

Columbia University Department of Political Science
Written Qualifying Examination in International Relations
January 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. Is it an accident that the main lines of great power conflict today are between democratic regimes and authoritarian ones? How is this to be explained?
- 2a. "Diplomacy is cheap talk." Discuss.

World Politics B

- 1b. Lately, there has been a renaissance in the study of psychology in the fields of international security and political economy. What important puzzles in IR, theoretical and empirical, have such approaches been able to illuminate? What are the implications of psychological approaches for the relevance of rational choice models in IR?
- 2b. Do international institutions screen or constrain? Discuss with reference to issues in both international security and economic relations.
- 3b. In what ways does China comply with, and in what ways does it violate, its obligations under

international law? Please discuss with respect to a particular domain of international law, such as (but not limited to) human rights, arms control, or trade.

4b. What do variations in international behavior across regional subsystems reveal about the power of systemic-level theories of international relations?

5b. "Liberal, Marxist, and realist accounts of U.S. foreign policy assume different motives, but actual initiatives over time have been more or less the same as what each would predict." Discuss.

6b. Make the best case for respecting the norm of international nonintervention and then give and justify two examples in which it should be overridden or disregarded.

7b. By what criteria would you judge a theory of change in IR? Which theories of international change have been the most successful (or are the most promising) by these criteria?

International Security

1is. Are crises the natural culmination of rivalry or accidental breakdowns in calculation?

2is. Analysts of cyber conflict and cooperation, both inside and outside academe, have shown considerable interest in applying long-established international relations theories about escalation, coercion, and norms to their subject. What advantages and disadvantages do you see in this?

International Political Economy

1ipe. The world is experiencing a public health crisis that has impacted almost everyone around the globe. The crisis has already had a profound impact on economic performance and international economic outcomes across domains like trade, FDI, immigration, macroeconomic cooperation, and greenhouse (GHG) emissions. Many scholars of IPE claim that the end of World War II marked a transformation in international economic policymaking, as the U.S. and its allies established a new framework for international cooperation designed to encourage trade and investment while also prioritizing domestic economic performance. What will the post-COVID international economic order look like? What will be the impact of the crisis on international economic policies and outcomes over the next decade? Use theories and evidence from the IPE canon to develop a single, integrated argument about the post-COVID global order.

2ipe. In "The False Promise of International Institutions," Mearsheimer (1994, 7) writes that "my central conclusion is that institutions have minimal influence on state behavior." After winning office in 2016, President Donald Trump took actions to reduce the influence of the

World Trade Organizations and the Paris Agreement. Considering international institutions in the trade and climate domains, evaluate whether Mearsheimer is right.

3ipe. What better explains ongoing US-China trade disputes—geopolitical competition stemming from great power rivalry or domestic redistributive pressures resulting from trade with China (popularly termed the “China shock”)? Use theory and evidence to defend your answer.