

**Columbia University Department of Political Science**  
**Written Qualifying Examination in International Relations**  
**August 2021**

**Instructions**

This examination consists of four sections: World Politics A (WPA) consists of general international relations questions; World Politics B (WPB) consists of somewhat narrower or more specific questions; the last two sections consist of questions on international security (IS) and international political economy (IPE).

Majors in IR must write three essays: one from WPA, one from either the IS or IPE section, and one from any other section (that is, you may not write more than one essay in any one section).

Minors in IR must write two essays: one from WPA, and one from any other section.

You are advised to demonstrate breadth as well as depth of knowledge in your set of essays. You should therefore avoid writing essays with answers that overlap substantially with respect to either theoretical arguments or substantive examples.

**World Politics A**

1a. “What Hans Morgenthau said years ago is even more valid today: ‘The theories that are dominant in IR today are in truth not so much theories as dogmas. They do not so much try to reflect reality as it actually is, as to superimpose upon a recalcitrant reality a theoretical scheme that satisfies the desire for thorough rationalization.’” Discuss.

2a. “This is the vicious circle of power politics: morality is the fruit of security, but lasting security among states depends on their observing a certain common standard of morality.” Discuss.

**World Politics B**

1b. In what ways do insights from psychology, cognitive science, and behavioral economics pose a challenge to rationalist theories in International Relations? In what ways are these theories compatible? Which of these theories have been most fruitful when applied to which problems?

2b. Recent scholarship on international law suggests that strong selection effects are at work in assessing the relationship between ratification and compliance. States, in other

words, make the decision regarding compliance prior to the decision to ratify. If those making the selection, or screening, argument are correct, why would states invest the time and resources required to create international law at all? Discuss with reference to at least two examples.

3b. Since the early 1990s some analysts have said that China's foreign policy suffers from a "soft power deficit." Focusing on a particular regional or issue-area component of Chinese foreign policy, assess the extent to which this deficit (a) exists and (b) does or does not affect China's ability to achieve its foreign policy goals.

4b. Scholars vigorously debate what independent effects international organizations have, if any. We have many theories about this, but is there any compelling empirical evidence backing them up?

5b. "Institutionalist solutions for peace tend to appeal to intellectuals and policymakers when conflict is low and to fall out of favor when conflict is high. So these theories are least helpful when most needed and thus of little use." Discuss.

6b. Explain the origins of the "Responsibility to Protect," evaluate its consequences, and discuss lessons learned.

7b. Scholars of terrorism have argued variously that it is used to generate support for a cause, and that it undermines the legitimacy of and therefore support for those who use it. How can we make sense of these seemingly contradictory positions? Under what conditions might terrorism be used to generate support (and support from whom), and when is it likely to have the opposite effect? Be sure to define terrorism or discuss relevant definitions of terrorism in your response.

### **International Security**

1is. To what extent do we need different theories (or not) to explain inter-state and intra-state war?

2is. "Cyber conflict is the new highest priority of strategy, but neither traditional strategic studies nor nuclear deterrence theory are much help." Discuss.

### **International Political Economy**

1ipe. Which individuals support trade liberalization and why? Have recent studies of attitudes toward trade openness changed our understanding of when societies adopt freer trade?

2ipe. Deepening trading relations between developed and developing countries have shifted emissions-related production processes from the former to the latter set of

countries, potentially facilitating the stabilization or reduction of emissions in developed countries. How should policy efforts to reduce fossil fuel emissions worldwide account for the linkages between trade and climate change? How can policymakers win domestic support for climate agreements that either do or do not account for these linkages?