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National Interests & Grand Strategy

Note: Below are informal notes taken by a JHU/APL staff member at the Seminar.

Dr. Art began by noting that too many academics believe that they can tell the government what to do. At the same time, Washington does need to step back every now and then and look at the big picture.

The most helpful definition of Grand Strategy includes elements such as:
- How does a State behave?
- What should it do in foreign policy?
- What can its military do as an instrument of national policy?

This is not the only definition of a Grand Strategy
- After the Cold War there was a good deal of thinking about what to do with the new US position
  - Perhaps a New World Order?
  - Now we see that was not really possible
- There was a document in 2003 identified as the Grand Strategy for America
  - Thinking has changed since then since situations have changed

What are US National Interests?
- Basically “applehood and motherpie” issues
- Need to look at them closely
- Grand Strategy flows from them
- Must start by identifying the threats
- These National Interests will be explored in more depth
  1. Protect the Homeland
  2. Protect the interests of allies
  3. Preserve sources of oil and other energy sources
  4. Preserve an open economic order
  5. Preserve human rights
  6. Protect against severe climate change

More specifically:
1. Protecting the homeland involves stopping the proliferation of NBC weapons
2. Of particular importance are our alliances with Japan and NATO
3. There needs to be real progress on energy development and methods to save fuel as well as protecting the free flow of oil in and from the Persian Gulf region
4. US commitment to an open economic system may require military efforts to protect that openness
5. Preserving human rights also involves supporting worldwide economic development
6. To protect the climate the US must be willing to cut and stabilize CO₂ emissions

#1. The US is actually very secure – no other state really threatens the Homeland
- There is no conventional threat to the Homeland
  - Nuclear deterrence does work and a missile defense would be a useful addition
    - Nuclear weapons are largely only good for defense
    - The probability of using nuclear devices to create terror is a worry that can be minimized
      - Must limit the opportunities that bad actors have for acquiring nuclear materials
Must do a better job of locking down fissile materials
  • Russia says 75% is already locked up but that is not good enough
    o The more states that have nuclear weapons, the more likely it will be that bad actors will get their hands on nuclear materials
    o It would really be preferable if only one country had nuclear weapons
    o The concept that terrorists could acquire nuclear materials is a major near-term threat
    o Bio-weapons in the hands of terrorists are a big threat in the long term

#2. Euro-Asian Alliances
  ▪ No great powers believe that war solves problems
  ▪ Wars lead to economic closures – need deep peace to keep economies open
  ▪ It would be hard to start a war in Western Europe
    o There is still Putin’s effort to raise Russia’s profile – a threat in 10-15 years
    o No one in Western Europe really questions which state is number one
    o US must stay engaged in Europe to keep up the deep peace needed
  ▪ In Asia Japan is used to being number one
    o Does not want to lose that position to China
    o China and Japan do have some island issues
    o US can be a buffer between China and Japan
      ▪ US presence keeps Japan non-nuclear
      ▪ It would take Japan less than a year to produce a nuclear weapon
  ▪ It would be bad if either Germany or Japan went nuclear – causing others to contemplate it, too
    o The recent US-India deal weakens the Non-proliferation Treaty
    o Must avoid any further weakening of the NPT

#3 Preserving Energy
  ▪ US must save energy and develop new sources

#4 Protection of Free Trade
  ▪ US has been strong on this issue since the 1930s
    o US GDP is about 10% stronger with Free Trade than without it
  ▪ Involves lowering barriers and increasing the flow of capital, goods and people
  ▪ Developing states that are the most open economically grow the fastest
    o US wants other countries to do well – better customers for US businesses
  ▪ Economies are now interdependent which is good since they are less likely to fight each other
  ▪ Many issues can threaten this interest
    o Always a gap between winners and losers
    o Loss of jobs to off-shoring can create a backlash
  ▪ Biggest danger to openness is if US pulls back on openness
    o Economic order losses can disrupt political/military structures
    o 1914 had even more interconnections among countries
      ▪ Nationalism and security issues became more important
    o The world’s GDP did not return to the 1914 level until the 1970s
  ▪ It is impossible to study economics without also studying politics
    o Politics is not a derivative of economics
  ▪ World economies reached such high levels of interdependence because the US pushed for it
    o US became the market of last resort – something that did not happen in the 1930s
    o US helped others get strong by limiting our own markets
    o US also projected power
      ▪ All governments rely on coercion to some extent – also internationally
  ▪ Security dilemma
    o Old Cold War saying about Europe: Keep Russia out, US in and Germany down
    o Worry was not about German economic growth but about it growing in militarily power
    o US stayed in Europe even after the Berlin Wall fell and communism was no longer a threat
      ▪ Fears continued about what would happen when Germany reunited
    o Similar situation with Japan
      ▪ US opened its markets to Japan and tolerated Japan closing its markets to US goods
US helped lay foundations for modern economic system
  - Political structures created economic inter-dependence
  - Politics destroyed the economic inter-dependence of 1914

US interest in maintaining freedom of the seas also plays a role here

**#5 Promote human rights and the spread of democracy as well as stopping wars**
- There is a role for morality here as long as it does not cost the government too much
- You can’t spread democracy using arms
  - US did it with Japan and Germany but it was not the most efficient way
  - Actually, it is not exactly clear what is the most efficient way
- There are always exceptions
  - US should intervene when mass murders are taking place
  - US cannot intervene with all conflicts – should not be world’s policeman
  - 20% of conflicts since 1945 have involved mass murders

**#6 Limiting CO₂ Emissions**
- US will actually suffer less from climate change because of its advanced technologies
- If one part of the Antarctic ice sheet melts, it could mean a 5 meter rise in world oceans
  - If the ice in Greenland melts, that could mean a 6 meter rise
  - An average 2-degree rise in world temperature could cause such melting
    - But no one really knows what world average temperature is
- We do have some specifics about the amount of carbon in the air
- Big issue with cutting emissions is how quickly can it be done and how much should be cut
  - Kyoto Accords really do not do anything to improve the situation and are not being met
  - To even stabilize the climate we would need to cut emissions dramatically
    - Particulates can stay in the atmosphere for 200 years
    - Changes can happen to the environment over decades

**The Grand Strategies under consideration:**
1. Muscular Wilsonianism
2. Off-shore Balancing (Isolationism)
3. Selective Engagement Light
4. Selective Engagement

Numbers 1 and 2 are opposites
Numbers 3 and 4 are very much alike and fall between the first two

Under Muscular Wilsonianism forward presence is important to shaping regions
- Selective engagement stresses bases abroad
  - Having a presence can permit the carrying out more actions
  - There can be various types of bases
- Key alliances remain Japan and NATO
  - Persian Gulf is also very important
  - Korea’s importance to the US is waning; after unification it will more likely bond with China
- US currently has 37 security commitments – tools of political management
  - Importance of US leadership is visible

Under Off-shore balancing the US will not be dominant but will still be the biggest economy – assuming we get through the current crisis

Selective Engagement is really the best way to go

**Wilsonianism** showed up in George Bush’s first term – Its “In your face” style eventually got pushed back
- Lippman complained that US commitments exceed US resources
- Problem: there is no single great threat to fight against
- US will decline in power as others rise
- Bush backed away from this strategy in his second term
**Off-shore balancing** means bring the troops home

- Plan to use forces sparingly
- Local balances of power happen around the world without US intervention
- Big question is when / where / with whom to use forces
  - Stabilizing EurAsia would be high on the list
  - Japan would likely go nuclear if the US was not there
  - If the US stays out of the Persian Gulf, bad things are likely to happen
- The US would be reacting to situations, not shaping situations with its strategy
  - US did do this after World War I and then went home, creating conditions for WWII
- It is better for the US to do things that are a help both to the US and to its allies
- Advocating Restraint – from the belief that the US is trying to do too much since the end of the Cold War
  - There is talk of transforming others but it can’t be done
  - Concept: *Rebalancing troops* (bringing them home) would force Japan to do more
  - Counter terrorism relies heavily on help from other countries
- Contains many elements of selective engagement
  - Some of this would hurt
  - Calls for withdrawal from Europe but…
    - If Iran goes nuclear, Europe will want to see the US there with them
    - Since Iraq, US forces are not popular with other peoples who want significant reductions
    - There will still be a desire to have some US troops stationed ashore
- Much of the rebalancing with Japan has already happened
  - There is less a sense of selective engagement there

**Selective Engagement**

- Requires getting the balance right
- Interests should drive strategy – not the other way around
- Identify a priority of means
- If you accept the list of national interest, then the you will not want the first two grand strategies

**What to Tell the Next Administration**

Draw down from Iraq but stay in Afghanistan to fight terrorism

- Al Qaeda is not wanted by either the Sunnis or the Shias
- Al Qaeda has already overextended itself

**Improve Legitimacy**

- Important since if people believe what you are doing is right, they are more likely to follow you
- Any great concentration of power worries other states
  - Other countries say they do not like what we do; it is not about who we are
  - Morgenthau on diplomacy said we should put ourselves into others’ shoes to see their views
- Multilateralism means that *all sides* talk about a topic

**Political Answers to Terrorism**

- Problem: must get rid of current terrorist leaders without developing new cohorts of terrorists
- Solutions:
  - Avoid excess force
  - Let terrorists hang themselves
  - Respond to legitimate discontent
  - Rely on locals to work through problems

**NATO and Persian Gulf Alliances**

- NATO shared the risks with the US during the Cold War
  - That is not happening in Afghanistan
  - Need to find ways to integrate their defensive capabilities more
- Europe can act as a block within NATO but the US would prefer no such block
  - Next Administration must figure out how to work more closely with allies
On-shore vs. off-shore presence issues present three possible futures
1. US-centered system
2. UN-centered system
3. Decentralized/regional system

- UN was supposed to be just the Great Powers but the Cold War got in the way
  - The idea was that they could work in concert
- Currently, there is no global concert because Great Powers differ too much for UN-centered system
  - Most visible from events happening 1991 to 2000
- Smaller groupings between the US and others predominate with no global concert
  - Regional Great Powers dominate
- UN-centered system is not likely – needs more agreement among parties which is unlikely
  - So choice is really between US-centered and Regional-centered
- If return to a Balance of Power system, what would the world look like?
  - Going from a US-dominated to a more regional system would take a long time
- Look at fundamentals such as demographics to see which way this is likely to go
  - Most current problems are self-inflicted: energy and financial issues primarily
- Can expect to move away from the US-centered system to regionally centered system
  - Must figure out how to create a soft landing

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Identifying Metrics and China
- Public opinion polls have been fairly consistent before Iraq about US legitimacy
  - World opinion now considers the US to be the most dangerous country
    - Makes it harder to work with others
    - Especially among friends who are mostly democracies answerable to their populations
  - Polls from 30 years ago said the US was arrogant but considered the US the good guys anyway
    - Not the same now
- It is always more efficient not to use force than to use force to change opinions
- Norms and values are important
- US wants to be a legitimate leader
  - Goal should not be to be loved
- Military power follows economic power
  - China will build a blue-water navy
  - China’s economy will continue to rise faster than others for the next 10-15 years
    - But they may grow old before they grow rich
    - That may take 40-45 years
    - China does have a deliberate policy of improving its comparative economic position
  - China is not that comfortable with the US protecting its oil lanes so it will build a navy
  - The last 17-18 years has bee atypical with having only one country being dominant

More on China
- China would like a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue
  - So would the US
- China would like Korea’s reunification to happen quietly
  - So would the US
- China would not want to see Japan to go nuclear
  - Neither would the US
- China and the US would agree on many other major issues

Old rivalries have fundamental differences
- Who will be #1 in East Asia maritime capabilities?
- The most stable situation would be: China as the continental hegemon and US as the maritime hegemon
  - Takes a long time to build a navy (both equipment and operationally)
  - If China decides to challenge the US, there will be an arms race but not as bad as with the Soviets
- China has been smart so far since it still depends heavily on US markets
  - The time to challenge the US lead position has not yet arrived