

Sample Current Issues and Events Essay Prompts

I. Fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, "U.S.-Russia relations are clearly headed in the wrong direction." That was the assessment of an Independent Task Force on U.S. policy toward Russia, sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations.

Brooke Leonard, executive assistant to the president of the Nixon Center, wrote, "Only a few years ago, Russia and the United States seemed to be headed towards a mutually-beneficial partnership in the common fight against terrorism. But Russia's recent behavior has left many wondering about its intentions, particularly when it comes to the United States."

Explain the nature and cause of the recent tension between Russia and the U.S.

II. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright stated, "In 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down, it appeared that the global debate had been settled in freedom's favor, yet almost two decades later, the struggle to define and defend self-government still rages. Indeed, a real danger exists that the world will again be split by competing ideologies: not communist versus capitalist, but democratic versus autocratic."

Explain where existing democratic governments or emerging democracies have been threatened this year.

III. Ron Moreau and Michael Hirsh of *Time* wrote, "Today, no other country on earth is arguably more dangerous than Pakistan." Explain why.

IV. Tom Baldwin of the *London Times* wrote, "(The) fifth anniversary of the war was marked with a collective yawn by many parts of the media, while a series of Hollywood films about Iraq have disappeared without trace at the box office. Indeed, the headlines remained dominated by the economy, which has replaced Iraq as the leading concern among voters."

In March, a CNN/Opinion Research Poll found that 42 percent of Americans say that the ailing economy has replaced the war as the issue atop voters' priority lists.

Explain how the economy has eclipsed Iraq as the most pressing issue among voters in the 2008 presidential race. Explain what has happened with the U.S. economy and in Iraq to change the political landscape. Also, explain how the three main presidential candidates — McCain, Obama and Clinton — are focusing on — that is, spinning — these two issues.