

International Relations Field Exam
August 2014

Please answer one question from each section. Keep in mind that you will be evaluated not only on your knowledge of the relevant literature, but also on your ability to think independently and make a compelling argument.

Section I

1-1. What changes in the causes and patterns of interstate war onset, if any, have taken place over the last one hundred years since 1914 and what explains them? Support your arguments with examples from the scholarly literature and empirical record.

2-1. The existence of a separate field of study within political science devoted to International Relations is typically justified by contrasting the hierarchical nature of domestic politics, in which the state enjoys a monopoly of legitimate violence, with the anarchical nature of international politics, in which there is no overarching authority. Does this distinction continue to make sense in an age in which, on the one hand, one state -- the United States -- enjoys a marked preponderance in conventional military power, thereby reinforcing the hierarchical aspects of international politics; and, on the other hand, some governments have lost their monopoly of violence, thereby reinforcing the anarchical aspects of domestic politics? Support your arguments with examples from the scholarly literature and empirical record.

Section II

2-1. Supporters of the International Criminal Court say that justice mechanisms are a valuable way to prevent genocides, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Given the empirical record of international courts, do you think the ICC deters states from committing these crimes? Support your arguments with examples from the scholarly literature and empirical record.

2-2. If scholars wanted to study the causal effect of a treaty on various countries' behavior, what challenges would they face in being able to identify the effect of treaties? What mistakes should scholars avoid? Support your arguments with examples from the scholarly literature and empirical record.

Section III

3-1 Despite a voluminous literature on interstate coercion, there's a pervasive sense that these studies have only limited applicability to the modern security environment. Gone are the days of conventional interstate wars and militarized interstate disputes, some would argue. Instead, the security environment is a jumbled mix of non-state threats (i.e. terrorist organizations), internal wars, dense economic linkages, and nuclear weapons that have conspired to reduce the efficacy

of deterrent and compellent threats. In your view, are there concepts, theoretical insights, and empirical findings from this interstate literature that remain relevant today?

3-2. The experimental method has swept across comparative politics like wildfire, with scholars applying this methodology to everything from interethnic trust to impact evaluations of development assistance. Not so in IR, where the units we typically study (i.e. states) are resistant to randomization. Yet recent work suggests that experiments could be applied in a variety of IPE and security domains. In your view, what domains or empirical puzzles are most ripe for the experimental method, and what areas will remain outside an experimental framework?