

**grand strategy**

The choices a government makes to balance and apply economic, military, diplomatic, and other resources to preserve the nation's people, territory, and values.

## BUILDING A GRAND STRATEGY

FOLLOWING THE 9/11 terrorist attacks, there was widespread agreement within the United States that America's grand strategy should center on homeland defense and the war on terrorism. This view is understandable, but it overlooks a broader point that first requires discussion of the meaning of grand strategy.

**Grand strategy** refers to the choices a government makes to apply economic, military, diplomatic, and other resources to preserve the country's people, territory, economy, and values.<sup>39</sup> Building a grand strategy has three components.

The first component is answering the question, "What should grand strategy be?" For the United States, should it be restricted to homeland defense and the war on terrorism? These are two critical policy areas, but are they too limited by themselves to be grand strategy? For example, should the United States adopt a "close-out strategy" in which it attempts to prevent any other country or group from developing the ability to challenge it economically or militarily? Or, should the United States use its power and wealth to try to create a cooperative multilateral world in which policies are made on the basis of the greatest good for the greatest number?



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■ President George W. Bush holds a meeting with his national security team on September 12, 2001. From left are Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Henry Shelton, chair of the Pentagon Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The second component in building a grand strategy is answering the question, “How can we develop consensus for a grand strategy?” Sometimes, a grand strategy is obvious and consensus develops easily. This was the case early in American history when George Washington argued that America should steer clear of entangling alliances, and it was the case after World War II when the Soviet threat made containment of communism the obvious grand strategy. It appears to be the case again today following al-Qaeda’s assault on America. But, again, are homeland defense and the war on terrorism, even though important, too limited to qualify as grand strategy?

The third component is leadership, required so appropriate policies can be implemented. Since conflicting viewpoints and interests lead different people and interest groups to have different views about appropriate grand strategy, leadership, usually provided by the president, is a requisite element of grand strategy. Once a grand strategy has been identified and consensus developed, policies in keeping with the grand strategy must be implemented. Even when consensus exists, there will be debate over specific policies. Even in the absence of a consensus, foreign and defense policies must be put in place.

In the twenty-first century, the United States is the world’s only superpower, unrivaled in economic and military strength and degree of social and cultural influence, but it is vulnerable to terrorist attack even as it confronts other foreign and defense policy challenges. How the United States combines homeland defense, the war on terrorism, and appropriate responses to its other foreign and defense policy challenges into a single grand strategy is the greatest challenge of all for twenty-first-century U.S. policy makers. Lessons learned from the war in Iraq will likely have a profound influence over how any new grand strategy evolves.

## SUMMARY

FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY are important functions of the U.S. government. This chapter stressed the evolution of foreign and defense policy over time, the role of public and private agencies, and the challenges that American policy makers face in the twenty-first century. In examining these issues, this chapter made the following points:

### 1. The Roots of U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy

From the earliest days, isolationism, unilateralism, moralism, and pragmatism were central elements of U.S. foreign and defense policy. Foreign and defense policy played a minor role in American politics for most of the nation’s first century. As U.S. economic interests expanded, the United States intervened more and more overseas, especially in Latin America. After

a delayed entry into World War I, America retreated into isolation but was unable to avoid World War II.

## 2. The United States as a World Power

After World War II, foreign and defense policy often dominated the American political agenda, and defense spending became one of the biggest items in the national budget. Foreign and defense policy became major concerns, especially issues such as U.S.-Soviet relations, nuclear weapons, and the Vietnam War. Despite debate, an underlying consensus existed that American policy should focus on containing the Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union collapsed, no immediate consensus emerged on the direction of U.S. foreign policy.

## 3. The Executive Branch and Foreign Policy Making

Balances found in other parts of the U.S. political system are generally absent in foreign and defense policy. The executive branch of government dominates foreign and defense policy, with the Departments of State and Defense being particularly important. Within the executive branch, the president predominates. During the Cold War, concerns that the president had acquired too much power were overshadowed by fears that if presidential power were limited, national security may be endangered. Until the War Powers Act, few constraints were placed on presidential prerogatives in foreign and defense policy.

## 4. Groups That Influence Foreign Policy

Institutions outside the executive also play a role in U.S. foreign and defense policy. These include Congress, the military-industrial complex, the news media, and the public. Congress has constitutional powers in foreign and defense policy but is less influential than the executive branch and president. The military-industrial complex consists of the Department of Defense and military industries. It became prominent after World War II as U.S. defense spending increased. The news media serve as watchdogs over foreign and defense affairs, shapers of public opinion, and vehicles through which the government communicates with the American people. Public opinion also influences U.S. foreign and defense policy.

## 5. Twenty-First-Century Challenges

The United States faces major challenges in foreign and defense policy during the twenty-first century, especially homeland defense and the global war on terrorism. Other challenges include identifying other national interests, balancing foreign and domestic issues, meeting threats from weapons of mass destruction and information warfare, addressing drug and environmental problems, deciding when to intervene overseas, and choosing between unilateral and multilateral action. How well the United States succeeds in meeting these

challenges will go a long way toward determining how the country fares in the twenty-first century.

## 6. Building a Grand Strategy

Building a grand strategy has three elements. The first is answering the question, “What should the grand strategy be?” The second is answering, “How can consensus be developed around a grand strategy?” Finally, leadership must be provided so that policies in keeping with grand strategy are implemented. The greatest challenge for U.S. policy makers is combining homeland defense, the war on terrorism, and appropriate responses to the other foreign and defense challenges into a single grand strategy.

## KEY TERMS

al-Qaeda, p. 716  
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 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), p. 707  
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## WEB EXPLORATIONS

To see the reach and worldwide involvement of the United Nations, go to

[www.unsystem.org](http://www.unsystem.org)

To learn about the specific workings of the IMF and World Bank, go to

[www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)

[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

To learn more about NATO's peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, go to

[www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)

To learn more about U.S. military operations around the globe, go to

[www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil)

To learn more about the National Security Council and the CIA, go to

<http://www.cia.gov/>

To learn more about key congressional committees in military and foreign affairs, go to

<http://www.house.gov/hasc>

[http://www.senate.gov/~armed\\_services/](http://www.senate.gov/~armed_services/)

[http://www.house.gov/international\\_relations](http://www.house.gov/international_relations)

<http://www.senate.gov/~foreign>

For a world map of countries that have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, go to

<http://projects.sipri.se/cbw/docs/cw-cwc-mainpage.html>