

Columbia University Department of Political Science
Written Qualifying Examination in International Relations
January 2025

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 (*All IR majors and all IR minors must write one essay from this section.*)

1a. Should states that are seeking security, stability, and prosperity adopt liberal principles in their foreign relations or should they be strictly pragmatic and transactional? Or if it depends, what does it depend on? Define key terms.

2a. In an influential paper, Barnett and Duvall (2005) identify four types of power in international relations: compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive. IR scholarship has tended to focus on the first of these (compulsory power) – is it right to do so? Why or why not?

World Politics B

1b. Countries frequently turn to sanctions on other states as a coercive tool. What are some political effects of sanctions and when are they effective at achieving the sanctioner's goals?

2b. Recently, there has been a “bureaucratic turn” in the study of foreign policy. Assess this turn and whether and how it contributes to our understanding of state behavior in the international system.

3b. How have nuclear weapons affected the nature and frequency of interstate war?

4b. Can global governance structures protect the human rights of migrants? If yes, how? If no, how could migrants' human rights be protected?

International Security

1is. Under what circumstances does a “sphere of influence” increase or decrease the security of a major state in the international system? Define key terms.

2is. How much, if at all, will climate change affect the probability that civil and interstate wars break out? Be sure to discuss both types of war in your answer.

IPE

1ipe. States have achieved an extraordinary amount of trade liberalization since the end of World War II; according to economists Chad Bown and Douglas Irwin, average global tariff levels declined from >20% prior to 1947 to less than 5% in the 21st century. Drawing on international political economy scholarship, discuss at least three political factors that have made this dramatic liberalization possible (and explain how they've done so).

2ipe. Discuss the following statement: “The recent surge in the popularity of anti-immigrant parties and platforms across the western world is distinct from past anti-immigrant movements.”