

US National Security Strategy & Policy:  
An Introduction to the Theory & Practice  
of Grand Strategy & the Elements of US  
Nat'l Security Policy

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# This Week's Agenda: Theoretical Dimensions of Nat'l Security & Nat'l Interests

- What is “National Security?” What are its “component parts” or “elements?”
- Morgenthau, on the two US “Mainstays” of USFP & Nat'l Security Policies – ‘Nat'l Interests & ‘Moral Abstractions’
- Bush II vs. Obama Strategies & ‘Worldview’
- Concerns for:
  - Strategic Constants & Norms / IR Theory
  - Instruments/Elements of National Power
  - The Limits of Military Power
  - Strategy as a Concept & Process
  - Defining American “National Interests”
- Recent US Nat'l Security Strategies (NSS) 2008, 2009

**What is “National Security?”**  
**What are its components?**  
**How wide-ranging is the term,**  
**“national security?”**

# Concepts for Nat'l Security Policy Analysis

National Security Policy Precedents

National Security Policy -Making

“National Interests”

“Vital Interests”

Role of Domestic Politics

Policy Legitimacy

National Power

Threats &

Constraints

A “Grand Strategy?”

# National Security Policy – Our ‘Working Definition

“The pattern of government decisions & actions intended to counter perceived threats to America’s national interests, and especially America’s vital interests.”

From which we develop these KEY QUESTIONS for our subject material:

1. What are America’s “national interests?”
2. What are America’s “vital interests?”
3. Who determines American “national interests?” “Vital interests?”

# Key Questions for the Course

- A. Who and what threatens those interests?
- B. How do we determine threats?
- C. What actions should we take to protect those interests?
- D. Who determines priorities?



# Let's Define National Security Policy (NSP)

NSP: Pattern of government decisions & actions intended to counter perceived threats to America's national interests

Policy =  $\sum_{\text{time}} \sum_{\text{players}} \sum \text{decisions, laws, rules, actions}$

What matters here? History of PM! Meanings:

Prior decisions / practices

Prior actions / inactions

Prior events / reactions

Past lessons learned

# National Interests (NI)

Things deemed important for national well-being, prosperity, continuity, & for NI:

Economic interests

Access to markets

Political interests

Countries with  
Shared interests  
& values

Political Values

Democracy

Human rights

# Vital Interests (VI)

Variables & conditions deemed essential for national well-being prosperity continuity

Things on which our national survival depends

What are you willing go sacrifice lives for?

What are decision-makers desiring to protect?

## External Focus

Foreign threats

## Internal Focus

Education

Poverty

Environment

# US / America's Vital Interests

American territorial integrity

Stable and friendly Canada & Mexico

Preservation of American political and economic institutions

Safety of Americana at home and abroad

Strong & Prosperous European free market democracies

What else?

Other variables / areas / topics to include?

What's missing?

# Generic Threats

## Countries

Soviet Union

China

The “axis of evil”

## Technology

WMD

Terrorism

Other threats?

## Events

War

Political & Economic  
instability

Disasters

What else?

# Specific Threats - Setting Priorities

Iraqi atomic bomb vs. Pakistani atomic bomb

Nuclear missiles vs. terrorism

Collapse of Russian economy & fledgling democracy vs.  
Collapse of Latin American economies & democracies

How do we decide?

Other 'specific threats?'

# Part II

## Requirements for Grand Strategy

1. REQ1: Strategic Environment
2. REQ2: Means of Power & Projection (Roles for Deterrence & Coercion)
3. REQ3: Elements of National Power

# Requirement #1

- **The Strategic Environment**
  - **Objective 1.** Describe the various characteristics that make up the strategic environment for the US.
  - **Objective 2.** Explain International Relations (IR) theory & relate it to our understanding of important security issues that shape strategy.

# Strategic Constants & Norms

- Physical Environment
- National Character
- Relationship between war & state
- Balance of power mechanism
- Geopolitical situation / geopolitics
- Other variables?

# Strategic Constants & Norms (Strategic Characteristics)

- Physical Environment:
  - Traditional elements: land forms, terrain, ocean & seas, climate
  - Spatial elements: natural resources, lines of communication
  - Political, economic, & social makeup of a nation results in part from physical environment
  - Location of international borders (land-locked vs. island nation vs. proximity to external pressures)

# Strategic Constants & Norms (Strategic Characteristics)

- National Character:
  - Character derived from: location, language, culture, religion, societal politics, historical circumstances
  - Always evolving
  - Psychological profile” of each nation or political group involved in the conflict:
    - Enemies
    - Allies
    - Potential enemies & allies
    - One’s own nation

# Strategic Constants & Norms (Strategic Characteristics)

- The Relationship between War & the State:
  - A state will almost always become involved
  - States are normally replaced by other states or groups
  - Generally, a state is remarkably tough & enduring
    - Context of the state system(s)
    - No political entity is permanent

# Strategic Constants & Norms (Strategic Characteristics)

- The Balance of Power Mechanism:
  - “status quo” in the distribution of power
  - no one dominant entity or group of entities
  - more than one political power center
  - Breaks down if:
    - One or more of the participants rebel
    - A power vacuum occurs
- Geopolitical situation / geopolitics

# International Relations Theory: Quick Review & Summary

- Main schools – Two Dominant Schools
  - Realism
  - Idealism/liberalism
  - Characteristics
    - Problem
    - Actors
    - Characteristics

# IR Theory, cont'd

- Realism:
  - Central problem: war & the use of force
  - Central actors: states interacting with other states (
  - Anarchic system of states
    - Hobbs, “Just as stormy weather does not mean perpetual rain, so a state of war does not mean constant war.”
    - Thucydides, “The strong do what they have the power to do & the weak accept what they have to accept” (Penguin translation).
  - View: International politics is a **jungle** dominated by the exercise of power & power politics

# IR Theory, cont'd

- Idealism/Liberalism:
  - Views a global society that functions alongside the states & sets part of the context for states
  - Trade crosses borders, people have global contacts, & international institutions (UN, NATO, etc.) create a context in which the realist view of pure anarchy is insufficient
  - International system: community
  - State of war focuses only on extreme situations & misses the growth of economic interdependence & the evolution of a transnational global society
  - Views international politics as a **garden**

# Requirement #2

- **Objective 3.** Describe how national-level strategy & policy incorporates the instruments of national power as a means of exercising power & influence.

# Instruments/Elements of National Power

- Diplomatic/political
- Informational
- Military
- Economic
- Social
- Others?

# Instruments/Elements of National Power

- **Diplomatic/Political:** The use of a country's international diplomatic skills & political position to achieve national interests
- **Informational:** The use of a country's information & psychological systems to achieve national interests
- **Military:** The extent a country's armed forces can be used to achieve national interests.
- **Economic:** The application of a country's material resources to achieve national interests

# The Limits of Military Power

- Political & psychological limits?
- Legitimacy & the credible capacity to coerce?
- Physical limits?
- Culminating points of actions?
  
- Can you think of or provide others?

# Requirement #3

- **Objective 4.** Determine how the full dimension of strategy as a concept & as a process relates to the policy, strategy, & military operations relationship.

# “Strategy” as a Concept & a Process

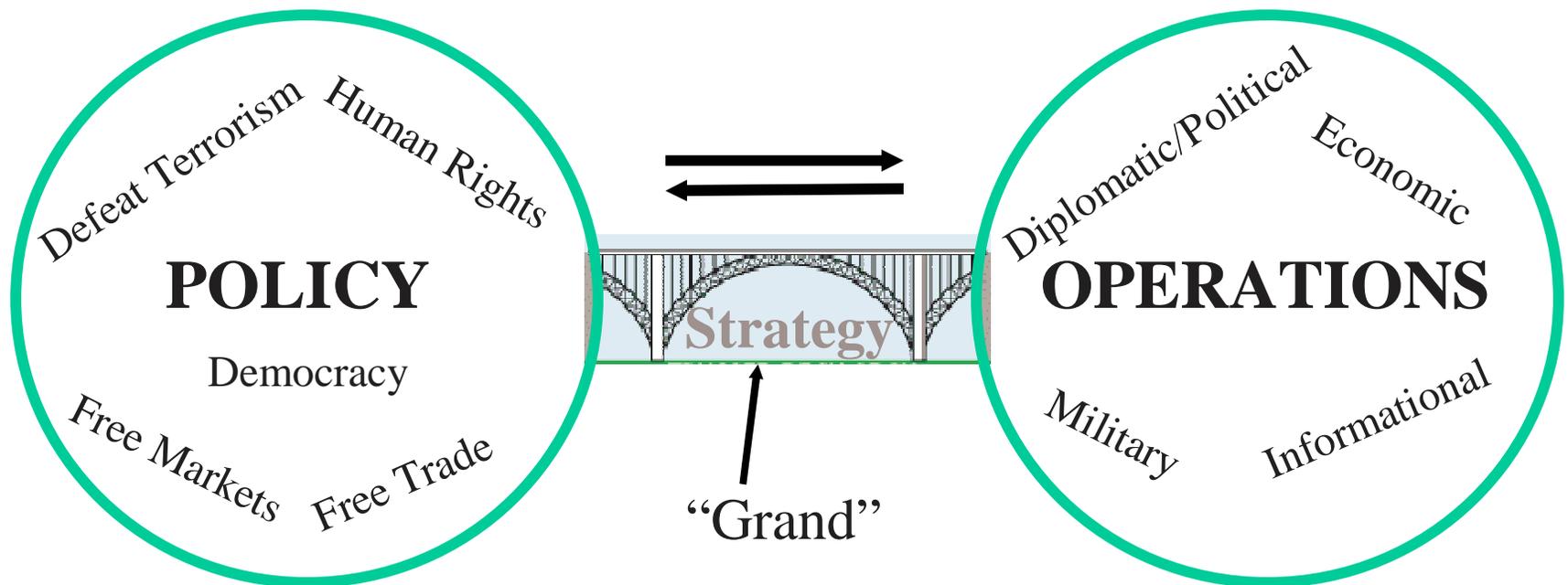
- **The “Strategy Process:”**
  1. Determining national security objectives
  2. Formulating grand strategy
  3. Developing military strategy
  4. Designing operational strategy
  5. Formulating battlefield strategy (tactics)

# Strategy as a Concept, cont'd

- Strategy
  - The bridge between policy & operations
  - Effective strategy must integrate political & military criteria rather than separate them
  - Civilian & military leaders may tend to polarize toward opposite sides of the bridge

# Key Points

## Weeks 1 & 2: Grand Strategy: Theory & Practice (cont'd)



# Strategy as a Concept, cont'd

- Complicating factors
  - Steps not neat or compartmentalized but blend & flow from national security objectives to tactics
  - Reverse flow or feedback system within the process
  - Numerous external factors have influence
  - Where & by whom are decisions made
  - Remember that this is a “political” process
  - What does that mean?
  - See the next slide!

# Strategy as a Concept, cont'd

- Characteristics of political/policy strategic objectives:
  - First step in making strategy is deciding which political objectives a strategy will aim to achieve
  - These objectives should establish:
    - Definitions for survival & victory for all participants in the conflict
    - Whether the nation is pursuing a limited or unlimited political objective

# Strategy as a Concept, cont'd

- Characteristics of military strategic objectives:
  - Military objectives flow from political/policy objectives
  - Use of military power should not produce unintended or undesirable political results
  - Must consider centers of gravity & critical vulnerabilities

# “National Interests”

- **Vital** “National Interests:”
  - An interest on which the nation is unwilling to compromise
  - An interest over which a nation would go to war
- Sometimes interests are categorized
  - Survival
  - Vital
  - Major
  - Peripheral

# Requirement #4

- **Objective 5.** Discuss how the current U. S. National Security Strategy integrates the various elements of national power to achieve its goals & objectives.
- Consider TWO recent US NSS (2002 & 2008; or 2002 & 2009; or 2008 & 2009)
- Let's examine just one (2002) more closely

# Post - 9/11 US National Security Strategy (US NSS, September 2002) Goals

- Champions aspirations for human dignity
- Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism & work to prevent attacks against us & our friends
- Work with others to defuse regional conflicts
- Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, & our friends with weapons of mass destruction

# US National Security Strategy, September 2002, cont'd

## Goals

- Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets & free trade
- Expand the circle of development by opening societies & building the infrastructure of democracy
- Develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power
- Transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges & opportunities of the twenty-first century