

# **IAFF 6101**

## **International Affairs Cornerstone**

Lecture 11  
U.S. Grand Strategy

November 8, 2016

# Outline

- **What is grand strategy?**
- U.S. grand strategy historically
- The 1990s debate
- Current U.S. grand strategy
- The future of U.S. grand strategy

# Grand Strategy

- Grand strategy is “a political-military, means-ends chain, a state’s theory about how it can best ‘cause’ security for itself” (Posen 1984, 13)
  - Tactical vs. operational vs. strategic vs. political vs. grand strategic
- Grand strategy identifies national interests and the best military (and possibly other) means available to achieve those interests
- Sets the broad outline of national security policy
- Answers questions like:
  - What international objectives should U.S. pursue?
  - What regions of the globe (if any) should U.S. protect?
    - Maintain commitments to Europe, East Asia, Middle East?
  - Should U.S. revise its strategy in response to China’s rise?
  - How secure in the U.S.?

# Elements of Grand Strategy

- What **interests** does the United States have?
- What are the **threats** to those interests that currently exist of that we foresee?
- What **military strategies** are best suited to counter those threats?
- What **military forces** are required to execute those strategies?

# Grand Strategy

**Interests**



**Threats to Interests**



**Strategies to Meet Threats**



**Forces to Execute Strategies**

# Fundamental Interests

- *Things the state values for their own sake; not means to some other end, but ends in themselves*
- Security
  - Protecting U.S. homeland from invasion, destruction
  - Protecting U.S. from coercion based on military threats
  - Safety, sovereignty, and territorial integrity
- Economic
  - Maintaining U.S. prosperity
- Humanitarian
  - Increase prosperity of other countries
  - Reduce human suffering from war, disease
- Political/Ideological
  - Spread democracy
  - Spread market capitalism

# Fundamental Interests, 2

- Priority assigned to different interests varies over time with changes in the international environment
  - Security dominated during Cold War; humanitarian, democracy secondary
  - Humanitarian and democracy receive greater priority in early post-Cold War era
  - Focus returns to security after 9/11, although threats are new
- But, changes in the international environment don't change fundamental U.S. interests. Rather, how U.S. makes tradeoffs among interests changes as threats and opportunities change
  - Security was still an interest in 1990s, but relative importance assigned to it decreased relative to other interests – decrease in threat, more leeway to spread democracy, pursue humanitarianism
  - Rise of terrorism and WMD → Return to security focus

# Threats to Interests: Security

- *Identifies threats to fundamental interests*
- Security of the U.S. homeland
  - Powerful autocracies
  - Rise of a hegemon in another region
    - Wilhelmine Germany, Nazi Germany, USSR, China?
  - Rise of a hegemon that unites resources of Eurasia
    - Nazi G., USSR
  - Great power war
    - U.S. is inevitably drawn in
  - Spread of nuclear weapons
  - Cutoff of Persian Gulf oil
    - Needed for warfighting purposes
- Can also think of many of these threats as *derivative interests* – things that you care about because achieving them helps you achieve a fundamental interest



# Threats to Interests: Economic

- *Identifies threats to fundamental interests*
- U.S. economic prosperity
  - Economic nationalism, return of trade barriers, collapse of open international economy
  - Freedom of the SLOCs
  - Great power war?
  - Cutoff of Persian Gulf oil
  - U.S. dollar no longer the global reserve currency

# Threats: Magnitude and Nature

- Magnitude of opposing capabilities/potential
  - Power of opposing state
  - Size and type of opposing forces
  - Difficulty of defense (and/or deterrence)
    - Geography
    - Nuclear weapons
    - Cyber
- Type of adversary – adversary's motives or intentions
  - Security seeking/preserve status quo
  - Greedy state/revision of status quo
- Non-state threats
  - Terrorist groups
  - Terrorists × WMD
  - Cyber

# Strategy: Specific

- Strategies to address specific security threats
  - Threat: Powerful autocracies
  - Strategy: Spread democracy; containment; alliances
  - Threat: Rise of regional hegemon
  - Strategy: Preventive war; forward-deployed forces; alliances; rapid deployment force (RDF)
  - Threat: Eurasian hegemon
  - Strategy: Keep continent divided among multiple powers, fight to oppose single dominant power
  - Threat: GP war
  - Strategy: Keep forces in region; nuclear umbrellas; alliances; RDF
  - Threat: Nuclear proliferation
  - Strategy: Preventive war; coercion; nuclear umbrellas; sanctions; strengthen NPT regime
  - Threat: Cutoff of Persian Gulf oil
  - Strategy: Base forces in region; naval patrols; security guarantees; alliances; deterrent threats; RDF

# Strategy: General

- Offense, Defense, or Deterrence
  - Preventive war vs. containment/deterrence
- Unilateral vs. multilateral
- Station troops abroad vs. send them from U.S.
- Conventional vs. nuclear
- Damage limitation vs. limited war (nuclear)

# Strategy: Disagreements

- Analysts may disagree about the results that will be generated by different strategies
  - **Competition**: maintain spending such that no other power could possibly catch U.S.?
    - Current NSS, primacy in 1990s
  - **Cooperation**: efforts to stay on top = costly and self-defeating, provoke balancing
- Which you choose may depend on your assessment of the adversary's motives

# Strategy: Costs and Risks

- The costs and risks of defending a threatened interest may exceed the benefits – none of the strategies might be worth pursuing
  - Nuclear proliferation
    - Maybe no strategy is effective
    - Could increase risk of attack on U.S.
      - Security guarantees
  - Prevent war among major powers
    - Requires costly presence of U.S. troops abroad
    - Might be little risk of war among major powers

# Forces

- What military forces are required to execute chosen strategies?
- Example
  - Threat = possibility of great power war of rise of regional hegemon represented by resurgent Russia
  - U.S. Strategy = NATO alliance; forward-deployed forces in Europe; nuclear umbrellas
  - Forces = 62,000 U.S. troops, mostly in Germany
    - \$3.4 billion European Reassurance Initiative
    - 1 U.S. Army armored brigade (4,200 soldiers + vehicles) rotating in and out of 6 E. European countries
    - 4 NATO multinational battalions to be deployed to Baltics + Poland

# U.S. Grand Strategy in History, 1

- **1776-1916: Isolationism**

- Avoid entangling alliances, esp. with Europe
- Work to expel European great powers from W. Hemisphere, and keep them out
  - Monroe Doctrine
- Unilateralism
- Tiny military establishment
- No U.S. forces stationed abroad

Interests: Homeland security

Threats: European GPs

Strategies: Exclude GPs from Western Hemisphere

Forces British Navy!



# U.S. Grand Strategy in History, 2

- **1917-1945: Offshore Balancing**

- U.S. intervenes in WW1 when it looks like Germany might win, dominate Europe
- Post-WW1 backlash: U.S. takes its toys and goes home
- No U.S. leadership in interwar period
- U.S. content to let Europeans deal with Hitler, until fall of France
- U.S. gets into WW2 to prevent German hegemony in Europe, Eurasia

Interests: Homeland security

Threats: European hegemon

Strategies: Fight to defeat potential hegemons in Europe

Forces: U.S. Army and Navy

# U.S. Grand Strategy in History, 3

- **1947-89: Containment**
  - U.S. would like to go home in 1945, but Europe is in ruins
  - Nobody to hold USSR in check – potential hegemon
  - Marshall Plan, Truman Doctrine
  - NATO
  - Permanent U.S. military presence in Europe, Asia
  - Backed by nuclear deterrence

Interests: Homeland security

Threats: Soviet hegemony in Eurasia

Strategies: NATO, forward deployments, deterrence (conventional and nuclear)

Forces: Large conventional and nuclear forces

# Neoisolationism

- Come Home, America!
  - Interests:
    - Security, prosperity
  - Threats:
    - Cutoff of oil from Middle East
  - Strategies:
    - End U.S. alliances with Europe and Asia
    - Close U.S. nuclear umbrella; accept limited nuclear proliferation
    - Prevent single power from monopolizing Gulf oil
  - Forces:
    - Reliance on nukes
    - Cut defense budget by 50%
    - Keep air and naval forces in Gulf, but no ground forces

# Offshore Balancing

- Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee!
  - Interests:
    - Security, prosperity
  - Threats:
    - Rise of regional hegemons
    - Resentment generated by U.S. forces abroad
  - Strategies:
    - Let countries in the region deal with rising power first
    - Only come in if they can't contain it
    - Alliances expendable
    - No forward deployed forces!
  - Forces:
    - Smaller but robust conventional forces, airpower, nukes

# Selective Engagement

- An insurance policy
  - Interests:
    - Security, prosperity, Gulf oil, GP wars
  - Threats:
    - Nuclear proliferation
    - Economic nationalism
    - Regional hegemon in Gulf
    - GP wars
  - Strategies:
    - Nuclear umbrellas
    - Forward deployed forces
    - Deterrence of conquest
    - General reassurance
  - Forces:
    - Not specified

# Primacy

- Being the top dog
  - Interests:
    - Security, prosperity, Gulf oil, GP wars
  - Threats:
    - Rise of a peer competitor
  - Strategies:
    - Preserve U.S. supremacy by outdistancing any global challenger
    - Remain heavily involved and deployed in Eurasia
    - NATO expansion
    - Prevent nuclear proliferation
  - Forces:
    - Nearly Cold War-sized force

# U.S. Interests (NSS 2015)

- Security
  - Security of U.S., its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners
- Prosperity
  - Strong, innovative, growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system
- Values
  - Respect for universal values (e.g., democracy, human rights) at home and abroad
- International Order
  - Rules-based order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, opportunity

# Threats to U.S. Interests (NSS 2015)

- Security
  - Terrorism: AQ, ISIL and affiliates
  - States:
    - Russia – violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, annexation of Crimea
    - North Korea
    - China – South and East China Seas
  - WMD: Irresponsible states (Iran, N. Korea), terrorists
  - Access to Spaces: Cyber, space, air, maritime
- Prosperity
  - Cutoff of energy supplies of U.S. and allies (e.g., by Russia)
  - Retreat from open international economic order
- Other
  - Weak states
  - Climate change
  - Epidemic disease



# Strategies: Broad (NSS 2015)

- **Lead**
  - With **strength**: economic, military, values, resilience of U.S.
  - By **example**: rule of law, democracy
  - With capable partners: allies, non-state actors, institutions
  - With **all instruments of U.S. power**: military, diplomacy, economic, intelligence
  - With **long term perspective**: lots of changes underway,
- **Partners**
  - Alliances
  - NATO, E. Asian allies
- **Principled and selective use of force**
  - Will use force unilaterally, if necessary, although prefer to act with allies
  - Clear and feasible objectives; effective, just, and consistent with rule of law

# Strategies: Specific (NSS 2015)

- Combat terrorism
  - Targeted CT operations; no more large ground wars!
  - Counter flow of foreign fighters and conditions that foster terrorism (poverty, inequality)
  - Build capacity in other states; train and equip local partners
  - Degrade/defeat ISIL
- Conflict deterrence and prevention
  - Alliances, forward deployed forces, building allied capacity
- Prevent spread of WMD
  - CTBT
  - Fissile material cutoff treaty
  - Iran
- Preserve access to cyber/space/seas

# Clintonian Grand Strategy: Deep Engagement

- Bottom-lines
  - Preserve key alliances
  - Maintain forward deployment
  - Maintain US military and economic leadership
- Major powers: Retain key alliances in Europe and Asia
  - Some believe that a hegemon would threaten U.S. military capabilities; others do not
    - This logic was more important during the Cold War than now
  - War (or security competition) between other major powers is dangerous because:
    - The U.S. could get drawn in
    - Competition could fuel proliferation—Japan, South Korea,
    - Competition (and war) are bad for trade/prosperity

# Clintonian Grand Strategy: Deep Engagement

- Prevent Proliferation
  - Proliferation optimists are too optimistic
  - Acquisition by “rogues” states is more dangerous, even though the probability of use may be low
  - Terrorists are even more worrisome
- Maintain U.S. Leadership
  - Helps maintain the open global economy by reducing insecurity and competition
  - Improves trade deals and helps maintain the U.S. dollar as the reserve currency

# Alternatives to Deep Engagement: Restraint

- U.S. remains highly secure
  - Don't exaggerate terrorist threat – definitely prefer AQ or ISIS to Nazi G or USSR!
- U.S. power encourages it to pursue policies that are not in its best interest and beyond its reach:
  - Activist foreign policies fuel opposition from terrorists and other states – balancing!
- Alliances and commitments:
  - Reduce/eliminate bases in the Arab world – be “over the horizon”
  - End support for Israel (and Egypt!)
  - Maintain security commitments to Europe and Asia, but withdraw forces; over 10 years in Europe: Asia trickier; manage transitions
    - Not only saves \$\$; encourages other states to be more responsible; and makes them share responsibility for globalization
  - Get allies to pull their own weight!
- Proliferation: U.S. requires a more measured assessment of the dangers; prefer deterrence to preventive war

# A Trumpian Grand Strategy?

- Elements of restraint
  - Burden-sharing by allies on defense
  - Willingness to abandon alliances
  - Willingness to tolerate nuclear proliferation to certain (former) allies
  - Would rather not be involved in Iraq; “that’s not our fight”
  - Not 100% clear on Israel
- Elements of deep engagement/primacy
  - Increase defense spending – investments in conventional forces
  - Maintain unquestioned military dominance
  - Bomb the sh-t out of ISIS! In Iraq, Syria, even Libya; send U.S. ground troops to fight them
  - Junk the Iran nuclear deal
- Elements of I’m not quite sure what
  - Extreme version of homeland defense – stopping Muslim immigration, deporting undocumented immigrants, building a border fence
  - Economic nationalism – junk TPP, designate China a currency manipulator