

International Relations Field Exam
August 2022

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. Discuss the following statement: “Realism remains the most compelling theoretical framework for understanding international relations, despite the challenges presented by other perspectives.”
2. The empirical study of international relations has evolved significantly in recent years. Scholars benefit from improved access to evidence (surveys, digitization of archives, event study datasets, etc.), new techniques for causal and descriptive inference, and more rigorous standards of replication. Discuss the role of IR theory in this environment. Do these changes reduce the need for “theory” as a subfield in IR?

Section II (pick one):

1. Discuss the following statement: “Russia’s invasion of Ukraine shows that weak states should pursue their own nuclear deterrent to guarantee their security.”
2. Discuss the following statement: “International security scholars struggle to explain how and why diplomacy contributes to peace and stability, treating it as cheap talk.”

Section III (pick one):

1. Do international institutions efficiently resolve cooperation problems or serve the interests of powerful states? Discuss the empirical evidence in at least two of the following issue areas: human rights, trade, laws of war, development assistance, environmental cooperation, and nuclear proliferation.
2. A growing body of scholarship adopts the framework of “open economy politics” (OEP) to explain international economic exchange. What assumptions characterize OEP research? Assess whether it has been a theoretically productive turn for IPE, citing specific examples.