America’s Future
Take Home Exam #1

Due at the START of class on Friday, December 17. Answer ONE of the following:

Question #1: Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington present starkly contrasting visions of the future of international politics. Compare and contrast the core arguments of each, highlighting their respective strengths and weaknesses. Which of these articles provides the more useful framework for understanding international relations in the present? That is, which provides a more accurate picture of what is going on in the world today?\(^1\)

Question #2: Write a critique of the Bush Administration’s National Security Strategy.\(^2\) What are the key elements – both in terms of goals and means -- of the Bush National Security Strategy? Is this strategy the optimal approach given the threats we face in the present? Is this strategy likely to achieve its stated (or implicit) goals? That is, will following this strategy make the United States more secure? How does America’s experience in Iraq influence your answer to this question?

Question #3: John Lewis Gaddis argues that surprise attacks on America have produced divergent strategic reorientations. After Washington was burned in 1814, John Quincy Adams advocated a strategy of preemption, unilateralism, and hegemony. After Pearl Harbor, Franklin Roosevelt reoriented the US toward formal alliances and multilateral cooperation, an orientation that remained throughout the Cold War years. Following the September 11 attacks, the Bush Administration also developed a new strategy, one more akin to the Adams approach. First, explain the rationale presented by Gaddis as to why Adams and Roosevelt choose these particular strategies to deal with the problems of their day. Based on this assessment, was the Bush Administration correct to adopt the main tenets of the “older” grand strategy, or would a more multilateral approach be more appropriate for the present day?

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.

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\(^1\) In addressing this question, I am looking for you to read these articles very carefully, think deeply about their underlying assumptions and logic, and to carefully consider these points against the evidence of what is actually going on in the world today.

\(^2\) By a critique I mean a critical analysis of the document that highlights both its strengths and its weaknesses; thus it can be either positive or negative overall. From this you should form your own arguments regarding the utility of policy and be able to explain the rationale behind your position.