

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

**August 19, 2019**

**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. "A lot of people talk a lot of nonsense when they say wars never settle anything; nothing in history was ever settled except by wars." (Winston Churchill) Discuss.

2a. The canon of international relations theory was developed mainly with reference to the history of the great powers, especially in Europe. Does research on international systems and subsystems in other regions support or challenge that canon?

**World Politics B**

1b. "No serious policymaker could allow himself to succumb to the fashionable debunking of 'prestige' or 'honor' or 'credibility.'" (Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 228.) Discuss.

2b. The Government of Country X has just been reported to have extra-judicially killed a number of its citizens and is said to be planning more executions. When, if ever, should the Government of another country, Y, intervene militarily to stop those executions in X. What factors and what additional information would incline you to say it should intervene; and what factors and information would incline you to say it should not? Please refer to the relevant literature.

3b. To what extent is the United Nations Charter like a "contract" and to what extent is it like a "constitution?"

4b. Factoring non-state actors into theories of international politics is generally unnecessary. Indeed, most outcomes of interest can be adequately accounted for by focusing on government to government interactions alone. Please state whether, to what degree, and why you agree or disagree with this statement using at least two concrete examples. What are the main elements of a research design that you could use to test your argument with respect to one of those examples?

5b. Many see rising nationalism as a threat to the liberal international order. And yet, national self-determination is typically seen as a core principle of both nationalism and liberalism. Under what conditions are nationalism and liberalism compatible or mutually reinforcing? When and why do they come into conflict?

6b. The relationship between democracy and terrorism is often debated. To what extent and in what ways do aspects of democracy mitigate against terrorism and to what extent and how does democracy make terrorism more likely? Be sure to define your terms in answering this question.

7b. Civil wars were historically unlikely to end in a negotiated settlement as opposed to a clear victory for one side, but in recent years this is much less true. What accounts for this shift in the ability of civil war belligerents to reach peace and with what implications for postwar politics and the recurrence of violence?

## **IPE**

1ipe. Scholars and policy-makers have long debated whether foreign aid should be continued and under what conditions. Is foreign aid effective for political goals like improving democracy, boosting human rights, or enhancing a government's legitimacy? When? How can we know?

2ipe. Many students of international political economy argue that states face a prisoner's dilemma with respect to cooperation in the domain of international trade. Consider the case of the United States' contemporary trading relations with China. How might a prisoner's dilemma structure help explain political demands in the United States for increased tariffs on Chinese goods? Draw on theoretical arguments and empirical evidence to make a case for whether economic factors or geopolitical factors provide more compelling explanations for the recent rise in trade protection. In your opinion, what are the most important pathways by which policymakers can facilitate trade cooperation between both nations over the next century?

### **Security**

1is. "No country has more inherent natural security than the USA; yet, no country spends nearly as much as it does on defense." What explanation for this do you find most convincing?

2is. Theorists infatuated with parsimony have argued that nuclear weapons promote peace between great powers because they make unlimited war unthinkable. The empirical record in the Cold War, however, discredits confidence in that rationale. Discuss.