POL486H1: Grand Strategy—International and Domestic Sources of National Security Policy

University of Toronto, Department of Political Science
Fall 2018, Thursdays 12-2p (Classes begin on Sept 13th and end on Dec 6th)
Room: SS 1078

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Description

Grand strategy is national policy for integrating all instruments of power—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic—to advance national security interests. Even small states and non-state actors have grand strategies, and states have them even if they don’t write about them, and perhaps even if their own policymakers don’t understand them very well. New technologies, economic globalization, and changes in the political fortunes of states have created a complex and uncertain threat environment in the 21st century. The proliferation of nuclear weapons to new actors, the development of autonomous weapons, ubiquitous dependence on cyberspace and satellites, and global terrorism pose major challenges for the formulation of national security policy. This doesn’t mean that traditional great power politics have receded, however; in some ways they are more important than ever.

This is a project-based course designed to give you tools to jump into the analysis of a state or region with which you are unfamiliar. The course begins with a survey of the factors that influence grand strategy in theory, such as technological innovation, the balance of power, domestic institutions, and complex interactions across these factors. Rough but time-tested concepts are used to flag potentially relevant dynamics and triangulate more detailed questions. Student teams then systematically explore competing structural (systemic) and institutional (unit) explanations for grand strategy and defense policy in a series of regional case studies. Students will compare and contrast the national security policies of a selection of countries that have interestingly different geopolitical characteristics. This course will not make you an expert on the strategy or policy of any particular state, but it will teach you something about the comparative method of analysis and the determinants of national security policy.

The regional focus will vary with each iteration of this seminar. For 2018 we will delve into the Northeast Asia region with a focus on the six parties to the slow burning nuclear crisis with North Korean (i.e., the US, China, DPRK, ROK, Japan, and Russia). The final course will enable students to work through a response to a nuclear crisis scenario on the Korean Peninsula.

Materials

Required articles will usually be posted on the portal. Articles should also be reachable on JSTOR through a U of T internet connection. There are two required books. And, yes, one is a novel.


In previous iterations I have assigned another book by Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine. We will read just one chapter this year. I highly recommend that you read the entire text for examples of how to compare system and unit level explanations for strategic choices.

The following sources are useful for assessing the balance of power for your projects:

• *The Military Balance* from the International Institute for Strategic Studies provides detailed profiles on country force structure, doctrine, and employment published yearly. Available online through UoT library.
• State military expenditures and arms transfers: [http://www.sipri.org/databases](http://www.sipri.org/databases)
• World Development Indicators from the World Bank (useful for charting relative growth and other correlates of power & wealth) can be readily visualized through Google: [https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncpjpjof8f9](https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncpjpjof8f9).

Format

This course is capped at twenty students to ensure that group sizes and discussions are manageable. Preference will be given to graduate students and upper division undergraduates in the Political Science Department. Prior introduction to international relations theory is a prerequisite for this course. Students are expected to be familiar with concepts such as anarchy, the balance of power, and the security dilemma, as well as institutionalist and constructivist alternatives to realist theory. We will do some work to summarize theoretical approaches and expose students to a portfolio of theoretical tools in the course, but the emphasis in this course is the application of theory to contemporary cases.

The heart of this course is the analysis of different national strategies after an introduction to analytical concepts. I will cover the United States as an example (which is also important to understand as an input to the grand strategy of other states) during the theory weeks. We will hold a “draft” on Week 3 to assign students to the countries examined after the break. You’ll get to focus on system or structural (3rd image) explanation for one country, and then unit or institutional (2nd image) factors for another. We are aiming for 3-4 students per group.

The first part of the seminar is dedicated to discussion of theoretical approaches to strategy and policy. If you have never been exposed to international relations theory in an academic course, you may want to reconsider whether you want to take this class, as the focus will be on applying and debating theory in real cases. I will provide a “gouge sheet” listing different explanatory variables typically employed in system level and unit level explanations, linked to important dimensions of defense policy (our dependent variables). This list is not exhaustive by any means, and it will make little sense without the accompanying readings, but it provides a mnemonic. Specifically, we will look at the factors which shape diplomatic alliances, military doctrine, civil-military integration, and defense innovation. Use this as a guide to structuring your presentation and paper, but as a group you will have to make decisions about what to emphasize and how to combine mechanisms where multiple ones apply.

In the second, empirical portion of the course, each case study session will be structured as a debate between groups arguing, respectively, for the importance of systemic/international or unit/domestic factors. Each group will prepare in advance a **40 min (max!! Aim for 30 min)** presentation on factors driving strategy and policy for the country of interest. Please keep slides to a minimum—a map showing the region or some relevant charts and graphs depicting the military balance and economic growth trends.
would be appropriate for system groups, while unit groups might want to highlight demographic trends, domestic political competition, and the relevant bureaucratic ecology. We will follow with a 30m discussion/debate about the two perspectives. I expect the students who did not present to actively question the complex relationships between the two levels of analysis. Participation marks encompass the whole seminar, not just the first five weeks.

Each of these presentations should address the strategies and policies of the state in question (i.e., the dependent variables you are trying to explain), and the systemic or unit factors that you assess cause them to take the value they do (i.e., the independent and conditioning variables that provide an explanation). Each group should explain how some combination of relevant factors affect national choices and debates about diplomatic alignment and reliance on international security institutions, military doctrine and posture including the role of nuclear weapons, civil-military relations and domestic politics, and the innovativeness of military doctrine and the defense industry. You will have to make choices about what to emphasize. Your goal is to make a clear argument, not to provide an encyclopedic listing of facts. It is likely that groups will have different opinions about the most important causes and effects—there is rarely one right answer about something as controversial as the use of force. Exploring these differences in interpretation is an important part of the exercise.

**Paper format.** Please turn in your paper as a PDF document. Please use double-spaced 12-point font. Use Chicago style short cites—“Posen, *Restraint*, p. 1”—for anything on the syllabus. Use Chicago style full citations for the first cite of any other material and short citations for subsequent mentions. This means you do not need to include a bibliography. Please use footnotes rather than endnotes. Your footnotes will be counted as part of the word count. Note that the word limit is a word limit, and I (or the TA if there is one) may elect to stop reading beyond it. All papers must have a clear introduction that summarizes the argument; it is best to draft this when you start and then rewrite it when you finish your paper, since sometimes you figure out a new article while writing. Try to summarize your argument with an arrow diagram—if you cannot it is likely too complex or murky. Likewise, all sections must have clear opening and concluding paragraphs, and all paragraphs must have clear opening and concluding sentence.

**Deadlines.** Turn in your papers via the course portal for the given assignment. Late assignments will be downgraded 5% (about a half grade) per day after the deadline. Extensions may be granted if sought in advance with a valid and documented excuse.

**Attendance.** Unless there is a valid emergency, students must attend all seminar sessions on time and be prepared and ready to participate. Class sessions are all scheduled in advance, and you should be able to build your extracurricular activities around them. If I call on you and you are not in class it will be awkward for us all. Try to eat something before class so that your mind has nourishment other than the fascinating conversations we will have together.

**Preparation.** Deliberate and active engagement with the reading will prime you for a good discussion in class. Think about how the readings for one week relate to the previous weeks’ concepts, and how the ideas in them might relate to contemporary defense problems. Lectures and discussions will not simply recapitulate the material in the reading.

**Please put down the glowing rectangle.** It takes work for all of us to battle the enemies of knowledge. Thinking is hard work. Don’t let the internet make it harder. Flashing pixels distract your concentration
by making feckless appeals to your primate reflexes. Studies have shown that your retention and participation are better if you take notes by hand instead of typing. If you think you are good at multitasking, think again; science says you are fooling yourself and wasting time. Worse, you are undermining your classmates’ learning experience with the digital equivalent of second-hand smoke.

Stand on the shoulders of giants. Your work must be original but should draw on ideas from the readings and lecture. Quotations and paraphrasing of other authors must be cited. Wikipedia is not a source. And in your research zeal, remember...

Remain in the light. Plagiarism will be severely punished according to university guidelines. It will be much harder to learn after you have been cast into outer darkness. Plagiarism is not only illegal, but it is also just a dumb idea, even, or especially, when prominent politicians do it.

Requirements

Individual Participation (20%). This is an advanced seminar, which means that discussion and debate will be guided by questions and interests that emerge through our conversation. What you get out of it depends on what you put into it. I look for evidence of your active engagement with the reading in your comments and questions in seminar discussion or in my office hours. I may ask students to summarize the argument of one of the readings in class, provide an example of where it applies, or provide a counterargument, so please prepare accordingly. Readings and seminars, much like cyber operations and military force, are complements not substitutes. You are expected to do the required reading for a country even if you are not presenting. If you are presenting you may want to delve into some of the recommended reading. You are, of course, encouraged to go elsewhere too.

Your participation grade includes your participation in sessions where you are not in a presenting group. You will be expected to do the required reading and ask questions. The participation grade also covers your involvement in the final scenario workshop.

Military Power Paper (20%). Prepare a short paper (2000 words max, about 10pp) on the system and unit level sources of national military power. This paper is due Sunday 21 October at midnight. Paper marks will be returned no later than 5 November.

What explains why states have the military force structure and posture that they do? Your goal is to put the two weeks on system and unit level theory into conversation with the week on military power. This will help you to consolidate concepts and get ready to apply them in the group projects. Your paper should have three parts. First, review the literature assigned for the “system level theory” week, highlighting key themes and arguments that cut across the different readings. Second, do the same for the readings assigned for the “unit level theory” week. Third, explain which you find more persuasive; or, explain why it is important to look at the interaction of system and unit level factors, highlighting conditions under which you expect one or the other to have more explanatory power. Your paper should have a clear introduction summarizing your argument.

Group Projects. See the format section above for detailed instructions.

- System-Level Analysis—Presentation (15%) and Paper (10%)
- Unit-Level Analysis—Presentation (15%) and Paper (10%)
All group members receive the same mark. Each group will prepare one paper (3000 words max with footnotes and Chicago style citations) due one week (midnight Thursday) after your presentation—please email a PDF to me. Your paper should first present a coherent stand-alone summary of the argument you presented in class. Second, please respond to the arguments presented by your counterpart group. Third, comment on which perspective you believe has more explanatory power for your country. While your presentation will take a strong side on the system-unit debate, the paper should aim to produce an honest appraisal. I want to see in the paper what your group believes actually explains why your country has the defense policy that it does. So, for instance, if you are in the 3rd image group but you end up finding the 2nd image arguments more persuasive, then say so and explain why.

**Individual Reflection Paper (10%).** The final paper (1000 words max) is due Thursday, 6 December, by midnight. This is your chance to reflect on grand strategy in the 21st century based on our discussions throughout the term. I welcome papers that take a step back and compare different states, which can include those we have visited in the course, or others. You might discuss implications for Canadian grand strategy and/or defense policy, some other country that we haven’t covered, a coherent collection of countries like NATO, or a quasi-state like Hezbollah. If you would like to focus in depth on some more specific defense policy issue for Canada or some other country, like procurement or cybersecurity, that is fine too, but be sure to articulate the ends-means chain back to grand strategy.

You can structure this paper however you would like, but here are some questions to get you thinking:

- **In general:** How would you define grand strategy? Which factors seem most important to you in determining what countries choose—or should choose? Do you suspect there are important factors that have been left out of our analysis this term, and if so what is an example of them making an important difference? Is the 21st century just too different or complex for this—or any—framework to be of use for thinking about security?
- **For Canada (or some other country X):** what do all the above questions mean for Canada? How do you see Canada’s threat environment changing in the future? What are Canada’s vital vs. discretionary interests, and how would you prioritize addressing them? Under what conditions should Canada go to war? What are the most likely, least likely, and most dangerous conflict scenarios for Canada in the next few years? Is Canada ready and able to address these concerns? What are Canada’s institutional advantages and challenges in implementing a grand strategy? Is Canadian defense policy on the right track or are major reforms appropriate? What is the prognosis for the reforms you envision in the current political environment?
- **How do the grand strategies of different Northeast Asian states affect the prospects of deterrence, counter-proliferation, and crisis management on the Korean Peninsula?** Are there contradictions between the dictates of strategy (how to prevail in a conflict) and grand strategy (when to get involved in conflict) in this instance? How might they be resolved? What should Canada’s role be given the new realities of DPRK nuclearization?
- **Remember,** every state has threats, politics, and individuals, but we would like to know which are most influential in driving outcomes because these are the factors that we can hope to affect in crafting pragmatic engagement (or confrontation) policies. In a counterfactual world with different leaders, parties in power, or threats in the neighborhood, what kind of behavior would you expect from your country? If you believe that a complex interaction of factors is most important, try to say more than that the world is complex and everything matters.
Schedule

13 Sep: What is Grand Strategy?
Welcome. In this session we’ll do introductions, and preview the course. We’ll also talk about what makes grand strategy so grand.

- Read the syllabus. If you’ve come this far, you’re off to a good start.

Recommended


20 Sep: Military Power in the 21st Century
This week we will be discussing the instruments of military power, which is a key independent and/or dependent variable for almost any analysis of grand strategy and defense policy. Modern military power is incredibly complex with forces operating on land, at sea, in the air and space, and increasingly in cyberspace. To get a sense of how different types of forces work and how they interact in the US case, and to understand part of the premise of the Singer & Cole novel, please read:

  - How does the US military project power in the sea, air, and space domains?
  - Why is the land domain different?
  - What is the role of cyberspace in this scheme, which Posen doesn’t mention?
  - What are the grand strategic implications of this perspective for the US, according to Posen?
  - How might Posen’s critics draw different implications from his same considerations about US military power position?

Next you have a choice. Option 1 is a novel grounded in real technological possibilities (endnotes!) that imagines the end of US command of the commons. Read to get a flavor of military operations, not for the (silly) plot, by answering the questions below. Option 2, if you really, really object to reading fiction,
is to read at least one selection from the list below for each warfighting domain (land, sea, air, space, cyber) and nuclear weapons (i.e., six readings). Try to answer the same questions listed for Option 1.

Option 1—Speculative Fiction

We cannot predict the future, but we can imagine it. How might new weapons and emerging political trends interact to create the future security environment? This novel speculates about a potential war between the United States and China, and it has many endnotes about the real-world inspirations for its many gadgets. Try to read for an understanding of the weapons and tactics of modern war, but do not worry about the plot or characters, which are problematic to say the least. As you read, please try to answer the questions.

  - What political, strategic, and operational assumptions in the story seem plausible or unrealistic to you?
  - Try to identify different distinguishing characteristics of war in different domains, i.e., land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace.
  - How does automation affect political strategy and military operations, and what is the difference between them?
  - Do technologies have particular strengths, weaknesses, or political-military consequences at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war?
  - How do organizational factors like doctrine and human skill condition or interact with technological capability?
  - Can you imagine conflict scenarios that are different from what Singer and Cole imagine using the same technologies? What different assumptions about time, space, wealth, and complexity might we make?
  - Where are the nuclear weapons in this story, and how might things change if they were included?

Option 2—Scholarship


27 Sep: No Class Meeting—Reading Session
There is no class or office hours meeting this week. There is a lot of reading for the next two sessions. Use this week to get ahead and get started on your first paper.

4 Oct: System Level Theory
This week focuses on analytical concepts for the assessment of grand strategy at the systemic level (3rd image).

  o Every system-level analysis must begin with a map!
  o This chapter presents both system and unit (organizational) explanations for military doctrine. We will discuss the system perspective this week and the organizational perspective next week.
  o Ch 1 is recommended for an overview of the military dimension of grand strategy. Ch 2 presents hypotheses on its variation.
The remaining (empirical) chapters in this book provide excellent examples of how to compare system and unit level explanations for strategic choices. Highly recommended.

  - This classic article should be familiar. If you have never read it, read it closely. If you have read it, skim to refresh yourself on the argument.

  - Focus on pp. 137-40, 147-150.

  - Nuclear weapons pose an existential threat. Grand strategy in the 21st century always has a nuclear component: how do nuclear states use their weapons, and why do non-nuclear states seek or eschew nuclear weapons?

**Recommended**


**11 Oct: Unit Level Theory**

This week focuses on analytical concepts for assessment of grand strategy at the unit level (2nd image). There are a lot of readings this week. Start early. Try to pull out the basic arguments.
  o You read this last week (right?)—refresh on the table of organizational explanations.
• Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Cornell, 1993), chapter 2
  o How do political economy strategies affect security policies? Try to get a sense of her argument by studying the diagrams, then skim the text.
  o Look at the table of hypotheses, then skim if you would like more discussion & context.
  o Skim for the basic argument. This is one way in which gendered factors may have grand strategic implications. There may be others, including...
  o This question took on a new urgency on January 20th, 2017.

**Highly recommended**—you are not required to read these but they are both seminal articles that you will find helpful for thinking across levels of analysis.

**Recommended**


**18 Oct: United States**

Note that your military power paper is due at the end of this week. This week is the transition between the theory and case portion of the class. I will give you an example of how to apply the theoretical tools in the case of the USA. We will discuss the U.S. as an example of how to put these theories to work. The U.S. also looms large as the unipole or liberal hegemon for all other cases. There is an active debate about U.S. grand strategy at the system level, with different assumptions about threats, and about the effects of unit level factors.

• Posen, *Restraint*, pp. 1-134
  • Posen presents two different visions of US grand strategy. What are they?
  • Be sure to distinguish between explanatory (what strategy does the US have and why) and normative (what strategy should the US have and why) arguments. Where and why is there a gap between is and ought according to Posen?
  • What is the role of system and unit level factors in each strategy? What unit level factors influence elements of restraint or hegemony? What system level factors are in play (or should be)?
  • Can you devise an argument for rather than against liberal hegemony? Does your argument rely on system or unit level justifications?
  • Where do you think the Trump administration (or parts of it) fall along this spectrum? More generally, how consistent or divergent is Trump with traditional US policy
positions, and what might be the long term consequence of any divergence? Base your answers on theories of grand strategy and defense policy we have reviewed.

Recommended

- Additional arguments about restraint
  - Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* vol. 21, no. 3 (1997): 5-53. Study the table at the beginning comparing assumptions for four rather than just two different grand strategies. The discussion section is now a bit dated, but the range of variation is still relevant.
  - Posen, Barry R. “Pull Back.” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2013. This is the reader’s digest version of *Restraint*.


- Drezner, Daniel W. “Values, Interests, and American Grand Strategy.” *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 3 (June 1, 2005): 429–32.

25 Oct: China
This is the first day of the rest of the class. Student groups are running the show from here on out. The entire class is still required to do the required readings. I am looking for evidence that the readings inform your discussion of the case, even if it’s not your week to present. The recommended readings may be helpful for you if you are presenting, but please feel free to research other sources as I do not pretend to be an expert on all regions. The China groups get more help with recommended reading because they are going first. You’re welcome. Be careful not to be misled by Singer and Cole’s novel.

  o Does Chinese nationalism make any of these visions more likely?


Recommended—Chinese Grand Strategy


**Recommended—Chinese Military Power**

• Kastner, Scott L. “Is the Taiwan Strait Still a Flash Point? Rethinking the Prospects for Armed Conflict between China and Taiwan.” *International Security* 40, no. 3 (January 1, 2016): 54–92.
• Blasko, Dennis J. “Integrating the Services and Harnessing the Military Area Commands.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 5–6 (September 18, 2016): 685–708.

Recommended—US-China Relations


Recommended—Chinese Defense Politics

1 Nov: Japan
One of the most militarist of states in history is now the most pacifist—how do we explain this change? Is it durable? What are the causes and consequences of Japanese “normalization”? How do North Korean nuclearization and the credibility of American alliance commitments shape Japanese policy? Some of the readings above in the China section are quite relevant to Japan vis-à-vis threats in its neighborhood and the US alliance.


**Recommended**


8 Nov: No Class Meeting this Week
The next sessions involve particularly complex states and regions balancing internal and external threats. Use this week to prepare. We will also divide up into analytical teams for the final scenario workshop. Use this week to start researching the position of your state(s).

15 Nov: Israel
Israel is a small democracy, with advanced technical capabilities, in a tough neighborhood, with complex internal politics, engaged in frequent counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations, managing controversial alliances, conducting active cyber operations, and its nuclear deterrent is an open secret. Thinking through this case requires you to also think through the strategies of the state and non-state actors in and around Israel.


**Recommended**


22 Nov: Pakistan

South Asia exemplifies the novel challenge of the Second Nuclear Age. Pakistan and India should be examined together. How does Pakistan balance its internal and external, and state and non-state, threats (are these the same)?


**Recommended**

- C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, "Pakistan’s War Within," *Survival* vol. 51, no. 5 (2009)

**29 Nov: Russia**

Great power politics is back in Europe, this time with new “gray zone” characteristics. Thinking through Russian strategy requires us to think through a security dilemma with NATO and thus NATO and US grand strategy as it affects and is perceived by Moscow. (How) do Russian aims differ from Soviet aims during the Cold War?

  - Does Mearsheimer have a sober view of Europe or is he buying into Putin propaganda? See the debate on this article: McFaul, Michael, Stephen Sestanovich, and John J. Mearsheimer. “Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?” *Foreign Affairs*, December 2014.


Recommended


6 Dec: Scenario Workshop
For the final session, you will be presented with a series of provocations involving Russia and NATO. For the purposes of this scenario, you are all analysts at CSIS working in teams who have been diligently consuming news and intelligence on different regions (so start reading as soon as you receive assignments!). Your job is to imagine and provide informed comment on how you expect the state(s) to act in the given situation. This is not a simulation in the sense that you are making moves in a scenario. You are not playing a game against other groups to “win” a crisis. You are telling us how you think your state(s) will behave. Students will be assigned into teams (Russia, US, UK, Central NATO, Eastern NATO) to discuss possible responses. We are especially interested in how and whether crisis strategy is consistent with grand strategy.

Groups will be expected to provide a short 1-2pp assessment of their actor’s position on the crisis two days before the class meeting. Please upload this to the portal, stating your actor’s interests and declaratory policy with regard to the crisis scenario (which I will provide).

Appendix
Here is some material on different states from previous iterations of this seminar.

North Korea
This is the poster child for the second nuclear age. The most insular state in the world now has the most dangerous weapon in history. The strongest state in history extends its nuclear umbrella to this state’s enduring rival, and may be tempted to launch preventative war. What does North Korea, or Kim Jung Un, really want?


**Recommended**


- Christopher Hughes, "North Korea’s Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan," *Asia Policy* vol. 3 (2007): 75-104
South Korea
This week we look at the other half of the Korean Peninsula. ROK emerged devastated from the Korean War and developed through a series of authoritarian governments to become one of the most economically productive democracies in the world. The contrast with the North today, politically isolated and chronically malnourished, could not be more extreme. How do we exchange the changes in ROK policy, and how does ROK manage relations with its unfriendly neighbor to the north?


Recommended

- Christopher Hughes, "North Korea’s Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan," *Asia Policy* vol. 3 (2007): 75-104

Canada
Can a middle power have a grand strategy?


Recommended


Islamic State (Daesh)

How can we use the concepts developed for states to think about the grand strategies of nonstate (or quasi state) actors?


Review your notes from Global Security:


Recommended


India

South Asia exemplifies the novel challenge of the Second Nuclear Age. Assessment of Indian policy will require a look at Pakistan as well—what does India think drives Pakistani policy and how does Delhi react? This is also the first state that we examine with internal violent insurgency. How does Delhi balance internal and external threats? To make matters worse, India also has to think about the nonstate threats to Pakistan.


Recommended—India
• T.V. Paul, ed., The India-Pakistan Conflict (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005)