



What Good is Grand Strategy?

Grand strategy is one of the most widely used and abused concepts in the foreign policy lexicon. In this important book, Hal Brands explains why grand strategy is a concept that is so alluring—and so elusive—to those who make American statecraft. He explores what grand strategy is, why it is so essential, and why it is so hard to get right amid the turbulence of global affairs and the chaos of domestic politics. As examples ranging from the early Cold War to the Reagan years to the War on Terror demonstrate, grand strategy can be an immensely rewarding undertaking—but also one that is full of potential pitfalls on the long road between conception and implementation.

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Session I - The Meaning and Challenge of Grand Strategy

Topics: Tactics, strategy and grand strategy; History of grand strategy
Reading: pp. 1-16

Session II - The Golden Age Revisited: Truman and the Evolution of Containment

Topics: Containment; U.S. alliance architecture; Rhetoric-policy gap
Reading: pp. 17-58

Session III - Travails of the Heroic Statesmen: Grand Strategy in the Nixon-Kissinger Years

Topics: Crisis of containment; The "Big Play;" Adjusting to relative decline
Reading: pp. 59-101

Session IV - Was there a Reagan Grand Strategy? American Statecraft in the Late Cold War

Topics: Reagan's critique; Reagan's strategic adjustments; Reagan's impact
Reading: pp. 102-143

Session V - The Dangers of Being Grand: George W. Bush and the Post 9/11 Era

Topics: Moral courage vs. moral hazard in grand strategy; War on terror
Reading: pp. 144-189

Session VI - Grappling with Grand Strategy

Topics: Necessity of grand strategy; First principles; Planning and process
Reading: pp. 190-206

Additional Reading

- Dean Acheson. *Present at the Creation: My Years at the State Department*.
- Walter Russell Mead. *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*.