

Security Studies Preliminary Exam

Political Science
Spring 2014

Answer one question from each of the following sections.

Section 1

1. A lot of widely read articles in international relations use formal theory. What are the major assumptions we typically make when using formal theory in international relations? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach? Using examples from research on interstate conflict, civil conflict, or terrorism, explain how this approach has advanced our understanding of international security.
2. According to Lakatos, a scientific research program is based not only on stunning discoveries but also on the progress that comes in its wake. In other words, a scientific research program must remain theoretically and empirically progressive. Pick a theory of your choice in “international relations/security studies” and assess it in light of Lakatos’ notion of a research program. Be sure to include in your discussion recent theoretical and empirical advancements of the theory.

Section II

1. Trace the development of the theory and evidence on why wars occur. What do we know now about war onset that we did not know thirty years ago? Where are the major gaps in our understanding of why wars begin? Name one or two recent articles that best represent the direction that this line of research is headed in.
2. Sociological literature on in-groups and out-groups demonstrates that individuals within in-groups tend to become more cohesive and supportive of their leader when facing threats from out-groups. One group of scholars in “international relations research” has similarly shown that populations tend to rally around their leaders when the country faces an external threat or is involved in an international crisis. Other scholars in this research contend that the issue is not about in-group vs. out-group, but that leaders are likely to manufacture an external crisis or an external enemy to divert attention away from domestic policy failures. Assess and evaluate this literature in the light of both theoretical development and empirical findings.

History
Spring 2014

Answer TWO of the following three questions.

1. Russia's seizure and de facto annexation of the Crimea seems out of step with an emerging norm of inviolable borders. How has the idea that states do not seize other states' territories developed over the course of the twentieth century?
2. Ukraine, Venezuela, and Thailand have all been shaken in recent months by large -scale popular protests against semi-authoritarian regimes, similar in many ways to the discontent that produced the Arab Spring. What are the long-term historical developments that explain this? You may focus on a particular case or discuss the general phenomenon.
3. Focusing on a world region of your choice, explain how the end of the Cold War has shifted American policy towards that region.