

HERTOG 2021 POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

GRAND STRATEGIES Vance Serchuk, Fellow, CNAS

In the final week of the Political Studies Program, fellows will turn to the study of grand strategy.

This seminar will meet mornings and afternoons from **August 9–13, 2021**.

Course Materials:

- Course Reader

Resources:

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites. These sites are aimed at introducing important thinkers in Western thought, with a particular emphasis on politics and philosophy.

Monday, August 9, 2021

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Session I (AM): Theorists

Readings:

- Williamson Murray, et al, “Ch. 1: Thoughts on Grand Strategy,” *The Shaping of Grand Strategy*
- Hal Brands, “Introduction: The Meaning & Challenge of Grand Strategy,” *What Good Is Grand Strategy?*
- Nina Silove, “Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of Grand Strategy,” *Security Studies*, August 2017
- Daniel Drezner, et al, “The End of Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2020

Discussion Questions:

1. What is grand strategy? How is it different from foreign policy or military policy?

2. Brands, Murray, and Silove offer different interpretations of what grand strategy is. What does each argue? Whose argument is most persuasive and why?
3. Williamson Murray claims that only great powers can have grand strategies; Nina Silove disagrees. Who has the better argument?
4. What are the influences and obstacles in devising a grand strategy, according to Murray and Brands? Do you think democracy is a help or a hindrance to grand strategy?
5. “Grand strategy is dead,” according to Dan Drezner and his *Foreign Affairs* coauthors. Why? How would Murray or Brands respond? Who has the better argument, in your view?

2 PM – 5 PM ET

Session I (PM): Practitioners

Readings:

- Henry Kissinger, Chs. 3 and 5, *Diplomacy*
- Murray, et al, “Ch. 4: Strategy as Character: Bismarck & the Prusso-German Question,” *The Shaping of Grand Strategy*
- Iskander Rehman, “Raison D’état: Richelieu’s Grand Strategy During the Thirty Years War,” *Texas National Security Review*, June 2019

Discussion Questions:

1. In *Diplomacy*, Kissinger profiles three European leaders—Cardinal Richelieu of France, William III of England, and Bismarck of Germany—each of whom he credits as the author of a kind of grand strategy.
 - a. What was the essence of the grand strategy associated with each of these men, according to Kissinger?
 - b. How does Kissinger grade the grand strategy of Richelieu, William III, and Bismarck? What were the strengths and weaknesses of each?
2. What made the respective strategies of Richelieu and Bismarck “grand”?
3. Are there certain qualities that all successful grand strategies have in common? Or that all grand strategists share?
4. Is grand strategy possible without a grand strategist? Is individual genius the prerequisite for grand strategy—or a liability to it?

Tuesday, August 10, 2021

Morning & Afternoon

Session II : Present at the Creation?

Readings:

- Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* 6, “Concerning Dangers from Dissensions Between the States,” and *Federalist* 11, “The Utility of the Union in Respect to Commercial Relations & a Navy”
- Robert Zoellick, “Ch. 1: Alexander Hamilton, Architect of American Power,” *America in the World*
- Robert Kagan, “Ch. 4: To the Farewell Address and Beyond,” *Dangerous Nation*
- Charles Edel, “Ch. 3: In Search of Monsters to Destroy,” *Nation Builder: John Quincy Adams and the Grand Strategy of the Republic*

Discussion Questions:

1. Was there a grand strategy “present at the creation” of the United States, as expressed in *Federalist* 6 and *Federalist* 11? If so, what were its components? What were the alternative strategies the Founders were arguing against?
2. Robert Zoellick suggests Alexander Hamilton was America’s first grand strategist. If so, what were the essential elements of his strategy? How did he translate the “big ideas” of the *Federalist Papers* into operational concepts in the George Washington Administration?
3. The 1790s were, as Robert Kagan describes, a period of bitter division and turmoil over the direction of American foreign policy. What was the nature of this debate? What was its bearing on America’s grand strategy?
4. What was the strategic vision of John Quincy Adams, and what was its relationship to the domestic and global landscape of his time? What were some of the dangers and obstacles Adams had to overcome to actualize his grand strategy? How successful was he?
5. What was the impact of liberalism in the grand strategy of the early republic? What was the impact of democracy?
6. What can we learn about the nature of grand strategy—and grand strategists—from the experience of Alexander Hamilton and John Quincy Adams? How should we grade them as grand strategists?

Wednesday, August 11, 2021

Morning & Afternoon

Session III: Grand Strategies of the Cold War

Readings:

- George Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947
- Hal Brands, “Ch. 1: The Golden Age Revisited,” and “Ch. 2: Travails of the Heroic Statesman,” *What Good Is Grand Strategy?*
- Henry Kissinger, “Ch. 30: The End of the Cold War: Reagan and Gorbachev,” *Diplomacy*

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the key ideas put forward by George Kennan in “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”? What were the strengths of his argument? Its limitations? Does Kennan’s work constitute a grand strategy? If not, what is it?
2. What was the process by which the Truman Administration translated concepts like “containment” into policies like the Marshall Plan and NATO? What does this reveal about the nature of grand strategy and grand strategy-making, according to Hal Brands?
3. Was the grand strategy of the Truman Administration successful? If so, why? What lessons should aspiring grand strategists draw from the example and experience of the Truman Administration?
4. What were the elements of the Nixon-Kissinger approach to the world? Is it accurate to describe their approach as a “grand strategy”? To what extent did it represent a break from the past versus a variation of a preexisting grand strategy they inherited?
5. Hal Brands writes that the greatest flaw of Nixon and Kissinger’s philosophy was their belief that grand strategy must be “executed independently of, and even in opposition to, the institutions and traditions of the society it was meant to serve.” What does this mean? How would Kissinger respond to the critique? Who has the better argument?
6. Did Ronald Reagan have a grand strategy and if so, what was it? Why was it successful, according to Kissinger? As with Truman, what lessons can be learned about grand strategy from the Reagan experience?
7. Who was the most important American grand strategist of the Cold War, and why?

Thursday, August 12, 2021

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

**Session IV (AM): What Went Wrong?
George W. Bush & the Response to 9/11**

Readings:

- George W. Bush, *2002 National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002
- John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security and the American Experience*, pp. 7–118
- Joseph Nye, “Transformational Leadership and U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2006

Discussion Questions:

1. John Lewis Gaddis tells a story of continuity about American grand strategy that links John Quincy Adams, Franklin Roosevelt, and George W. Bush. What is his argument? Are you persuaded?
2. Gaddis ranks FDR among the top tier of American grand strategists. Why? What in particular impresses Gaddis about Roosevelt? Do you agree? How do you think he compares with other strategists we have studied?
3. Where does Joseph Nye situate George W. Bush’s grand strategy in the American historical tradition? Who has the better argument about Bush—Nye or Gaddis? What does each get right, in your view, and what does each get wrong? To what extent are their respective conceptions of grand strategy itself congruent?
4. Almost twenty years after 9/11, the general consensus is that George W. Bush’s grand strategy was a case study in failure. If so, what can we learn about grand strategy from the response of the Bush Administration to the 9/11 attacks? What went wrong?

2 PM – 5 PM

**Session IV (PM): What Went Right?
India-U.S. Strategic Partnership**

Readings:

- Steven Lee Myers, “Clinton to Impose Penalties on India over Nuclear Tests,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1998
- Jane Perlez, “U.S. Ready to End Sanctions on India to Build Alliance,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2001
- U.S. Department of State, “Background Briefing by Administration Officials on U.S.-South Asian Relations,” March 25, 2005
- The White House, “Joint Statement Between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh,” July 18, 2005
- Alex Perry, “Why Bush Is Courting India,” *Time*, February 28, 2006
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- Elisabeth Bumiller, “Bush and India Reach Pact That Allows Nuclear Sales,” *New York Times*, March 3, 2006
- Ashley Tellis, “The Merits of Dehyphenation,” *Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 2008
- Peter Baker, “Senate Approves Indian Nuclear Deal,” *New York Times*, October 1, 2008
- Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “Countering China, Obama Backs India for U.N. Council,” *New York Times*, November 8, 2010
- Elizabeth Roche, “How the Nuclear Deal Thawed India-US Relations,” *Mint*, July 17, 2015
- Gardiner Harris, “President Obama and India’s Modi Forge an Unlikely Friendship,” *New York Times*, June 5, 2016
- “India-US Defence Sales at All Time High: Pentagon,” *The Economic Times*, February 13, 2019
- “Howdy, Modi!’: Trump hails Indian PM at ‘historic’ Texas rally,” BBC, September 23, 2019
- Robert Blackwill and Ashley Tellis, “The India Dividend,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2019
- Bilal Kuchay, “India, US Sign Key Military Deal, Symbolising Closer Ties,” Al Jazeera, November 2, 2020
- Alex Ward, “Biden’s Meeting with ‘the Quad,’ a New Alliance to Counter China, Explained,” *Vox*, March 12, 2021
- Rajesh Roy, “China, India Move Tens of Thousands of Troops to the Border in Largest Buildup in Decades,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2021

Discussion Questions:

1. Does U.S. policy toward India over the past 20 years constitute ‘grand strategy’? Why or why not?
2. What were the elements of the U.S. outreach to India starting under Clinton? What were its assumptions?
3. What can the India-U.S. Strategic Partnership teach us about the conduct of successful grand strategy?

Friday, August 13, 2021

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Session V (AM): New Horizons

Readings:

- Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, “External Affairs Minister’s Speech at the 4th Ramnath Goenka Lecture,” 2019
- Shivshankar Menon, “Chapter 13: India’s Tasks,” *India and Asian Geopolitics*

- Rajesh Rajagopalan, “India’s Strategic Choices,” Carnegie India, 2017, pp. 3–36
- Mark Galeotti, *We Need to Talk About Putin*
- Stephen Kotkin, “Russia’s Perpetual Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016
- Vance Serchuk, “Russia’s Middle East Power Play,” *National Review*, September 12, 2019

Discussion Questions:

1. Shivshankar Menon and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar are two of India’s most distinguished diplomats and strategic thinkers. Menon’s career culminated as national security advisor to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Jaishankar currently served as external affairs minister under Prime Minister Modi. What are their respective conceptions and recommendations for Indian grand strategy? Where do they agree and where do they disagree? How would you characterize their respective philosophies?
2. What are potential grand strategies that Rajesh Rajagopalan identifies for India? Which does he recommend and why? How does his vision compare with that of Menon and Jaishankar? Which do you find most compelling?
3. What are the key features of Russia’s grand strategy under Vladimir Putin, according to Mark Galeotti? How do these relate to Russian history and character, according to Stephen Kotkin? To what extent is Russia’s grand strategy a deliberate choice versus a condition?
4. How does Vladimir Putin rate in comparison to the other grand strategists we have studied in the seminar? What are his strengths and weaknesses?

2 PM – 5 PM ET

Session V (PM): Closing Discussion

Discussion Questions:

1. Grand strategy has been analogized to gardening, gambling, chess, cooking, football, and judo, inter alia. What is your preferred metaphor for grand strategy and why?
2. You can have dinner with one grand strategist we have studied in the course. Whom do you choose and why? What questions would you ask him?
3. President Biden asks you to draft a memo for him about how he should think about American grand strategy. He tells you to be sure to address two questions in particular:
 - a. Does America have a grand strategy? If so, what is it?
 - b. Does America need a grand strategy? If so, what should it be?What do you write?