

10. The empirical relationship between economic inequality and political instability, frequently explored in political science, suggests that higher levels of inequality are often correlated with:

- A) Increased social cohesion and trust.
- B) Greater political participation across all socioeconomic strata.
- C) Higher rates of protest, social unrest, and populism.**
- D) Reduced demand for social welfare programs.

11. Which finding from behavioral psychology, frequently integrated into political philosophy, demonstrates that people tend to overestimate their own contributions in group projects, leading to potential conflict over perceived fairness?

- A) The halo effect
- B) The fundamental attribution error**
- C) The illusion of transparency
- D) The actor-observer bias

12. The 'veil of ignorance' thought experiment, central to John Rawls' theory of justice, is a philosophical tool designed to facilitate reasoning about fairness by asking individuals to design a society without knowing their own:

- A) Future political affiliations.
- B) Social status, natural assets, and abilities.**
- C) Personal moral beliefs.
- D) Economic preferences.