

**International Relations Field Exam**  
**August 2018**

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. In a 2002 report, the National Science Foundation lamented the existence of a “schism [...] between those who engage in formal modeling that is highly mathematical, and those who employ empirical modeling which emphasizes applied statistics.” Discuss some examples of formal arguments applied to the study of international security, evaluate their causal logic and empirical evidence, and discuss how formal models should best be married with empirical techniques.
2. In recent decades, with the decrease in major interstate war, scholarship in IR has focused increasingly on topics such as terrorism, counterinsurgency, peacekeeping, and (the international dimensions of) civil war. Does it still make sense to have IR as an autonomous field of study within political science? Why?

**Section II (pick one):**

1. Discuss the following statement: “Domestic politics has a remarkably weak ability to explain interstate conflict.” In your answer, discuss some arguments on the effect of domestic politics on interstate conflict, evaluate their causal logic and empirical evidence, and discuss avenues for future research.
2. Some scholars talk of a “nuclear revolution,” according to which nuclear weapons have radically transformed international politics. Others view these claims in a skeptical light, arguing that power politics remains largely unchanged in a nuclear world. How, if at all, did nuclear weapons impact international security?

**Section III (pick one):**

1. The U.S. government is abandoning many of its international commitments. Why is this happening? What are the implications for international cooperation? Your answer should discuss what at least two theoretical traditions within IR might have to say about these developments.
2. Have recent studies on individual preferences fundamentally changed our understanding of how, when, and why countries choose to liberalize trade? In answering this question, you should explain how IR scholars have traditionally explained economic openness as well as discuss several concrete examples of relevant micro-level studies.