

International Relations Field Exam
August 2019

Please answer one and only one question from each of the three sections below. 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 (pick one):

1. No other empirical field of political science -- American and comparative politics -- entails a subfield labeled "theory." How can the exceptional existence of a "theory" subfield within IR be justified? What are the purposes of IR theory? How does it integrate with the other areas of study within IR?
2. Many foreign policy decisions appear mistaken, ill founded, influenced by the psychology of leaders or pathologies of domestic politics. What are the benefits and limitations of a rationalist approach to the study of international relations? In your answer, discuss one issue area, outlining some of the lessons that have been gained from a rationalist approach and some important future challenges.

Section II (pick one):

1. Scholars argue that an important challenge for foreign policymakers in the nuclear age is to make their threats credible. How would you assess the success of the United States in deterrence and compellence since the end of the Cold War?
2. Observers of world politics have spent the last two years discussing the fall of the postwar Liberal International Order -- arguing about whether the LIO matters, whether it is coming to an end, and what will replace it. Does the Liberal International Order shape world politics and, specifically, international security dynamics and outcomes? If so, how? What would be the consequences of its demise for international security?

Section III (pick one):

1. Despite the protectionist rhetoric of key political leaders and media outlets, trade barriers in the US remain historically low. What domestic factors (i.e. institutions and actors) explain this outcome? In other words, who favors free trade and why is this preference reflected in trade policy?
2. Immigration reform is a hot topic in US politics today. It has been argued that immigration policy is tightly connected to trade policy. Under this interpretation, are immigration and trade policy complements or substitutes? Elaborate your answer and specify which combination of policies are preferred by American producers and under which circumstances.