Dr. Barry Posen began by explaining that his talk would be a general overview of the currently desultory debate about the nation’s Grand Strategy. He would include a review of the current thinking, what is behind the major strategic views, and what could be done to change the situation.

What is Grand Strategy?

- Up until the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act it was difficult to identify one
  - Now there are many strategies appearing, even on DoD websites
  - But, they are not all that grand
- Grand Strategy definition: a theory about national security involving
  - The safety of the people
  - Sovereignty – the ability of a country to make its own decisions
  - Territorial integrity
- Grand Strategy relates to power decisions of today
  - In the 18th Century monarchs did not worry much about the population’s safety
  - Previously governments were concerned more with the real estate that they controlled
  - There is a need to understand the relations between means and ends
    - What is the order of the priorities that a government should handle?
    - Assumes that some resources are scarce
    - “Strategy has a dollar sign”, it is resource limited
    - Deciding what is the biggest threats are leads to where one invests

The Current Grand Strategies
There are three major Grand Strategies competing currently with another making a comeback

I. National Liberalism
II. Liberal Internationalism
III. Selective Engagement
IV. Restraint
Nationalist Liberalism
- Largely supported by the Bush Administration, especially the neo-conservatives (but that term is too narrow)
- Basically, an activist hegemonic strategy
- US is actively trying to shape the world while trying to remain preeminent
  - Being preeminent does not force hegemonic behavior but makes it possible
- Comes from the Primacy strategy of the 1990s
  - No clear strategy here
  - No clear purpose for it at the time but now there seems to be one

Liberal Internationalism
- Mostly mainstream Democratic thinkers
- Primary view of the Clinton Administration
  - As usual it was ignored when the next administration came in
- A lineal descendant of cooperative security concepts of earlier eras
  - Related to the Princeton Project on National Security

Selective Engagement
- Concept is hegemonic but gently so
- US does not need to be engaged in the world all the time
- Problem: proponents never could figure out how to select the engagements
  - When a country is out in the world with lots of capability, it is always endanger of trying to do one more thing – which may be one too many
  - Although proponents developed selection criteria, they did not like them

Restraint – or Off-shore Balancing
- Only going into international conflicts when really needed
- Being sponsored by the CATO Institute among others
- Dr. Posen noted he considers himself currently a proponent of this strategy, moving away from Selective Engagement

HOW THE WORLD WORKS – FROM THE FOUR STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

National Liberalism View
- Realism at the international level
  - Sees the world in anarchy
  - No 9-1-1 to call in an emergency
- Need to be able to look after yourself with your own military power
  - Must keep buying more power and need a strong economy to do that
  - US can’t be too capable or too powerful
- At the domestic level, liberalism takes over
  - The nature of states is important
The world would be better if other countries were democracies like us
  • Only illiberal states fear the US
  • US should not worry about those who are afraid of us – they don’t like
    us anyway
• Nationalism and Identity politics may complicate the issue
  • Now happening in many places in the world
  • In 1990s related to nationalism and ethnicity issues but now mostly religion
  • Nationalism and identity politics an be dangerous if not controlled
    • Also very weak so can be handled by proper peace-building, nation-
      building so they can be shown the way
• Democracy is the answer
  • Can see this view involving Iraq now

Liberal Internationalism View
• Liberal both internationally and domestically
• US power greases the skids to make things happen
  • Secretary Albright: “US is the indispensable nation”
  • Always easier when there is a leader internationally – probably essential
• The international scene is no longer anarchy
  • Now it is too hard for one state to dominate others because of possibility of
    nuclear weapons
  • Economic connections have also made improved the situation
  • International relationships measured not just in military power but also by
    social and economic relations
• Biggest threats come from below international level: identity politics issues
  • Also have threats that come from success such as global warming
  • There is something out there causing problems for poor countries
  • Not always sure what it is – only hypotheses
  • Whatever globalization is, some believe this it is a disruptive force
    • Problems come from below because of the success at the top
    • Many countries may like globalization benefits but have other forces
      that also develop anti-globalization efforts
• Alternative theories about why the US is no longer well-liked
  • US-Israeli relationship – has polarized Arab and to lesser extent wider
    Islamic world
    • This does not mean that the relationship should be ended
    • Does mean that the US should be engaged working on the
      problem of Palestine, etc.
  • US is also in the MidEast region for its own reasons which are not
    acceptable to some factions
• Situation seen as dangerous but the position of the anti-system is weak
• If US manages the situation and does more peace-keeping could take the winds out of
  the sails of the anti-US efforts
US should be willing to pay more if it has to in order to make the situation work better
- Other Great Powers (such as they are) would go along if the US led properly
- Basic belief: Democracies around the world would be better for the US
- US must help other countries ease into more democratic ways using international organizations
  - Not like Bush Administration which did not trust such entities
  - This strategy wants to use at least some international organizations (the correct ones) to improve the world situation

**Restraint View**
- Proponents believe the international system is anarchical but US has mostly won out and now has no peers
  - US concerns about remaining preeminent will cause problems
  - Really more like a balancing of issues
    - If US gets too grabby, then other countries will react
    - US should strive to be on the right side of this balance
    - Balancing is normal, need to expect it; may involve alliances or war
- Must understand that others see the US as the threat in international situations
  - US makes others nervous with its overwhelming power
  - Anti-system terrorist are not actually against our way of life, just fear power
- Having more democracies in the world is a good thing but it is not a necessary condition for being more secure
- Nationalism and identity politics situations are hard to change
  - Basically a field of land mines

**Selective Engagement**
- See a struggle for security involving Great Power relations and competition
  - For various reasons, these struggles have not been prevalent for years
  - We forget how good it is that the Great Powers are not fighting each other or worrying about such things
No longer a need to be autonomous because of a fear of giving power to others
  - Now power can be shared – EU, etc.
- Many reasons why things have been quiet and US left in leading position
  - Other countries are largely weak and unorganized
  - US should work to keep the Great Powers system boring
- US may need to drop its overseas activities but probably not those in the Middle East
  - Need to consider proactive balancing
- Rather like old-style politics of the elder Bush administration
- Criteria for selection of engagements is a problem
  - Those involved could not stick to their own criteria
  - Always want to do just a little bit more to be a little bit more safe
  - There was a belief that NATO would stand or fall over Kosovo issues
    - But US national security was not involved in those issues
- However, there might be reasons for interventions for moral reasons
- Constantly taking on a little more will not secure continuing safety
- Must also understand issues like identity politics as complications

HOW THE FOUR GRAND STRATEGIES SEE CURRENT AND FUTURE THREATS

National Liberalism no longer see other states as threats, despite 9/11
- Rogue states might still be threats
- In the future China might become a first priority threat
- Terrorists, not limited to Al Qaeda, would be the next area of threat
- Failed states would be a third category of threat especially because of the rise of terrorists
  - Failed states could connect WMDs and terrorists
  - Could be true of any illiberal state
  - Become mechanisms that terrorists, who hate the US, could use to get WMD

Liberal Internationalism sees the world system as fragile
- All the power the US has must be used to keep the system going
- Domino theories abound
  - Balkans conflicts could cause refugees to overrun Europe thereby causing right wing overreactions
  - Problems for trade in the world could create problems for the US economy
- Also worry about terrorists
  - See failed states as hatcheries for terrorists especially involving WMD
- Worry about negative externalities that grow out of successful globalization
  - Global warming, pandemic, etc.
- There is some concern about China but a belief it can be brought into the world system without war
  - Using a combination of encouragement, teaching world rules, and containment
- Wants to keep US power at the top of the heap

Restraint proponents not that worried about external forces
- Greatest fear is of over reach
- See danger in the US trying to do too much which would weaken US power

Selective Engagement primary concern is a falling back to war of all against all

POTENTIAL REMEDIES

National Liberalism
- Believes in reliance on the preponderance of US military power
  - Other states should have more limited powers, especially regarding WMD
  - Used in the elder Bush administration
- US power to protect ourselves and friends must be great enough that no others would even try to challenge it
- Use military power as needed
  - Much discussion of preemptive war – attack because you are in danger of imminent attack
    - Accepted in international war
    - Not really what they always meant
  - Really talking about preventative war – fight now rather than later
    - Very little to support this view in international law
- Also expect to exert influence in areas related to resources such as the Gulf
- International organizations are useful but only if the US has the lead

Liberal Internationalism
- Believes in concept of a chain-mail fist in a velvet glove
- Use international organizations whenever possible but have a strong military for when those efforts fail
- Also push use of international standards and regulations to hold back problems like the proliferation of fissile material
  - Perhaps could create a system where no country had the opportunity to make its own fissile material
  - All fissile material would come from a central, internationally regulated entity
- Use cooperative actions over failed states
- There is a little emphasis on the use of traditional military forces
  - A little more emphasis on peace-keeping duties
  - Really only a matter of degrees

Restraint
- Must maintain great military power but do not plan to use it very much
  - Need to use such powers as enablers
- Navy is now such a force
  - Dr. Posen noted his increased support of the Navy for such missions
  - Navy goes places but does not homestead overseas so creates less of a footprint problem
- Also need to protect economy at home
- Need to get the US out of the terrorists narrative
  - What the US does, allows others to criticize all its overseas actions
    - But they will still sell and make a profit for a US company

Selective Engagement
- Most proponents have migrated to other strategies
- This concept may be rebuilding, depending on the outcome in Iraq
- Largely share the Liberal Internationalism view of the threat
- Basic concept is that there is a need to do something but must avoid doing too much
CONCLUSIONS

There is a degree of artificiality looking at the subject from four separate views

- It is really a continuum
  - Key figures in any of these strategies might even disagree with descriptions
- Dr. Posen plans to write these concepts into a formal document in the near future
  - Right before ‘08 election is good time for major discussions on Grand Strategy
- There is much in common among the four strategies
  - Always some morphing going on from one to another strategy
  - Foreign policy of the political parties generally converges
    - All want the US in the lead
    - They might disagree on the means
    - Relationships with specific other countries might show differences
- Each strategy has its own risks
  - Not discussed here
  - Each strategy will point out the risks involved in the others
- Hegemonic strategies are very seductive
  - Because Americans believe in exceptionalism of the US
  - Americans generally want to make the world a better place and think the American way can make that happen
- How the Iraq war ends will be important to deciding which way the strategy goes
  - The Iraq war will not be settled by who has the best argument
  - The Iraq war will probably not end well

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Hegemonic strategies are interested in maintaining national safety and security

- They want to solve the problem for all time
- Run into the problem of offensive realism
  - Where do you stop? It use to be the water’s edge since hard to move armies across water.
  - US is unusually strong on a global scale
    - Has more power to reach out and touch entities everywhere
- Two theories involved
  - The current Bush administration uses the idea that we need to lock in the huge US power advantage for as long as possible, even forever
    - Other groups do not think this is possible but trying to set up such a system that will help keep us safe as long as possible
    - Still others also believe in trying to do as much as possible but also fear imperial overstretching
  - In the other theory after 9/11, adherents saw a need to restore respect for US military power, so chose to take out the worst tyrant available
  - Need to look to see where power is up for grabs in the world
If the Democrats win in 2008 there will likely be a shift to Liberal Internationalism

- Don’t expect to see much change in the relationship with Iran
  - No one really believes that all options are on the table
  - US should not pretend that it has all options – because of Iraq it is not ready to fight with Iran
- Hegemonic impulse also comes from winning the Cold War
  - US believes that it can go into a situation overseas and make it better
  - This part of the theory probably won’t last beyond the Iraq war
  - If Iraq ends up very badly, then the US will be less inclined to be out in the world
- Post Cold War elite show more interest in Restraint

Does the US have the right governmental structure to pursue a Grand Strategy?

- No, but a new governmental diagram won’t solve the problem
  - Current structure is not a barrier to following any one strategy
- US has learned to contract-out some of its imperial duties
  - NGOs have been doing humanitarians work since the 1990s
  - Might not want to discuss such activity as hegemony but it is
  - In Iraq finding even more duties to contract out
- No matter what, any changes would be messy
  - Go ahead and try to change anyway but not likely to work

Deterrence as a strategy

- Why can’t we use the same methods with Iran that we did with the Soviet Union?
  - Iran is significantly weaker than the old Soviet Union
  - US could threaten with a great deal of power
  - Iran could never reach level of nuclear weapons that the US has
- Would the threat of countervalue attacks be enough to stop Iraq’s proliferation?
  - MAD – mutually assured destruction – with the Soviets was not actually a strategic choice
  - MAD developed as the US and the Soviets kept building more weapons to overcome those of the other side
  - Countries want to be secure based on their own terms, not actions of others
  - Leaders of these smaller states like to keep their jobs, so there is some value in threatening them
- US does not like to try to deter peoples that it does not understand
  - More comfortable if nuclear weapons are in the hands of democracies
  - Iraq has shown the US something about what size place it could control
  - Would adding another 100,000 troops actually help in Iraq?
  - US must understand that it cannot change governments on the cheap
  - Other side can make it expensive to eliminate their nuclear weapons
- People might not be happy with the concept of deterrence alone, but that might be the only strategy left available

It is a problem that the US Grand Strategy changes every four years

- Foreign policies and Grand Strategies of the two political parties largely overlap
• One side will usually not say anything nice about the policies/strategies of the last administration of the opposite party
  ▪ However, there won’t be much difference in their views
• Consensus is not necessarily all that good a concept
  ▪ Especially if based on bad ideas