America’s Future
Take Home Exam #3

Due at the START of class on Friday, February 18th. Make sure to answer BOTH parts of the exam.

Part I: Answer ONE of the following questions. In formulating your answer, it may be beneficial to consult readings beyond those assigned in the course. (75%)

1. You are the head of the National Security Council’s Policy Planning Staff. Your group has been charged by President Bush to review American policy toward the two remaining members of the ‘Axis of Evil’ – Iran and North Korea. Write a memorandum to the President (and I want it written in the form of a memo!) outlining your proposed policy toward EITHER Iran or North Korea. Make sure to fully elaborate your policy and explain why you believe this policy is most likely to achieve our desired goals at an acceptable cost and risk. Additionally, be sure to elaborate what you foresee to be the likely reactions to this policy from Iran/North Korea; other regional powers and allies; and US domestic actors (i.e., Congress, public opinion). [Laney and Shaplen; Cha and Kang; Chubin and Litwak; Amuzegar]

2. Respond to the following: “The United Nations is an anachronistic organization that no longer reflects the realities of power in the 21st century. Countries such France and Germany are attempting to use the UN as the ‘ropes to tie the American Gulliver down.’ The experiment of subjecting the use of force to the rule of law has proved a failure and should be recognized as such. Therefore, although we may remain a member, it is no longer in America’s national interest to actively pursue our foreign policy through the United Nations.” [Taroor; Glennon]

3. Is China going to be a partner or competitor with the US in the future? Does the United States have reason to fear the rise of China as an economic power or military power, either globally or in East Asia? Are Chinese and American national interests largely congruent or fundamentally at odds with each other? What are the major points of potential conflict between Washington and Beijing and how likely are any of these to explode in the near term? Ten years down the road, are our relations with China likely to be more like our relations with Russia during the Cold War or like our relations with Russia today? [Sutter; Gilboy]

4. Over the past thirty years the trend in American public policy has eliminated barriers to free markets, decreased the role of government, and cut taxes. Advocates contend that it has made America a more efficient and prosperous place, leaving everyone better off. Opportunities abound and the American Dream is alive and well. Critics contend that these policies only benefit the wealthy few. The average American feels their wages squeezed by foreign competition and outsourcing, while the social safety net unravels due to tax cuts and decreased spending. America has become leaner and meaner; the American Dream is now a mirage. Which perspective do you think is closer to the truth? Why? [Taking Sides, Issues 15 and 16; Dollar and Kray; Drezner]

5. Take a side on any ONE of the following questions:
   - Does affirmative action advance racial equality?
   - Should abortion be restricted?
   - Does the PATRIOT Act abridge essential freedoms?
   - Do we need tougher gun control laws?
   - Should there be a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage?
   - Should America restrict immigration?

Obviously you will need to refer first to the readings in the Taking Sides book. Note, however, that if you do this question I EXPECT that you will use sources beyond those in the textbook to support your argument. [Taking Sides, Issues 8, 9, 13, 14, 17, and 18]

OVER ➔
Part II: Answer the following question (25%)  

Here is your chance to directly contemplate America’s future....The year is 2015. Write the ‘State of the Union’ address for the President. (You can decide who is president, but I want it written as a speech. Check out a transcript of Dubya’s recent State of the Union if you are unsure of the format.) Make sure to highlight both the major problems faced by the US in the years previous, the key issues of the present day (i.e., 2015), and how well the US is doing in handling those problems. (NOTE: Obviously this is a question that allows for a great deal of creativity, but keep in mind that I expect you to formulate the issues for your ‘future America’ in the context of the topics discussed in class.)

Format: Your exam should be typed, double-spaced, and with normal margins and fonts. Please include a cover sheet indicating which question you have answered and staple your paper. You are welcome to incorporate sources from beyond the syllabus if you wish. There is neither a minimum nor maximum length for this paper. The substance of your argument, not length of your paper, is what matters. However, you are unlikely to be able to successfully address any of these questions in less than five pages. Alternately, if you go beyond ten pages you might want to think about scaling it back!

Tips for Success: In order to address these questions successfully, you need to first of all review the material from the course (readings and lecture) relevant to the question. Secondly, you need to think about it. The main thing I am looking for is your analysis of these arguments, not just repeating what the authors have said. Finally, your essay needs to be clearly written and organized so as to easily guide the reader through your arguments. At a minimum, your discussion should be bracketed by an introductory paragraph that sets out the main points you intend to make in your essay and a clearly elaborated conclusion.

Grading: Your essay needs to show that you understand the material we have discussed, have thought about it in depth, and can present a logical, intelligent, and well-written argument that is supported by the available evidence. You do not get an “A” for just not making mistakes; you have to earn an “A” through high quality work.