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Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote Jr.., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Steven E. Miller, eds. *America's Strategic Choices.* Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1997. xxiii + 335 pp. $18.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-262-52243-4.

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Can Grand Strategy be Grand?

America's Strategic Choices is an edited collection of articles that first appeared from 1991 through 1997 in *International Security*, a journal published by MIT Press under the sponsorship of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University. The book also contains a February 1996 unclassified White House document, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* that has been available through the White House website (http://www.whitehouse.gov) until superceded by the 1997 document *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*.

The premise of the collection is that the United States in the post-Cold War world still needs and is searching for a grand strategy to replace that of containment. The authors variously offer grand strategy recommendations and/or engage in their explication and comparative analysis. The most cursory review of the contributors' institutional affiliations suggests that the reader will engage in dialogue with the best and the brightest. This reviewer will leave it to the reader to decide whether the epithet is best taken in a literal sense or in Halberstam's.[1]

First, to the collection's premise. *Is* there a need for a grand strategy? Perhaps not. A sound bite, a catchy phrase, may function as a call to glory, a motive for action, but do they foster consensual thought or behavior? Containment has been perceived as anything from a bend-but-not-break defense, an in-your-face line in the sand, to a rollback offense. Moreover, some overarching mantra–even if consensually perceived–may foster the most myriad of policies, plans, and programs. In addition, a political psychologist with a grounding in the psychodynamic, social cognition, and postmodernist literatures may well posit that grand strategies are as much or more projections of intrapsychic conflict, schemas with leveling and sharpening features to satisfy information-processing challenges, or narratives yielding subjective reactions of authenticity and resonance than products of rigorous, objective, hypothetico-deductive logic. And when grand strategy interacts with domestic politics and inter- and intra-organizational dynamics, the consequences may be anything but grand or strategic. Finally, one must at least consider the schools of thought that relegate grand strategy documents, treatises, and tomes to dusty shelves, circular files, and unconsulted computer disks–perhaps an anathema to security intellectuals with the motives to influence government and their own careers.

But accepting the collection's premise and moving on to the Preface written by Lynn-Jones, this reviewer notes the harping on *threat* as a central strategic question, but not on *opportunity*. (Doesn't the National Security Council still pass out those coffee cups with Chinese characters purporting to depict a security crisis as both threat and opportunity?) Moreover, Lynn-Jones suggests that the U.S. decisions to intervene in Bosnia but not in Rwanda and to take both cooperative and adversarial tacks with the Russian Federation suggest that the U.S. does not have a grand strategy. Why should a viable grand strategy that addresses the complexities of the real world require intervention everywhere or solely cooperative or adversarial behavior towards other political actors? On a very positive note, Lynn-Jones does an admirable job in describing the various arguments of the authors. This will be extremely helpful to students, faculty, officials, and dilettantes alike.

"Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy" by Posen and Ross presents an analysis of four competing grand strategies. The problem here is that all four are a priori moot abstractions needing little analysis. *Neo-isolationism* begs the question of other nuclear powers and possessors of non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction, environmental concerns, and the global economy. *Selective engagement* is a trivial concept in the face of the other contenders–nonselective engagement or omnipresent engagement that respectively would be truly dysfunctional or impossible in a world of finite resources.

Cooperative security cannot–as Posen and Ross suggest–rest on an unworldly distinction between self-interest and collective interest but on various integrations of the two. *Primacy* surely is a time-limited prescription, but it also–unlike the other three recommendations–is more a *consequence* of strategy than strategy itself. Posen and Ross also stress the *military* aspects of grand strategy, when globalized science, technology, and economics surely are growing in import. This reviewer believes, then, that the analysis of Posen and Ross is basically sound but unnecessary.

"A Defensible Defense: America's Grand Strategy After the Cold War" by Art takes up the role of military assets in grand strategy. He supports a continued but attenuated and redefined internationalist employment of these assets. His discussion of the benefits of a global military presence is deft, although he forces a problematic demarcation between protecting U.S. allies and protecting the U.S. In national security policy, isn't the former a vehicle for the latter? Also, he seems to support an inconsistent telos for military assets–rendering problematic the quest for spreading democracy, but with little equivocation supporting the quest for spreading U.S. values of which democracy is highly salient if not paramount.

"'Bismarck' or 'Britain'? Toward an American Grand Strategy After Bipolarity" by Joffe wonderfully employs historical analogy. Joffe opts for a grand strategy that would be a modified version of Bismarck's who sought to prevent an anti-German alliance in the late nineteenth century rather than of Great Britain's which sought to assemble coalitions to oppose potential aggressors. Joffe might have noted that current trends in science, technology, and globalization render geographical similarities between the U.S. and Great Britain and dissimilarities between the U.S. and Germany of less strategic importance. He rightly stresses that "Great powers remain great because they promote their own interests by serving those of others"–an observation that has been supported by commentators on the human condition as diverse as Kautilya,[2] Confucius,[3] and Machiavelli.[4]

"Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategies After the Cold War" by Mastanduno attempts to formulate what U.S. grand strategy *has become* after the Cold War as opposed to what it *should be*. This assumes that one or more grand strategy has existed since the disestablishment of the Soviet Union–explicitly, implicitly, or serendipitously. With this assumption, Mastanduno has two candidates–theories of Waltz and Walt. In finding that U.S. allies in Europe and Asia have sought to maintain this alliance and not sought to create anti-U.S. alliances–an apparent contradiction of Waltz's realist theory through balance of power–Mastanduno ignores less contradictory findings from the Mideast. Another apparent contradiction–that the U.S. has not disengaged from its Cold War commitments–may reflect that the policies stemming from these commitments are now supporting a different strategic design. Mastanduno's observation that Walt's realist theory through balance of threat is contradicted by the U.S. having taken a hard line in economic dealings with China will be news to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. liberals who support labor and environmental protection, and human rights organizations.

"The Past as Prologue? Interest, Identity, and American Foreign Policy" by Ruggie attempts to make grand strategy recommendations based on the history of U.S. foreign policy as opposed to Joffe's historical analogies involving the foreign policy of other political actors. Ruggie's undertaking is a perilous one in a world of postmodern historiography. The peril is most obvious in Ruggie's contention that the history of U.S. foreign policy suggests that sustained internationalism is only possible when couched as part of an idealistic vision as opposed to a vehicle to achieve realistic objectives. The problem is that one observer's idealist vision is another's realistic laundry list. Although the Woodrow Wilson era passes the test, Franklin Roosevelt's internationalism–as explicated by Ruggie–seems as realistically based as one could get. Ruggie's recommendations for the future–comprising continuing engagement and transformation of multilateral institutions–are sound, but again do not seem founded on the idealism-realism distinction.

"Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation" by Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky at first blush would seem the most intriguing chapter in the collection as it makes the case for an isolationist grand strategy in a world that seems to be becoming ever more interdependent. The reader will soon learn, however, that the authors' isolationism features global economic engagement in the context of military retrenchment. As with Joffe, the authors seem to put too much credence in the military security protection afforded by U.S. geostrategic status. The authors' policy recommendation to disband the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)–even if sound–emphasizes a reduced threat from the Russian Federation and largely ignores NATO's role in preventing conflict amongst its constituent members. Their contention that U.S. military retrenchment is supported by South Korea being easily able to handle a military conflict with North Korea conflates eventual victory with a terrible road in getting there. Even with

such concerns, the authors' make a strong case for military retrenchment and force rethinking of comfortable and long-held assumptions.

"From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy" by Layne needs to directly address "preponderancy" used throughout the chapter from "primacy" used in other parts of the collection. Beyond this, it both presents a vital critique of preponderancy and also invites a serious counter. Granted that the grand strategy of preponderance can be associated with security overextension, the exaggeration of threat, thwarted extended deterrence, and a resultant loss of U.S. strategic power and exacerbation of domestic ills, what can be done to avoid these pitfalls–all of which can be associated with at least some other grand strategies as well? Layne's advocacy of the grand strategy of offshore balancing–like that in the chapter by Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky–is guaranteed to challenge through its close and strong argument. However, it would have been helpful if Layne had directly addressed offshore balancing of powerful versus threatening political actors as does Mastanduno's chapter.

The inclusion of the 1996 White House national security strategy document with the collection of *International Security* articles affords the reader a great opportunity to engage in a textual analysis of the document based on grand strategy recommendations and critiques. There are snippets of such analysis throughout the chapters and in the Preface by Lynn-Jones.

To conclude, the reviewer makes the following observations. The value of publishing a collection of previously published articles could have been increased by addressing the need for grand strategy in the Preface or in an additional chapter and by including a direct dialogue among the authors. Also, the collection would have benefited from an index to help the reader engage in a comparative analysis of the author's thoughts. As well, the editors might have considered placing analyses of grand strategy in the context of recurring issues throughout history analogous to Polk's treatment of foreign policy.[5] These observations address a need for further coherence in a collection of articles that approaches that of contemporary works by single authors on (admittedly different problems of) grand strategy.[6] That being said, this collection presents a rich fare for practitioners, academics, and students of grand strategy. This reviewer plans on making parts of the collection required reading and the entire collection a secondary source for an upper-level, undergraduate course on American Foreign Policy.

So, can grand strategy be grand?

Notes

[1]. David Halberstam. *The Best and the Brightest.* Greenwich, Conn: Fawcett, 1972.

[2]. Narasingha P. Sil. *Kautilya's Arthasastra: A Comparative Study.* Peter Lang Publishing, 1989. (Original Arthasastra written c. 321-296 B.C.E.)

[3]. Thomas Cleary. *The Essential Confucius: The Heart of Confucius' Teachings in Authentic I Ching Order.* San Francisco, Calif.: Harper, 1992. (Original analects written c. 500 B.C.E.)

[4]. Machiavelli, N. *The Prince. The Discourses.* N.Y.: Modern Library, 1940. (Original works written c. 1513.)

[5]. William R. Polk. *Neighbors and Strangers: The Fundamentals of Foreign Affairs.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

[6]. See, for example, John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices.* Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1973; Alistair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.; and David M. Abshire, *Preventing World War III: A Realistic Grand Strategy.* N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1988.

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