Questions for the Mid-term Examination

The mid-term examination will consist of three questions taken from the list below. You will have fifty minutes to complete two short essays.

1. How did Soviet nationalities policy shape nationalist conflicts in the late and post-Soviet periods?

2. “For Russians national identity is wrapped in political controversy. Russians must reach a consensus on what it means to be a Russian. The outcome will have profound implications for everyone living in Russia and the near abroad.” Explain.

3. “For most Soviet successor states one of the most important choices they must make is between defining their nations in civic or ethnic terms. The choice will have profound effect on the long-term peace of those countries.” Give examples from at least three successor states to illustrate the consequences of these different choices.

4. The Soviet political system has been described as “not authoritarianism of the traditional type, but a modern type of authoritarianism—totalitarianism.” What are the key attributes that distinguished the Soviet type of authoritarianism?

5. “The Yeltsin Constitution was designed by presidential advisors so as to guard against a reemergence of the threats to presidential power that had been seen in the first two years of the newly independent Russian Federation.” Explain.

6. Do the Russian people—particularly as revealed through public opinion surveys and elections—support reform towards democracy and capitalism?

7. Has Vladimir Putin’s presidency moved Russia closer to or further away from democracy?

8. Why are some post-soviet states not democracies today? Which successor states have failed to develop or sustain democracy? How can we explain this?