Design and Emergence in the Making of American Grand Strategy

by

Ionut C. Popescu

Department of Political Science
Duke University

Date:_______________________
Approved:

__________________________
Peter Feaver, Supervisor

__________________________
Bruce Jentleson

__________________________
David Rohde

__________________________
Alex Roland

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Political Science in the Graduate School of Duke University
2013
ABSTRACT

Design and Emergence in the Making of American Grand Strategy

by

Ionut C. Popescu

Department of Political Science
Duke University

Date:___________________
Approved:

___________________________
Peter Feaver, Supervisor

___________________________
Bruce Jentleson

___________________________
David Rohde

___________________________
Alex Roland

An abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Political Science in the Graduate School of Duke University

2013
Abstract

The main research question of this thesis is how do grand strategies form. Grand strategy is defined as a state’s coherent and consistent pattern of behavior over a long period of time in search of an overarching goal. The political science literature usually explains the formation of grand strategies by using a planning (or design) model. In this dissertation, I use primary sources, interviews with former government officials, and historical scholarship to show that the formation of grand strategy is better understood using a model of emergent learning imported from the business world. My two case studies examine the formation of American grand strategy during the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras. The dissertation concludes that in both these strategic eras the dominating grand strategies were formed primarily by emergent learning rather than flowing from advanced designs.
Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................................................. iv

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................................................... vi

Chapter 1: How Does Grand Strategy Get Made? ................................................................................................. 1
  Defining Grand Strategy ...................................................................................................................................... 3
  The Making of American Grand Strategy: Design vs. Emergence ................................................................. 14
  Research Design and Methodology .................................................................................................................. 30

Chapter 2: Design and Emergence in the Making of Containment .......................................................................... 40
  Kennan and Nitze as the Architects of Containment .......................................................................................... 43
  The Truman Doctrine ......................................................................................................................................... 66
  Marshall Plan and NATO .................................................................................................................................... 76
  NSC-68 and the Korean War .............................................................................................................................. 86
  Eisenhower and Project Solarium ....................................................................................................................... 98
  Rethinking Containment: Kissinger's Grand Strategy of Détente ................................................................. 113
  Ronald Reagan and the Culmination of Containment ....................................................................................... 123

  George H. W. Bush and the Origins of the AGL Grand Strategy .................................................................... 146
  Bill Clinton and AGL in the 1990s .................................................................................................................... 174
  AGL after 9/11: George W. Bush and the War on Terror ............................................................................... 204

Chapter 4: Conclusions .......................................................................................................................................... 230
  The Interplay of Design and Emergence in American Grand Strategy ......................................................... 231
  The Question of Success: Tentative Conclusions and Implications ............................................................. 238

References .............................................................................................................................................................. 253
List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Cold War.................................................................................................................. 234

Table 2: Summary of Post-Cold War Era.................................................................................................. 237
Chapter 1: How Does Grand Strategy Get Made?

This is a thesis about the theory and practice of grand strategy in general, and American grand strategy in particular. Since the end of the Cold War, debates on American grand strategy have increased in prominence in both the scholarly and the policy-making communities. A general sense that a successor needs to be found for the Containment grand strategy that dominated America’s foreign policy in the Cold War led many scholars and commentators to propose new frameworks and master plans for guiding Washington’s actions on the world scene. Despite a significant literature on American grand strategy in both the scholarly and the policy worlds, however, most political scientists and policy analysts debate the merits of particular grand strategic plans and options without paying much attention to the process of formulating grand strategy. There is instead a fairly widespread implicit assumption that coherent grand strategies should be the product of strategic planning and design.1

This idea that grand strategies must be planned is based mainly on the Cold War experience, an era when the United States was generally regarded as following a Containment design laid out in the late 1940s. But what if this argument does not hold

1 There is a large body of literature on American Grand Strategy in the past two decades, mostly dedicated to debates about the merits of competing choices for the United States. Most scholars generally assume that strategies are planned in advance, and therefore they focus on determining what the right plans or frameworks should be. Some of the most influential works over the past twenty years include: Joffe, "Bismark or Britain"; Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions"; Gaddis, “Grand Strategy of Transformation"; Art, Grand Strategy for America; Biddle "Grand Strategy after 9/11"; Layne, Peace of Illusions; Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders; Kupchan and Trubowitz, "Dead Center"; Zakaria, "Future of American Power"; Drezner, "Obama Grand Strategy?"; Flournoy and Brimley, Finding our Way and America's Path. A separate category includes policymakers and scholars who doubt the existence of American grand strategy, and believe such explanations are provided after the fact to assign more coherence to what was generally ad-hoc behavior. For example, see McDougall, “Grand Strategy?”; Gray, Irregular Enemies, and Betts, "Is Strategy an Illusion?"
under more careful scrutiny? What if the principles of the actual Containment grand strategy, as more and more historians now hold, were different from the planned designs of George Kennan and strategic thinkers who followed him? Conversely, after the Cold War, the lack of a widely accepted Kennan-esque master plan led many commentators to believe that US leaders have not had a grand strategy that was coherent and consistent. But what if the post-Cold War American foreign policy, despite lacking a grand design, nevertheless followed a number of key principles in much the same way as Containment did? In order to explain such outcomes, this dissertation argues that a different theoretical model of grand strategy formation would be required to replace—or at least complement—the design and bureaucratic politics paradigms that dominate the political science literature. I import and adapt such a model from the business world. The emergent strategy model, as described in the business-theory literature primarily by Henry Mintzberg, offers an alternative view of how grand strategies can form. This thesis argues that grand strategies are actually best understood as being formed by the interplay of design and emergence, rather than being either fully deliberate plans or ex-post-facto rationalizations of ad-hoc, non-strategic behavior. The dissertation will examine the two broad strategic eras in modern US foreign policy: the Cold War period (1945-1989), and the post-Cold War era (1990-2008), including the so-called “War on Terror.” In each of the case studies, the project will analyze the formation of the grand strategies that eventually came to shape American foreign policy in order to test the relative explanatory power of the emergence model compared to a planning model and an ad-hoc model.
Defining Grand Strategy

Grand strategy is the broadest form of strategy. In the security studies literature, most definitions of strategy are inspired by the traditional Clausewitzian understanding of the concept as “the use that is made of engagements for the object of the war.”\(^2\) This should be viewed in the context of the Prussian theorist’s more famous definition of war as a continuation of politics with the addition of other means. Thus, if strategy is a means to an end in war, by extension it is also a means to an end in high politics. Colin Gray extended Clausewitz’s definition of strategy slightly, arguing that strategy is “the theory and practice of the use, and threat to use, of organized force for political purposes.”\(^3\) Barry Watts and Andrew Krepinevich criticized these definitions for being too specific to military strategy and hence difficult to apply at a more general level. They also contended that such commonly accepted definitions do not provide enough guidance on how to “do strategy as a practical endeavor.”\(^4\) Watts and Krepinevich believe that “strategy is fundamentally about identifying and creating asymmetric advantages in competitive situations that can be exploited to help achieve one’s ultimate objectives despite the active, opposing efforts of one’s adversaries or competitors to achieve theirs.”\(^5\) Their broader definition makes an implicit transition from strategy to grand strategy. While not mentioning it explicitly in the theoretical part of their study, they use the term grand strategy in their case studies and make it evident that their definition of strategy applies to the grand strategic level. This definition of strategy is very limiting, however, because it only incorporates only “asymmetric strategies,” a sub-category of a larger group of possible strategies.

---

\(^2\) Clausewitz, *On War*, 128.
\(^3\) Baylis et al., *Strategy in Contemporary World*, 3.
\(^4\) Krepinevich and Watts, *Regaining Strategic Competence*, 16.
\(^5\) Ibid., 19.
The traditional understanding of the difference between “strategy” and “grand strategy” in the security studies literature is that grand strategy is an extension of military strategy so as to incorporate the use of other instruments of national power as well. One of the earliest and most influential definitions belongs to Basil L. Liddell Hart, who defined this term in the period between the world wars within the context of great-power wars. In his view, grand strategy involves the coordination and direction of “all the resources of a nation or band of nations towards the achievement of the political objectives [of the war].”

Another equally influential definition of strategy and grand strategy comes from one of Hart’s contemporaries, Edward Mead Earle:

"Strategy is the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation, or coalition of nations, including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies. The highest type of strategy – sometimes called grand strategy – is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is rendered unnecessary or undertaken with the maximum chance of victory."

Writing in the early Cold-War era, international relations theorist Robert Osgood echoed the same themes in his definition: "Strategy must now be understood as nothing less than the overall plan for utilizing the capacity for armed coercion - in conjunction with economic, diplomatic, and psychological instruments of power- to support foreign policy most effectively by overt, covert and tacit means."

These definitions broadened the scope of strategy making, as the concept of grand strategy became applicable to both wartime and peacetime. In recent years, two historians running an American Grand Strategy program at Yale University have successfully promoted an understanding of grand strategy along these lines. In a book suggestively titled

---

6 Baylis et al., Strategy in Contemporary World, 3.
7 Earle, Makers of Modern Strategy, viii.
8 Baylis et al., Strategy in Contemporary World, 4.
“Grand Strategies in War and Peace,” Paul Kennedy stated that “the crux of grand strategy therefore lies in policy, that is the capacity of the nation's leaders to bring together all elements both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long term (that is, in wartime and peacetime) best interests. [ital. in orig.]” His colleague John Lewis Gaddis prefers a simpler definition, yet one consistent with Kennedy's: “My own definition... is that grand strategy is the calculated relationship of means to large ends. It's about how one uses whatever one has to get to wherever it is one wants to go.”

In addition to historians, political scientists interested in grand strategy have tried their hands as well at defining the concept. They have often done so in a somewhat different way than historians. Barry Posen defines grand strategy as “a state's theory about how to produce security for itself.... It enumerates and prioritizes threats and potential political and military remedies to threats. A grand strategy contains explanations for why threats enjoy a certain priority, and why and how the proposed remedies would work.”

More recently, Colin Dueck attempted to provide a more concise yet comprehensive definition of grand strategy. Building upon Posen’s definition, Dueck spelled out some possible criteria for determining whether a strategy qualifies as grand: “In the final analysis, any grand strategy must provide concrete guidelines on the use of policy instruments such as: the form and level of defense spending, the nature and extent of strategic commitments abroad; the deployment of military forces abroad, peacefully or not; the use of foreign aid; the use of diplomacy with real or potential allies; and the diplomatic

---

10 Gaddis, “What is Grand Strategy?”
stance taken toward real or potential adversaries.”¹² Fareed Zakaria similarly believes that a grand strategy should provide an overarching framework that guides most of the nation’s other regional or military strategies. In his view, Containment qualifies as a grand strategy because during the Cold War “almost all foreign and defense policy has been derived from its central equation.”¹³

Peter Feaver has also addressed in some detail the key question of what exactly makes a grand strategy worthy of the name:

“Grand Strategy is a term of art from academia, and refers to the collection of plans and policies that comprise the state’s deliberate effort to harness political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance that state’s national interest. Grand strategy is the art of reconciling ends and means. It involves purposive action -- what leaders think and want. Such action is constrained by factors leaders explicitly recognize (for instance, budget constraints and the limitations inherent in the tools of statecraft) and by those they might only implicitly feel (cultural or cognitive screens that shape worldviews).

Grand Strategy begins with theory: leaders’ theories about how the world works and what is or ought to be their states’ roles in that world. Yet it is embodied in policy and practice: government action and reaction in response to real (or perceived) threats and opportunities. Grand strategy may be born in debates at the highest levels of national power, but it lives or dies in the collaborative action of myriad junior officials.”¹⁴

One of the key aspects of Feaver’s definition is the deliberate, purposive aspect of grand strategy. While this may seem uncontroversial, some of the confusion surrounding the concept comes from the view of some scholars that the element of intentionality is not a necessary prerequisite for grand strategic behavior. Edward Luttwak, for example, writes that “all states have a grand strategy, whether they know it or not. That is inevitable because grand strategy is simply the level at which knowledge and persuasion, or in

---

¹² Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders, 10-11.
¹⁴ Feaver, “What is Grand Strategy?”
modern terms intelligence and diplomacy, interact with military strength to determine outcomes in a world of other states with their own grand strategies.”

Similarly, Colin Dueck contends that "whether or not national governments actually design and follow through on any overarching grand strategy, they act as if they do. Whether or not a strategic plan actually exists, nations must make difficult choices on matters of defense spending, alliance diplomacy, and military intervention. Decisions regarding trade-offs between ends and means are inevitable, even if they are neither coherent nor coordinated.”

Luttwak and Dueck pose a dilemma: if grand strategy is something that states do by virtue of simply making choices, does that mean that the term is analytically meaningless, or indistinguishable from foreign policy?

The vagueness of many of the definitions mentioned above has led some scholars to be fairly skeptical of the whole effort to define grand strategy. Bruce Jentleson and Steve Weber, for example, have referred to grand strategy as an “extravagant term... that foreign policy academics bandy about.” Rather than being a “coherent story about the world and what you want to achieve in it,” as many understand to be the meaning of strategy in international politics, they argue that strategy instead “should be a compelling story about making choices. To be strategic is to prioritize.”

Rather than focusing on the deliberate planning aspect of making strategy, these authors believe that:

“Strategy is about adapting in the face of what you don’t know and what you don’t control and learning as you go. Such learning must encompass the uncertainties in the world and the perspectives of other players on those uncertainties. And so the forward looking question for foreign policy becomes this: How do great leaders develop adaptive strategies to cope with complex

---

15 Luttwak, Byzantine Empire, 408.
16 Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders, 11.
17 Weber and Jentleson, End of Arrogance, 154.
18 Ibid., 155.
combinations of uncertainty, knowing and taking into account the fact that other leaders are trying to do the same thing.”  

Historians Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley express a similar skepticism regarding commonly accepted definitions of strategy. They point to the importance of understanding the process of strategy-making in an uncertain world: “Straightforward definitions go fundamentally astray, for strategy is a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty and ambiguity dominate.”

The same focus on the process of making strategy is also present in the business literature on this topic. Recent theoretical developments from this field of study can complement the conceptual understanding of strategy and grand strategy derived from works in history and political science.

The corporate world and students of business have been fascinated by strategy and strategic planning for more than half a century. The rich literature they have produced on this topic offers students of national security some valuable new insights into how to think about strategy. Definitions of strategy in the corporate world have evolved over the years, and some interesting parallels can be made to the evolution of strategic thinking in security studies. In the relatively stable environment of the 1960s, strategy in the business world focused on detailed, long-term planning. In an influential definition that resembles those of Paul Kennedy or John Gaddis, Alfred Chandler defined strategy in 1962 as “the determination of the long-run goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of

---

19 Ibid., 155-56.
21 In the following pages, I will present the view on strategy from the business world, and then offer my own definition of grand strategy, which combines elements from strategic studies and the corporate strategy literatures.
courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals.”

In the 1980s, the focus shifted from long-term planning to the search for a competitive advantage. Harvard Business School’s Michael Porter, one of the main sources of inspiration for Andrew Krepinevich and Barry Watts, defined strategy the following way: “Competitive strategy is about being different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value.” It is difficult to miss the similarity of this definition to the concept of “asymmetric advantages” offered by Krepinevich and Watts. In the past quarter century, however, the business world largely moved away from traditional understandings of strategy and engaged in an intense debate on how exactly do organizations go about “making strategy.”

This debate has been conducted by the proponents of a “design school” focused on planning and execution versus those of an “emergence school” focused on learning and adaptation. The debate has led to the emergence of a Janus-faced definition of strategy as both a plan, (“a direction, guide or course of action into the future, a path to get from here to there”), but also as a pattern, that is “consistency in behavior over time.”

The plan that an organization develops represents its intended strategy, while the pattern of behavior that it ends up pursuing over a longer period of time represents its realized strategy. When the realized strategy is the same as the intended strategy, the result is a deliberate strategy. This is the kind of “model” strategy that is recognized by most national security analysts and scholars in the world of strategic studies. Many times intentions are not realized in practice due to the difficult task of implementation, producing

---

23 Porter, “What is Strategy?,” 64.
unrealized strategies. However, in addition to deliberate strategies and unrealized ones, there is one more possible outcome. As business theorists Henry Mintzberg, Bruce Ahlstrand and Joseph Lampel note in their comprehensive review of the literature on corporate strategy, “there is a third case, which we call emergent strategy – where a pattern realized was not expressly intended. Actions were taken, one by one, which converged over time to some sort of consistency or pattern.”25 Similarly, a pair of McKinsey consultants recently adopted a definition of strategy that can accommodate emergent strategy: “Strategy is a handful of decisions that drive or shape most of a company’s subsequent actions, are not easily changed once made, and have the greatest impact on whether a company meets its strategic objectives.”26

So what is Grand Strategy? Borrowing from both the security studies literature and the business world, for the purpose of this paper a grand strategy is best understood as a state’s conscious pattern of coherent and consistent behavior on the international scene in search of an overarching goal.

The “coherent” aspect of grand strategy refers to the presence of three essential elements that have dominated the foreign policy and national security decision-making processes throughout the era:

- a clear and consistent overarching goal
- a vision of the nation’s role in the world in that particular strategic era, and
- a theory about how the world works (assumptions about strategic context, driving forces shaping the international system, perception of threats and opportunities)

25 Ibid., 11.
The “consistent” aspect of grand strategy refers to the presence of a set of principles that accurately describe the contours of the grand strategy over its entire duration. While some wartime grand strategies may be limited to only a few years, such as US grand strategy in WWII, in long wars such as the Cold War or in periods of relative peace a consistent grand strategy is one that survives multiple changes in presidential administration with only minor changes. In wartime, grand strategies provide guidance on how best to apply the military and non-military means at one’s disposal in order to defeat the enemy. In peace time, grand strategies provide a sense of direction and guidance on choosing the policies that allow a state to achieve its main objectives in a competitive international system.

How Is Emergent Strategy Different than Ad-Hoc Behavior and Bureaucratic Politics?

In the political science literature, critics of the rational design model are often scholars of organizational theory or bureaucratic politics. Students of bureaucratic politics write about a series of topics often connected to grand strategy, such as budgets and resource allocation, crisis management, or the “garbage-can” process that characterizes certain decisions, but overall they do not talk about grand strategies per se. For example, Barry Posen examined the formation of military doctrine for three European powers during the period between the world wars and found that a balance-of-power/realist theory better explains their choices better than organization theory. However, Posen studied lower-level, tactical, organizational and doctrinal decisions made by the military establishments, not

27 Some of the classical works of the bureaucratic politics literature include Allison and Zelikow, Essence of Decision; Halperin and Clapp, Bureaucratic Politics; Wilson, Bureaucracy; Huntington, Common Defense.
grand strategy decisions. Moreover, he was interested in determining whether the substantive aspects of the planning done by militaries (in terms of offense/defense orientation, integration with political goals, and innovation) was more influenced by perceived bureaucratic interests or by objective external threats. Posen thus focused on a small subset of military policy, the formation of doctrine, and he analyzed the substance of the plans, whether the plans were implemented or not. Another version of the broader organization-theory paradigm is the “garbage can” model advanced most recently in foreign policy circles by Stephen Krasner. This model, however, explains only discrete policy choices on narrow issues, not the formation of long-term grand strategies.

The bureaucratic politics literature evolved as a critique of the “rational actor” model of decision-making, rather than as an explanation of how grand strategies actually get made. As such, it is mostly focused on showing some of the obstacles to faithfully implementing a carefully designed strategy; this critique of planning is incorporated in the

---

28 Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine.
29 The two particular instances in which Krasner applied his model are the formation of The Partnership for Democratic Governance and the conceptual framing of China as a “Responsible Stakeholder.” Drawing on his experience in government as director of the policy planning staff at the State Department, he argues that the garbage can model best captures the policymaking process in an “organized anarchy” type of organization such as the U.S. government. Borrowing from the works of organizational theorists Michael Cohen, James March, Johan Olsen and John Kingdon, Krasner agrees with them that the American government functions much more like an organized anarchy than a “rational actor”: “Preferences may be opaque or contradictory. Actors move in and out of the policy process. There are disagreements among agencies and bureaus. Jurisdictional boundaries are not clear. Technologies are uncertain; it is not clear how inputs into a process are turned into outputs.” Therefore, strategic outcomes are not the result of analysis but rather the “convergence of problems, solutions, people, and choice opportunities.” The similarity between this model and the emergent strategy model consists of the emphasis both models put on the bottom-up process of strategy formation. The big difference between them, however, is that while an emergent learning model involves a coherent pattern of decision-making that comes out of a learning process, in the garbage can model strategic decisions are occurring ad-hoc; they are dependent on the fortuitous congruence of three independent policy streams and a window of opportunity. Hence, as business theorist Robert Burgelman observed, “the coherence of strategy-making in this model depends to a great extent on chance.” Stephen Krasner, “The Garbage Can,” 161; Burgelman, Strategy Is Destiny, 5.
“emergent strategy” model, and hence needs no separate treatment. However, while the emergent model incorporates some of the "ad-hocery” that the bureaucratic politics literature emphasizes, there is a crucial difference: in the case of an emergent strategy, seemingly ad-hoc decisions were not simply non-strategic or random: they gradually converged on a coherent pattern as a result of emergent learning. At the end of the day, an emergent strategy shapes behavior and guides decision-making just as a planned strategy would be expected to do, and the actions of states follow from such an emergent strategy to the same extent that they would if the strategy had been written up in a formal document. Hence, unlike paradigms of organizational theory or bureaucratic politics, the emergence model explains the formation of a strategy, not the lack of a strategy. Emergent strategy is another form of strategy, not a collection of unrelated ad-hoc decisions. Later in this chapter, a couple of examples of emergent strategies from the business world will briefly illustrate how this works in practice.

The differences between a pure ad-hoc approach and an emergent strategy approach will be made obvious by highlighting how crucial decisions taken in the early formative stages of a grand strategy were guided by a common purpose and vision, how they incrementally built upon each other, and how they contributed to the formation of an implicit grand strategy that subsequently shaped decisions for the rest of the respective strategic era. In contrast, in a purely ad-hoc approach the connection between grand strategy and policy decisions breaks down; the latter do not fit into the conceptual framework set by the former in anything resembling a consistent pattern. Contrary to Paul Kennedy's definition, I choose to treat grand strategy as a separate analytical concept from policy. A series of policies and actions can indeed converge towards a coherent, emergent grand strategy, but they need not do so. They can be merely ad-hoc decisions, which, at the
end of the day, do not add up to any sort of coherent or consistent pattern of behavior. Only when the formative elements of a grand strategy mentioned above are present can one show that the policies and decisions were not ad-hoc but rather part of an emergent grand strategy. The coding template at the end of this chapter explains in more detail how unplanned policy decisions are coded as being part of an emergent strategy rather than purely ad-hoc and hence non-strategic. For an intuitive example of what an ad-hoc approach looks like, one can think of the modern foreign policy of the European Union, one in which domestic interests, bureaucratic influences and a lack of overarching strategic vision characterizes how the EU makes decisions on the world stage. Another example would be American foreign policy in the interwar years, when domestic political interests prevailed over grand strategy.

The Making of American Grand Strategy: Design vs. Emergence

Having defined what grand strategy is about, at least as far as this thesis is concerned, it is possible to address the main question of how grand strategies take shape when they do. If it is the case that a grand strategy existed during a particular era, then there are at least two broad ways to explain its formation. Rational design is the dominant model in the field of strategic studies. It will be treated first, followed by the emergent

---

30 One question worth considering is what happens when an ad-hoc policy decision goes against the tenets of the present grand strategy. There are two possibilities which will be examined in the empirical analysis in that situation: either the policy represents an outlier without significant impact on the grand strategy in the long-run, or the policy becomes incorporated into the grand strategy and consequently modifies some aspect of the grand strategy from that point on for the rest of the strategic era. Evidently, the more policy decisions are outside the parameters of the stipulated grand strategy, the more we would question the existence of a grand strategy.

31 The theoretical possibility of “no grand strategy,” i.e. that the foreign policy behavior was mostly ad-hoc, will also be discussed in the empirical chapters. However, the above discussion showed that ad-hoc paradigm explains the absence of a grand strategy as I defined it, not the formation of a grand strategy. Therefore, its expectations are listed below in the hypothesis and coding scheme section of this chapter, rather than in this section focused on explaining the formation of grand strategies.
process model, a relatively recent theoretical innovation in the business literature that has not been applied to national security scholarship so far.

The Rational Planning/Design Model

The common understanding of how strategy and grand strategy get made is that of a deliberate process of analyzing different strategic options and paradigms, making choices, and implementing them. As Richard Betts put it, strategy is “a plan for using military means to achieve political ends.”32 For a strategy to be real rather than illusory, “one must devise a rational scheme with forces, keep the plan working in the face of enemy reactions, and achieve something close to the objective. Rational strategic behavior should be value maximizing, choosing appropriate means according to economistic calculations of cost and benefit.”33 Proponents of this model assume that, by and large, states do successfully formulate and implement deliberate strategies to confront the security threats that they perceive. As John Mearsheimer titled his critique of recent American Grand Strategy, Washington’s approach is Imperial by Design.34

This implicit or explicit assumption that grand strategies are made by design leads scholars to engage in vigorous debates about which grand plan or theoretical framework would best advance American interests. The literature of American grand strategy is dominated by debates between the proponents of various theoretical schools, and by efforts to categorize past grand strategies into typologies derived from broad international

33 Ibid.
34 Mearsheimer, “Imperial by Design.”
relations theories, such as offshore balancing, liberal internationalism, primacy/hegemony, or selective engagement.  

Scholars sometimes differ on how to classify past grand strategies, but they do agree that such grand strategies came out of deliberate designs. For example, the “structural realist” Benjamin Miller, by looking at changes in two systemic conditions (“distribution of capabilities” and “balance of threat”), argues that the U.S. government changed its grand strategy five separate times from 1947 to 2008. Christopher Layne, a “neoclassical realist,” includes domestic variables along with systemic variables to explain why the United States consistently pursued a very costly grand strategy of “extra-regional hegemony” between 1945 and 2007, and why it keeps following it rather than adopting the “offshore balancing” strategy favored by realists like him, Stephen Walt, or Barry Posen. While he moves away from structurally-determined explanations like Miller’s, and he finds just one grand strategy where Miller found six, Layne also views grand strategies as being formed in a rational-design manner: he claims to show in his case studies that “the goals the United States set for itself on the Continent following World War II, and the strategy it employed to attain them, show that the Open Door’s causal logic inexorably led the United

35 The most common example of this type of classification for our current period is offered in Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions.”
36 Miller, “Explaining Change.” For a recent attempt to split a period of Containment into two episodes and argue that Eisenhower followed a “buck passing” strategy and Kennedy a “balancing” one see Green, “Two Concepts of Liberty.” Attempting to fit grand strategies into such rigid theoretical categories is unfruitful not only because it leads to endless debates about whether the actions fit one or another of the theoretical boxes, but also because it implies that grand strategies change quite often, as the examples above illustrate. If US changed its grand strategies more or less with each new administration, can it really be said to have a grand strategy at all? A focus on splitting differences and attempting to see whether a president pursues “primacy” or “balancing” or “liberal institutionalism”, when in fact it pursues approaches from multiple perspectives most of the time, is just as fruitless as the hackneyed debates about whether an administration is “realist” or “idealist.” My approach avoids this by focusing on those principles and coherent patterns that lasted over multiple generations and presidents, thus properly being classified as “grand” strategy.
States to establish its hegemony in Europe.” Similarly, another neoclassical realist, Colin Dueck, emphasizes the importance of initial design and planning when he writes that “grand strategy involves the prioritization of foreign policy goals, the identification of existing and potential resources, and the selection of a plan or road map (emph. added) that uses those resources to meet those goals.”

Much like the “design school” found in the business literature, proponents of this model regard strategic planning as a rational process of determining objectives and priorities, followed by formulation of strategies aimed at matching the available means to the desired ends. As Barry Posen defined it, echoing John Lewis Gaddis, “grand strategy is a political-military, means-ends chain.” In the particular case of defense strategic planning, an important subset of grand strategy, Posen defines “military doctrine” broadly as the component of grand strategy that “sets priorities among various military forces and prescribes how those forces should be structured and employed to achieve the ends in view.” As seen earlier in this chapter, one of the most important questions in the business literature is the connection between “strategy as plan” and “strategy as pattern”: was the intended strategy the same as the realized strategy? Posen uses an analogous conceptual distinction in the context of defense planning, by emphasizing the level of integration between “foreign policy” (which one could think of as the “plan,” or the intended strategy set by the top leaders of the executive branch) and “military doctrine” (which could be thought of as the “pattern” of decisions made by the bureaucracy on resource allocation, force employment, tactics, training, etc.) as one of the key elements of successful defense

---

38 Layne, Peace of Illusions, 38.
39 Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders, 1.
40 Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, 13.
41 Ibid., 7.
strategic planning. A high level of integration between the two suggests that the intended strategy was also the realized strategy, and therefore this process could be classified as deliberate rational planning. He argues that, in accordance with the rational design model, it is indeed the case that “priorities get set and military organizations are deflected from their preferred course” by civilian leaders who attempt to adapt to new threats caused by changes in the international system.42

In addition to being a positivist theory, the rational-design model also has a strong normative influence on the conventional understanding, in both academic and policymaking circles, of how successful strategy-making should take place. The impetus for formal, periodic, strategic-planning reviews, such as the National Security Strategy review or the Quadrennial Defense Review, comes from a belief that such attempts to “institutionalize” the making of strategy would lead to a more “rational” process and better strategies. Two former high-level Pentagon officials, Michele Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, deplored the lack of a more organized effort to design a grand strategy for the post-9/11 world: “More than four years after September 11, 2001,” they wrote in 2006, “there is no established interagency process for assessing the full spectrum of threats and opportunities endemic to the new security environment and identifying priorities for policy development, execution, and resource allocation… .There is still no systematic effort at strategic planning for national security that is inclusive, deliberative, and integrative.”43 In addition to scholar-practitioners and academic experts, the Washington institutions working on defense policy have also been very active in calling attention to the shortcomings of recent American grand

42 Ibid., 227.
43 Flournoy and Brimley, “Strategic Planning,” 80-81.
strategic planning and offering suggestions for improvement.\textsuperscript{44} Andrew Krepinevich and Barry Watts began their monograph on “regaining strategic competence” with the following premise: “The ability of the US national security establishment to craft, implement, and adapt effective long-term strategies against intelligent adversaries at acceptable costs has been declining for some decades.”\textsuperscript{45} In addition to the Cold War-era Containment, the Allied grand strategy during World War II to deal with Germany/Europe first, and the Pacific theater second, is another common example of a successful, designed grand strategy.\textsuperscript{46}

The rational-planning model, thus, sets a very high standard for successful grand-strategy-making: formulate, adapt, and implement a long-term coherent strategic plan to define and accomplish the nation’s goals, and do so despite the efforts of adversaries to counter your actions, and in the face of inherently unpredictable changes in the international system. It is not surprising that most scholars of grand strategy who either implicitly or explicitly incorporate the tenets of this model in their thinking usually end up being disappointed with the performance of policymakers. One of the foremost academic experts of grand strategic studies, Yale’s John Lewis Gaddis, used his opening remarks at a recent academic conference on the topic to express his worries that “there is a grand strategic deficit, that it’s been developing over the past two decades, and that its roots extend even further back than that.”\textsuperscript{47} Princeton’s Aaron Friedberg similarly laments the lack of rigorous analytical planning inside the US government: “The U.S. government has lost its capacity to conduct serious, sustained strategic planning.”\textsuperscript{48} Even though the

\textsuperscript{44} Flournoy and Brimley, \textit{America’s Path}; Krepinevich and Watts, \textit{Regaining Strategic Competence}.

\textsuperscript{45} Krepinevich and Watts. \textit{Regaining Strategic Competence}, 4.

\textsuperscript{46} Biddle, “Leveraging Strength.”

\textsuperscript{47} Gaddis, “What is Grand Strategy?”

\textsuperscript{48} Friedberg, “Strengthening US Strategic Planning,” 47.
design model dominates the current understanding inside the national security community of how grand strategies take shape, this is not the only way in which a grand strategy can form. The “Emergence Model” from the business world offers a different theoretical explanation of the strategy formation process.

The Emergence Model

The starting point to begin understanding strategy-making as an emergent process is the fundamental insight of the learning school that strategies can form without being fully formulated. The advocates of the emergence school are skeptical about the real-world applicability of the rational-design model of strategic planning, but they suggest that organizations can learn over time, thus allowing for coherent, consistent, and often successful strategies to emerge. Two examples from the business world will illustrate this concept more vividly.

One of the classical “design vs. emergence” case studies in the business strategy literature is Honda’s strategy for entering the US motorcycle market.\(^4\) The success of Honda’s penetration of this market was initially regarded as the result of a deliberately planned strategy, but later scholarship based on in-depth interviews with Honda’s executives showed that the successful strategy in fact had little to do with any initial planning and much more to do with adaptation, learning, and a bit of good fortune. The first account of Honda’s strategy, presented by adherents of the design model, contended that the Japanese must have had a carefully thought-out strategy to enter the lower end (“Supercubs” 50cc) of the motorcycle market due to the cost advantages given by their large domestic production base for this model. Given that Honda achieved great success in this

---

\(^4\) The following summary is based on: Pascale, “Perspective on Strategy,” 47-72; Kiechel, Lords of Strategy, 149-57; and Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel, Strategy Safari, 201-206.
market segment in the United States, the design model adherents simply assumed that they had followed a deliberate strategy to reach this result. However, the story later told by Honda executives was quite different. First of all, Mr. Honda, the founder of the company, planned to focus on the bigger bikes (250cc and 305cc) to penetrate the American market because “the shape of the handlebar on these larger machines looked like the eyebrow of Buddha,” something he regarded as a strong selling point given the reputation of American bikers. As for careful financial plans regarding targets for market share, breakeven points, and other elements of deliberate planning, one Honda executives frankly admitted that “we did not discuss profits or deadlines for breaking even…. We had no strategy other than the idea of seeing if we can sell something in the United States.” The bigger bikes Honda pushed in the American market sold a small number of units, but soon began to break down due to their being driven longer and faster in the US than they had been in Japan. The outlook seemed dire, and as one representative put it they felt that “disaster struck.”

Even as sales of bigger bikes lagged expectations, however, something unexpected happened that eventually turned the situation around and led to a strategy shift and Honda’s remarkable success. Given what they knew about the tastes of the “heavily macho” US market, the Honda representatives did not even attempt to sell their small 50cc Supercubs for fear of harming the image of their brand. However, Honda employees used them to ride around Los Angeles to run errands. A buyer from Sears approached the Honda representatives and insisted that Supercubs would sell at his store. After some debate, Honda began distributing the Supercubs as well, and soon realized that they could sell these small bikes much better through sporting goods stores than traditional motorcycle dealers.

At this point, a new strategy emerged for Honda’s penetration of the American motorcycle market. Rather than focus exclusively on the large 250cc and 350cc segments of
the market, it channeled some of its resources to the Supercubs 50cc. Thus, the company moved from a strategy predicated on the sale of big bikes to a balanced strategy across the three categories. As the sales of large bikes remained mediocre, the sales of Honda Supercubs skyrocketed, fueled partly by the famous marketing slogan “You Meet the Nicest People on a Honda.” Even the adoption of this slogan had an interesting unplanned twist to it: it originated as the term project of a UCLA undergraduate student, was later purchased by an advertising agency, and finally was pitched to Honda. Despite concerns about antagonizing the more traditional “black leather” bikers, the local US sales manager convinced his superiors back in Japan to adopt this “softer” image. This is another example of specific initiatives leading to the emergence of a strategy rather than top-down plans.

The end result was a smashing success: in four years, nearly one out of two motorcycles sold in the US was a Honda. Business theorist Richard Pascale, the author of the study detailing this emergent success, described it as a tale of “miscalculation, serendipity, and organizational learning.” Even though the initial planned strategy did not succeed, Honda’s flexibility and learning capacity allowed the company to adapt and take advantage of new opportunities, eventually leading to strategic success in a different market segment than the one they had planned for.

A second famous example of emergent business strategy formation is Intel’s historic shift from producing memory chips to its current focus on microprocessors. Rather than being a deliberate change in strategy planned from above, this shift was the result of “a host of decentralized decisions taken at divisional and plant level that were subsequently acknowledged by top management and transformed into strategy.”50 In short, the local plant

50 Grant, Contemporary Strategy Analysis, 25.
managers needed to meet profit benchmarks and they began shifting the focus of their product line from memory chips to the more profitable microprocessors. Slowly but surely, Intel became more and more involved in making microprocessors rather than traditional memory chips. The strategic planners in the corporate headquarters, as they began noticing this emerging trend and growing shift in their mix of products, eventually decided that the new strategic direction of Intel should indeed be in the more profitable, growing microprocessors business. Therefore, they adopted this view as official strategy, and started to formally implement it throughout the organization. This important shift in strategy emerged, and was eventually institutionalized, in the absence of any deliberate design calling for it.  

The learning model evolved from several distinct bodies of literature that converged around the central themes of this school. Henry Mintzberg, Bruce Ahlstrand, and Joseph Lampel trace the origins of this school of thought back to the work of Yale political scientist Charles Lindblom in the 1960s on “disjointed incrementalism.” Writing about the policy-making process inside the American government, Lindblom described it as “a never-ending process of successive steps in which continual nibbling is a substitute for a good bite.” Business theorist James Brian Quinn later adopted Lindblom’s incrementalist approach, shifting from an understanding of the process as “disjointed” to one of “logical incrementalism.” Unlike Lindblom, Quinn argued that a series of incremental decisions could converge towards a common strategy. It is the responsibility of managers to “guide these streams of actions and events incrementally toward conscious strategy.” For Quinn,

51 Burgelman and Grove, “Strategic Dissonance.”
52 Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel, Strategy Safari, 179. The following brief summary of the evolution of this model draws heavily on this account offered by three of its foremost proponents.
53 Ibid.
thus, “constantly integrating the simultaneous incremental processes of strategy formulation and implementation is the central art of strategic management.”

The next step in the development of a learning school was a body of work on the internal “strategic venturing” conducted by various actors within the firm. Joseph Bower’s detailed study of the resource allocation process and Robert Burgelman’s series of articles on “corporate venturing” laid the theoretical and empirical foundations for this model. As it was summarized in a later review of this body of work, “the overall conclusion was that strategic initiatives often develop deep in the hierarchy and are then championed, or given impetus, by middle-level managers who seek authorization of senior executives.

[emph.orig]” Even though the process of “intrapreneurship” may present leaders with multiple strategic initiatives, in order for an overall strategy to form top management must find ways to integrate these ideas into a coherent perspective.

The concept of emergent strategy represented a conceptual breakthrough in the development of the learning model. This new model used the idea of emergence to offer a different view of strategy formation than the traditional design/planning model. One of the most influential proponents of the notion of emergent strategy, Henry Mintzberg, describes this difference in the following way: “Deliberate strategy focuses on control – making sure that managerial intentions are realized in action – while emergent strategy emphasizes learning – coming to understand through the taking of actions what those intentions should be in the first place.”

54 Ibid., 180, 145.
55 Ibid., 186.
56 Ibid., 189.
Finally, the last piece of the puzzle in the development of a model of strategic learning was to conceptualize a way to link the emergence of strategy to a “conscious” process of learning. Karl Weick’s concept of “Retrospective Sense Making” accomplished this task. His theoretical model relies on an ecological model of variation/selection/retention. The key insight is that “management is inextricably bound with the process of imposing sense on past experience… All understanding originates in reflection and looking backwards.”57 The role of analogies and lessons learned is particularly crucial in fostering this process. Thus, the formulation of strategy and its implementation are regarded as strongly interconnected, rather than separate stages in a strategic planning process. The in-house think tank of the Boston Consulting Group currently advances the concept of “adaptive strategy” and learning as the key to strategic success: the greatest competency a company must develop is “learning how to learn across industries.” The role of leadership should not be to dictate a strategy based on “analysis, prediction, and deduction,” but rather to set “optimal conditions for the continuous emergence of superior strategies through an adaptive- or evolutionary- process.”58 An emergent approach is particularly useful in complex environments in which linear predictions are difficult to rely on.

The learning school does not deny the importance of certain elements of deliberate planning: “all real strategic behavior has to combine deliberate control with emergent learning.”59 However, unlike the design school’s focus on detailed strategic planning exercises, and then on implementing the strategies resulting from such planning, the learning school has a different role for strategists. Deliberate planning should focus on

57 Ibid., 195.
58 Kiechel, Lords of Strategy, 321.
managing the process of strategic learning. The strategist’s role is to create the conditions for a process of “planned emergence,” i.e. to provide a general guiding perspective, and then to recognize the successful strategic innovations coming from the bottom up and adopt them at the level of the entire organization. In the context of explaining US grand strategy, one particularly useful concept is that of an “umbrella strategy,” one version of emergent strategy. Such a strategy describes a case in which the leader defines the strategic vision or perspective, while the details are allowed to develop in an emergent fashion.60

The empirical record accumulated in the business literature over several decades offers some significant support to the emergent-process school of strategy formation. Several studies suggest that while most intended strategies end up unrealized, a large number of successful strategies emerge from a complex set of interactions between actors at different levels within the firm; they form without being formulated in a written plan by corporate management. Mintzberg cites a poll of consultants by Fortune magazine, which found that less than ten percent of intended strategies become realized.61 A McKinsey survey of corporate executives found that "less than one quarter [of the executives surveyed] report that their companies make important strategic decisions within the formal strategic planning process."62 Similarly, Amar Bhide studied the formation of new businesses and reported that two-thirds of the founders of successful new ventures relied on learning and adaptation rather than on a detailed strategic plan written beforehand.63

In addition to these survey data, in-depth case studies of several companies have further confirmed the importance of emergent processes in strategy formation. In addition

60 Ibid., 191.
61 Ibid., 25.
62 Erdmann, “Strategic Planning,” 140.
63 Ibid., 141.
to the Honda and Intel examples already discussed, Robert Grant analyzed the strategic planning processes of the major oil companies in the turbulent markets of the past few decades. Rather than deliberate strategic planning, he found evidence of a process of “planned emergence.” The oil industry has been the source of major innovation in strategic planning in the aftermath of Royal Dutch/Shell Group’s famed use of "scenario planning," as opposed to forecasting, as the principal tool to prepare for the future by virtue of a process of organizational learning. Grant found that the oil majors continue to innovate successfully in the area of strategic planning, and that their approach aptly combined design elements with emergent processes:

“Strategic planning was primarily a bottom-up process in which corporate management provided direction, but primary inputs came from the business units and operating divisions. However, consistent with the process view of strategy formation, it was clear that the strategies of the oil majors were not created by their strategic planning systems.”\(^{64}\)

The concept of an emergent strategy is likely to appeal at an intuitive level to students of grand strategy as well. For example Edward Luttwak’s account of the grand strategy of the Roman Empire is one of the classical examples of an implicit, emergent grand strategy. In fact, Paul Kennedy referred to Roman grand strategy as “perhaps the most successful (if subconsciously) sustained ‘grand’ strategies in history.”\(^{65}\) Luttwak’s more recent history of Byzantine grand strategy also fits the emergence model, and indeed one chapter of his book is titled "The Emergence of the New Strategy.” The author argues that even though the Byzantines “had no central planning staff to produce documents in the modern manner... they assuredly had a grand strategy, even if it was never stated explicitly

\(^{64}\) Grant, "Strategic Planning in Turbulent Environment."
\(^{65}\) Kennedy, Grand Strategies, 7.
– that is a very modern and indeed rather dubious habit--but certainly it was applied so repetitively that one may even extract a Byzantine operational code... The Byzantines learned from experience as well as any of us.”

Similarly, a pair of analysts at the Center for New American Security, Richard Fontaine and Brian Burton, recently advised current strategic planners inside the US government to recognize the existence of emergent strategy in the course of foreign policy-making. Borrowing from the work of former State Department planner and current McKinsey consultant Drew Erdmann, Fontaine and Burton highlight the importance of taking into account some of the core propositions of the emergent-strategy model.

Rather than adhering to strategies developed in a cyclical process by planners isolated from implementation, operators (from senior executives to field employees) make decisions with strategic implications during the course of everyday acts of initiative and reaction. These decisions add up to an emergent strategy, which often looks very different from that which a dedicated planner might develop, but nevertheless consists of actual actions taken rather than simply actions planned... As the recent National Security Strategy demonstrates, many strategy documents attempt to discern patterns in discrete actions and beliefs as much as they lay out a course of action toward an attainable future goal.

As the works referenced above illustrate, the idea that strategies can sometimes evolve in an emergent fashion has been present at least implicitly in the literature on strategy and grand strategy. However, no work in the security studies literature so far has examined explicitly this model of strategy-formation in order to compare its explanatory power with that of the rational-planning model. This thesis will accomplish this task.

Lastly, the emergence model to some extent challenges the well-known adage stated by President Eisenhower, “plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.” This mantra is

66 Luttwak, Byzantine Empire, 408, 418.
67 Fontaine and Burton, Eye to the Future, 7.
commonly repeated by admirers of Eisenhower's Project Solarium. In The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning, one of the most widely-read and influential business books on this topic, Henry Mintzberg questions not only the value of plans, but that of the process of traditional “strategic planning” as well. He describes three “fundamental fallacies” that plague most planning efforts:

• the fallacy of predetermination ("[planning assumes] the prediction of the environment through forecasting.");

• the fallacy of detachment ("the detachment of strategies from operations, and, as a result, of what is called strategic management from operational management"), or, more simply, the separation of strategy formulation from strategy implementation, of the "planners" from the "doers"; and, lastly,

• the fallacy of formalization ("the fallacy that strategy formation can be formalized, ... that innovation can be institutionalized.")

To be sure, Mintzberg does not argue that planning has no value, quite the contrary he lists certain useful roles that planners can play, e.g. communicators, analysts, or internal catalysts. What he does dispute is the notion that planning itself is “indispensable” to the formation of strategy. It is also worth noting that Eisenhower himself made that oft-quoted remark in the context of preparing for battle. In that context, planning (particularly operational planning such as logistics, etc.) could well be indispensable. However, most of the rational-design proponents who embraced that mantra have used it to call for comprehensive strategic planning efforts, something rather different than Eisenhower’s original intent.

---

68 Mintzberg, *Rise and Fall*, 221, 323.
Research Design and Methodology

The main research question for this thesis is which model of strategy-formation has the greatest explanatory power in understanding the origins of US grand strategy in the two periods under review. Therefore, the main dimension of the paper is explanatory, how does strategy get made. In the last chapter, however, I will also offer some preliminary thoughts on how should strategy be made. I will not attempt to demonstrate that emergent strategies are more successful than designed ones, but I will provide some tentative evidence from the two cases that they can be so in certain instances. I approach this task in two steps. First, in order to compare the explanatory power of the models and answer my research question, I will infer hypotheses from the models on how do grand strategies form. Second, I will develop a template and a coding scheme in order to test which of the observable implications of the hypotheses are confirmed and which are not. The core differences between the hypotheses inferred from the models can be briefly stated as follows.

Hypotheses

1. Design

In the Design Model, the expectation is that the realized strategy is largely the same as the deliberately planned strategy: actions taken are generally the same as the actions planned. This does not mean that the pattern of decisions perfectly matches the plans, or that the plans themselves do not change in light of new circumstances, but it does mean that the preponderance of evidence leads an observer to conclude that the planned strategy led directly to the realized strategy in its most important elements - overall objective, vision, key policy decisions.
In addition, strategic plans and planning drive the decision-making process. This means that strategic plans are used to guide actions, and that the strategic choices that are made in the aftermath of strategic planning reviews/exercises are subsequently implemented in a way congruent with the original intent of their designers.

2. Emergent

In the Emergent Strategy model, on the contrary, the realized strategy is expected to be significantly different than the planned strategy. While plans and frameworks can provide some overall guidance and perspective, the final strategy is much more a product of emergence rather than planning. Incremental policy decisions and specific initiatives have a larger impact on the contours of the final strategy than strategic plans. Formal strategic planning reviews rarely determine the future strategic course of the nation: the plans coming out of such planning exercises have at best a marginal impact on future real-world decisions. Government officials engage in an active process of learning from recent experience, particularly by the use of analogies and experience, when making strategic decisions. The use of analogies could, of course, be part of the formulation of a plan, and to the extent that the author of a plan uses them in creating the initial design, then the mere reference to a “lessons of history” is not evidence of an emergent model. However, when subsequently policymakers use analogies derived from their recent experiences (as opposed to historical knowledge), and these new references end up playing a larger role in decision-making than the initial design, that would support the emergence model. Another way to understand this difference is to examine how the analogy is used: if it is referenced

---

69 For the canonical treatment of the use of analogical reasoning in American foreign policy decision making, see May, ‘Lessons’ of the Past. See also Jervis, Perception and Misperception; Breslauer and Tetlock, Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy.
deductively in a direct fashion it gets closer to representing evidence in favor of a planned process, while if it is used more inductively as a guiding lens it is evidence supporting an emergent one.

In the emergent strategy model, moreover, there is a continuous interaction between formulation and implementation of a strategy, to the point where the two become almost indistinguishable: “trial and error,” along with a constant readjustment of (intermediate) objectives, are common patterns of strategy-making.

3. Ad-hoc

Unlike the design and emergence models that explain the formation of a coherent grand strategy, the ad-hoc model rejects the existence of grand strategic principles in pursuit of a larger vision and overarching goal. The hypothesis of the ad-hoc school is that actions and policies arise ad seriatim in response to specific problems and challenges. They need not reflect an overall conscious, coherent rationale or worldview. Instead, they may be simply pragmatic, utilitarian, or instrumental. They will often be contradictory, incoherent, or inconsistent. Moreover, they may reflect the influence on strategic decision-making of forces outside the domain of the foreign policy/national security world, such as domestic political opinion, interest groups, and bureaucratic politics.

**Coding**

One of the challenges in dealing with qualitative data is inferring whether the statements made by policymakers represent accurate depictions of their beliefs, or whether they were made “for public consumption.” The same goes for some of the public documents the policymakers produce. Another challenge is that in their memoirs, the principals might recollect imperfectly, and of course they might attempt to present their history in a way that makes them look farsighted and “strategic.” In order to address these difficulties inherent in
"process-tracing" qualitative methodology, I have applied the methods of "indirect inference" developed by Deborah Welch Larson.\textsuperscript{70} I tried to ascertain the truthfulness and significance of statements, and what purpose they might have had, by looking at who said what to whom under what circumstances.

The formation of the overarching objectives, the vision for the US role in the world, and the theory about how the world works (i.e. worldview) for each grand strategy will be analyzed by comparing how the official documents coming out of formal strategic planning reviews describe them, or what we would call the planned strategy, with the actual objectives pursued and the vision and theory that guided decision-making, as can be inferred from government’s actions and justifications used for those statements, or the realized strategy. If the two are similar, the rational-design model is confirmed. If, on the other hand, the realized strategy differs from the foundational documents, the emergent model is confirmed. In addition, I will also pay attention to a third possibility. If one cannot find any consistent overall objective or a vision, whether planned or emergent, over the period of time covered by the case study, then we would doubt the existence of a grand strategy at all, thus providing support for the ad-hoc model.

Key policy decisions will be coded as being part of a planned strategy, part of an emergent strategy, or part of no strategy – i.e. purely ad-hoc. The coding rules for key decisions are based on the following criteria, which admittedly are more heuristically useful and reasonable rather than strictly water-tight:

- If the policy follows from a written plan, and/or if a plan is invoked or used in justifying the decision, and/or if it could be otherwise reasonably inferred that the

\textsuperscript{70} Larson, “Research Note," 247-53.
written plan/strategy or the strategic planning exercise/review leading to the respective plan shaped the decision in a decisive way, then the decision will be coded as planned.

• If the policy was congruent with the stated goal and vision, but it was made based on perceived "lessons learned" or analogies with recent similar situations, and/or if it arose as a response to an immediate crisis, and/or if the action preceded rather than followed the formulation of a strategy (i.e. difference between "formulation" and "implementation" was blurred), then the decision will be coded as emergent.

• If the policy was created based on domestic political considerations, bureaucratic interests or other considerations largely divorced from the main principles of the grand strategy, and/or if the decision contradicted the purported vision and long-term goals of the grand strategy, and/or if the decision was neither part of a plan nor was made without reference to recent experience that would indicate learning/feedback loops, then it will be categorized as ad-hoc.

**Testing the Hypotheses**

At the beginning of each case study, I will further detail what the reader should look for in the subsequent discussion of that era that would confirm the planning or the emergent model. For each period under study, I will stipulate a series of principles that I argue represented the pillars of an existing grand strategy.

I will analyze the defining elements of the grand strategy and determine whether they are better understood as products of planning or emergence. The planning model is confirmed if the substantive principles of the strategy laid out in planning documents are similar to the substantive principles of the strategy realized in practice. These constitutive
elements revolve around an overall objective, a worldview of how the international system operates, a vision for the US role in the world, and a series of policy decisions congruent with the broad goal and vision. At the same time, I will also analyze whether these defining elements, taken together, constitute a pattern of behavior coherent and consistent enough to be considered a grand strategy, as opposed to merely ad-hoc behavior.

One more way to test the hypotheses is to examine the impact of grand-strategy documents and strategic-planning reviews on decision-making, and contrast that with the impact of “emergent processes” such as learning from recent experience, particular initiatives, incremental crises responses, and the rest of the tenets of the emergent model described above. The emergent-model hypothesis predicts that a grand strategic plan does not have long-lasting impact on future decisions, while the planning model predicts the opposite. The ad-hoc model also denies the importance of plans, but it furthermore denies that emergent processes necessarily lead to the development of a coherent grand strategic framework. Instead, it expects contradictory actions and decisions that are logically inconsistent with one another, and not part of a common set of principles or of the pursuit of an overarching long-term goal.

Data Sources

The data for the study comes from a number of sources. First, there are the government’s “national strategy” publications. They represent the core documents for “planned strategy.” Some of these documents were secret at the time but are now available, such as NSC-68, while others, such as the modern-era National Security Strategy documents, were written from the beginning with the expectation that they would become public immediately. In addition to the “grand strategic level” documents, the memoirs of participants, intermediary drafts of the documents and transcripts of the strategy meetings
leading to the creation of those documents, and retrospective evaluations of those
documents by participants and historians can provide the needed context for understanding
them. One type of fairly weak evidence in support of the design school would be if the
designers claimed that their designs were successfully implemented. Conversely, one type
of fairly strong evidence in support of the emergent school would be if the designers
claimed their own processes were not fitting the design model.

The next step, understanding the impact of strategic plans and strategic planning on
decisions and actions, and thus on the contours of grand strategy, will require a close study
of the debates surrounding particularly significant decisions and actions. For this purpose, I
will examine the historical record composed of the internal memos and transcripts
surrounding the big debates of those periods (where available), speeches and public
addresses, biographies and memoirs of the main actors, historical scholarship, detailed,
journalistic, behind-the-scenes accounts of those periods, and research interviews with
former government officials (where possible).

The "overarching objective" and "vision" components of grand strategies can be
determined by showing that the language used by government leaders in public documents,
internal debates, speeches, and other public pronouncements is based on a discernible
worldview guided by the pursuit of one overarching objective, an idea of the specific role of
the United States in the international system, and an explicit or implicit series of theoretical
assumptions about what they are trying to accomplish and how they go about doing it.
**Case Studies Methodology and Overview**

This study will follow the methodological approach adopted by previous works in political science that addressed the strategy-making process, such as the books of Barry Posen (Sources of Military Doctrine), Amy Zegart (Flawed by Design), Graham Allison and Phillip Zelikow (Essence of Decision), as well as the method used by business theorists. It will answer the research question stated in the introduction by means of testing competing hypotheses derived from the theoretical models in a comparative case-study research design. Given that this project deals with the question of how strategy is made, a process-tracing qualitative approach is the most appropriate technique for exploring the relative explanatory power of each of the models. The analysis of the case studies will particularly rely on the guidelines for “structured, focused comparison” provided by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett in their acclaimed methodological work Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences.\(^\text{71}\)

Each case study will begin with an introduction to the respective strategic era. In this opening segment, I will set up the context and foreshadow the argument that I will make in the rest of the chapter in regards to the grand strategy present in the period of time under study. I will also present a literature review of the scholarly works on grand strategy for that particular era, and show how my thesis connects with the scholarly debates. The expectations of my two theoretical models will be presented upfront for each respective strategic era, and then I will stipulate what kind of evidence would support each model. I will discuss in details the most important designs available for each era, and then I will analyze to what extent the actual grand strategy flowed from them as opposed to emerging

---

\(^\text{71}\) Bennett and George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences*, 65-73.
outside of the framework set in such plans. For each period, I will lay out the main principles of the grand strategy, and then I will conduct the empirical analysis of key decisions and policies to show how these principles came about and evolved, and how they shaped the conduct of foreign policy for the rest of the era.

As for presenting the analysis, rather than one long narrative I will offer instead a number of mini-narratives focused on the crucial moments related to the formation, impact, and conclusion of each grand strategy. Such an approach will allow me to examine in detail how well the expectations of the design and emergence model fit the data during these key episodes that are most suitable for a “design vs. emergence” comparison. For each chapter, I will explain upfront how I selected these mini-cases, and what I am looking for in terms of testing my hypotheses in each episode. The core of the chapters will be comprised of the structured analysis of these historical mini-cases, and of showing how they confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses.

After presenting the mini-cases, I will first offer a brief conclusion of the entire period, in which I will reiterate whether the constitutive elements of the grand strategy were pursued coherently and consistently enough throughout the entire period so as to allow us to accept the argument that the extant grand strategy was indeed worthy of the name. Second, I will present my conclusions on how well or poorly the case study supported the theoretical expectations of the two models, design and emergence, and then wrap up the chapter with a general discussion of how each of the models help us understand the making of grand strategy in the respective era.

While the case-study methodology and the use of process-tracing qualitative research techniques such as archival research and interviews are well established in political science, the theoretical foundation for my approach imports new concepts and
ideas from two other academic fields, history and business strategy, in order to enhance our understanding of grand strategy. First, one of the limitations of the political science debates about grand strategy is a focus on idealized typologies derived from broader theoretical frameworks – such as efforts to classify grand strategies as “offshore balancing” (inspired from the general international relations theoretical paradigm defensive realism) or “primacist” (offensive realism) or “liberal institutionalist” (liberal institutionalism). Even if scholars are generally aware that in the real world policymakers mix and match various elements from each paradigm, the literature is nevertheless dominated by debates and attempts to impose these broad frameworks to describe past grand strategies, and prescribe new ones. This study will adopt a different way to define a grand strategy, as a series of interrelated principles that guided a pattern of coherent and consistent behavior over time. This approach is partly inspired from the historian Edward Luttwak’s concept of an “operational code,” which he used to analyze the grand strategies of the Roman and Byzantine Empires. And second, the strategy-formation process will be modeled using the emergent learning theory from the business academic literature. This model provides a compelling alternative to the models used by political scientists in the past.
Chapter 2: Design and Emergence in the Making of Containment

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union entered into a prolonged period of ideological and geopolitical conflict that came to be labeled the Cold War. The two superpowers promoted two different visions of political and economic order, and they competed for influence on a global scale. The roots of the clash between the two powers, famously predicted to some extent by Alexis de Tocqueville all the way back in 1835, could be found in the tense relations between the US and the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik Revolution.¹ The strategic alliance made in World War II in order to counter Nazi Germany led to a rapprochement between the two, but the friendly relationship between them was short-lived and powerful disagreements about the future of Europe and Asia and the shape of the international security system came to dominate the relations between Washington and Moscow as soon as it became clear that the Axis Powers would be defeated.

Historians have been debating the Cold War for over half a century. Several threads run through this literature, but the debates about the formative stages of the Cold War clearly dominate.² A few schools of thought have emerged over the years. First, the traditionalists (also called the “orthodox school”), much like most US officials of the time, viewed containment as a response to the aggressive behavior of the Soviet Union and as a

¹ Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 412-13.
² Gaddis, “Post-Revisionist Synthesis,” 171. Gaddis notes that even in the 1980s there are more historical dissertations being published about the 1945-1950 than any other period of US foreign relations. In addition to the debates surrounding the formative period, another topics debated by scholars include effects of the nuclear arms race; US and Soviet policies in the third world; the wars in Korea, Vietnam; other smaller military interventions; and the end of the Cold War. These debates are less relevant for my thesis, and will be touched upon only tangentially as needed.
defensive measure against the spread of communism. A revisionist school of historians critiqued that initial understanding, and instead focused on what they saw as aggressive American behavior dictated by capitalist, economic-expansionist interests (the Open Door policy); theses scholars contended that the Soviets acted defensively in pursuit of legitimate security concerns. The next school of thought, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, are the post-revisionists, who rebutted many of the economics-based arguments of the revisionists and adopted a tone far less critical of capitalism and the actions of US officials. Instead, post-revisionists paid most attention to geopolitical causes of the Cold War, and shifted away from assigning blame exclusively to one side or the other. Lastly, following the end of the Cold War and the opening of new documentation from former Communist countries, one of the leading post-revisionists, the prominent historian John Lewis Gaddis, moved back to the traditionalist understanding of the Cold War as being mainly the product of Stalin’s ideological predisposition and aggressive international behavior. The members of this new school, known in the literature as neo-traditionalists, have faced some criticism from other scholars for veering towards American triumphalism or being too simplistic.3

Eschewing these historiographical debates, this thesis will adopt a significantly different focus. Was Containment mainly a defensive strategy meant to combat the spread of Soviet influence and international communism, or was it an offensive/aggressive one designed to spread US economic and political influence around the globe? This is the major

3 Some of the initial orthodox/traditionalist works include McNeil, America, Britain and Russia; Feis, From Trust to Terror; Herz, Beginnings of Cold War; Schlessinger, "Origins of the Cold War." Major revisionist works are exemplified by Williams, Tragedy of American Diplomacy; LaFaber, Russia, America; Kolk and Kolk, The Limits of Power; Yergin, Shattered Peace. Some of the most significant post-revisionist works are Gaddis, United States and Origins of Cold War; Leffler, Preponderance of Power; Trachtenberg, Constructed Peace. See also McCalister, No Exit. The major neo-traditionalist work is Gaddis, We Now Know, and the most recent one is Miscamble, From Roosevelt to Truman. Some new revisionists argument and of the more recent critics of the neo-traditionalists include Westad, Global Cold War; Offner, Another Such Victory.
point of contention between the neo-traditionalist and the neo-revisionist views of
Containment. Similarly, when it comes to understanding the end of the Cold War, the neo-
traditionalists tend to give more credit to the actions of US officials and claim that the US
“won” this conflict, while their critics point to the large costs incurred and the decisive role
of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev (rather than Ronald Reagan) in bringing about an end to
the conflict. The real answer, of course, might lie outside these two perspectives altogether:
Gorbachev might have launched forces over which he lost control. While these debates will
enter the conversation at various times, this thesis will analyze the strategy of containment
from a different angle. The emphasis will be on showing to what extent it was planned or
emergent.

On this particular issue, of how the strategy was formed, there is a surprising lack of
rigorous discussion in the literature, perhaps because historians have been generally less
concerned with testing theoretical models of strategy formation than with debating the
“drivers” (i.e. search for security, ideology, economic interests) and the outcomes of the
strategy. Even though there is not an extensive scholarly debate about how strategy was
made during the Cold War, there is certainly a conventional “planning” narrative.\footnote{Some of the most commonly cited works of Cold War history that embrace in various ways the conventional wisdom crediting Kennan with the planning of Containment include: Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}; Paterson, \textit{Meeting the Communist Threat}, LaFaber, \textit{America, Russia, and the Cold War}, and Yergin, \textit{Shattered Peace}.} This
narrative, which is largely embraced by the Washington policy community, contends that
Kennan, a career Foreign Service Officer, formulated Containment. Kennan planned the
containment strategy in general terms, and then specific policies evolved from his broad
framework, with more guidance coming out of subsequent planning efforts, most
importantly the NSC-68 reappraisal of American grand strategy undertaken by Kennan’s
successor Paul Nitze and his team. As the following section will show, Kennan’s writings and Nitze’s NSC-68 have been regarded over the years as the key examples of the design for Containment.

**Kennan and Nitze as the Architects of Containment**

Kennan’s reputation soared early in the Cold War when his famous Long Telegram and subsequent publication in *Foreign Affairs* of the X Article were widely portrayed in the media as articulating the US government’s new Cold War containment strategy towards the Soviet Union.\(^5\) Historian Daniel Yergin described the Long Telegram as a highly influential document akin to a “bible for American policymakers,” a piece of analysis circulated widely inside the high levels of government.\(^6\) Soon afterwards, Kennan became the first director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff (1947-1950), essentially the chief strategic planning position inside the government at the time. Kennan’s “recognition” as the father of Containment was further solidified in the academic world when John Gaddis, in the most comprehensive study of containment, called Kennan “its chief architect.”\(^7\) Even scholars who strongly disagree with Gaddis’s interpretation of the Cold War, such as Thomas Paterson, contend that the “X” article was “responsible for implementing the containment doctrine as the commanding principle of American foreign policy in the Cold War.”\(^8\) Finally, in the policy community Kennan’s reputation was perhaps forever secured when the widely

---

\(^5\) New York Times columnist Walter Lippmann led this campaign, with a dozen articles commenting on Kennan’s ideas throughout 1947, which culminated in a widely circulated book, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy*.


\(^7\) Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 23.

\(^8\) Paterson, *Meeting the Communist Threat*, 131.
respected grand strategist and statesman Henry Kissinger declared: “George Kennan came as close to authoring the diplomatic doctrine of his era as any diplomat in our history.”

In addition to Kennan, his successor Paul Nitze is also held in high regard as one of the designers of Containment. His most important contribution was direction of the NSC team that drafted the legendary NSC-68 grand strategy document. This report is often regarded by many of today’s national security experts as an exemplar of deliberate grand strategic planning, one that should be emulated by current policymakers. As historian Steven Rearden wrote about its impact, "Some regard it as the essential blueprint of the Truman administration’s cold war military buildup, while others go so far as to say it was a clarion call for the United States to assume the role of global policeman. That its impact was profound is generally agreed." Historian Ernest May, the editor of an entire volume dedicated to the formulation and impact of NSC-68, remarked that some writers “hailed it as the master plan that brought victory in the Cold War,” and, “citing the need for a post-cold war strategy, they called for a new NSC-68.” Similarly, Melvyn Leffler dubs the report “the most renowned strategic paper of the Cold War,” and Etzold and Gaddis described NSC-68 as “the most elaborate effort made by US officials during the early Cold War years to integrate political, economic, and military considerations into a comprehensive statement of national security policy.”

---

9 Kissinger, White House Years, 135.
10 Rearden, Nitze, 7. See also Powaski, The Cold War, 85.
11 May, Cold War Strategy, 16.
Rethinking this Narrative

In recent years, a number of historians have questioned Kennan’s portrayal as the main architect of Containment. The most vocal member of this school of thought is historian Wilson Miscamble, the author of a book-length treatment of Kennan’s role in the early Cold War. Miscamble concludes that:

“The structure of American foreign policy was built stone by stone, as it were, in reaction to pressing needs and challenges. Through addressing these various situations a foreign policy emerged.... It developed functionally and through being called forth by circumstances more so than being imposed upon them.... This point deserves emphasis and might well be appreciated by those who campaign for more long-term planning by romanticizing the Truman period as some kind of golden age for such.”

Thomas Wright touches on the same points in his cautionary remarks about the mythology that developed around Kennan’s strategic planning foresight: “Kennan, head of policy planning from 1947 to 1949, was relatively uninvolved in the crafting of the Marshall Plan, and he opposed both the Truman Doctrine and NATO.... It is absolutely vital to remember that these initiatives were not the product of deliberate thought and planning.... What succeeded in the 1940s came out of the best of traditional diplomacy – adjustment to changing international circumstances and vigorous bilateral diplomacy – and not out of advance planning.” Melvyn Leffler’s study of this era in the 2010 Cambridge History of the Cold War refers explicitly to” the gradual emergence of a Containment grand strategy.”

---

13 Some of the most important works questioning the narrative of Kennan as the main author of Containment include Miscamble, George F. Kennan; Wright, “Learning the Right Lessons.”; Leffler, Preponderance of Power, 66-90.
14 Miscamble, George F. Kennan, 348.
16 Leffler, Cambridge History, 67.
Leffler has long believed that the practice of containment, if not the strategy, existed before Kennan's Long Telegram.¹⁷

Lastly, the recent publication of Kennan’s authorized biography by John Gaddis has led to further debate among historians and political scientists on how much influence and impact Kennan’s planning really had during the formation of Containment.¹⁸ Gaddis, who in his earlier book *Strategies of Containment* credited Kennan with being the chief architect of US Cold War grand strategy, once again reinforced this image in the new biography, which notes that Kennan’s Long Telegram opened up “a path between the appeasement that had failed to prevent World War II and the alternative of a third world war.”¹⁹ In his review of Gaddis’s new biography, Marc Trachtenberg criticizes this argument by contending that Kennan should not be given credit for showing a “middle path” because the crucial decision-makers of the time never really considered appeasement and war as the only alternatives.²⁰ In another review of Kennan’s new biography, Miscamble argues that: “Gaddis rightly attends to Kennan’s important role in calling forth the need for a new American approach to the Soviet Union in the Long Telegram and elsewhere, but he overstates Kennan role in fashioning that response. He succumbs, at least partly, to the temptation to anoint George Kennan as the essential delineator of the West’s policy of containing the Soviet Union.”²¹ Gaddis appears to back away from his stronger claims as Kennan as the architect of containment, and he concedes that Miscamble’s arguments are fairly persuasive: “I defer to Miscamble’s judgment when he says that Kennan was no Moses: he was not the sole

¹⁸ See *Kennan H-Diplo Roundtable* for the exchange summarized below.
¹⁹ Gaddis, *Kennan*, 694.
²⁰ *Kennan H-Diplo Roundtable*, 49.
²¹ Ibid., 44.
architect of containment, and if my book conveyed that impression, it fell prey to the
biographer’s occupational hazard of inflating the subject's importance.” And, as this
dissertation will discuss in further detail, Gaddis makes the following observation which is
an interesting metaphor for the interaction between a more planned approach to the
making of strategy and a more emergent one: “The most useful insight for me, in all of these
comments, is Miscamble's suggestion that Kennan was Plato, more preoccupied with ideal
forms than with gritty reality, while Acheson was Aristotle, focusing on the world as it was,
adapting as necessary to get things done.”22 As the empirical section of this chapter will
show, Acheson’s approach to strategy-making was indeed generally more emergent than
planned.

Having said that, this chapter will also show that this parallel is not entirely fair to
Kennan, who, somewhat ironically given his reputation as an “architect” of Containment,
was deeply skeptical of the utility of long-term strategic plans. Kennan strongly doubted the
value of written plans and policy guidelines. Instead, he preferred to rely on flexibility,
professional expertise, and the capacity to adapt in the face of unexpected changes: “I had
no confidence in the ability of man to define hypothetically in any useful way, by means of
general and legal phraseology, future situations which no one could really imagine or
envisage.”23 In other words, he understood the limitations inherent in the design model of
strategy formation and wanted instead to rely on the kind of constant interaction between
formulation and implementation characteristic of the emergent model. In fact, Kennan
himself indirectly endorsed the hypothesis of the emergent model when he stated that
“American policy since World War II was not based ‘on any global plan’ but owed much to a

22 Ibid., 47.
23 Kennan, Memoirs, 408.
great deal of improvisation.”24 In summary, the conventional wisdom regarding Kennan's role and the planning of Containment has begun to shift in recent years, and my work builds on this trend in the literature. Kennan’s own position that he did not actually have much influence on the final shape of Containment is gaining more support among many scholars.

Even though a number of historians and commentators have criticized the master narrative of Containment in recent years, however, there has been no effort to theorize these critiques and to offer an alternative theoretical model to explain the formation of containment in a different way than the classical design model does. The political science and policy communities have not yet incorporated in their theoretical models some of these recent developments in the historical literature. Thus, one of the major contributions of this chapter will be to offer a new strategy-formation model that theorizes the new insights of recent Cold War historical scholarship, and challenges the conventional "lessons learned" by security-study experts and policymakers about the role of design in the formation of Containment.

Overview of Containment and Its Sources

The grand strategy of containment was composed of several inter-related principles. Taken together, these principles formed the strategy that guided US behavior during most of the Cold War, as will be shown in the empirical analysis presented in this chapter.

• First, the greatest threat to the US national interest came from the spread of Soviet and international communism, and therefore the overall goal of US policy was the containment of Soviet influence and of communism across the globe.

• Second, the US maintained troops deployed under formal alliances in key places such as Europe and East Asia to deter Soviet advances.

• Third, the US saw itself as a nation with a special responsibility as leader of the Free World, and thus would need to bear a large part of the costs of deterring communist expansion.

• Fourth, the US offered presumptive support to local governments threatened with being overtaken by communism; such support came in military, economic, diplomatic or covert forms.

• Fifth, the US generally promoted a liberal world order based on US political and economic values (democracy, free trade and open markets) even though there were some exceptions being made when these goals came into conflict with containing the spread of Soviet influence or of communism.

The logic that tied together these principles rested on a theory that in the long run the strength of the Western world’s economic and political institutions would prevail, as long as the US countered the aggressive expansionist tendencies of USSR and other communists. The key question for the rest of this chapter is to determine whether the design model or the emergence model better explain the formation of these principles. In order to do that, I will first lay out the expectations of the design model by presenting the grand strategic plans credited by its proponents with being the quintessential overarching frameworks guiding US strategy throughout the Cold War. Then I will proceed with a discussion of what kind of evidence would support the emergent model. After I summarize the different theoretical contentions and offer more details on my research methodology for this chapter, I will proceed with the empirical analysis of key decisions and policies
throughout the Cold War. The last section sums up the evidence on both sides and makes a judgment on which model is better supported by the data.

The Design(s) of Containment

As discussed earlier, the view of Containment as a designed strategy attributes the planning of it in its formative stage, at least in broad strategic terms if not in all the specifics, to a few of the writings of George Kennan during 1945-1947 and to the NSC-68 report produced by Kennan’s successor as head of the State Department Policy Planning Office, Paul Nitze, in 1949-50. In order to test out this hypothesis, I will present the strategic plans as they were outlined in these documents at this initial stage in the chapter. Afterwards, I will analyze the extent to which the shape of the Containment grand strategy, as manifested through the policies and decisions taken by various administrations, matched these designs and the principles I laid out above. If they matched the designs, they will be classified as planned, if they matched the emergent principles but not the designs, as emergent, and if they don’t match either the principles or the designs they will be coded as ad-hoc.

In addition to these two crucial formative designs, later presidents conducted strategic reviews meant to re-examine and re-design various aspects of the Containment grand strategy. In my case studies, I will address the most significant re-evaluations of

---

25 This chapter analyzes the formation of the Containment grand strategy, and therefore it focuses on the planning done beginning with the Truman presidency. However, it should be mentioned that the Roosevelt administration engaged in serious postwar planning regarding certain aspects that came to influence the future of American grand strategy, such as the importance of preventing any country from gaining control of the Eurasian landmass, or the need to maintain a robust international financial and monetary system. The general historical consensus is that Truman deviated significantly from Roosevelt’s grand strategic vision of the “Four Policemen” and from his conciliatory approach towards the Soviet Union, and therefore it would be unwise to include Roosevelt’s World War II era design as part of the design of containment. Having said that, on the issues where Truman continued Roosevelt’s approach, such as the two mentioned above, I will take not of it and code as supporting the design model.
Containment (Eisenhower’s New Look, Nixon’s Détente, and the Reagan Doctrine) in detail in order to further test whether and how these later attempts to redesign Containment influenced the shape of the grand strategy.

Kennan’s Plans

The grand strategy of Containment in Kennan’s conception could be fleshed out from an examination of the Long Telegram, the X Article, and some of the papers and reports he produced as head of policy planning at the State Department.26

The first major question of Containment was what was the threat to be contained. For Kennan, the answer was Russian/Soviet expansionism, not international communism. Such expansionism, he explained in the Long Telegram, was being driven not by external circumstances, but by “basic inner-Russian necessities which existed before the war and exist today.”27 The totalitarian Stalinist regime sought a state of permanent conflict with the outside world to justify its repression of its own people. Here, Kennan introduced the word “containment” to Washington’s strategic vocabulary: “In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.”28 Second, for Kennan the communist ideology was more of a tool used by Kremlin leaders to further their goals rather than an overarching force guiding their behavior: “Ideology is a product and not a determinant of social and political reality.”29 And third, Kennan emphasized the psychological aspect of the communist threat rather than its military dimension. The

26 In addition to primary documents, this discussion is also based on the extensive study of Kennan’s strategic thinking in Etzold and Gaddis, Containment, 25-37.
27 Kennan, “Long Telegram.”
28 Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.”
29 Quoted in Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 33. 
possibility of Soviet advances via psychological means worried him more than their ability to use force: “it is the shadows rather than the substance of things that move the hearts, and sway the deeds, of statesmen.”\(^{30}\) In practical terms, the above beliefs led Kennan to oppose moves to counter containment at a global level, and instead argued for focusing on a few key geopolitical areas. They also led him to oppose what he later deplored as the “militarization” of his approach and insist on economic and political support for US allies rather than direct US military assistance or protection.

The grand strategic context of Kennan’s designed strategy of Containment was not provided solely by the nature of the Soviet threat, but also by Kennan’s own understanding of the international system and his view of the proper US role in the world. Kennan was a realist in his worldview, and therefore he designed a strategy based on the principle of balance of power. As he put it in a Policy Planning Study in 1947, “All in all, our policy must be directed toward restoring a balance of power in Europe and Asia.” He thought that the Soviets could pose a dangerous threat to the United States only in so far as they could upend this balance by taking over another key region of the world. Kennan listed five such key regions: the United States, the United Kingdom, the Rhine valley, the USSR, and Japan. He subsequently defined “the main task of containment, accordingly, as one of seeing to it that none of the remaining ones fell under such control.”\(^{31}\)

If the US goal was to maintain a balance of power in Europe and Asia, then the US policy should move towards encouraging strong, independent power centers in these regions capable of resisting Soviet encroachment. Kennan envisioned the emergence of a reunited Germany and a strong Japan developing independently and providing for their

\(^{30}\) Kennan, Memoirs, 351.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 359.
own defense without the need for US military support. He also believed US and Soviet troops would eventually withdraw from their forward-deployed positions facing each other in the middle of Europe: “Any world balance of power means first and foremost a balance on the European land mass. That balance is unthinkable as long as Germany and Japan remain power vacuums.”32 Kennan thus opposed a long-term American forward deployed military presence in Europe. As he recollected, he believed that the US objective should be “to get out as soon as possible of the position of abnormal political-military responsibility in Western Europe which the war had forced upon us. I had no confidence that a status quo dependent on so wide an American commitment could be an enduring one.”33

Kennan also fought against the formation of NATO. In PPS/13, a report titled “Resumé on the World Situation” and dated November 6, 1947, Kennan argued that “our best answer ... is to strengthen in every way local forces of resistance, and persuade others to bear a greater part of the burden of opposing communism. The present ‘bi-polarity’ will, in the long run, be beyond our resources.”34 Similarly, in another report on the role of NATO, Kennan argued that US policy should be directed “toward the eventual peaceful withdrawal of both the United States and USSR from the heart of Europe, and accordingly toward the encouragement of the growth of a third force which can absorb and take over the territory between the two.”35 The addition to NATO of most countries already part of the Marshall

32 Kennan, “PPS/13.”
33 Kennan, Memoirs, 464. For a detailed analysis showing how many of the US government’s plans in the 1940s and into the early 1950s called repeatedly for a US military withdrawal from Europe, see McCalister, No Exit.
34 Kennan, “PPS/13.”
35 Ireland, Creating the Entangling Alliance, 108.
Plan, on the contrary, would mean “a final militarization of the present dividing line through Europe.”

Just as significantly, Kennan argued against the support of anti-communist movements worldwide. Instead, he wanted to focus only on those directly connected to the Soviets and the European balance of power. Otherwise, he said, “everybody in the world” would start asking for US help claiming that they are facing communist insurgents. To further highlight his clear distinction between Soviet and international communism, Kennan went on to say that “We are not necessarily against the expansion of communism, and certainly not always to the same degree in every area.”

The realist design proposed by Kennan also played down the importance of the internal form of governance of different states. He was a strong critic of what he called the liberal, “universalist” American tradition in foreign policy for assuming that “men everywhere are basically like ourselves, that they are animated by substantially the same hopes and inspirations.” This led Kennan to oppose the freedom, democracy and human-rights agenda that became an important part of the Containment strategy, starting with the Truman Doctrine and continuing in different ways for the rest of the Cold War. His designs were predicated on a non-ideological calculus of power interests, without much concern for

36 Kennan, “PPS/13.”
37 One rather vague and open-ended sentence in the X article led Kennan’s critics on the left, including Walter Lippmann, to blame him for offering a prescription for a universalist and militarist vision of containment: “It will be clearly seen that the Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence.” Kennan regretted that language ever since and made numerous attempts at clarifying his opposition to both the “globalism” and the “militarism” aspects some historians read into his language. For more on this controversy, see Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, Chapter 2 and 3, “Kennan and Containment” and “Implementing Containment.”
38 Quoted in Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 37, 40.
39 Ibid., 27.
a special US role in the world as defender of the so-called Free World and as guarantor and promoter of a liberal world order: “It is a traditional principle of this Government to refrain from interference in the internal affairs of other countries,” he wrote.

In Kennan’s designs, the restoration of a balance of power could be thought of as the first stage of American grand strategy following World War II. The second and third stages were the exploitation of tensions between Moscow and the international communist movement, and bringing about over time a change in Soviet external behavior leading to a negotiated settlement between the US and USSR. And, even more long-term, the “United States has it in its power to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.” This last paragraph, written towards the end of the X Article, appears prophetic in the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s demise, and Kennan surely deserves credit for laying out the possibility of such an outcome from the very beginning of the Cold War. However, such prescience should not be confused with evidence that his plans served to bring about this outcome. Such an analysis remains to be conducted in the rest of the chapter, where I will examine the relation between the initial plans and the actions taken by US statesmen in some key episodes of the Cold War.

____________________________

40 Ibid., 30. This quote also exemplifies Kennan’s realist mindset developed from thinking exclusively about European-style great power realpolitik, and his very low regard for the Third World. Such a statement must have caused some puzzling looks in the capitals of the Central and Latin American countries in the Western Hemisphere that experienced a much more direct level of involvement from Washington in the name of the Monroe Doctrine.
41 I borrow this three-stage classification from the extended and comprehensive examination of Kennan’s strategic design outlined in Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 24-53.
42 Kennan, “Sources of Soviet Conduct.”
NSC-68 as the “Blueprint” for the Cold War

In addition to Kennan’s designs, the other important formative document heralded by proponents of the design school as an exemplar of a Cold War grand strategic plan is the NSC-68 report produced in 1950 by Paul Nitze, Kennan’s successor as head of the State Department’s policy planning office.

NSC-68 is infused with the universalism and idealistic language present in President Truman’s speeches, as opposed to the more calculated, “realist” tone of George Kennan’s PPS strategy memos. The document begins on an ominous note, warning that the “Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world.” Even more worrisome, the conflict between the US and USSR had reached a critical moment that demanded immediate actions on the part of the United States to prevent the Soviets from achieving a potentially decisive advantage: “any substantial further extension of the area under the domination of the Kremlin would raise the possibility that no coalition adequate to confront the Kremlin with greater strength could be assembled.”

In a section devoted to explaining the “Kremlin design,” a term that appears dozens of times throughout the document, the authors summarize their view of the nature of the threat posed by the Soviet Union:

“The fundamental design of those who control the Soviet Union and the international communist movement is to retain and solidify their absolute power, first in the Soviet Union and second in the areas now under their control. In the minds of the Soviet leaders, however, achievement of this design requires the dynamic extension of their authority and the ultimate elimination of any effective opposition to their authority.

The design, therefore, calls for the complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society in the

43 White House, NSC-68.
countries of the non-Soviet world and their replacement by an apparatus and structure subservient to and controlled from the Kremlin. To that end Soviet efforts are now directed toward the domination of the Eurasian land mass. The United States, as the principal center of power in the non-Soviet world and the bulwark of opposition to Soviet expansion, is the principal enemy whose integrity and vitality must be subverted or destroyed by one means or another if the Kremlin is to achieve its fundamental design.”

The next chapter of the current study is dedicated to explaining the “underlying conflict” in the realm of “ideas and values” between the two superpowers. The Cold War was not merely a geopolitical conflict between two great powers, but also a contest between the idea of “freedom,” on the one hand, and “slavery” on the other. The conflict between the two was unavoidable:

“The antipathy of slavery to freedom explains the iron curtain, the isolation, the autarchy of the society whose end is absolute power. The existence and persistence of the idea of freedom is a permanent and continuous threat to the foundation of the slave society; and it therefore regards as intolerable the long continued existence of freedom in the world. What is new, what makes the continuing crisis, is the polarization of power which now inescapably confronts the slave society with the free.”

Given this ideological view of the global communist threat, it followed that the US needed to defend and contain the entire “perimeter” between the communist and the free world, not merely the selected “strongpoints” Kennan had argued needed to be kept out of the Soviet orbit in order to maintain the balance of power. In unambiguous language, NSC-68 declared that “the assault on free institutions is world-wide now, and in the context of the present polarization of power a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere.” This monolithic view of communism was a trademark of NSC-68, and a key difference between Nitze’s and Kennan’s views of Containment.

NSC-68 also discusses in a separate section why negotiating with the Soviet Union “is not possible as a separate course of action but rather as a means of gaining support for a
program of building strength.” Even though NSC-68 acknowledged as an “ultimate”
objective the negotiation of a settlement with the Soviet Union, it cautioned that “such a
settlement can only record the progress which the free world will have made in creating a
political and economic system in the world so successful that the frustrations of Kremlin's
design for world domination will be complete.”

In addition to countering “the Kremlin design,” NSC-68 also made the argument that
the United States could not focus solely on containing the expansion of the Soviet Union and
of communism, but also had to play a leadership role in maintaining a liberal world order:
“In a shrinking world, which now faces the threat of atomic warfare, it is not an adequate
objective merely to seek to check the Kremlin design, for the absence of order among
nations is becoming less and less tolerable. This fact imposes on us, in our own interests, the
responsibility of world leadership.”

The report laid out a number of courses of action for US strategy, and made a
recommendation in favor of one of these options. The four courses of action discussed were:
“a. Continuation of current policies, with current and currently projected programs for
carrying out these policies; b. Isolation; c. War; and d. A more rapid building up of the
political, economic, and military strength of the free world than provided under current a,
with the purpose of reaching, if possible, a tolerable state of order among nations without
war and of preparing to defend ourselves in the event that the free world is attacked.” The
authors, not entirely surprising given how the options were presented, chose the fourth
course of action as the most desirable one. And while there was some mention of economic
and diplomatic efforts, the primary recommendation of NSC-68 was the need for an
extensive military build-up to counter the expanding Soviet conventional and nuclear
military capabilities: “It is clear that a substantial and rapid building up of strength in the
free world is necessary to support a firm policy intended to check and roll back the
Kremlin's drive for world domination." The latter sentence is important because it shows
how NSC-68 not only called for containing the Soviet Union, but also flirted with the idea of
rolling back its influence. And while such a program would be "costly," the document
admits, nevertheless "budgetary considerations will need to be subordinated to the stark
fact that our very independence as a nation may be at stake."

NSC-68 also discussed in a separate section why negotiating with the Soviet Union
"is not possible as a separate course of action but rather as a means of gaining support for a
program of building strength." Even though NSC-68 acknowledged as an "ultimate"
objective the negotiation of a settlement with the Soviet Union, it cautioned that "such a
settlement can only record the progress which the free world will have made in creating a
political and economic system in the world so successful that the frustrations of Kremlin's
design for world domination will be complete."

The document is predicated on the "frustration of Kremlin's design" as the
"fundamental purpose" of American Cold War grand strategy. Such a goal required "the free
world to develop a successfully functioning political and economic system and a vigorous
political offensive against the Soviet Union. These, in turn, require an adequate military
shield under which they can develop." The main preoccupation of the authors of NSC-68
was with US allies in Western Europe in danger of falling into the hands of the communist
world, whether due to military, economic or political weakness: "The United States and the
other free countries do not now have the forces in being and readily available to defeat local
Soviet moves with local action.... Unless our combined strength is rapidly increased, our
allies will tend to become increasingly reluctant to support a firm policy on our part and
increasingly anxious to seek other solutions." The document is fairly traditional in its
military requirements, and asks for US and allied troops to be rapidly built up so as to be able to, first, withstand a Soviet attack, and, second, launch a winning counterattack in the event of war against the communist block.

The report thus is almost exclusively focused on the European and Japanese theaters, with scarce guidance for the global picture outside of those regions. It also groups the world into the “Free World” and the communist one without addressing the truly difficult cases in which a less-than-free government is nevertheless asking for assistance in an alleged fight against communist forces.

In its discussion of political and economic measures, the report lists a series of priorities needed to “frustrate the Kremlin design.” The first one is defined as providing an “adequate political and economic framework for the achievement of our long-term objectives.” The assumption of the report is that the “problems faced by the free countries in their efforts to build a successfully functioning system lie not so much in the field of economics as in the field of politics.” The paper goes on to talk about the need to strengthen the United Nations system as an organization “to which the world can look for the maintenance of peace and order in a system based on freedom and justice.” Another priority is to wage psychological warfare calculated to “encourage mass defections from Soviet allegiance,” including measures and operations in the fields of economic warfare and political and psychological warfare with a view to fomenting and supporting unrest and revolt in selected strategic satellite countries.” Lastly, some priorities refer to more US-focused actions, such as “a concerted attack on the problem of the US balance of payments; ... reduction of Federal expenditures for purposes other than defense and foreign assistance; ... [and] increased taxes.” The context and impact of NSC-68 will be discussed in further detail in a separate mini-case study, along with the Korean War, the outbreak of
which is generally regarded as a key catalyst leading to the adoption of some of the report's recommendations, at least in the short term.

Two Designs

The presentation above makes it clear that the Kennan grand-strategy design for Containment differs from the NSC-68 design. In key areas they are quite contradictory, as both Kennan and Nitze were well aware at the time. Some of the key differences are as follows:

- In the realm of overarching goals, Kennan listed the restoration of a balance of power in Europe and containment of Soviet communism. NSC-68 instead talked about frustrating the so-called "Kremlin Design" for world conquest by fighting the spread of communism wherever it appears, and even undermining its support behind the Iron Curtain.

- Kennan's ideas came out of a realist worldview, while Nitze's out of a universalist, ideological view of international relations as a fight between democracy and totalitarianism, "freedom" in the West and "slavery" behind Iron Curtain.

- Kennan wanted to treat communist non-Soviet states as independent actors pursuing their own self-interests; NSC-68, on the contrary, viewed all communism (except Tito's Yugoslavia) as a monolith.

- Kennan talked about strict focus on containment in key areas and the desirability of a future multipolar system, while NSC-68 argued for an unashamed role of global leadership in order to achieve containment and hopefully *rollback* of communism.

---

44 See a recent historical analysis of their complicated relationship in Thompson, *Hawk and Dove.*
As for the means, Kennan wanted a politico-economic version of containment, while NSC-68’s most important recommendation called for heavy conventional rearmament in addition to a nuclear arsenal in order to withstand a possible Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Also, Kennan worried about limited means and the inability of the US to remain the main provider for the defense of the Free World, while the NSC-68 drafters were much more confident in the financial resources available to Washington to fund an expensive global strategy.

Therefore, at the very least one must consider that there were two proposed designs of Containment during its formative era. The design model would be supported if it were found that either one of these frameworks accurately explains the formation of the grand strategy, while keeping in mind that in real life no strategy could be perfectly implemented so we would not necessarily require an exact match on every principle or in every decision for the planning model to be supported by the data.

An Emergent Understanding of the Formulation of Containment

An emergent view of the formulation of Containment holds that the principles of the strategy and many of the most important policies and decisions made in the name of Containment did not follow from the plans laid out above, but rather emerged from crisis responses, analogies, lessons learned, bottom-up initiatives and the long-term impact of some of the early choices made during the Truman administration. These emerging principles and decisions fell outside of the initial designs, and also outside of other designs produced by subsequent administrations in an effort to tweak the containment strategy

---

45 Gaddis shows a similar understanding of this when he develops the concepts of “symmetrical” Containment (à la NSC-68) and “asymmetrical” Containment (à la Kennan).
they inherited from their predecessors. Such later efforts include Eisenhower’s New Look, Kissinger’s and Nixon’s Détente, and Reagan’s National Security Directives 32 and 75. These later planning documents will be discussed in the mini-case studies in order to analyze the design/emergence dynamic after the formative stages of the Containment grand strategy.

A very important test to determine whether the emergent model is supported by the data consists in showing that the differences between the designs and the actual principles and policies are not simple elaborations or adaptations inherent in the conduct of foreign policy over a long period of time. Instead, they would have to have had no relation with the plans, or, to have contradicted some of the core tenets of the designs.

The way to show the emergence of a strategy is to analyze key episodes of Containment, such as the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, the formation of NATO, the launch of the Marshall Plan, the Korean War, Détente, or the culmination of Containment during Reagan’s term, and show to what extent the actions matched the designs. Unlike the design model, with which we could show a priori the expectations of the model up front (i.e. the written plans), the emergent allows no such test.

Lastly, while for methodological clarity the models are presented as alternative explanations of Containment, it is of course entirely possible for certain elements of the grand strategy to be better explained by the design model while others are better explained by the emergent model. Yet others might contain a mix of both planning and learning.

Therefore, the standard for judging the theories is one of accounting for the preponderance of evidence, not the entirety of it.

Ad-Hocery during the Cold War?

The third theoretical possibility is that the United States in fact did not follow a grand strategy at all during the Cold War, but instead acted generally ad-hoc. In my analysis,
I will address also the question of whether the policies and decisions I am examining are better understood as belonging outside of both the design or the emergent Containment framework that I am proposing. If significant decisions were made generally without paying attention to the broader goals and objectives of the grand strategy, then they will be considered ad-hoc. However, because this involves rebutting a position that the current literature does not offer support for either, I will dedicate less attention to design vs. ad-hoc and emergent vs. ad-hoc comparisons than I will to the design vs. emergence comparison.

**Summary of Cold War Hypotheses:**

Design Model: The early designs of the Truman era, supplemented and tweaked at the margins by later strategy reviews during the Eisenhower, Nixon and Reagan presidencies, determined the principles of Containment and guided policy-making.

Emergence Model: The principles of Containment and the policies and actions that flowed from it were formed in an emergent manner, and they differ significantly from the plans.

Ad-Hoc: The key US foreign policy and national security decisions during the Cold War were generally taken for non-strategic reasons, such as domestic politics or bureaucratic politics, and they did not match well with either the design or the emergent framework stipulated above.

**Mini-Case Selection**

Rather than analyzing the entire Cold War, I will focus instead on several key mini-cases in order to have enough space to provide the rich level of detail needed to determine whether the Containment grand strategy is best explained by the emergent or the planning model. The cases that I will examine are the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the formation of NATO, the adoption and legacy of NSC-68, the intervention in the Korean War,
Eisenhower’s Project Solarium and NSC 162-2, the rethinking of containment under Henry Kissinger’s détente, and the culmination of containment under Ronald Reagan’s presidency. These cases reveal the formative moments of Containment and some paradigmatic examples of strategic planning in NSC-68 and Project Solarium. The argument will also be made that détente represented the most significant deviation from the tenets [principles?] of Containment, and therefore it is worth examining in detail. Reagan’s presidency, which saw the ultimate triumph of the US in the Cold War, represented the culmination of Containment rather than a departure from it.

The cases allow for analyzing the origins of each of the key principles of Containment outlined above. The first and most important principle, about the nature of the threat and the overall goal of containment, is covered in the discussion of the Truman Doctrine, NSC-68, and Solarium and is revisited during the examination of Kissinger’s détente and Reagan’s return to the early principles of containment. The second principle, on US formal military alliances, is discussed in the mini-case of the formation of NATO, and also touched upon in the discussion of the Korean War. The third principle, on US leadership of the free world and bearing the costs of containment, is covered most prominently in the NSC-68, Solarium, and Reagan sections, although hints of it are present in all of the cases. The fourth one, on economic, military, and diplomatic support for allies, is addressed initially in the studies of the Marshall Plan, Truman Doctrine, and NSC-68, and later is revisited during Nixon’s and Reagan’s presidencies. The fifth one, the promotion of a liberal political-economic world order while also making exceptions for anti-communist illiberal allies, is also one that spans most of the cases under study, with a particular emphasis on the Truman Doctrine and the subsequent reconsiderations during Solarium and in Reagan’s time.
Lastly, from a methodological perspective, some of these cases, such as NSC-68 and Solarium, are classic examples of the planning model and therefore would be “most-likely” cases for it, while the others should be considered as neutral because there is no a-priori reason to believe that they would favor either planning or emergence.

**The Truman Doctrine**

The roots of the Truman Doctrine, and consequently of some the broader principles of the Containment grand strategy, lie in the Truman Administration’s policy of “patience and firmness” which emerged from having to deal with a series of geopolitical conflicts of interests between US and the Soviet Union throughout 1946 and 1947.\(^\text{46}\) This mini-case will show the emergence of the Truman Doctrine by presenting the steps that led to its formation, such as the responses to conflicts in Iran, Greece, and Turkey, and the objectives and vision adopted by policymakers regarding the US role in the world vis-à-vis the USSR and international communism. At the same time, it will also analyze to what extent the strategy was the result of the plans and designs developed during this time by George Kennan, the so-called “architect” of the Containment strategy. While Kennan had some impact, the evidence shows that the strategy was more emergent than planned, and thus it is not surprising that Kennan himself came to be a strong critic of the Truman Doctrine and of the final shape of the Containment grand strategy that grew out of it.

As Dean Acheson described it in his memoirs, “the year 1946 was for the most part a year of learning.”\(^\text{47}\) First, there was the Iranian crisis in March of that year.\(^\text{48}\) The two major problems in this conflict were whether the Soviet troops would fully withdraw from Iran in accordance to the schedule set in the Tehran Declaration in 1943, and whether the Soviets would succeed in installing a puppet Communist government in the province of Azerbaijan or even annex it to the USSR. On both counts, the Truman administration, together with its British allies, supported the Iranian government and took a tough line against the Soviets.

When the March 2 deadline passed without any Soviet withdrawals from Azerbaijan, US Secretary of State James M. Byrnes sent Moscow a strongly worded demand for immediate Soviet withdrawal, and made the release public so as to put more pressure on Kremlin. The US and UK also offered strong backing to the Iranians in bringing the issue of Azerbaijan to the attention of the UN Security Council. Emboldened by this support, Iranian Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam sent troops to Azerbaijan to reclaim control of the province. When the Soviet army finally withdrew, the local communists were quickly neutralized as a potential threat.

The strong reaction of the Truman administration to Soviet pressures on Iran, and the subsequent retreat of the Soviets from the country, was viewed by many contemporary observers as “a turning point in American policy towards Russia,” and future historians came to regard it as an event of great significance in hardening the US stance towards the Soviet Union in future interactions.\(^\text{49}\) As one of the chief historians of the crisis, Bruce

\(^\text{47}\) Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 196.
\(^\text{48}\) For an in-depth account of Truman’s approach and strategy during the Iranian crises, as well as during the Greece and Turkey crises that shortly followed it, see Kuniholm, *Cold War in Near East*.
Kuniholm, summarized its impact, “The crisis in Iran crystallized the Truman administration’s understanding of Soviet tactics.” High-level officials such as Dean Acheson used Iran as a “model” for how to deal with the Greek and Turkish situations.\(^{50}\) Lastly, policymakers used analogies such as calling Grecian Macedonia another “Azerbaijan area.”\(^{51}\) This process of reasoning by the use of analogies, and using “lessons learned” from one crisis to develop a response to the next crises, supports the emergent model’s process hypothesis.

The emergent model, with its focus on incrementalism and use of analogical reasoning, also explains the road from the decisions on Greece and Turkey to the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine in March 1947, as well as the shape of the Containment grand strategy that came out at the end of the formative stage of the Cold War.

Soon after the Soviets had withdrawn from Iran, Washington grew concerned about communist influence spreading in two other countries of strategic importance, Greece and Turkey. These crises were precipitated by the British inability to continue to offer financial and military assistance to either of these two countries. In Greece, the local communists insurgents threatened the stability of the pro-Western ruling government, and, as former State Department official Joseph Jones recollects in one of the classical accounts of the formation of the Truman Doctrine, “according to unanimous reports streaming into the Department, [the Greek government] was in February 1947 within weeks of an economic,

\(^{50}\) Kuniholm’s study of this period concludes by highlighting how the response to the Iranian crisis “conditioned the administration’s reaction to Soviet notes delivered to Turkey in the fall of 1946” and how “success of the firm stand taken by the administration towards the end of 1946 in Iran strongly reinforced an inclination to take a similar stand in Greece.” Kuniholm, *Cold War in Near East*, 404.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
moral, and military collapse.” The communist governments in neighboring Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia were allegedly training and supplying the communist guerillas. Fearing imminent collapse and a takeover by Communist guerillas, the US Ambassador in Athens, Lincoln MacVeagh, requested both economic and military aid on February 20. Undersecretary of State Acheson, Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, and ultimately President Truman all agreed to provide such aid as soon as possible. In his memoirs, President Truman recalls this as a key decision in the strategic context of the Cold War: “If we were to turn our back on the world, areas such as Greece, weakened and divided as a result of the war, would fall into the Soviet orbit without much effort on the part of the Russians. The success of Russia in such areas and our avowed lack of interest would lead to the growth of domestic Communist parties in such European countries as France and Italy, where they were already significant threats.”

Turkey, in turn, was also facing pressures on its borders from communist neighbors, the Soviet republics of Armenia and Georgia. Even more ominously from an American perspective, the Soviets insisted on a naval base in the Dardanelles Strait, a geostrategic position of great significance. Much like Greece, the Turkish government, having just lost the support of the British, was in need of a new external ally to resist Soviet pressure, and the Truman administration readily agreed to help. More so than merely a geopolitical maneuver, Washington officials feared a Soviet invasion of Turkey, and began designing possible military responses against such a move. Based on recently declassified documents, historian Eduard Mark conducted a detailed study of the “war scare” Turkish crisis of 1946

---

52 Jones, Fifteen Weeks, 11.
53 Ibid., 132-36.
54 Truman, Memoirs, 124-25.
55 Kuniholm, Cold War in Near East, 369-73.
and showed its importance in changing the administration's view of USSR's intentions: “At the beginning of 1946 there was not expectation of war with Russia, and no plans for fighting that country existed. By the end of the year, policymakers had accepted the postulate that war was always possible as long as Moscow pursued expansionist designs, a full set of war plans was nearing completion, and American and British planners had devised a common strategy for fighting the USSR [in case of a Soviet invasion].”56 Thus, the Soviets were already beginning to be regarded as a global aggressive enemy in need of containing even before Kennan's famous X Article.

As the administration had already decided to help Greece and Turkey as part of a broader effort to combat Soviet influence, Congress now had to be convinced to appropriate the necessary funds. Truman convened Congressional leaders at the White House for a meeting on this topic, and invited Marshall and Acheson to brief them on the situation. Secretary Marshall explained the need to support the governments of Greece and Turkey, two countries of strategic significance, in the aftermath of British withdrawal. However, his presentation was met with significant skepticism. Congressmen asked questions such as “Isn't this pulling British chestnuts out of the fire?” or “What are we letting ourselves in for?”57 At that moment, Dean Acheson intervened and delivered a presentation on the global conflict with the Soviets, which not only persuaded the Congressional leaders in that meeting, but also sketched the contours for President Truman's subsequent address to Congress and the containment grand strategy that ultimately dominated Truman’s approach to the Cold War. Joseph Jones's account of that meeting describes how Acheson's remarks linked the Greece and Turkey crises to the grand strategic level:

57 Jones, Fifteen Weeks, 139-140.
"Only two great powers remained in the world, Acheson continued, the United States and the Soviet Union.... Moreover, the two great powers are divided by an unbridgeable ideological chasm. For us, democracy and individual liberty are basic; for them dictatorship and absolute conformity. ... For the United States to take steps to strengthen countries threatened with Soviet aggression or Communist subversion was not to pull British chestnuts out of the fire; it was to protect the security of the United States – it was to protect freedom itself.... The [Soviets] aim was control of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. From there the possibilities for penetration of South Asia and Africa were limitless."\(^{58}\)

When Harry Truman addressed Congress on March 12, 1947, he incorporated the same themes in what came to be known as the Truman Doctrine: "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.... Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far-reaching to the West as well as to the East."\(^{59}\) Truman’s new strategy had an instant impact on the public debate, and the media proclaimed it “a historic landmark in American foreign policy . . .no less significant than the Monroe Doctrine and the decision to oppose Hitler.”\(^{60}\) In his memoirs, one State Department official recalled how “the explicit reaction to all in government, from the President down, who were concerned with the decision to aid Greece and Turkey was that a historical turning point had been reached, that the United States must now stand forth as leader of the free world in place of the flagging British and use its power directly and vigorously to strengthen free nations.”\(^{61}\)

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 140-41.  
\(^{59}\) Truman, “Address to Congress.”  
\(^{60}\) Leffler, Preponderance of Power, 145.  
\(^{61}\) Jones, Fifteen Weeks, 143. See also Acheson, Present at the Creation, 220.
In terms of the decision-making process by which the Truman Doctrine came about, it is worth noting its incremental, emergent nature, as opposed to the influence of written plans. As historian John Lewis Gaddis argued, “Decisions to aid Greece and Turkey, as well as other nations threatened by the Soviet Union, had been made months before” the proclamation of the doctrine in 1947. Moreover, in addition to the strong response on Iran, the Truman administration throughout 1946 manifested a tough stance towards the USSR in a number of other instances: the termination of German reparations shipments, refusal to compromise on the Baruch Plan on nuclear energy, tacit approval of Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech, and Secretary Byrnes’s tenacious negotiating tactics at the Paris Peace Conference. These policies are evidence of a strategic approach emerging out of the immediate crises of 1946-1947, which ultimately crystallized in Truman's speech to Congress. The Doctrine generalized the commitment to aid Greece and Turkey into a commitment to resist Soviet expansionism and the spread of communism globally. The reasons for doing so had more to do with the need to persuade Congress and public opinion of the magnitude of the Soviet threat rather than being part of any designed grand strategic plan for Containment, whether authored by Kennan or anyone else. And even if there were some domestic political considerations involved, Truman’s policies listed above as well as his subsequent ones are consistent with a strategic framework dominated by the concern with Soviet Union and international communism, and thus not ad-hoc.

Kennan’s reputation as the key architect of Containment rests largely on his well-timed introduction of this concept (i.e. containment) in the public debate, and crystallizing under one single word the strategy that was already showing signs of emerging in the

---

62 Gaddis, Origins of Containment, 22.
responses to the Iranian, Greek and Turkish crises. The publication of the X Article in 1947 and the resulting national debate, along with the Truman Doctrine, led to the adoption in the foreign policy community of the idea of containment as the central concept of America's Cold War grand strategy. When it comes to the origin of this first principle of Containment, therefore, the design model receives important empirical support.

However, despite adopting containment in general, there were at least two important ways in which the Truman Doctrine set the parameters for a grand strategy of Containment different from that outlined in Kennan's writings. First, there was from the beginning a tension between the philosophical underpinnings of Kennan's approach and that adopted by US presidents for much of the Cold War. While Kennan viewed the Cold War at a theoretical level in geopolitical, realist terms, President Truman and Secretary Acheson adopted a more universalist view of the role that the United States should play in defending and promoting freedom and democracy around the globe. Secretary Acheson, Kennan's boss at the time, never shied away in public speeches from espousing the very principles of "universalism" that Kennan disparaged so thoroughly in his writings: “We are children of freedom,” said Acheson. “We cannot be safe except in an environment of freedom.... We believe that all people in the world are entitled to as much freedom, to develop in their own way, as we want ourselves.”President Truman shared Acheson's views, and it is no coincidence that his administration supported British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's now famous Fulton speech in which he warned that “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.” Churchill went on to call for liberal democracies to stand together against the threat from Soviet expansionism,

64 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 106.
65 Kishlansky, Sources of World History, 298-302.
emphasized the role of liberal ideas and principles, and explicitly rejected a balance-of-power approach: “From what I have seen of our Russian friends and Allies during the war, I am convinced that there is nothing for which they have less respect than for weakness, especially military weakness. For that reason the old doctrine of a balance of power is unsound. We cannot afford, if we can help it, to work on narrow margins, offering temptations to a trial of strength.”

Second, and following from this different grand strategic view of world politics, Kennan’s designs aimed to contain the Soviet Union, not international communism everywhere, and certainly not to advance a liberal global world order. Kennan’s vision of the containment strategy was not one based on the American leadership of such a liberal world order, an order faced not just by Soviet expansionism but also by the threat of international communism, as President Truman contended in his speeches. For example, in 1948 Truman portrayed the Cold War and America’s role in it in an idealistic framework that had very little to do with Kennan’s geopolitical analysis: "We are faced with the leadership of the free people of the world. We must assume that leadership, if we expect our children not to have to go through the same situation that we had to go through with [sic?] during the last five or six years. Get these things in your mind, and use your influence to do what God almighty intended us to do: to get the right sort of peace in the world." This President was calling upon Americans to support anti-communist forces around the globe, not only in areas of great geopolitical importance in the competition for influence with Moscow. Kennan advocated a “strongpoint” defense of several important centers of geopolitical interests, rather than a “perimeter” defense on a global scale. This narrower

\[66\] Inboden, Religion and American Foreign Policy, 105.
focus would have undermined the vision of American grand strategy of maintaining a liberal world order. As Colin Dueck puts it, “the liberal and anti-Communist elements of containment undermined sharp distinctions between regions of vital importance and regions of lesser interest. If communism was such a threat, then it had to be contained everywhere; and if a liberal international order was to be established, then it had to be promoted worldwide.”

These substantive differences between the emergent form of Containment and Kennan’s designs to the specific instance of the Truman Doctrine reveal some aspects of this early formative period of Containment that were designed, and some that were emergent. The principle of containing the threat, as opposed to the extremes of war or appeasement, could be deemed as evidence in favor of the design model. Second, the language of the Truman doctrine, with its emphasis on the US role to help any free people in danger of being overtaken by communists and of promoting a liberal world order, clearly represents a departure from Kennan’s vision because it was universal and ideological rather than being focused on a balance of power against the Soviet threat. Third, the role of US as a leader of the free world engaged in a long-term conflict against the Soviets and their allies is also different than the more limited role that Kennan envisioned for Washington, made possible, in his view, by the revival of an independent Western Europe capable of defending itself. And fourth, the decision to offer military aid, as opposed to merely economic aid, to all states facing a communist threat, was an emergent development incongruent with Kennan’s position. Indeed, at the time he argued against offering Turkey the military assistance requested by Ankara.

---

67 Dueck, Reluctant Crusaders, 91.
In fact, Kennan himself concluded in 1949 that his own strategic plans had not been implemented as he intended them to be. Shortly before leaving government, he wrote that “my concept of the manner in which our diplomatic effort should be conducted is not shared by any of the other senior officials of the [State] department.”68 In his Memoirs he contended that his ideas “made only a faint and wholly inadequate impression on official Washington.” Dean Acheson apparently agreed. One of Acheson’s biographers quotes him as saying that Kennan’s “reputation has outrun his professional performance.”69 Another contemporary, Joseph Jones, one of the drafters of Truman’s address to Congress, announcing the Truman Doctrine notes in what he calls a “curiously ironic note” that “Kennan, often regarded as the mastermind of the policy of containment... objected strongly to both the tone of the message and the specific action proposed.”70 As will be seen in the following section on NATO and the Marshall Plan, this will not be the last time that Kennan’s plans and policy preferences were overruled by his superiors.

**Marshall Plan and NATO**

The period from 1947 to 1950 led to a further evolution of the Containment grand strategy. Two particular episodes worth mentioning were the creation of the Marshall Plan and of NATO. These two components of Cold War foreign policy reveal how Containment evolved into a multi-dimensional grand strategy, incorporating economic, military, and diplomatic instruments of power created to achieve one overarching goal, i.e. containing Soviet and communist expansion. They represent the starting points for a key principle of the strategy, the forward deployment of US troops under formal military agreements in

68 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 81.
69 Beisner, Dean Acheson, 118.
70 Jones, Fifteen Weeks, 155.
Europe (through the formation of NATO), and a more institutionalized extension of the economic commitments begun under the Truman Doctrine (through the adoption of the Marshall Plan).

The Marshall Plan, as the name implies, should be a great example of the planning model at work, and therefore a more difficult test for the emergence model. However, even though the Policy Planning Unit set up by Secretary of State Marshall and headed by George Kennan was involved in its formation, the actual policies that made up the “plan” originated outside the formal planning exercises. Both the substance and the process that led to the Marshall Plan match more closely the expectations of the emergent model than of the planning model. Lastly, the generally accepted idea that the Marshall Plan and NATO represent two of the most successful American strategic initiatives during the Cold War lends further support to the emergence model’s contention that advanced planning is not necessarily needed for successful strategies to form.

The Marshall Plan was announced in the immediate aftermath of the Truman Doctrine, and the latter paved the way for the former. As President Truman put it, “they are two halves of the same walnut.” At the time, high-level State Department officials saw a “straight line running from the Truman Doctrine to the Marshall Plan.” This is important theoretically for this thesis because it shows the incremental nature of the strategy process, with one action leading to the next without the need for an overarching plan, but nevertheless within the parameters of an overarching set of precepts about US interests,

---

71 Accounts of the origins and formation of the Marshall Plan can be found in Gimbel, Origins of Marshall Plan; Pollard, Economic Security; and Jones, Fifteen Weeks.
72 Summarizing this high regard for it, the Marshall Plan was recently described by two historians as “the most successful single foreign policy initiative ever undertaken by the United States,” Craig and Logevall, The Politics of Insecurity, 91.
73 Quotes in Jones, Fifteen Weeks, 233.
threats to them, and nature of power (i.e. the principles that made up Containment). Unlike in the case of a purely ad-hoc approach, these two policies were clearly linked to the achievement of an overarching goal – the containing of Soviet and Communist influence - first in Iran, Greece, and Turkey, and now in Western Europe.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Marshall Plan was the lack of a detailed plan. David Ellwood's historical account of the Marshall Plan, aptly subtitled A Strategy that Worked, begins by emphasizing the emergent nature of the “plan”: “It didn't start as a plan, and some of the veterans said it never did become a plan. Its own second-in-command, Harlan Cleveland, called it "a series of improvisations ... a continuous international happening." A State Department official at the time wrote that “the 'Marshall Plan has been compared to a flying saucer – nobody knows what it looks like, how big it is, in what direction it is moving, or whether it really exists." Indeed, even George Kennan wrote in a briefing to Secretary Marshall, a full six weeks after the Secretary's famous speech announcing the "Marshall Plan,” that “we have no plan." A comprehensive history of the formation of the Marshall Plan concludes unequivocally that:

The picture of the State Department engaged in beehive-like activity, producing studies of Europe's problems and providing a rational, long-range policy that Marshall used for his Harvard address, is out of focus. It is out of harmony with Marshall's frequent protests that he had not planned at the time and it does not reflect the contemporary statements and judgments of Clayton, Kennan, Lovett, and others who participated closely in the development of the Marshall Plan.

77 Cromwell, "Marshall Plan, Britain and the Cold War,” 235.
The origins of the Marshall Plan can arguably be found in a memorandum written by Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs William L. Clayton, upon returning from a trip to Europe. In it, he highlighted the disastrous economic conditions of Western Europe and warned that “without further substantial aid from the United States, economic, social and political disintegration will overwhelm Europe.... Aside from the awful implications which this would have for the future peace and security of the world, the immediate effects on our domestic economy would be disastrous.”79 Even more convincing than his memo, Clayton made passionate oral presentations to Marshall and Acheson and was very persuasive in presenting the urgency of launching an aid program, thus contributing perhaps more than most to “triggering” the Secretary’s famous “Harvard speech.”80 A week after Clayton’s memo, Secretary Marshall, without making any reference to magnitude or duration, told his Harvard audience that European governments should seize the initiative and come up with an economic aid plan that the US could fund. Looking back at this, the plan’s official historian noted how that one-paragraph “suggestion” launched a program that “evolved swiftly into a vast, spirited, international adventure: as the enterprise unfolded, it became many things to many men.”81

George Kennan and his Policy Planning Staff were also involved in the debates surrounding this initiative. An analysis of their work and of its impact shines some light on the limited role of formal planning in the Marshall Plan. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) was the source of one of the first government planning efforts credited by some later historians with contributing to the launching of the Marshall Plan; the

80 Jones, *Fifteen Weeks*, 249.
committee also produced the documents that Kennan and his staff drew upon in preparing their subsequent reports. In particular, the suggestions to focus on increasing European coal production and on integration and coordination of economic programs were appropriated by Kennan in the report produced for Secretary Marshall, labeled PPS/1. As historian John Gimbel showed, however, the impact of the SWNCC report was “modest.” “It listed eight nations that needed aid within a few months. Three of them were never included in the European recovery program. It listed eight nations that had no urgent need for aid. Five of them were initially included in the Marshall Plan.”

The same discrepancies between the planned strategies and the realized strategies that eventually emerged can also be found in Kennan’s famous PPS/1 report, ”Policy with Respect to American Aid to Western Europe,” a document considered by Kennan biographer John Lewis Gaddis to be “certainly the most influential” paper to have come out of the Policy Planning Staff during his tenure. In this report, which took three weeks to write--it was by Kennan’s own admission “hastily produced” directly by himself--the grand strategist presented his personal view for European reconstruction. This report was described by a later scholar as having “produced nothing that could be construed as a plan or program.... It was not a plan, except as it was a plan to develop a plan.” Gaddis claims that the report was influential because it formed the basis for Secretary Marshall’s speech at Harvard, along with Clayton’s memorandum. However, as shown earlier, Clayton and Kennan had different views on a variety of issues related to the approach to Europe’s

---

82 For more details, see Gimbel, Origins of Marshall Plan, 10; Miscamble, George F. Kennan, 46; See also the discussion on Kennan’s role in Gaddis, Strategies of Containment.
84 Ibid., 15.
reconstruction. These differences, as well as the continued lack of support for Kennan’s “realist” views in other parts of the State Department, eventually led to policies at odds with Kennan’s more specific recommendations. For example, Kennan did not recommend that Great Britain and Germany be included in the Marshall Plan, and his strong conclusion that the Marshall Plan should supplant the Truman Doctrine (which he opposed) was contrary to the view of the Marshall Plan as being a complement to the Truman Doctrine, which is how Truman and Acheson understood it at the time.

In the following months, the US had to drastically change another key principle of PPS/1: even though the Europeans were supposed to take the lead on the amount and details of the funds required, at the Paris Conference they initially proved unable to arrive at a position acceptable to the American delegation, so Washington had to take a more active leadership role in setting the terms of the program. Once the Europeans reduced their demands, Secretary Marshall set up an Advisory Steering Committee to work with Congress on funding, a challenging task that would bring further modifications to the final plan. Hence, the planned approach that the Europeans would define it and the US would fund it was changed along the way to one in which Washington reluctantly laid out the details.

Thus, the Marshall Plan is more properly viewed as an immediate response to the deteriorating economic and political conditions in Europe rather than being part of any grand design. The way this program came about shows more elements of emergence than planning. This initiative represented a complement to the Truman Doctrine in the

---

85 For a summary of these differences, see Gimbel, Origins, 14.
86 Gaddis, Kennan, 271.
87 Miscamble, George F. Kennan, 65.
88 Ibid., 71-73.
Containment grand strategy, as it sought to help democratic states resist communist influence, and thus should be coded as being part of an emergent strategy.

The formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organizations (NATO)

The formation of NATO in April 1949 added a military principle to the Truman Doctrine. Along with the Marshall Plan, it represented another important element in the formation of the Containment grand strategy. While the Marshall Plan offered economic assistance, NATO provided the security guarantees needed to shore up US allies and to protect them from the threat of Soviet/Communist influence. The origins of NATO can be found in the efforts of British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin to find a way to "stem the further encroachment of the Soviet tide" in Western Europe. He laid out his vision for how to deal with this problem in a speech to the House of Commons: "We must organize and consolidate the ethical and spiritual forces inherent in this Western civilization of which we are the chief protagonists. This in my view can only be done by creating some form of union in Western Europe, whether of a formal or informal character, backed by the Americas and the Dominions." \(^{89}\) Such language, reminiscent of Churchill Fulton’s speech, was in line with the emergent vision of a liberal world order under assault from the forces of Soviet Communism, the same strategic vision shared by Dean Acheson and Harry Truman, but not by the George Kennan, Washington’s chief strategic planner at the time. While he never directly proposed to Washington a formal treaty or military alliance, Bevin’s request for "an understanding backed by power, money, and resolution" to oppose “Soviet infiltration” set

\(^{89}\) Best, *British Influences*, 115.
in motion the series of negotiations between the US, Canadians and Europeans over the next year that led to the adoption of the North Atlantic Treaty. 90

The American response to Bevin’s ideas offers another example of the lack of impact of Kennan’s grand strategic planning on some crucial policy decisions. Even though 1947-1949 is the period in which, as John Lewis Gaddis argues, Kennan was the “chief strategic planner” inside the government, the formation of NATO was not only not part of the planned strategies, but actively opposed by Kennan. 91 NATO historian Timothy Ireland noted how two schools of thought developed inside the State Department on the question of how Washington should associate with Western European countries on military matters. Kennan and his Policy Planning Staff argued that the US should merely offer a “unilateral guarantee in the form of a presidential declaration similar to the Monroe Doctrine.” The other school of thought, represented by officials such as Undersecretary of State Lovett and the head of the Office of European Affairs, John Hickerson, “adopted an opposite point of view…. They felt that the most effective form of association would embrace the concept of reciprocal obligations.” 92 Hickerson even proclaimed the need to overcome a principle of American diplomacy that was as old as the republic: “I don’t care whether entangling alliances have been considered worse than original sin since George Washington’s time. We’ve got to negotiate a military alliance with Western Europe in peacetime and we’ve got to do it quickly.” 93

While Kennan focused on writing strategy memos to Secretary Marshall and the NSC staff detailing how a formal military alliance would be unnecessary and potentially

90 Miscamble, George F. Kennan, 116.
91 For the origins of NATO, see Ireland, Creating the Entangling Alliance; Cook, Forging the Alliance.
92 Ireland, Creating the Entangling Alliance, 80.
93 Quoted in Miscamble, George F. Kennan, 117.
detrimental to US grand strategic objectives in Europe, Hickerson, Lovett and their allies inside the State Department began serious negotiations with the British and Canadians at first, and then with other Europeans, on the details of a treaty that would replace the Treaty of Brussels* with a formal mutual defense alliance treaty incorporating US, Canada, and several European states. They also worked closely with Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R, MI), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, to secure support on Capitol Hill for approval of the eventual treaty.

The grand strategy planned and advocated by Kennan in his memos would have been ill served by the development of an institution such as NATO. As shown earlier, Kennan argued for a balance-of-power approach predicated on creating “independent centers of power” in Europe and East Asia. He did not see a need for US formal military commitments to the defense of U.S. allies, and even considered them counterproductive to the goal of strengthening local forces. This is why he opposed the creation of NATO, even though he agreed with the Marshall Plan as a way to restore Europe as a global power fairly independent of both American and Soviet influence. In a report on the role of NATO, Kennan argued that US policy should be directed “toward the eventual peaceful withdrawal of both the United States and USSR from the heart of Europe, and accordingly toward the encouragement of the growth of a third force which can absorb and take over the territory between the two.” The addition of NATO to most countries already part of the Marshall Plan,

---

94 *The Treaty of Brussels was a military cooperation agreement that the British, the French and the Benelux states signed earlier that year
95 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment 139-140, and Kennan, 333-34.
on the contrary, would mean “a final militarization of the present dividing line through Europe.”

Much like the debate over the Truman Doctrine, Kennan’s “realist” views on the balance of power were not shared by his superiors, and his objections to NATO were left unanswered. On the contrary, the dominant view in the Truman administration was that an alliance was necessary to provide the sense of military strength and security that would promote political stability and economic development in Europe. This position was most forcefully advocated inside the US government by John Hickerson, someone who should be recognized as one of the “true fathers of containment,” according to Miscamble. Hickerson’s policy preferences, however, were not derived from a grand design he had for the Cold War, as was the case for Kennan. He was influenced more by his commitment to strong Anglo-American relations, which he developed in his previous job handling the relations with the British Commonwealth during World War II, and his vision of the need for US leadership in Europe, a vision he shared with Acheson but not Kennan. Furthermore, most European leaders shared Hickerson’s view: as Norwegian historian Gier Lundestad famously put it, the American’s presence in Europe was an “Empire by Invitation.” In short, the creation of NATO took place despite, not because of, the planning done inside the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff. Washington’s chief strategist, George Kennan, actively opposed the formation of NATO, but he was unsuccessful in his efforts to persuade his superiors to follow his approach.

---

96 Ireland, Creating the Entangling Alliance, 108.
97 Miscamble, George F Kennan, 129, 137.
98 Lundestad, “Empire by Invitation?”
The birth of NATO instead is owed to the actions of a small number of American and European diplomats committed to formalizing US military commitments to its allies. The ad-hoc/bureaucratic model is better supported here than in previous instances, as the formation of NATO was closely tied to bureaucratic struggles and “policy entrepreneurs” pushing their priorities. The emergence model is more relevant to understanding the ultimate impact of NATO’s formation, which was the commitment to maintain forward deployed troops in Europe throughout the Cold War. While the process was more along the lines of the bureaucratic politics model than the emergent learning model, the long-term impact fit within the emerging framework I stipulated, and therefore there is mixed evidence on how to code this episode.

**NSC-68 and the Korean War**

By 1950, a series of apparent setbacks in the budding Cold War, such as the Communist takeover of China, the Soviet development of nuclear weapons, and persistent bureaucratic infighting among military services, led President Truman to launch a comprehensive study reevaluating America’s grand strategy. Paul Nitze, Kennan’s successor, led the team that prepared the secret report labeled NSC-68. Despite its reputation in later years as a kind of master plan for the Cold War, a closer look at NSC-68 and the context it came from shows that it represented something rather different than a grand design that brought coherence and consistency to America’s foreign policy during that era. The substantive analysis and the policy recommendations of the document are summarized in the introduction to this chapter, and therefore in this mini-case study I will proceed directly with discussing the content of NSC-68 in the context of the debate at the time about the shape Containment would take, and examine its impact through the prism of
the two theoretical models, design and emergence. In order to better analyze its influence, I will also present a brief analysis of the outbreak and role of the Korean War in US grand strategy for the rest of the Cold War. This event is widely regarded as the key trigger for NSC-68’s subsequent alleged influence, and as such a discussion of it allows us to wrap-up the analysis of Containment's formative stages under the Truman administration and draw some conclusions as to the relative explanatory power of the emergence and planning models.

The first big difference between NSC-68 and the Kennanesque approach to containment consisted in the globalist tone adopted in the document, and the unabashed rhetorical defense of American values such as freedom and democracy. Scholars generally supportive of Kennan’s more subtle approach to Containment, such as John Gaddis, criticize NSC-68 for departing from the carefully designed and calibrated plans of the famed grand strategist. It is true that Truman’s actions often diverged from Kennan’s strategic plans, but as we have seen earlier this divergence was often a consequence of a difference in policy and strategy preferences, rather than being a result of a poorly executed implementation of the balance-of-power strategy suggested by Kennan. Gaddis finds “striking” the idealistic and globalist tone present in NSC-68, and argues that such rhetoric was designed for public consumption and to gain the support of Congress. This is an unpersuasive explanation. Lest we forget, NSC-68 was a top-secret document, not a public relations statement. There are strong reasons to believe that its tone, while sounding perhaps overly dramatic to a contemporary observer, was nevertheless sincere.

99 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 105.
As Melvyn Leffler, Christopher Layne, and other historians have shown, the strategic discourse of the Truman administration had a very strong ideological component, and key players such as Paul Nitze, Dean Acheson, and the President himself genuinely believed in their mission to lead America into its role of global leadership, promoting a liberal world order based on American ideals. Kennan and the realists lost that debate at that time, but that does not necessarily mean Truman’s strategic performance was worse off because he chose a different approach. Whether a less idealistic (some critics would say ideological) strategy would have had better results is an interesting counterfactual question, but its answer is not relevant to understanding how Truman’s actual containment strategy came into being. Given the continuity between the language of the 1947 Truman Doctrine speech and the 1950 NSC-68, and given the fact that both of them are at odds with the official strategic planning done between 1947 and 1950 by Kennan, the evidence seems to suggest that the strategic goals and vision were more emergent than planned during Truman’s tenure.

NSC-68 crystallized a set of attitudes, predispositions, and concerns present inside government circles in 1950. The differences between the strategic ideas espoused in this document and Kennan’s designs show that by 1950 the influence of the “architect” of containment was waning. In particular, the document captured much better than Kennan’s plans did the importance of American ideals and of US leadership of a global world order, which became embodied in the resulting Containment grand strategy. However, it would be a mistake to automatically view NSC-68 as a plan shaping US behavior any more than Kennan’s plans did. In fact, a closer look at the document and its impact calls into serious question its reputation as a great exemplar of a designed grand strategy.
First of all, the Manichean rhetoric infused with repeated depictions of a global conflict between the free and slave societies, led by the US and the USSR respectively, represented an oversimplification. The US supported a less-than-free government in Greece in the early years of the Cold War, and for the rest of the Cold War Washington compromised its nominal position on freedom and human rights in order to support anti-communist forces within Greece.

The second proposition of questionable relevance for the future shape of Containment was predicking the entire American grand strategy on the need to combat a "Kremlin design" for which there was little evidence. NSC-68 talks about the Soviet’s "fanatical faith" seeking to “impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world,” but it fails to predict what the Soviets might do or articulate how the U.S. should respond. And thirdly, the monolithic view of communism present in the document was already being challenged by Tito’s independence in Yugoslavia. The document thus made a number of faulty assumptions and presented recommendations that did not come close to accurately representing the future shape of US grand strategy during the Cold War.

In fact, despite its almost legendary reputation in the policy community, several scholars criticized NSC-68 after it became declassified. One of them, Samuel Wells, Jr., deplores the poor quality of the analysis leading into the final recommendations: “The concluding analysis of courses of actions is sophomoric in posing four alternatives which include two straw options (isolation and war), one unacceptable choice (continuation of current policies), and the obviously desired solution (a rapid political, economic, and military build-up).”\(^\text{100}\) This “false alternatives” became a common gambit for such grand

\(^{100}\) Wells, “Sounding the Tocsin,” 138.
strategy documents, as will also be seen in later cases. Another common criticism of the document is that it is purely conceptual, and it does not go into the operational details of strategy, such as making recommendations on critical budgetary choices. In one of the first critical reviews of the document in the public domain, Paul Hammond makes this argument: “[NSC-68] was only a general statement of policy without a definite settlement of its meaning in terms of tangible decisions about budgets, procurements and forces... Undoubtedly, much of what was done in the Korean military build-up would have been done anyway.”101 And if one thinks of the definition of strategy only in the classical way that most academic strategists employ it - as an effort to formulate a plan that matches your means with desired ends, and then implement it – then NSC 68 also revealed a “considerable gap between concept and implementation” when it came to the Containment grand strategy because it did not discuss how to pay for the achievement of its expansive objectives, as Etzold and Gaddis pointed out. 102

These criticisms tend to argue that NSC 68 was a bad strategic document, but they tend not to question that it was a strategic document consistent with the Truman Doctrine and the US government’s view of Containment circa 1950. When one incorporates the insights of the emergent model of strategy formation, a different understanding of the role of NSC-68 in the formation of containment becomes possible. The document should be regarded much less as a grand strategic plan and much more as an “umbrella strategy” document, which in the business literature denotes a distillation of the vision of the enterprise, its place in the market, and its broad objectives, but does not operationalize this vision. The fact that this document introduced no new military programs, but did serve to

---

101 May, Cold War Strategy, 131.
102 Etzold and Gaddis, Containment, 34.
justify funding for programs already in place by putting the need for them into a larger grand strategic context, fits well with the expectations of the emergence model. In this model’s process hypothesis, there is a continuous interaction between formulation and implementation of strategies, and emergent actions can converge into a coherent strategy when decision-makers recognize that certain bottom-up initiatives should be adopted into general strategy. Carl Kaysen, an NSC staff member in the Kennedy administration, probably offered one of the most useful ways to understand the actual role of NSC-68: “As a distillation of what became the dominant American attitude toward the Soviet Union for the whole period of the Cold War, NSC 68 is exemplary. No more than any other abstract document was it a cause of policy.”\(^{103}\) Similarly, Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State by the time of NSC-68, later wrote that “the purpose of NSC-68 was to so bludgeon the mass mind of top government that not only could the President make a decision but that decision could be carried out.”\(^ {104}\) Acheson’s comment supports the view of NSC-68 not as a strategic analysis document as much as an advocacy document meant to support the strategy that had already been emerging for a few years.

NSC-68 might have remained one of the many reports produced in Washington on a regular basis, but for one singular event: the North Korean invasion of South Korea in the same year. The Truman administration did follow through on the report’s main recommendation of a substantial increase in defense spending, and the undisputed cause of that was a military build-up associated with the US involvement in the Korean War. Truman was committed to a lower military budget even after approving NSC-68, but that situation changed dramatically after North Korea’s invasion of South Korea. The Korean War shaped

\(^{103}\) May, *Cold War Strategy*, 120.

\(^{104}\) Ibid., 98.
the evolution of containment as a grand strategy in important ways: political scientist Robert Jervis even claimed that the Korean War “brought about most of the characteristics which we associate with the Cold War.... Without Korea, U.S. policy would have been very different, and there were no events on the horizon which could have been functional substitutes for the war.” \(^{105}\) The decision to intervene in this conflict, and the war’s future impact on Containment, represent important episodes that support the emergence model of strategy formation more so than the design model because they show the relatively limited impact of NSC-68 in shaping either of them.

First, its outbreak was perceived at the time as confirming NSC-68’s view of USSR and its communist allies as being bent on global expansion, by force if necessary. The *decision to intervene* in Korea was consistent with the tone of NSC-68, but given the unanimous support for intervention in Washington, even from declared opponents of NSC-68 and its version of containment such as George Kennan and the future Republican Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, it would be a stretch to argue that the intervention is itself evidence of the impact of NSC-68. \(^{106}\) As John Gaddis describes the political atmosphere at the time, one gets the feeling that the decision had more to do with the “lessons learned” from previous circumstances, a staple of the emergence model, than with any strategic design: “To a nation still recoiling from the ‘loss’ of China, still brooding over the ‘lessons of Munich,’ Korea quickly became a symbol of resolve regardless of its military-strategic significance.” \(^{107}\) Truman’s public statements at the time reinforce this: ‘If aggression were allowed to succeed in Korea, it would be an open invitation to new acts of aggression

elsewhere…. We cannot hope to maintain our own freedom if freedom elsewhere is wiped out,”\textsuperscript{108} declared the president. He went on to characterize South Korea as “the Greece of the Far East,” and in his memoirs he talked about the importance of Iran and Greece, as well as the Berlin crisis of 1948, as successful examples of resistance to Soviet aggression that guided his decision-making.\textsuperscript{109} This analogical process of reasoning fits the expectations of the emergent process hypothesis better than the design hypothesis, because it shows plans and planning did not play the most important role in this decision.

Second, the impact of the Korean conflict on the future shape of Containment also fits the emergence model better than the planning model. According to one of the most complete examinations of NSC-68, the document was “threatened with irrelevancy” before the outbreak of the Korean War, and only because of that conflict did the Truman administration adopt some of the report’s recommendations - most importantly an increase in defense budgets.\textsuperscript{110} In addition to higher budgets, another profound impact of the war was the militarization of NATO by an increase in US conventional military power in Western Europe and German rearmament, which in turn led to the final step in solidifying the division of Germany and an end to Kennan’s vision for an independent and unified German state. Both inside the administration, in Congress, and among the general public, the Korean War led to an increase in the perception of a global conflict against an implacable Communist bloc bent on aggressive behavior.\textsuperscript{111} Secretary of State Acheson talked about the impact of Korea on his hardened view of the Soviet Union’s aggressive and risky behavior:

“The profound lesson of Korea is that, contrary to every action preceding, the USSR took a

\textsuperscript{108} Truman, “Radio-Television Address, September 1,1950.”
\textsuperscript{109} Truman, Memoirs, 337-40. See also Paige, Korean Decision.
\textsuperscript{110} Schilling, Hammond and Snyder, Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets, 370.
\textsuperscript{111} Jervis, “Korean War,” 578-584.
step which risked – however remotely – general war." Jervis concluded that Korea was essential in shaping all the elements of the early stages of the Cold War Containment grand strategy: "high defense budgets, a militarized NATO, the perception of a Sino-Soviet bloc, the belief that the world was tightly interconnected and that any Communist victory anywhere would threaten vital American interests." Most relevantly for the purpose of this thesis, the Korean War locked in US policymakers to a series of strategic choices that had a great impact on the future of Containment and of the rest of the Cold War. Even though NSC-68 provided the rationalization for some of them, these decisions could be regarded as having emerged as “lessons learned” from the war at least as much as they could be seen as having been part of any formulated strategic design. It is also important to emphasize that the decisions taken in the aftermath of Korea fit within the Containment strategic framework that had emerged since 1946: they were not ad-hoc or otherwise unrelated to the path followed by the US in recent years. As shown in the pages above, the events in Iran, Greece, and Turkey, the Truman Doctrine’s global approach to containment, and the discussions

112 FRUS 1950, vol. 1, 293.
114 Even though due to limited space this dissertation won’t explore an issue as broad and controversial as the Vietnam War, the decision to intervene in Vietnam and the war’s conduct was linked closely by later scholars with these “lessons learned” from Korea. The best example of such an analysis is Yuen Foong Khong extraordinarily detailed examination of the role of the Korean Analogy in the decisions surrounding the case of Vietnam. According to the author’s tabulations, Korea was referenced no less than 51 times by US officials between 1964-1966, more so than any other analogy/lesson of the past. Khong quotes President Johnson’s recollection in his memoirs that “when a President faces decisions involving war and peace, he draws back and thinks of the past and of the future in widest possible terms,” a use of analogical reasoning as opposed to a recourse to pre-planned strategies that was reinforced by statements of lower levels officials as well. For example, the author also quotes Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs William Bundy stating that the US policy in South Vietnam “was not the result of some abstract design from a drawing board, but rather the fruit of history and experience,” as well as Secretary of State Dean Rusk as being “enormously impressed by the analogy of Korea because he had been deeply engaged in the Korean War,” according to his deputy. Such an interpretation would tentatively suggest support for the emergence model on the process hypothesis (Vietnam as an emergent policy decision), but also support for the planning model on the success dimension because by most accounts the emergent approach led to failure. Breslauer and Tetlock, Learning in Foreign Policy, 302-50.
about the shape and role of NATO all either influenced the response to Korea or were in turn influenced by the "lessons learned" from the conflict.

**Design, Emergence, and Ad-Hocery Truman's Strategy-Making**

To conclude our discussion of the formative stages of the Containment grand strategy under the Truman Administration, a brief summary of the elements of design, emergence and ad-hocery of the final principles of the strategy is in order. The element of design most prominent in Truman's approach was the view of the Soviet Union as an expansive power that needed to be contained, an idea popularized by the X Article and amplified by NSC-68. Therefore, this general conceptual understanding of containment as the optimal strategic approach should be coded as planned. The formation of NATO had important elements of ad-hocery and bureaucratic politics, even though its consequences in terms of forward deployed troops in Europe is fully consistent with the emergent framework stipulated in the introduction of this chapter. Most of the other principles came out in an emergent fashion. Kennan's designs called for a geographically limited view of containment with a reduced US presence abroad, while NSC-68 swung in the other direction and called for universal containment of all communist expansion anywhere in the world.

The actions and policies pursued by the United States, both during the Truman administration and later, fell in-between these two views. US relations with allies, both in terms of economic assistance and formal military alliance, came out in an incremental way: while Kennan's planning had some impact on the Marshall Plan it was unable to block the creation of NATO. For all the powerful rhetoric of NSC-68, it was the Korean War that led a military build-up in 1950 and that solidified the US commitment to forward bases in East Asia and a global view of Containment. Lastly, the vision of the US as a leader and protector of a liberal world order in the face of the existential menace of communism emerged most
strongly in the drafting of the Truman Doctrine speech, and was later confirmed in NSC-68, even though as we noted in practice this idealistic vision was at times abandoned when it seemed to interfere with combating Soviet influence.

The emergent nature of the strategy-making process also led some important scholars to argue that the quality of Truman's foreign policy suffered as a result. For example, John Gaddis deplored Secretary Acheson's predilection for actions rather than plans. "The thing to do was to get on and do what had to be done as quickly and effectively as you could," Acheson once said. While this approach does not fit Gaddis's deliberate view of strategy-making as a design process, it is, however, more in line with an emergent understanding of strategy. In fact, the conclusions drawn by Gaddis on the overall performance of the Truman administration inadvertently point just out how emergent Truman's approach really was: "There was in the administration very much a sense of direction without destination – of marching forthrightly forward into unknown areas, without clear sense of what the ultimate objective was, how long it would take to achieve it, and at what cost."115 Truman in fact had a much better vision of the final objective than Gaddis allows, but it is true that he did not have a carefully detailed strategic plan. Such a roadmap was provided neither by Kennan's designs, which conflicted with the preferences of Truman and Acheson, nor by NSC-68, which was too broad and too aggressive and ideological to provide much practical guidance for the future. Even though Gaddis appears to fault the administration's failures to embrace the rational-design model of strategy-making, it might be that Truman's incremental decision-making process simply testifies to the emergent nature of the formulation of Containment as a grand strategy.

Another criticism that Gaddis and others have voiced of Truman’s strategic performance is the lack of a clear relationship between means and ends, in other words ad-hocery and lack of strategy. Gaddis faults the authors of NSC-68 for failing to define U.S interests: “For the authors of NSC-68, American interests could not be defined apart from the threat the Soviet Union posed to them: ‘frustrating the Kremlin design’, as the document so frequently put it, became an end it itself, not a means to a larger end.”116 Addressing the administration’s planning in general, Gaddis criticized its “confusion between means and ends,” and its “concentrating so much on the processes of containment as to lose sight of what it was that strategy was supposed to contain.”117 Gaddis viewed the authors’ “preoccupation with building alliances, the use of ideology as a predictive instrument, concern with credibility, the emphasis on commitments and neglect of costs,” as being reflective of an “excessive attention to the processes of diplomacy... . They reflect an inclination to let policy dictate strategy, rather than the other way around.”118 This insightful critique by Gaddis makes the point that NSC-68 was not a conscious, intentional grand strategy. One of the key ideas of the emergent view of strategy formation is precisely the weakness that Gaddis finds in the process of creating NSC-68. The process hypothesis of the emergent-strategy model emphasizes the continuous back-and-forth between formulation and implementation of strategy, and the lack of a clear separation between the two. What Gaddis perceives as an unfortunate preoccupation with “process” rather than strategy, an emergent planner would regard as the actual core of strategy-making. Emergent strategies do not come from implementing plans, but rather from repeatedly re-

116 Ibid., 93.
117 Etzold and Gaddis, Containment, 36.
118 Ibid.
evaluating your choices and objectives and learning from past decisions, all within a broad
vision and overarching purpose. This does not make the actions ad-hoc as long as they fit
within a broader framework, whether implicit or explicit, which was the case for the
formation of Containment under Truman.

Eisenhower and Project Solarium

As the Korean War evolved into a bloody stalemate, with high costs and indecisive
results, the lesson the next President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, learned from that event was
that the US should avoid getting sucked into such future endeavors. Consequently, he
concluded that there must be a better way to contain the USSR and Soviet communism than
what he perceived as the overly expensive and militaristic approach taken by Truman and
spelled out in NSC-68. In fact, perhaps some of the most persuasive evidence of the limited
usefulness of understanding NSC-68 as a strategic plan for the rest of the Cold War comes
from the strong criticism heaped upon its conclusions and recommendations by Truman’s
immediate successor. The most important criticism Eisenhower and his team had of NSC-68
was related to the document’s prescription for a large build-up of US and allied
conventional military forces to counter Soviet power and influence. In their view, this could
lead to very high expenditures on military forces, which in turn would harm the overall
health of the US economy, and, consequently, endanger the very way of life that the
government was supposed to protect. Eisenhower and his administration had a much more
limited perception of the means available for containment than the authors of NSC-68:
concerns about inflationary borrowing, repressive taxation, and deficit spending permeated
national security debates in the new administration.
Gaddis noticed that the assumption that economic stability and military strength were inseparable "was probably the most persistent single theme of Eisenhower’s public and private utterances while in the White House." The administration had a conservative fiscal outlook and worried about the impact that budget deficits and inflation could have on the American way of life. However, this concern with NSC-68’s recommendation for increased military spending did not translate into a rejection of the need to contain the Soviet Union or of the need to act as a global power in the service of the American ideals of freedom and democracy. The Eisenhower administration believed nevertheless that there was a more economical way to pursue the military objectives of the Containment grand strategy. The solution that they proposed was to attempt to exploit the threat of retaliation with nuclear weapons, rather than to invest in the relatively more expensive conventional capabilities.

During the presidential campaign of 1952, Eisenhower had been sharply critical of the Truman administration’s strategy-making process, “a purgatory of improvisation” characterized by “stop-and-start planning.” This description goes to show that in the eyes of some contemporary observers, including the next President of the United States, Truman’s strategy was indeed more emergent than carefully planned out. Eisenhower vowed that once in office he would formulate and pursue a “‘cold war’ national strategy.” To plan systematically and rigorously such a strategy, Eisenhower would establish “a commission of the most capable civilians in our land” to “critically review the political policies governing our military program, and the “military program itself in all its significant details.”

119 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 132.
120 Metz, “Eisenhower,” 53; Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 79.
121 Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 79.
It is ironic that contemporary critics of Eisenhower used some of the same arguments to describe his performance that Ike used against Truman during the campaign, and it goes to show that a concern with a perceived “need for better planning” permeated each new generation of foreign policy critics. Samuel Huntington, one of the leading national-security scholars of his generation, wrote in 1961 about the strategic-planning process in a language familiar to the critics of recent presidents: “The strategy-making process is slow, prone to compromise, given to generalities, strewn with reefs and shoals, and unlikely to produce clear-cut, coherent, and national policies.”122 And a young Henry Kissinger wrote in 1957 about the dysfunctional impact of bureaucratic interests in the formulation of rational strategies: “the conclusions of both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the National Security Council reflect the attainable consensus among sovereign departments rather than a sense of direction.”123 In a common pattern of the scholarly discourse about the making of American grand strategy, contemporary observers appear to be always critical of the present administration and to romanticize the proverbial “good old days.” Such was the case with Truman’s critics, and then with Eisenhower’s, even though both these presidents are nowadays regarded as great grand strategists who laid the foundation for America’s successful Containment approach to the Cold War. This goes to show that the emergent view of strategy formulation can lead to the formation of successful strategies, even when the strategic planning process is wanting according to the design model.

123 Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, 407.
Project Solarium

In the summer of 1953, Eisenhower followed through on his campaign pledge and launched Operation Solarium, an elaborate strategic planning exercise organized by the White House to consider the grand strategic options available to the United States and help the president choose the one most likely to achieve the administration’s goals. The main impetus for the review was a sense that the current strategy inherited from the Truman administration would lead to a continuous weakening in the US position in the Cold War relative to the Soviets. Dulles believed that “unless we change this policy, or get some break, we will lose bit by bit the free world, and break ourselves financially.” The President agreed “the present policy was leading to disaster,” mostly because it would both cede the initiative to the Soviets and also be unaffordable in the long run. He set up three groups tasked with making the case for three possible alternative grand strategies: containment, containment plus a “red line,” and rollback.

Project Solarium’s first group, Task Force A, argued for a “containment” strategy, albeit the more restrained form of Containment favored by George Kennan, the head of this task force, rather than the more global and militaristic form adopted by the Truman Administration in its last years. The three main objectives guiding Task Force A’s grand strategy were: “1. To maintain over a sustained period armed forces to provide for the security of the United States and to assist in the defense of vital areas of the free world; 2. To continue to assist in building up the economic and military strength and cohesion of the free world; and 3. Without materially increasing the risk of general war, to continue to

---

124 The name refers to the White House “solarium” where the initial meeting authorizing the exercise was held
125 Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 124.
exploit the vulnerabilities of the Soviets and their satellites by political, economic and psychological measures.”

One of the most daring proposals of Task Force A was to propose immediate negotiations with the Soviets leading to a rearmed, reunified, “independent” German state. Kennan advocated such a course before, but Eisenhower, much like Truman, did not follow through with this approach either. The task force report also reflected Kennan’s thinking in focusing almost its entire efforts on Europe rather than other parts of the world. Lastly, the report did not focus on military means to contain Soviet influence, but rather on strengthening economic, political and psychological programs.

Task Force B argued for a strategy of containment supplemented by a clear warning to the Soviets that the US would respond aggressively to any attempt to further expand their influence in the free world. Thus, its mandated objectives were written out as follows:

“1. To complete the line now drawn in the NATO area and the Western Pacific so as to form a continuous line around the Soviet bloc beyond which the U.S. will not permit Soviet or satellite military forces to advance without general war; 2. To make clear to the Soviet rulers in an appropriate and unmistakable way that the U.S. has established and determined to carry out this policy; and 3. To reserve freedom of action, in the event of indigenous Communist seizure of power in countries on our side of the line, to take all measures necessary to re-establish a situation compatible with the security interests of the U.S. and its allies.”

Even though this task force also adopted a version of containment as the basic foundation for its grand strategy, its focus was more global, and more unilateral, than that favored by Task Force A. The threat of nuclear retaliation could be used to hold the line against Soviet or communist aggression everywhere, not solely in Europe. One further

\[\text{\textsuperscript{126}}\text{Ibid., 125-26.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{127}}\text{Ibid.}\]
advantage of this emphasis on nuclear weapons was that relying on nuclear capabilities for both deterring and winning wars would require lower levels of defense spending than conventional weapons, thus allowing Eisenhower to maintain a balanced budget, which he viewed as key to a healthy economy in the long run.

Lastly, Task Force C was tasked with defending a “rollback” or “liberation” grand strategy, something advocated by Dulles and some Republicans in the presidential campaign against Truman, and a strategic concept present in NSC-68 as well. The goal would be to “force the Soviets to shift their efforts to holding what they already have rather than concentrating on gaining control of additional territories and peoples and, at the same time, to produce a climate of victory encouraging to the free world.” Thus, the task force’s recommendations were designed to “1. Increase efforts to disturb and weaken the Soviet bloc and to accelerate the consolidation and strengthening of the free world, and 2. To create the maximum disruption and popular resistance throughout the Soviet Bloc.”128 Unlike the previous two groups, this task force argued that Containment was a sterile policy and criticized the implied acceptance of Containment by task forces A and B. Instead, this task force advocated accepting “higher risks” in the search for victories against Communist forces both behind the Iron Curtain and in the third world.

The three task forces presented their cases in front of the NSC members and other officials in an all-day meeting at the White House on July 16, 1953. The President observed that, at the end of the day, the many similarities between the strategies were more important than the differences between them, and he asked the three teams to “agree on certain features of the three presentations as the best features and to bring about a

128 Cutler memorandum for the record, May 9, 1953; Summaries prepared by the NSC Staff of Project Solarium presentations and Written Reports, cited in Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 125-26.
combination of such features into a unified policy.” However, the members of the task forces disagreed with this approach, claiming that there are “fundamental differences which could be compromised into a watered-down position but not really agreed to.” The process of arriving at a strategy thus does not conform to an analytical design exercise where a number of strategies are analyzed and the best one is chosen, as in the modern-day interpretation of Project Solarium. Instead, Eisenhower instructed Robert Cutler, the special assistant to the President for national security affairs, to “work out what he thought best.”

It is thus not surprising that the final contours of the strategy mirrored so well Eisenhower’s initial views. Moreover, the three options were not in fact mutually exclusive, which is why the hybrid option favored by the president was indeed possible.

Over the next three months, the NSC White House staff continued to review and analyze the issues raised during the Solarium Project and eventually drafted a comprehensive grand strategy document, Basic National Security Policy, or NSC 162/2. The document states that in order to defend against the Soviet threat, United States policy required three elements:

- The development and maintenance of “(1) A strong military posture, with emphasis on the capability of inflicting massive retaliatory damage by offensive striking power. (2) U.S. and allied forces in readiness to move rapidly initially to counter aggression by Soviet bloc forces and to hold vital areas and lines of communication. (3.) a mobilization base, and its protection against crippling damage, adequate to insure victory in the event of general war”

129 Ibid., 138.
130 Ibid.
131 White House, “NSC 162/2,” 5-6.
• “Maintenance of a sound, strong, and growing economy, capable of providing through the operation of free institutions, the strength described in “a” above over the long pull, and of rapidly and effectively changing to full mobilization.”

• “Maintenance of morale and free institutions and the willingness of the U.S. people to support measures for national security.”

The first paragraph encapsulates the “massive retaliation” strategic nuclear deterrence doctrine that came to characterize Eisenhower’s New Look. In the “policy conclusions” segment of the document, this strategy is spelled out in further detail: “the risk of Soviet aggression will be minimized by maintaining a strong security posture, with emphasis on adequate offensive retaliatory strength and defensive strength. This must be based on atomic capability.”\textsuperscript{132} To make the point even more explicit, the document states that the U.S. should make clear its intention to react with nuclear military force against any aggression by Soviet bloc forces: “in the event of hostilities, the United States will consider nuclear weapons to be as available for use as other munitions.”\textsuperscript{133}

The consensus among historians is that the New Look resembled broadly option A, containment, with some elements of option B’s concept of massive retaliation.\textsuperscript{134} The “containment” version adopted by Eisenhower, however, differed from Kennan’s (and hence Task Force A’s) view of Containment in one important aspect: the New Look focused on regaining the initiative by threatening the use of nuclear forces at a time and place of Washington’s choosing, rather than merely reacting to Soviet moves. It is also worth noting

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{134} John Gaddis makes this judgment about the “conventional wisdom” among historians on this topic in Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 144.
that despite the campaign rhetoric about “liberation” and “roll back,” option C did not receive much support and Eisenhower’s designed strategy coming out of Solarium eventually continued along the same broad grand-strategic path he inherited from Truman, with the “massive retaliation” addendum. The inputs to the final form of NSC 162/2 came not only, or even primarily, from the Solarium Task Force reports, but also from the “concept memorandum” prepared by Cutler, the President’s speech following Stalin’s death, and a myriad of other government reports and studies circulating inside the government during that time.135

Eisenhower’s Project Solarium has enjoyed a new surge in reputation in the last decade in the policy community, and is regarded as one of the prominent examples of a strategic planning exercise worthy of emulation. As two strategy experts recently noted, “The Eisenhower Administration is now generally seen as the gold standard in national security strategic planning.”136 Former top Obama Pentagon strategists Michele Flournoy and Shawn Brimley have called for a new Project-Solarium-style exercise, arguing that “an example of a truly inclusive and integrated process of long-term strategic planning in the executive branch does exist, although one must look back more than 50 years to find it.”137 Barry Watts and Andy Krepinevich concur with this assessment: “The Eisenhower approach to national strategy offers useful insights concerning how the United States might improve its strategic performance.”138 Perhaps the most effusive praise comes from David Rothkopf, who concluded that the Solarium Project was “not just the work of a good executive or a

135 For a more complete list of the studies consulted in preparation of NSC-68, see Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 141.
137Flournoy and Brimley, “Strategic Planning,” 80-81.
138 Krepinevich and Watts, Regaining Strategic Competence, 7.
master bureaucrat or even a canny politician; it was a magisterial illustration of an effective president in action, perhaps one of the signal events of the past sixty years of the American presidency.”

The reason why advocates of the rational-design model hold Operation Solarium in such high regard is that it is viewed as an elaborate process in which competing grand strategies were debated, the assumptions of each strategy were rigorously examined, and, in the end, tough strategic decisions were made. This interpretation is only partly accurate, because it overestimates both the importance of the deliberative process in developing Eisenhower’s “New Look” strategy, as shown above, and also the ultimate impact of this strategic plan in determining the actual decisions taken by the administration in future years. The outcome of this exercise was in line with Eisenhower’s previous views. Indeed, even in the most laudatory account of this exercise, the two authors acknowledge that “In most respects the fundamental elements of Eisenhower’s national strategy so closely paralleled his pre-presidential views that one could argue that he would have adopted similar policies without the Solarium exercise.” The same conclusion is reached by another recent examination of this exercise: historian Valerie Adams wrote that “NSC 162/2 did not look all that different from what was in existence before the Solarium project.” Moreover, as Gaddis has shown in his examination of Eisenhower’s strategic performance, “in practice the administration's strategic concept ... managed to incorporate in one form or another all three of the alternatives considered in that exercise.” Thus, the effort to design

---

139 Rothkopf, Running the World, 71.  
140 Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 258.  
141 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 144.
a long-term strategy did not result in a new plan whose subsequent implementation
changed strategy in critical ways, as the design model would expect.

In theory, the New Look’s strategic concept was seductive because it promised to
allow the United States to regain the initiative while lowering the cost of containment. John
Foster Dulles explained the logic of the new approach: “The way to deter aggression is for
the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of
its own choosing.” Because the US could rely on its preferred means of response (i.e. nuclear
weapons) rather than having to engage in an expansive conventional military build-up to
try to match Soviet means, as NSC-68 recommended, the administration would get “more
basic security at less cost.” Gaddis praised this approach as an example of “asymmetric
strategy” - a strategy that seeks to apply one's strengths against the weaknesses of the
other side, as opposed to the less imaginative symmetrical approach adopted by NSC-68
based on an across-the-board military build-up. This approach would do a better job than
the NSC-68 version of containment in terms of meeting Gaddis's definition of strategy, i.e. a
calculated relationship between means and ends: “the New Look, therefore, was an
integrated and reasonably efficient adaptation of resources to objectives, of means to
ends.”

In practice, however, the implementation and the long-term impact of the New Look
were not as impressive as its initial design. First of all, it is worth emphasizing that, unlike
many of his successors, Eisenhower did manage to reshape defense spending levels and
priorities according to his strategic goals. Total national security expenditures declined
from 69.5 percent of the federal budget in 1954 to 50.8 percent in 1961, while as a

142 Ibid., 145.
143 Ibid., 159.
percentage of GDP national security spending fell from 13.1 percent in 1954 to 9.4 percent in 1961.\textsuperscript{144} Implementing some of the recommendations of NSC 162/2 and the New Look involved a major reshaping of the armed forces: total manpower decreased by 600,000, with the Army shrinking 33 percent from 1.5 million to 1 million soldiers, the Navy by about 15 percent, and the Marine Corps by 20 percent, while the Air Force gained 60,000 airmen.\textsuperscript{145} The Air Force, as the service most involved in nuclear deterrence, increased its share of Pentagon expenditures from 34 percent in FY1953 to 46.2 percent in FY1955, while the Army and Navy/Marine Corps received about 20-25 percent each in the “mix” of New Look defense spending.\textsuperscript{146} While conventional forces were sharply reduced, the administration enhanced its strategic programs such as Minutemen, Polaris, B-47, B-52, and B-58.\textsuperscript{147}

The massive retaliation defense strategy shifted American military priorities from conventional to nuclear, forcing the administration to rely on one main option--the threat of nuclear war--to contain the expansion of the Soviet Union and international communism. This was a formidable threat that should in theory have had a great deterrent effect, but the Eisenhower administration eventually discovered that not all of the challenges it was facing from communist expansion throughout the globe could be addressed effectively by massive retaliation. One of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of this strategy was that, as strategic analyst Steve Metz has argued,

\textit{the New Look was built on a theory of war that was coherent but obsolete.... [Eisenhower] never grasped the significance of limited war. In line with American tradition, Eisenhower tended to view strategic history as}

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 162.  
\textsuperscript{145} Bowie and Immerman, \textit{Waging Peace}, 196.  
\textsuperscript{146} Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 169.  
\textsuperscript{147} Metz, “Eisenhower,” 56.
composed of periods of relative stability upset by aggression and subsequently adjusted by major wars.... Eisenhower and his advisers complained of the difficulty of preparing for both global and 'lesser military actions short of all-out war.'

Therefore, this strategy might have arguably deterred the Chinese from invading Quemoy and Matsu in the Taiwan crises of 1954-55 and 1958, but in many other instances, particularly in the "small wars" and civil conflicts spurred by "revolutionary movements" in the Third World, the Eisenhower administration found itself unable to gain benefits from the threat of massive retaliation and thus had to go beyond its planned strategy and rely on other means to prevent the spread of communism. By 1955, even the president admitted the limits of the "massive retaliation" strategy when it came to deterring Moscow and Beijing from exploiting "national liberation" movements in the Third World for their purposes: the strategy "offers, of itself, no defense against the losses that we incur through the enemy's political and military nibbling. So long as he abstains from doing anything that he believes would provoke the free world to an open declaration of major war, he need not fear the deterrent."

The practical difficulties encountered by their newly designed "massive retaliation" strategic concept led the administration to go back to re-emphasizing a couple of the strategic approaches that emerged during the Truman era, thus reinforcing the case for continuity in the major principles of Containment. The two alternative ways to achieve containment when threats of massive retaliation didn't work were the use of covert operations and the offering of military support to anti-communist governments. The CIA expanded its covert activities greatly during the Eisenhower administration, and was deeply

---

148 Ibid., 62, 64.
149 As quoted in Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 176.
involved in organizing coups d’état in a number of places. The first intervention occurred in Iran in 1953, where the CIA helped overthrow the government of Mohammad Mossadeq, a pro-Soviet prime minister who dissolved the Iranian parliament and threatened to turn Iran into a Soviet client state. In his place, the CIA helped the pro-Western Shah Reza Pahlavi return to power. Encouraged by the success of this operation and the low costs involved in it, the Eisenhower administration proceeded to organize the overthrow of a pro-Soviet leader in Guatemala a year later. This is another example of how an emergent approach takes shape in incremental steps, based on perceived successful lessons learned from previous similar circumstances. However, other operations were not so successful, such as the failed attempts to overthrow Sukarno in Indonesia in 1958 or Fidel Castro in Cuba in 1960-1961. The CIA was also involved in covert operations in Egypt, Syria, and possibly other places as well.\textsuperscript{150} The success record therefore is very mixed on this particular issue, which shows one of the downsides of emergent strategy – i.e. overgeneralization from a small sample of initial decisions. This is therefore a piece of evidence in support of the planning model’s success hypothesis, which links successful outcomes with following a pre-set design. In addition to covert operations, supplying military aid to anti-communist governments came to be regarded as another favorite policy to deal with the threat of communism in the Third World. Eisenhower left a lasting imprint on this fourth principle of the Containment grand strategy. This was the case in places like South Korea, the Philippines, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and South Vietnam.

During the Eisenhower administration, the debate between containing international communism wherever it is found versus Kennan’s more narrow focus on Soviet influence

\textsuperscript{150} Powaski, \textit{The Cold War}, 105-107; Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 156.
focus was also decided in favor of the former version, giving Containment a global reach and solidifying this principle of the strategy. Secretary of State Dulles viewed the fight against communism as a global struggle whose result would determine the very existence of the United States as a free democratic country: “The object of Soviet communism is to extend its system throughout the world and establish its 'one world' of state socialism.”\footnote{151} He described international communism in highly ideological terms as “a vast monolithic system which, despite its power, believes that it cannot survive except as it succeeds in progressively destroying human freedom.”\footnote{152} Therefore, the US needs to contain any further expansion of communism: “If Soviet communism is permitted to gobble up other parts of the world one by one, the day will come when the Soviet world will be so powerful that no corner of this world will be safe.”\footnote{153} And that moment might be very close, as Eisenhower warned in one of his addresses to Congress when he compared the situation in Indochina with a row of dominoes in an ill-fated analogy: “Where in hell can you let the Communists chip away any more?” It seems that at least on this particular issue the Eisenhower administration was not so different from the authors of NSC-68, even though as this section made clear the new administration was highly critical of that report’s general analysis recommendations. This goes to show that by the end of the formative stage of Containment a consensus on the principle of global containment did emerge, but that it would be wrong to conclude that NSC-68 in any way served as a guide to later presidents in embracing this choice.

\footnote{151}{Cited in Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 135.}
\footnote{152}{Ibid., 139.}
\footnote{153}{Ibid., 135.}
All in all, the Eisenhower era is now regarded by many as the most productive period since World War II for strategic planning by the US government, and one worthy of emulation, but such an appraisal is not fully justified because the importance of the design processes is overestimated. Even though there was more deliberate, systematic strategic planning going on at this time than in other historical periods, the process by which Eisenhower arrived at his strategy was not as clear-cut as later proponents of the design model claim. Eisenhower’s grand strategy did not deviate significantly from the five core principles of Truman’s containment strategy, which, as we have seen, was more emergent than deliberate. Moreover, the main innovation that it did bring to national strategy, the focus on massive retaliation, proved so problematic to implement that it needed to be complemented by a number of other policies and strategies not part of the initial designs. “Massive retaliation” never proved able to work in practice in the same way that the designers of the New Look/NSC 162-2 intended it to, and Eisenhower had to rely on other familiar approaches, such as covert action and supporting local anti-communists, to contain the spread of Soviet influence in the Third World. Thus, on balance, Eisenhower’s tenure offers mixed evidence for the design vs. emergence comparison: while planning was more detailed and important than at other times during the Cold War, its impact was not as great on the final strategy as the proponents of the design model have argued in recent years, nor did it lead to such overwhelmingly positive outcomes as to be fully worthy of the current calls for emulation.

*Rethinking Containment: Kissinger’s Grand Strategy of Détente*

The Containment grand strategy that emerged out of the Truman and Eisenhower eras suffered a strong blow to its reputation in the Vietnam War. The conflict was regarded
by many as having been caused by blind adherence to a flawed, even simplistic, anti-communist strategy on a global scale. President Richard Nixon and his trusted foreign policy adviser Henry Kissinger came into government convinced of the need to not only get out of Vietnam as inexpensively as possible, but also to redesign some of the principles of American grand strategy. Kissinger in particular, an eminent scholar of grand strategy, went to great lengths to design a new grands strategic approach to dealing with the challenge of Soviet and international communism, and with the new geopolitical realities of the 1970s. Détente, as his grand strategic approach came to be called, represented a change from the contours of the Containment strategy that preceded it, but its ultimate impact was short-lived as future administrations eventually went back in large part to many of the principles of Containment from the early days of the Cold War.

On numerous occasions, Kissinger expressed his intention to design a more consciously planned approach to US Cold War grand strategy than was the case before. Therefore, his efforts represent a particularly good example of the power of the design model to explain the formation of grand strategy. This thesis will argue, that Kissinger’s tenure in government indeed led to a deliberate design of the Détente grand strategy, and that some important US policy decisions and actions followed fairly closely from his designs. Thus, the design model explains the Nixon-Kissinger era better than it does any other time during the Cold War. However, while the design model hypotheses find important supportive evidence during this time, there were nevertheless aspects of the process of strategy-making, and a few of the decisions taken by Nixon/Kissinger, that do not conform with the tenets of the design model. They could instead be regarded as more emergent than planned. Moreover, the carefully designed détente grand strategy was not embraced by
future administrations, and therefore the evidence supporting the design model is limited to Kissinger’s time in office.

Nixon and Kissinger did not produce a formal National Security Strategy document similar to NSC-68 or NSC-162/2, and detente did not come out of an elaborate strategic planning review. Much like Kennan’s Long Telegram, the new grand strategic approach was rather the product of Kissinger’s own ideas and of the “realist” worldview that he brought with him to government. The tensions between Kissinger and the traditional government bureaucracy have been widely documented in historical and biographical accounts of the Nixon-Kissinger era. The strategy-making process was highly centralized inside the White House, and more precisely inside Kissinger’s small cadre at the NSC. This distrust of the bureaucracy, which was viewed by Kissinger and Nixon as hostile to the priorities and best interests of the President, led these two leaders to conduct their foreign policy and grand strategy in great secrecy and to separate large parts of government from the decision-making process. Before coming into government, Kissinger studied and wrote about the shortcomings of a formal strategy-making process: “creativity in planning is confounded with projecting the familiar into the future.” He concluded that in order for the executive to be able to reach its foreign policy goals without hindrance, “some of the key decisions are kept to a very small circle while the bureaucracy happily continues working away in ignorance of the fact that decisions are being made.” As will be shown in the next pages, important components of the détente strategy, such as “linkage” and the opening to

155 For Kissinger’s early frustrations with the bureaucracy, see Kissinger, _White House Years_, 41-45. See also Gaddis, _Strategies of Containment_, 299-301.
156 Kissinger, _Necessity for Choice_, 357.
157 Litwak, _Détente_, 65.
China, were both conceptualized and undertaken by Kissinger outside of formal government channels.

Even though Détente did not come out of a formal planning process, its substantive elements were part of a fairly coherent design in Kissinger's mind. The speeches given by him while in office, as well as his Annual Foreign Policy Reports to Congress, reveal that Détente rested on a strategic framework composed of a few major elements. Therefore, the expectations of the design model are fairly well met during Kissinger's time in terms of the substance of the strategy, with a few exceptions highlighted at the end of this section. As an academic well versed in the study of grand strategy, Kissinger designed Détente according to the "realist" principle of balance of power. Much like George Kennan, Kissinger was uncomfortable with the "universalist" rhetoric and actions of previous administrations, and he believed that a more purposefully designed grand strategy was needed to best protect the US national interest. Kennan once remarked that "Henry understands my views better than anyone at State ever has." In his magisterial account of the various ideas shaping Containment during the Cold War, Gaddis noticed "striking similarities" between the worldviews of these two grand strategists:

"Both adhered to a multidimensional conception of power in the world. Both insisted that means were limited, and that distinctions had to be made, accordingly, between vital and peripheral interests. Both saw the Soviet Union, not international communism, as the major threat to those interests. Both sought to contain the threat and respond asymmetrically: by relying on diversity to maintain the balance of power, by exploiting fissures within the international communist movement, [and] by combining pressures and inducements to try to bring about long-term changes in the Soviet concept of international relations.... Like Kissinger, Kennan had identified American interests with maintaining a balance of power in a multipolar world. And like Kissinger, Kennan had evolved a conception of interests capable of standing on

158 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 281.
its own, independent, as intervening strategies had not been, of both threats and commitments.\textsuperscript{159}

Unlike Kennan, however, Kissinger’s positions at a high level in government (National Security Advisor at first, and later Secretary of State) and his formidable skills as a bureaucratic infighter allowed him to control the foreign-policy-making process and influence decisions in a way that Kennan never could.

The theoretical foundation underpinning the Détente grand strategy was the notion of a transition from the bipolar international system in which US grand strategy was dominated by a concern with containing the Soviet Union at every point to a multipolar one in which American grand strategy should be aimed towards preserving the balance of power among the five major centers of economic power: the US, USSR, Western Europe, Japan, and China. As Kissinger argued in 1968,

“\textit{In the year ahead, the most profound challenge to American policy will be philosophical: to develop some concept of order in a world which is bipolar militarily but multipolar politically}.\textsl{...} For the two decades after 1945, our international activities were based on the assumption that technology plus managerial skills gave us the ability to reshape the international system\textsl{...}. Political multipolarity makes it impossible to impose an American design.”\textsuperscript{160}

The design of détente thus rested on this vision of the United States as a member of an increasingly multipolar international system, a shift from the Containment vision of the 1950s and 1960s of two ideologically opposed superpowers facing each other in an inescapable global conflict. Kissinger was a practitioner of \textit{realpolitik}, and in the aftermath of the perceived failure of the universalist/idealist principles of the Containment grand strategy in Vietnam he found himself in an ideal position to design and implement a more

\textsuperscript{159} Ib\textit{id.}, 281.
\textsuperscript{160} Gordon, \textit{Agenda for the Nation}, 588-89, 602.
realist course of action for the United States.\textsuperscript{161} President Richard Nixon shared Kissinger's realist worldview, which made it easy for the two of them to work together very closely.

Kissinger believed that one of the main problems with the Containment grand strategy as it emerged in the early Cold War era was its grounding in an ideological opposition to communism rather than in balance-of-power principles: "Part of the reason for our difficulties is our reluctance to think in terms of power and equilibrium."\textsuperscript{162} At the core of the détente grand strategy was therefore a search for a diffusion of tensions with the Soviet Union through negotiations aimed at achieving a more stable world order based on the principle of balance of power. In Kissinger's words, "The principal goal of the foreign policy of this administration ever since 1969 has been to set up what the President has called a structure of peace, by which we mean an international system less geared to the management of crises, less conscious of constant eruption of conflict, in which the principal participants operate with a consciousness of stability and permanence."\textsuperscript{163} The way to achieve a "structure of peace" was through engaging the Soviet Union in a series of serious negotiations over a wide range of substantive policy issues. Over time, the hope was that such negotiations would lead to a less adversarial relation between the US and USSR, one akin to those of more traditional great-power rivalries, and one that could be managed at a lower cost than the formative period of the Cold War, which had been strongly influenced by ideological concerns.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{161} For more on Kissinger's “realist” worldview and his effort to move US foreign policy in that direction following the Vietnam debacle, see Suri, \textit{Henry Kissinger}, 235-38; Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 272-281; Litwak, \textit{Détente}, 66-79.
\textsuperscript{162} Gordon, \textit{Agenda for the Nation}, 611.
\textsuperscript{163} Litwak, \textit{Détente}, 115.
\end{flushleft}
One of the keys to understanding the grand strategy of Détente was the concept of "linkage," or connecting progress on certain policy issues important to the USSR with progress on the ones important to the US. For example, in the case of Vietnam, the administration requested Soviet assistance in pressuring Hanoi in exchange for advancing negotiations in other areas of interest to Moscow, such as trade or arms control. Or, in a different case, in December 1971 the Nixon administration threatened to cancel an arms-control summit with Moscow unless the Kremlin pressured its ally India to refrain from invading West Pakistan. Such attempts at quid pro quo were regarded by the administration as the quintessential elements of truly deliberate strategic behavior. As Kissinger noted in his memoirs, “The most difficult challenge for a policymaker in foreign affairs is to establish priorities. A conceptual framework – which ‘links’ events – is an essential tool.... We saw linkage, in short, as synonymous with an overall strategic and geopolitical view. To ignore the interconnection of events was to undermine the coherence of all policy.”

Perhaps the most extraordinary policy result coming out of the Nixon-Kissinger grand strategic design was the opening to communist China. In what is almost universally regarded as one of the most successful grand strategic actions of the Cold War, Kissinger embarked on a secret effort to establish diplomatic relations with Mao’s communist regime, the first step towards the normalization of relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China. This action has since been regarded as an extraordinary diplomatic coup because it capitalized on the tensions between Moscow and Beijing and it positioned Washington geopolitically to take advantage of the rift between the two most

---

powerful communist countries. The move was quintessentially realist in its nature, as it relied on a view of national interest of the state as being the main determinant of foreign policy, regardless of the ideology or domestic form of government. Before joining the government, Kissinger hinted at the idea of starting a dialogue with China. In a speech he wrote for Nelson Rockefeller, his candidate in the Republican primary, he stated that: "In a subtle triangle of relations between Washington, Peking, and Moscow, we improve the possibilities of accommodations with each as we increase our options towards both." Later on, in his memoirs, he explained further his thought process on this issue. The US needed to "free our diplomacy from the dead weight of two decades," the period of the Containment grand strategy, which regarded communism largely as a monolith. Once that happens, then "each Communist superpower would have greater inducement to deal with us constructively" and our options towards them would be "greater than their options toward each other." 165

It is very important for the argument of this thesis to point out that the opening to China, despite fitting very well with the Nixon-Kissinger détente grand strategy, was not part of any well-thought out plan to accomplish this feat. As Kissinger himself candidly admitted in his memoirs: "In retrospect all successful policies seem preordained. Leaders like to claim prescience for what has worked, ascribing to planning what usually starts as a series of improvisations. [emph. added] It was no different with the new China policy. The new Administration had the general intention of making a fresh start. But in all candor it had no precise idea how to do this and it had to take account of domestic realities." 166 As documented in a number of historical accounts, including Kissinger’s detailed memoirs, the

165 Ibid., 165.
166 Ibid., 167.
establishment of US-PRC relations was the end-product of a number of secret overtures through the diplomats of different countries such as Pakistan and Romania, all culminating with visits by Kissinger, and then Nixon, to the mainland to meet Mao and Zhou Enlai.\textsuperscript{167}

In contrast to the diplomatic coup in Beijing, other efforts to implement détente were marred by a number of problems that eventually led to its rapid demise once Kissinger was out of government. The grand design of détente assumed that the US Administration could engage in \textit{realpolitik} and make decisions on the "sticks" and "carrots" to be used to modify the behavior of the Soviet Union. However, Congress hindered Kissinger’s efforts at linkage by advancing its own priorities, such as the Jackson amendment that denied certain important trade benefits to the Soviets (Most Favored Nation status and access to loans) until the Kremlin allowed higher levels of emigration for their Jewish citizens. A similar difficulty occurred with the increased restrictions on the use of military power imposed by Congress through the War Powers Act, which arguably hindered Nixon’s ability to make credible threats and deter Soviet “adventurism” in the Third World.\textsuperscript{168}

In addition to Congressional opposition, the attempt by Kissinger to “purge our foreign policy of all sentimentality” by making decisions based on cold calculations of national interest and minimizing the role of human rights in the conduct of American foreign policy led to a loss in popular support for his grand strategy. And one could make the argument that the Nixon and Ford administrations themselves moved away from their own “balance of power” calculations in certain situations, despite their plans to de-emphasize the role of ideology. In places like Chile, Angola, or Vietnam, the two

\textsuperscript{167} For more details on this period, see Kissinger, \textit{White House Years}, 684-733.

\textsuperscript{168} Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 315.
administrations spent a lot of energy opposing communist takeovers even though the impact on the global balance of power of any one of these countries falling under Soviet influence would be marginal.\footnote{Ibid., 285.} Therefore, the design of détente was not entirely consistent with its later implementation. However, the \textit{realist} shift in policy was evident during this time, and Kissinger’s highly centralized foreign-policy-making style allowed him to advance his predetermined policy priorities more so than many of his predecessors or successors. The Détente period, therefore, supports the design model.

In conclusion, during Détente America’s foreign policy moved away from some of the traditional principles of Containment, at least to some extent. While the principles of containing the Soviet Union, of close relations with Western allies and of support to anti-communist forces remained in place, the view of communism as a global ideological threat was not popular with Nixon and Kissinger, who focused on the national interests of states rather their internal form of government. Washington was more willing to work with allies without regards to their democratic credentials, and there was less concern with promoting democracy and human rights than in previous administrations. And despite the exceptions noted in the previous paragraph, a balance-of-power approach based on realpolitik calculations was the organizing principle for US actions, rather than a willingness to bear the financial and military burdens of leading the “Free World” in a fight against Soviet expansionism and international communism. This shifts away from the Containment strategy of previous decades was generally one planned by Kissinger and Nixon, thus providing support for the design model’s hypothesis. On balance, thus, the design model fits
the data on the process of strategy-making during this period better than the emergent model.

**Ronald Reagan and the Culmination of Containment**

The Containment grand strategy culminated with the presidency of Ronald Reagan. The 1980s reveal the explanatory power of both the design and the emergence models, because an ambitious grand strategic vision was often linked with the Reagan administration's foreign and defense policies, particularly after the end of the Cold War. President Reagan came into office with very strong beliefs about America's role in the world and about the Soviet Union. His worldview resembled the idealist, Truman-era strategic vision much more so than the deviations from the early version of Containment, such as détente, that followed the Vietnam War. In fact, in its first years the Reagan administration re-designed American grand strategy in ways that went beyond mere containment and resonated more with the aggressive ideas of NSC-68, such as rollback, and the perceived futility of negotiating with an implacable ideological enemy. However, Reagan's actual decisions, particularly in his second term, had more in common with the traditional Containment strategic framework described in the five principles than with Reagan's initial grand strategic plans. Moreover, in terms of the quality of the strategy-making process, the Reagan presidency is infamous for its lack of discipline and structure: Reagan replaced his National Security Advisor no less than five times. Deliberate process is not a notion often associated with the workings of the Reagan White House. Thus, the conclusion of this section is that the emergence model finds more support during the Reagan era than the design model.
Ronald Reagan's early rhetoric fit squarely in the Truman-esque, idealist vision of the US as leader of the liberal forces engaged in a global struggle against the repressive forces of communism represented by the Soviets and their proxies. This is congruent with the first principle of the Containment strategy, the focus on a global fight against communism, and the third principle, regarding America’s special leadership role in this fight. In fact, Reagan often invoked Truman in his speeches:

Harry Truman once said that ultimately our security and the world’s hopes for peace and human progress 'lie not in measures of defense or in the control of weapons but in the growth and expansion of freedom and self-government.' And tonight, we declare anew to our fellow citizens of the world: freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few; it is the universal right of all God’s children... Our mission is to nourish and defend freedom and democracy and to communicate these ideas everywhere we can.¹⁷⁰

The Soviet Union, in one of Reagan’s immortal phrases, represented an “evil empire” that the United States needed to oppose “with all our might.”¹⁷¹ His image of America was that of the leader of the free world, of American exceptionalism, not of just another great power. Reagan talked about a "sense of responsibility, a new sense of confidence in America and the universal principles and ideals on which our free system is based. It is not an arrogant demand that others adopt our ways. It’s a realistic belief in the relative and proven success of the American experiment.” The President was an ardent believer in universal values and in the US role to support the spread of those values around the world: “freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few, but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings.”

Reagan’s view of the international system resembled the tenets of the “Democratic Peace Theory” that became fashionable in academic circles in the two decades following the

¹⁷⁰ Reagan, “State of the Union (1985)”
¹⁷¹ Smith, America’s Mission, 270-71.
end of the Cold War: “True peace rests on the principles of individual freedom, human rights, national self-determination, and respect for the rule of law.... Freedom and democracy are the best guarantors of peace.... The rights of the individual and the rule of law are as fundamental to peace as arms control. A government which does not respect its citizens’ rights and its international commitments to protect those rights is not likely to respect its international undertakings.”\textsuperscript{172} Even though he was not often criticized for being overly “academic” in his thinking, it is important to recognize that in his own distinctive way Reagan’s theoretical understanding of the international system was a coherent one that had considerable academic support in later years, and one that buttressed American grand strategy in the post-Cold War era as well. The goals, vision, and theoretical worldviews espoused by Reagan thus were very much part of a coherent grand strategy, and they fit in with the fifth principle of the Containment grand strategy, on promoting and defending a liberal world order based on American political and economic ideals of democracy and free trade.

Despite the clarity in Reagan’s mind on vision and goals, however, his administration went through an important transformation from the first term to the second. This transformation is the subject of a growing debate in the historiography of his foreign policy. One school of thought argues that Reagan followed through on the initial plans he laid out early in his presidency, and thus had one planned grand strategy throughout. Some proponents of the design model, such as Paul Lettow and Tom Mahnken, hold the view that the administration’s grand strategy fits the tenets of this model: “The Reagan strategy documents, among the most sophisticated of the post-World War II era, established

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
guidance that the Administration followed successfully over seven years. Significantly, they allowed for flexibility in exactly how each strategy would be pursued, giving the Administration leeway to make adjustments over time while still pursuing a coherent plan.  

As Henry Nau contends, Ronald Reagan did not change his strategy from his first term to the second. He used the arms build-up in the first term to enable the arms reductions in his second. Will Inboden contends that despite the contradictions, it is wrong to split the presidency into two: Reagan designed and implemented a grand strategy of rollback all along. The early strategy directives advocating the defeat of the Soviet Union as opposed to mere coexistence were implemented through a number of programs in later years, such as SDI and the “Project Democracy” that led to the formation of the National Endowment for Democracy.

The second historical interpretation, of two different eras in Reagan’s grand strategy, was put most directly by John Gaddis: the Reagan administration “put forward no comprehensive strategy for ending the Cold War. That would emerge only gradually, in response to what happened after Reagan entered the White House. [emph.added]” Jeremi Suri also belongs to this second school of thought: “Reagan did not have a “plan” of any sort to end the Cold War. Instead, he had grown apprehensive, like his Soviet counterparts, that superpower tensions were spiraling out of control.” In line with the second school of thought, my thesis will argue that the changes that the administration made from its plans were not mere “adjustments,” but rather fundamental reformulations that call into question

---

173 Lettow and Mahnken, “Getting Serious.”
175 Inboden, “Paradox of the Reagan NSC.”
176 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 350. The same argument is made in detail in Gaddis, We Now Know; Prados, How the Cold War Ended; Suri, “Explaining the End,” and Mann, Rebellion of Ronald Reagan, among others.
177 Suri, “Explaining the End,” 71.
the extent to which the initial designs provided the "guidance" claimed by design proponents. In order to do that, I will first lay out in some detail the two most important plans produced by the Reagan administration, and then will analyze how well their subsequent actions matched these plans.

Ronald Reagan's initial grand strategy design is captured in two National Security Decision Directives (NSDD) adopted in May 1982 and January 1983, respectively: NSDD 32, "U.S. National Security Strategy," and NSDD 75, "U.S. Relations with the USSR." These documents were later described by Reagan scholar Paul Lettow as “the fundamental, authoritative statements of U.S. national security policy during the Reagan administration.”178 Adopted midway through the first term of his presidency, these strategic plans offered a glimpse into the administration’s planned grand strategy. NSDD-32 was specifically designed to establish “a definitive strategic rationale and agenda to guide all aspects of national security policy”179, while NSDD-75 was a follow-up that focused on the USSR, the main target of Reagan’s global grand strategy. The two documents taken together show how the Reagan administration initially attempted to revisit the rollback policy considered in NSC-68 and the pre-Solarium days of the Eisenhower administration.

In unambiguous language, NSDD-32 lists as a global objective of US national security policy to “contain and reverse the expansion of Soviet control and military presence throughout the world.”180 Moreover, the administration would also move to destabilize the communist system both in USSR and around the globe. NSDD-32 sought to “weaken the Soviet alliance system by forcing the USSR to bear the brunt of its economic shortcomings,

---

178 Lettow, Ronald Reagan, 56.
179 Ibid., 63.
and to encourage long-term liberalizing and nationalist tendencies within the Soviet Union and allied countries.”¹⁸¹ In order to achieve these goals, NSDD 32 called on the US government to use all instruments of a grand strategy by integrating “a set of strategies including diplomatic, informational, economic/political and military components.”¹⁸² Shortly after the adoption of this secret directive, Reagan offered the public a glimpse of this ambitious, idealist strategy when he declared in his famous speech before the British Parliament that the West should capitalize on the manifest political and economic failures of the Soviet/communist system and wage a “campaign for democracy. ” In the long term, he said, the “march of freedom and democracy will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history.”¹⁸³ Thus, Reagan talked forcefully about reaching American preeminence in the international arena, not just settling for a bipolar order with the Soviets as the other superpower in a “balance of power” arrangement.¹⁸⁴ More so than many of his predecessors, his grand strategy reflected a vision for the United States’ unique role and responsibility as the “last, best hope of man on earth,”¹⁸⁵ an emphatic confirmation of the third principle of Containment.

One of the key architects of that speech was the NSC Director for Soviet Affairs, Richard Pipes, a Harvard historian who was a powerful critic of détente and a proponent of a much tougher anti-communist strategy. Later that year, Pipes was also tasked with drafting NSDD 75, a follow-up paper to NSDD-32, which would further detail the Reagan Administration’s grand strategy with respect to the Soviet Union. In his memoirs, Pipes

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 2.
¹⁸² Ibid., 1.
¹⁸³ Reagan, “Promoting Democracy and Peace.”
¹⁸⁴ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 351.
¹⁸⁵ Reagan, “City Upon a Hill.”
writes about the differences between Reagan’s views, which he shared, and those held by many State Department officials at the time. Pipes argued that “the policy of containment, which remained one of the foundation stones of US-Soviet policy, had long been overtaken by events.” The Soviets found ways to expand their influence via non-military means all around the world (Ethiopia, Angola, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua) and the West had been unable to counter these moves; moreover, when the US tried to use military force to stanch communist expansion in Vietnam, it proved very costly and impossible to do. Pipe’s conclusion was that “it was a hopeless undertaking to try to prevent its further spread at the periphery: one had to strike at the very heart of Soviet imperialism, its system.” The foundations of détente and of the Kennan/realist version of containment were based on the notion that the US should attempt to influence Soviet behavior. On the contrary, Pipes explained, “Following what I sense to be the President’s belief, I, by contrast, argue that behavior is a consequence of the system and that our policies aim at modifying the system as a prerequisite for changed behavior.”

NSDD-75 states three main objectives of US Cold War grand strategy:

- To contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism by competing effectively on a sustained basis with the Soviet Union in all international arenas -- particularly in the overall military balance and in geographical regions of priority concern to the United States. This will remain the primary focus of U.S. policy toward the USSR.

- To promote, within the narrow limits available to us, the process of change in the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic political and economic system in which the power of the privileged ruling elite is gradually reduced. The U.S. recognizes that Soviet aggressiveness has deep roots in the internal system, and that relations with the USSR should therefore take into account whether or not they help to strengthen this system and its capacity to engage in aggression.

---

186 Pipes, *Vixi*, 197.
187 Ibid., 198.
To engage the Soviet Union in negotiations to attempt to reach agreements which protect and enhance U.S. interests and which are consistent with the principle of strict reciprocity and mutual interest. This is important when the Soviet Union is in the midst of a process of political succession.

The key grand strategic issue, Pipes recollects, revolved around the second paragraph, which noted that the Soviet internal system needed to be changed, not merely Soviet behavior. The qualifier "within the narrow limits" was added at the insistence of the State Department, despite his objections, but nevertheless he regarded this whole paragraph as a "great victory over State and the conventional wisdom of the Sovietological community." The first element of the strategy, containing and reversing Soviet gains by competing in all international arenas, was reinforcing the Rollback grand strategic idea present in NSDD-32. As we have seen, even though Truman and Eisenhower discussed such a policy in NSC-68 and Project Solarium, they ultimately dismissed it. Now, Reagan adopted it for the first time as official policy, and further confirmed it later on in what pundits called the Reagan Doctrine – the assistance of anti-Communist insurgents around the world in their fight against pro-Soviet governments. Hence, Reagan’s designed grand strategy not only abandoned détente, but rather than simply returning to containment it also stipulated “rollback” and the pressuring of the Soviet system itself as core objectives. According to a memo written by the National Security Adviser William Clark, “[this third objective] represents a new objective of U.S. policy. The basic premise behind this new approach is that it makes little sense to seek to stop Soviet imperialism externally while helping to strengthen the regime internally.” This move marked a departure from the first principle

188 Ibid., 201.
189 Lettow, Ronald Reagan, 79.
of the Containment grand strategy, as the US now sought more than merely containing the 
expansion of communism, looking instead to also reverse its previous gains.

The grand strategic approach designed by Reagan in the first term underwent 
important changes as his presidency progressed. The emergent model explains these 
differences between his foreign policy decisions in the second term and to plans laid out in 
the first better than the design model does. Unexpected external events such as the rise of 
Gorbachev in the USSR and domestic political pressures following the misadventures in 
Central America were some of the key factors contributing to these changes, and they surely 
pushed the administration to reconsider some of its initial plans. The design model certainly 
does not require that governments stick rigidly to their playbook in light of changing 
circumstances. The fact that Reagan deviated from initial plans does not inherently 
disconfirm the planning model. Some level of flexibility and adaptation is to be expected for 
designed strategies, even if not to the same extent as for the emergent ones. However, in 
Reagan’s case the changes were not mere tactical adaptations. They were significant 
deviations from the initial plans at the highest level of the grand-strategy principles.

Even though he adopted a very hard line towards the Soviet Union early on in his 
presidency, the president changed his tone and positions later on and followed a less 
combative strategy than was laid out in NSDD-32 and NSDD-75. But before addressing some 
of these changes, it is also important to acknowledge one important domain of grand 
strategy, military strategy, where Reagan implemented a series of decisions congruent with 
his early plans. The Reagan administration increased the Pentagon’s budget from $171 
billion in 1981 to $376 billion in 1986. It revived the B-1 bomber, and accelerated the 
deployment of MX ICBMs and the Trident submarine, and increased the size of the Navy 
from 454 to 600 ships. Most controversially, it launched the $23 billion Strategic Defense
Initiative (SDI), a national ballistic missile defense program regarded by Reagan as a great way to regain the “offensive” in the strategic competition against the Soviets by shifting the focus on an area of US competitive advantage–high technology – where the Soviets would have difficulty matching US efforts effectively.\textsuperscript{190} Thus, in terms of restoring American military power, the President did his best to follow through on his initial grand strategic plans and launch a military build-up. Inboden and Nau are right to argue that some aspects of the initial plans, such as this military build-up, carried over throughout his presidency, and decisions on the military build-up and SDI are coded as planned. But Reagan’s second term grand strategy was about a lot more than military spending, and in other areas there is far less congruence between the initial plans and later actions.

In other aspects of Reagan’s grand strategy, his administration’s decisions shifted significantly from earlier plans. First, in terms of his view of the Soviet Union and of relations with it, Reagan went from calling it an “Evil Empire” in 1983 to declaring in 1988 that “I was talking about another time, another era.”\textsuperscript{191} While in the first term Reagan had frosty relations, and no face-to-face meetings, with the Soviet leadership, and approached arms control negotiations very cautiously, in the second term he built a much better working relationship with a new and rather different kind of Kremlin leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. Furthermore, Reagan adopted some positions on arms control that drew criticism from his conservative supporters, such as talking about banning nuclear weapons completely or signing a treaty at the Washington Summit in 1987 removing most intermediate-range nuclear missiles from Europe. The relationship that Reagan built with Gorbachev fits into the traditional framework of Containment grand strategy better than the

\textsuperscript{190} Powaski, \textit{The Cold War}, 233, 247.
\textsuperscript{191} Smith, \textit{America’s Mission}, 272.
rollback grand strategic designs put forward early in the Reagan presidency. The emphasis on negotiations with Moscow while building up US military power and countering Soviet expansionist designs, economic pressures, an informational campaign to counter communist propaganda, all of these were staples of US grand strategy since Truman’s days, with the arguably partial exception of the détente period. One of the reasons for the shift to traditional Containment later in his Presidency is that the most hard-line members of the administration, such as Pipes, Allen, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, and CIA Director William Casey left the administration around 1982-1983, or lost their influence in favor of more moderate Republicans, such as the new Secretary of State George Shultz. Another reason, and perhaps the more significant one, is that Reagan’s view of the Soviet Union changed as he got to know Gorbachev better. In his memoirs, the president wrote that following their summits he concluded that “Gorbachev had the intelligence to admit Communism was not working, the courage to battle for change, and, ultimately, the wisdom to introduce the beginnings of democracy, individual freedom and free enterprise.”

In regards to the “freedom agenda,” despite the President’s rhetoric in official NSC documents and speeches supporting liberty anywhere and everywhere, in practice the record is much more mixed. While Reagan, through the CIA, always supported anti-Soviet democratic forces in places like Poland, he was also influenced early on by UN Ambassador’s Jeanne Kirkpatrick’s argument that supporting pro-American dictators was needed to combat communism. Thus, the Reagan administration offered its support initially to illiberal actors in places like Panama, the Philippines, El-Salvador, and Chile. Gradually,

192 The argument that Reagan pursued an implicit containment grand strategy, despite its early plans and rhetoric to the contrary, is also made in Zakaria, “Reagan Grand Strategy,” and Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 353-76.
Kirkpatrick’s influence waned as she left the administration and new members such as the new assistant secretary of State for human rights, Elliott Abrams, pushed strongly for withdrawing support from Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and helping pro-democracy forces in Chile, despite the President’s initial reservations. Overall, however, the Reagan administration was very selective in its choice of which “freedom fighters” to support, and containing Soviet/communist influence, one of the enduring principles of the Containment strategy, remained a more powerful force in making these decisions than the desire to promote democracy. Perhaps the best evidence for this is the funding of patently anti-democratic, but also anti-communist, insurgents under the aegis of the Reagan Doctrine in Nicaragua (the infamous Contras), in Afghanistan (the even more infamous Mujahedeen), and in Angola (the UNITA).

The Reagan administration was also far less adventurous in military terms than some of its rhetoric and strategic plans might have suggested. Reagan’s largest anti-communist operation was in the tiny island of Grenada, and he did not hesitate to back away from Lebanon after the terrorist attack on the Marine barracks in 1983. The support for the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan or the Contras in Nicaragua was limited to arms transfers, and the CIA also offered assistance to anti-communist forces in other parts of the world through covert operations. A relevant point for the emergent-process hypothesis of strategy-making is that these decisions, much like the decisions to launch SDI or to impose economic sanctions on the USSR, did not come out of elaborate strategy reviews. Reagan and a very small number of his close advisers decided on these matters and then let everyone else in the cabinet know about their decisions. As former National Security

---

194 Jentleson, “Presidential Beliefs.”
Adviser Bill Clark recollects, “Few of these initiatives were discussed at cabinet meetings. The president made his decisions with two or three advisers in the room.” Therefore, the decision-making process did not follow from written plans, be they the initial plans or later ones developed in light of the new changes in the international environment. Instead, the President followed his instincts, his own personal worldview, and the advice of a few of his close confidants. One question remaining is whether the changes made in the second term were so divergent from those of the first term as to be considered ad-hoc decisions. As the above analysis showed, however, the second term decisions were mostly in line with most of the tradition principles of Containment that came to characterize that grand strategy since the Truman era. Reagan’s initial designs to replace containment with a more aggressive rollback policy proved short-lived, and in the end his administration, in broad terms, reverted back to the traditional approach to the Cold War.

---


The Cold War ended for all practical purposes in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the overthrow of communist regimes all around Eastern Europe without any opposition from the Soviet Union. The latter entity would eventually fall apart in 1991, when Moscow transitioned from being governed by the Soviet Communist Party to a quasi-democratic form of government. Thus, close to fifty years of geopolitical and ideological competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, and between the capitalist and communist systems, came to an unexpectedly sudden conclusion. The end of the Cold War caused the most significant disruption in U.S. grand strategy since the emergence of Containment in the aftermath of World War II. The Washington national security community found itself without the overarching threat that largely caused the US national security apparatus to come about and grow in size for the previous half a century. The Cold War was so much the organizing principle of US grand strategy in the second half of the twentieth century that the period immediately following it came to be known as simply the “post-Cold War Era.”

As discussed in the previous chapter, most of the grand strategy literature for the Cold War era contends that the United States followed a broad strategy of Containment, and that the strategy was generally planned. For the 1991-2008 era, however, the scholarship

---

1 The end of the Cold War is difficult to periodize precisely, given the lack of a formal “peace agreement” as would be the case in a traditional military conflict, and the gradual dissolution of the Eastern bloc during 1989-1991. For the purpose of this thesis, I considered it most useful to begin my analysis of the Post-Cold War era in 1991, the year when the attention of US leaders began to seriously shift away from the Soviet threat and sustained debate began on the next strategic era.
on American grand strategy is much more fragmented, with a number of different threads running through the scholarly debates and policy analysis. The decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall was dominated by the search for a new grand strategy to replace Containment, as both the George H. W. Bush (Bush 41) and Clinton administrations consciously set about designing a new vision for America's role in the world. During the 1990s, the policy and scholarly debates generally revolved around two main questions: first, how well did the Bush 41 or Clinton administrations do in their quest to find a new coherent and consistent grand strategy to replace Containment?; and second, given the general scholarly skepticism about the strategic performance of Washington’s post-Cold War leaders, what are the relative merits of the alternative grand strategies for the United States? The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, appeared to mark the transition to a new strategic era, dominated by a “War on Terror” against Islamist extremism. Following George W. Bush’s (Bush 43) articulation of his post-9/11 grand strategic designs encapsulated in the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS), the literature debates generally focused on analyzing the merits of Bush’s “War on Terror” paradigm and of the subsequent policy decisions flowing from it, particularly the Iraq War.

3 The subsection of the grand strategy literature dedicated to debating the pros and cons of different possible overarching frameworks is not directly relevant to my thesis about how the grand strategy was formed. For a detailed overview of this 1990s debate, see Posen and Ross, ”Competing Visions.”
4 There is a large literature on the “Bush Doctrine” of preemption and the adoption of a post-9/11 new grand strategy focused narrowly on the War on Terror. Among others, see Daalder and Lindsay, America Unbound; Jervis, “Understanding the Bush Doctrine,” and ”The Compulsive Empire”; Schmidt and Williams, ”Bush Doctrine and The Iraq War”; Mearsheimer, ”Imperial by Design”; Crawford, ”Road to Global Empire”; Halper and Clarke, America Alone; Talbott, ”Unilateralism”; Fukuyama, America at the Crossroads; Hakan Tunc, ”Preemption in the Bush Doctrine”; Betts, American Force Ikenberry, ”End of the Neo-Conservative Moment”; Monten, ”Roots of the Bush Doctrine”; Miller, ”Explaining Change in U.S. Grand Strategy”; Brands, From Berlin to Baghdad; Marshall, “Remaking
In the context of the theoretical discussion of the formation of grand strategy being developed in this study, the key question for my thesis is whether the major foreign policy strategic decisions of this era are best understood, on balance, as being part of one (or more) planned grand strategies, as part of an emergent grand strategy, or as largely ad-hoc and thus part of no strategy. The literature offers support for a number of different answers to this question. These scholarly arguments and debates will be fully engaged as the chapter delves into analyzing the plans, policies and decisions undertaken by US government officials, but a brief summary of the landscape of the debates here will foreshadow my argument and its place in the literature.

A majority of scholars criticized Bush 41 and Clinton for failing to develop a coherent grand strategy: some deplored the lack of an overarching framework and the reliance on ad-hoc, non-strategic decision-making, while another nuanced version of this line of argument criticizes the internal contradictions of the proposed grand strategic frameworks rather than their complete absence. For both these subsets of scholars, there was not a grand strategy coherent and consistent enough to be worthy of the name during the 1990s, thus confirming the expectations of the ad-hoc model. Similarly, many contend that Bush 43 brought about a dramatic change in foreign policy after 9/11, a shift planned in the 2002 NSS document. Therefore, for these scholars the design model receives solid support after 9/11, but they don’t consider that there was enough continuity between

---

the World”; Newhouse, Imperial America; Renshon and Suefeld, Understanding the Bush Doctrine; Snyder, “Imperial Temptations”; Mann, Rise of the Vulcans; Gaddis, “A Grand Strategy of Transformation”; Lieber, The American Era; Litwak, Regime Change.

The view that the Bush Doctrine represented a sharp change was dominant but not universal. For contrary arguments, see Leffler, “9/11 and American Foreign Policy”; Kagan, The World America Made; Posen, “Stability and Change”; Feaver, “Grand Strategy at Crossroads.”

5 See fn 2 above for references to many of the works in this group
Clinton and Bush to speak of a single grand strategy during the entire post-CW era. Yet other scholars, myself included, perceive more continuity and the contours of a single grand strategy during the entire era, even if they differ among themselves on what were its main defining elements that spanned the whole period.

The case for a single grand strategy of American Global Leadership (AGL)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States found itself as the lone remaining global superpower. In response to this, the United States could have decided to construe its interests in narrow security terms as academic realists define them, remove its forces from many Cold War hot spots, and rely on offshore balancing to ward off distant challenges to US security and economic interests. Or, the United States could have embraced a vigorous liberal institutionalist view and put international law, institution building and multilateral partnerships at the center of its grand strategy. Instead of either of these two plausible alternatives, three successive presidents sooner or later came to agree that the United States' security and prosperity are best served by pursuing a grand strategy I would call American Global Leadership (AGL).

---

6 See fn 4 above for references to many of the works in this group
7 For some recent works that perceive a fairly consistent single grand strategy for the entire period under study, see Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlfforth, “Don’t Come Home America”; Feaver, “Grand Strategy at Crossroads”; Layne, Peace of Illusions; Posen, “The Case for Restraint”; Friedman et al., “Restraining Order”; Bacevich, American Empire; Preble, The Power Problem. Even though there are some common themes, these authors each choose to emphasize different elements as the defining ones characterizing the grand strategy, and they do not focus on the formation (my main concern) but rather on its success/failure dimension. I return to this literature in Chapter 4 to offer some tentative implications of my thesis for this debate.
8 This was the grand strategy proposed by prominent realist experts; for example, see Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, “Come Home America,” and Layne, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing.”
9 For a typical argument along these lines, see Ikenberry, “Liberal International Renewal.”
10 For stylistic reasons, I will refer to the grand strategy described in the following pages simply as AGL.
Like all grand strategies, AGL’s overall objective was securing America’s security and prosperity. Unlike the Cold War era, when the overarching threat of Soviet communism guided the formation early on of a Containment framework to combat it, during the post-Cold War era US strategists faced a much more uncertain threat-environment. The more short-term concerns were threats to regional stability due to local intra- and inter-state conflicts, including ethnic violence; the proliferation of nuclear weapons to “rogue regimes”; and later in the period the rise of the al-Qaeda global terrorist network and Islamist extremism. The longer-term threats were thought to be the rise of a hostile power capable of challenging America’s interests and its allies in key geographical regions, or even globally.

In addition to mitigating new threats, American leaders also saw opportunities for consolidating and building upon the gains brought by the end of the Cold War in the worldwide advancement of democratic institutions, open markets, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. In order to meet these goals, the vision for the role the US needed to play in the world was that of a global superpower uniquely capable to take the lead in defending not solely its homeland, but international stability broadly defined and consequently the current beneficial world order.

The logic that underpinned the grand strategy was based on the idea that Washington will pay the costs associated with its role of global leadership for two reasons. First, for the more immediate concerns, the three administrations sooner or later came to believe that they need to engage directly and take a leadership role in addressing new threats to international security, or otherwise these problems would harm core US national security and economic interests, and/or those of U.S. allies. While the United States tried to get other powers to contribute to addressing threats to regional and global security, and it preferred to act as part of multilateral coalitions and through international institutions,
Washington nevertheless did not let the lack of broad international support prevent it from pursuing a desired course of action. Second, in the longer-term, the U.S. global military presence was thought to allow the U.S. to “shape” the security environment in a peaceful direction by deterring (or punishing) aggression and dissuading potentially hostile powers from military build-ups that could threaten the stability of the current world order. In addition to shaping the security environment militarily by virtue of its extensive alliance system and its unmatched military power, Washington officials also looked to advance a politico-economic liberal world order because the spread of open markets and political freedom was thought to make for a more prosperous and peaceful world, one beneficial to US interests and values alike.

In practice, the post-Cold War AGL grand strategy rested on five principles, listed in the order of priority generally assigned to them when trade-offs had to be made:

**First Principle:** The U.S. protected and expanded its alliances in key regions of the world, and maintained a dominant global military presence.

**Second Principle:** The U.S. used force whenever it considered necessary not only to address immediate threats to the U.S. homeland, but also when it perceived threats to international stability more broadly defined.

**Third Principle:** The U.S. preferred to act with multilateral coalitions and to obtain international legitimacy for its actions through U.N. resolutions when possible, and it attempted to build working partnerships with other emerging great powers.

**Fourth Principle:** The U.S. promoted the expansion of free trade, free markets, and economic globalization.

**Fifth Principle:** The U.S. promoted the expansion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.
Sources and standards of evidence for testing the competing models

For better or worse, grand strategy is a subfield of the security studies literature that deals with broad generalizations, and the framework above is no exception. Analysis at the grand strategic level is almost inherently just a little better than a mile wide and an inch deep, given the challenge of integrating into a single argument disparate policies and actions taken in different contexts over large periods of time. The principles above attempt to accurately approximate broad patterns of America’s post-Cold War foreign policy, and to account for more of the universe of evidence than alternative explanations such as “no grand strategy” or “multiple grand strategies” (New World Order, Enlargement, War on Terror, etc). Given that grand strategic analysis is based on malleable concepts such as vision, worldview, leadership, principles, or pillars, precise quantitative measurements and thresholds of the kind employed in other areas of social science are impossible. Having said that, what grand strategy scholars usually do is to examine whether the plans, policy decisions, and doctrines adopted by presidents are more or less consonant with frameworks or theoretical principles stipulated beforehand. Therefore, my standard of evidence here is showing that the most important grand strategic choices of post-Cold War American foreign policy fit within the continuity framework above more so than with alternatives emphasizing no grand strategy or fundamental changes between administrations and thus no single grand strategy. Another caveat is that the continuity argument does not require that there were no deviations from the framework or that the principles were always prioritized in the order I suggested, but rather that such deviations were short-lasting and that US grand strategy more often than not regressed to the mean, a “mean” best approximated by my framework above.
Engaging in a more detailed discussion of the contours of US grand strategy after the Cold War is necessary because, unlike the case of Containment, there is no commonly accepted view in the strategy community of what framework (if any) guided US foreign policy for the post-Cold War era. However, the focus of my dissertation remains on showing how the plans, policy decisions, and doctrines adopted by the three administrations are best understood as designed, emergent, or ad-hoc/bureaucratic. In order to test my theoretical expectations regarding the existence and formation of the post-Cold War grand strategy stipulated above, I will analyze the key policies and decisions from this era in the military, geopolitical/diplomatic, and international-political-economy realms. Each episode will be analyzed through the prism of two questions, and coded according to the criteria laid out at the end of my introductory chapter: 1. Is it consonant with the principles I stipulated above and thus in support of my continuity argument?, and 2. Is it best explained by design, by emergent learning, or by non-strategic ad-hocery?

My argument is that the overall objectives, vision for the US role in the world, internal logic, and principles of the AGL framework originated in the second half of the George H. W. Bush administration. In order to determine to what extent the AGL framework better accounts for Bush 41’s policies and actions than an "ad-hoc" view, I analyze the administration’s goals, its strategic vision for the US role in the world, and three policy areas of lasting importance for the development of the grand strategy: 1. The geopolitical calculus underpinning the post-Cold War US defense strategy, America’s commitment to its alliances, and its relations with emerging powers, 2. The search for a use of force doctrine, and 3. The promotion of free trade and democracy. These three issues incorporate all five pillars of the AGL grand strategy, thus allowing for an effort to rebut the "no strategy" criticisms. At the same time, discussing the impact of major planning efforts
such as the New World Order framework codified in the White House 1991 National Security Strategy and the Pentagon efforts (the classified Defense Planning Guidance of 1992 published as Regional Defense Strategy in 1993) provides a way to analyze the relative explanatory power of the design and emergence models.

For Clinton, the three episodes under review are Clinton’s military interventions, his policy of NATO Enlargement while also pursuing good relations with Russia, and the promotion of free trade through the formation of NAFTA. The designs of the administration to be assessed are their initial approach referred to as “assertive multilateralism,” their Enlargement grand strategy laid out in a speech by national security adviser Tony Lake and described as the intended “successor to Containment,” and the more formal 1994 NSS titled “A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement,” a document updated yearly.

For Bush 43, I will begin by discussing how his policies, in areas other than the War on Terror, fit with the AGL principles rather then his campaign-era critique of some of the Clinton administration’s foreign policy. Second, I will analyze whether the common view of him adopting a new planned grand strategy after 9/11, and a new use of force doctrine, is supported by the evidence. And third, I will show how the design, emergence and ad-hoc models can explain the action’s development of their approach to fight the War on Terror. The main question is whether the 2002 NSS document and the launching of the Iraq war confirm the claims of many critics that Bush 43 adopted of designed preemptive/preventive war doctrine to target the nexus of WMD/terrorism and a grand strategic plan for democratizing the Middle East by force.
Sources:

• Primary sources:

  o Unclassified documents include: White House-issued National Security Strategy documents, other government strategic reviews such as the Regional Defense Strategy of 1992 and the Quadrennial Defense Reviews (QDRs), and speeches.

  o Recently declassified documents, many of them unavailable to previous scholars, include National Security Archives collections on the “Formation of the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance,” “Humanitarian Intervention,” the War on Terror/aftermath of 9/11, and the lead-up to “The [second] Iraq War.”

  These collections include internal drafts and transcripts from the period during the formation of final strategy documents and the adoption of major decisions. Other declassified materials, particularly a number of key Presidential Decision Directives, are now available thanks to the Presidential libraries and the Federation of American Scientists website.

  o Recent memoirs from almost all the major players involved in the making of grand strategy in the period under study, complemented also by a few book chapters and essays by mid-level officials. Moreover, the memoirs of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Douglas Feith are accompanied by online websites where a large number of previously classified documents are now available. Many of these were also unavailable to scholars until very recently.

  o Interviews with former officials

• Secondary Sources:
The scholarly and popular history literature is necessarily limited given the short amount of time passed since the events, but a number of books and articles proved useful in the analysis nevertheless.

Other secondary resources include journalistic, behind-the-scenes accounts from well-sourced reporters who interviewed the participants for their news stories and books. Elizabeth Drew and Bob Woodward in particular offered highly detailed accounts of the deliberations and inner workings of the Clinton and George W Bush administrations.

**George H. W. Bush and the Origins of the AGL Grand Strategy**

The overall goals, vision, logic, and the five principles of the AGL grand strategic framework first developed during the latter half of the George H.W. Bush administration. This is not how many analysts judged his administration, however, as Bush 41 was often criticized for failing to formulate a new grand strategy for the post-Cold War era. Terry Diebel expressed a common critique of the president’s foreign policy: “Little in the administration’s actions so far has revealed a capacity to formulate a strategic design for the post-Cold War world or a president who knows where he wants to take U.S. foreign and national security policy in the 1990s and beyond...The foreign policy of George Bush displays an intriguing mixture of competence and drift, of tactical mastery set in a larger of indirection”

Similarly, Jeremi Suri claimed that the administration acted ad-hoc rather than adopting a grand strategic framework similar to Containment: the Bush administration did not “think seriously about how it wanted to manage state-to-state relations in anything

---

11 Diebel, “Mastery of Inaction.” Hal Brands concurs with this assessment: “The Bush administration’s attempts to define a post-Cold War policy ended in frustration... Bush’s presidency did not provide a new American grand strategy.” Brands, *From Berlin to Baghdad*, 100.
beyond ad hoc arrangements and vague ideas about democratization, development, and regional defense.”

In a catchphrase popular in Washington at the time, Bush was accused of lacking “the vision thing.” In fact, Richard Haass, one of his top NSC staffers, complained of how Bush was personally rather uncomfortable with “grand doctrine” and with debating “fundamental concepts and principles.” This is also the view of former Bush-era Pentagon official Eric Edelman, who notes that “Bush and Scowcroft lacked the inclination to engage in speculative ‘grand strategy’ or the ‘vision thing.’ He quotes an anonymous NSC staffer also saying that the ‘1991 NSS was consciously intended to say as little as possible.’ And even when Bush attempted to elevate his rhetoric to the grand strategic level by advocating “a new world order,” skeptics criticized him for naïveté (“The Bush administration was an era of illusion and false hopes in American policy: the false dawn of a new world order”) and for failing to integrate his tactical successes into a long-term strategy.

First of all, the critics’ view of Bush as focusing on tactical challenges rather than on developing a future grand strategy does indeed fit well with the first two years of the administration. Other than an effort by the Pentagon to adapt defense planning and budgeting to the new realities of a post-Cold War era, the Bush 41 foreign policy team spent a large amount of time early on managing the end of the Cold War in Europe, working towards achieving a peaceful German re-unification, and dealing with the break-up of the

12 Suri, “Clear Skies Over the Horizon,” 615.
13 Goldgeier and Chollet, From 11/9 to 9/11, 9.
16 “The victory of Desert Storm, therefore, did not become the first step in a clear, vigorous, and steady policy of active peacekeeping in the world after the Cold War. The hasty, confused, and unsatisfactory conclusion of the Gulf War became instead the pattern for a hesitant, confused and unsatisfactory foreign policy carried for the rest of the Bush administration.” Kagan and Kagan, While America Sleeps, 256.
Soviet Union. However, Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 forced them to shift their focus towards something they seemed reluctant to do initially, i.e., accept that the Cold War was over and move on to dealing with the challenges and opportunities available in a new post-Cold War strategic era. Just as the United States engaged in containing the Soviet Union in 1946 and 1947 before the grand strategic framework of Containment fully emerged, so too did Washington act as a global leader and chief protector of the new world order in the first Gulf War before fully developing the principles of the AGL grand strategy. In retrospect, the international crisis caused by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was the key transition moment in America’s grand strategy from the Cold War view to the post-CW era. For the first time in almost fifty years, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait forced Washington to deal with a national security crisis without being able to rely on the familiar lens of Containment as the guiding principle shaping its response. The Cold War was over for all practical purposes, and the Bush administration was faced with the task of deciding how to respond to Saddam’s brazen act of aggression. More broadly, this crisis led policymakers to confront the larger question of how to think of a new international order and of America’s grand strategy in a post Cold-War era.

The Gulf War shaped the formation of an American post-Cold-War grand strategy both in the run-up to the war, when the idea of a “New World Order” emerged, and also in the aftermath of the conflict, when the White House formalized the lessons learned from this crisis in the 1991 National Security Strategy report, and the Pentagon incorporated its lessons in the strategic planning that culminated with the classified Defense Planning Guidance of 1992 and follow-on unclassified Regional Defense Strategy published in January 1993. The President’s actions and decision-making process following Iraq’s aggression supports the critics claim that (by August 1990) Bush did not have a post-Cold
War grand strategy already in place that could guide the response to this crisis, but does not support the view that Bush acted ad-hoc and moved on. Instead, I contend that the Desert Storm crisis led the administration to think harder about larger strategic questions (such as precedent for use of force, international institutions, role of US in the world, future defense requirements, etc), and Washington eventually developed most of the elements of the AGL grand strategy out of that experience in an emergent fashion.

**A New World Order? American Leadership and Bush's Search for a Use of Force Doctrine**

The argument that Bush 41 acted ad-hoc and failed to develop a grand strategy is often based on his approach to the use of force. Suri deplores the lack of an overall vision guiding his actions: “The Bush administration lacked a clear framework for explaining its small and often unsatisfactory wars.... In practice, members of the Bush administration exercised power to secure *ad hoc* U.S. interests, falsely confident that doing this would organically shape a safer and more stable international system.”17 He was also criticized for being too cautious both in following through on his initial success in the Gulf War and subsequently in deploying U.S. power to address the violent crisis brought by the break-up of Yugoslavia: “American actions were ambiguous, half-hearted, and contradictory, and the government had failed to establish a clear policy for the future, much less to provide the well-reasoned basis needed to gain support for a new world order at home and abroad.”18

Another version of this second criticism is brought by humanitarian advocates such as Samantha Power who were dismayed that despite its rhetoric of a “New World Order”

---

17 Suri, “Clear Skied Over the Horizon,” 620.
18 Kagan and Kagan, *While America Sleeps*, 266. A somewhat different criticism, not addressed here because it doesn’t directly pertain to my theoretical discussion, is that his he was also too cautious in not overthrowing Saddam Hussein’s regime after the first Gulf War: “The uncanny decision to end the Gulf War without overthrowing Saddam Hussein and leaving his apparatus of terror still largely intact... marked the stillbirth of the ‘New World Order’.” Almond, *Europe’s Backyard War*, 37.
where aggression would not be tolerated, the administration refused to intervene to stop the massacres in Bosnia: “War that spread was deemed threatening to the United States. Regardless of how many civilians died, one that remained internal was not.”19 Lastly, others criticized him for failing to truly live up to the multilateralist rhetoric he employed:

His determination to use the Security Council as an instrument of U.S. policy rather than as an agent for managing post-Cold War crises left Americans wondering whether the "new world order" was merely a euphemism for the United States as the old world order’s policeman. Regrettably, Bush may have missed a real opportunity to take up the work of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt at a historic moment in world politics.20

Defenders of the President, such as Eric Miller and Steve Yetiv, argue that the “ad-hoc/lack of vision” criticism is unfair because “insofar as he seriously and genuinely advanced the new world order concept, Bush did display a vision for how world affairs could be conducted in the post-cold war and post-Gulf crisis period,” and that the New World Order rested on three dimensions: checking aggression, collective security, and great power cooperation.21 These three factors capture well Bush’s intended approach in the aftermath of the Gulf War, but later developments diminished some of their utility for underpinning a lasting post-Cold War legacy on the use of force principle (Second Principle) of the AGL framework. The strategy development effort spurred by the Gulf War crisis, nevertheless, led to the adoption of a number of lasting elements of the AGL grand strategy, as detailed in the following pages, and it did so in a manner better explained by the emergence model than the alternatives.

---

19 Power, Problem from Hell, 288.
20 Diebel, “Mastery of Inaction,” 621.
The argument in favor of an emergent understanding of the adoption of a global leadership vision for the United States comes from Bush’s thoughts and actions following Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait. Rather than being part of any explicit design, his concept of a “New World Order” originated in a conversation with his National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, as they took a fishing trip in late August 1990, shortly after the beginning of the Gulf Crisis. In their joint memoir, Bush and Scowcroft recollect how “in the first days of the crisis we had started self-consciously to view our actions as setting a precedent for the approaching post-Cold War world…. Our foundation was the premise that the United States henceforth would be obligated to lead the world community to an unprecedented degree, as demonstrated by the Iraqi crisis, and that we should attempt to pursue our national interests, wherever possible, within a framework of concert with our friends and the international community.”22 Hence, from the beginning the response to the Gulf crisis took on more grand strategic meaning in the minds of US officials than merely reversing Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait to protect US economic interests in the oil-rich Persian Gulf region. The decision represented an emergent step towards the formation of the Second Principle of the AGL grand strategy, shaping the use of force in the post-Cold War era. The vision of a unique leadership role for Washington crystallized in the discussions surrounding this formative event.

Over the next few months leading to the American-led attack on Iraqi forces in Kuwait, and in the aftermath of the resulting conflict, the New World Order became a commonly-used slogan by the President and other senior members of his administration to describe their grand strategic vision for the post-CW world. And the concept became more

elaborated over time, encapsulating dimensions other than the initial focus on punishing aggression at the international level through UN-sanctioned multilateral interventions. Initially, the term served to place the decision to launch the Gulf War in a more idealistic framework, as President Bush was courting the support of many skeptics in Congress: “what is at stake is not simply our energy or economic security and the stability of a vital region but the prospects for peace in the post-Cold war era--the promise of a new world order based on the rule of law.” Scowcroft even admitted to a reporter that the concept was also a “catchphrase” used for domestic political purposes.

In a remarkable parallel to the formation of the Truman Doctrine, the universalist and idealistic language employed at least in part to garner Congressional and public support for the intervention in the Gulf (or aid to Greece and Turkey, respectively) came to influence the formation of American grand strategy far beyond the initial decisions. Once Bush launched the idea, he became committed to it and went on to elaborate on its meaning in more detail than he might have planned on doing initially. Despite his personal inclination to avoid “the vision thing,” there was nevertheless a serious effort to expand on the grand strategic implications of a New World Order concept throughout 1990 and 1991. In April 1991, for example, the President said that “in the coming weeks I’ll be talking in some detail about the possibility of a new world order emerging after the Cold War.” When asked by a reporter what was the main threat now that the Soviet Union was gone, Bush answered that “the enemy is instability, the enemy is uncertainty.” The solution was to maintain a relatively stable world order: as then-National Security Council staffer Robert Gates pithily

---

24 Brands, From Berlin to Baghdad, 80.
put it, “our central mission is shifting from containment of an enemy to the promotion of stability.” This is further evidence supporting the formation of Second Principle of the AGL framework, as it showed the priority put on the US military role in maintaining regional and international stability in the new era.

As for the special role the Unites States had to play in the post-Cold War era, Bush said that the United States would be the leader of the international community in the transition to this new world order. Even though collective resistance would be the way to address the threats to peace, the US would have a special role in leading this multilateral effort: “Among the nations of the world, only the United States of America has both the moral standing and the means to back it up. We’re the only nation on this Earth that could assemble the forces of peace. This is the burden of leadership and the strength that has made America the beacon of freedom in a searching world,” declared the President in the 1991 State of the Union address. One of the top State Department strategic advisers, Robert Zoelick, reflected years later on the strategic architecture Bush 41 followed: “This was a multilateralist strategy. But it did not view multilateralism solely through the lens of United Nations structures or hierarchies. This multilateral model sought to position the United States at the center of intersecting political, security, military and economic networks.” Scowcroft also explained the dual nature of the approach: “The U.S. had to be the leader. No one else could be a focal point for dealing with aggression, but it was not coercion. It was infinite consultation, cajoling, and listening to their views. We led and got our way, but no

27 Callahan, Between Two Worlds, 66.  
one felt steam-rolled.” Such quotes provide support for both the vision of the AGL framework, as well as for its Third Principle regarding the preference for multilateral action whenever possible.

This leadership vision for the role US should play in the post-Cold War world was further elaborated in the 1991 National Security Strategy published later that year:

In the 1990s, as for much of this century, there is no substitute for American leadership. Our responsibility, even in a new era, is pivotal and inescapable... Despite the emergence of new power centers, the United States remains the only state with truly global strength, reach and influence in every dimension -- political, economic and military. As we move toward the 21st century, this interdependence of peoples will grow and will continue to demand responsible American leadership.

Therefore, at the start of the post-Cold-War era, American grand strategy rested on a vision of the US as the leader of the international community, more responsible than others for protecting and promoting the principles of the new world order. The successful outcome of the war, with Saddam’s forces being pushed out of Kuwait by a US-led coalition in no more than one hundred hours and with minimal casualties, further reinforced the notion that the United States had a great positive role and responsibility to play in punishing and deterring aggressors who posed a threat to international security.

While Bush laid out the vision for an American-led world order following the Gulf Crisis, his legacy on setting the roots of the use of force principle of AGL was complicated by later developments, and gave his critics more ammunition to persuasively question his real commitment to global leadership and the NWO. The Bush Administration expected to bring about an era in which the great powers worked together in harmony at the United Nations

30 As quoted in Miller and Yetiv, “New World Order,” 63.
to deter and punish aggressors, much as they did during the Gulf War. As Bush told an audience at the Air War College in a speech on the New World Order, “This order, this ability to work together, got its first real test in the Gulf war. For the first time, a regional conflict -- the aggression against Kuwait -- did not serve as a proxy for superpower confrontation. For the first time, the United Nations Security Council, free from the clash of cold war ideologies, functioned as its designers intended -- a force for conflict resolution in collective security.”32 The designs of the Bush administration for the use of force, however, addressed only easier a case of blatant inter-state aggression in a key region for the global economy where major powers had roughly the same interests in restoring the status quo, a situation where international cooperation was not very hard to achieve. Such a scenario did not reoccur following the Gulf War.

What did occur in the 1990s were messy intra-state ethnic conflicts often accompanied by humanitarian disasters. Leading the international community and working with other great powers to confront these challenges turned out to be a lot harder than the Gulf War experience had suggested might be the case. These types of conflicts, which came to dominate the US military intervention record before 9/11, posed some difficult challenges for one particular part of Bush’s New World Order designs. He saw the United Nations as potentially becoming an important actor in the growing area of peacekeeping operations, but his views on this matter proved to be too optimistic.33 The outbreak of ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia and subsequently the humanitarian disaster in Bosnia tested

---

32 Bush, “Remarks at Maxwell Air Force Base.”
33 “My vision of a new world order foresees a United Nations with a revitalized peacekeeping function. I think most that follow the United Nations see the economic and social side of United Nations as having performed well since it was founded [but] the peacekeeping function for the most part has not been effective... I think there’s going to be new credibility for that peace keeping function, new credibility for the United States.” Bush, “Economic Club of New York.”
the grand strategic design of the New World Order, led to the beginning of a contentious
debate in Washington on the use of military force in the post-Cold-War era that continued
into the Clinton administration, and set the stage for the kinds of complex security
challenges that arose later in the 1990s. The level of violence in Bosnia escalated to
genocide and ethnic cleansing, and the images coming out of the Balkans called into doubt
President’ Bush’s proclaimed vision for a New World Order of peace, prosperity, and rule of
law under American leadership.

After some lively internal deliberations, the Bush administration decided against
using American military power to stop the bloodshed. One reason was that the
administration, despite its previous positions in the 1991 NSS on the need for active US
leadership to successfully maintain international stability, nevertheless decided that the
European powers should be the ones to primary handle this crisis given that their interests
were more immediately threatened. As Secretary of State James Baker III wrote in his
memoirs, “the Bush administration felt comfortable with the European Community’s taking
responsibility for handling the crisis in the Balkans…. Yugoslavia was in the heart of
Europe, and European interests were directly threatened…. Most important, unlike the
Persian Gulf, our vital national interests were not at stake.”34 President Bush wrote in his
diary that “We don’t want to put a dog in this fight,” apparently ignoring that his New
World Order had envisioned the United States as the guarantor of peace and stability
around the world.35 As it became clear that the Europeans were unwilling or unable to solve
the problem on their own, and the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia worsened, the

35Holbrooke, To End A War, 26-27.
administration came under public pressure to do more to stop the violence. But President Bush remained unconvinced that a US military response was the right answer, particularly as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, made public his opposition to an intervention. Bush told the press that the problems of Yugoslavia were caused by “ancient rivalries.”36 Passing the buck, President Bush answered a question about intervening in Bosnia by declaring that “I won’t do that until the military, Colin Powell, [Secretary of Defense] Cheney come to me and say, ‘Here’s what we need to do. Here’s what our mission is. And here’s how those kids are going to get out.’” Samantha Power nevertheless notes that the military estimates were often grossly exaggerated, and provided a reluctant President a convenient excuse. In a particularly poignant example, “military planners said some 50,000 U.S. ground troops would be needed to secure a thirty-mile perimeter around the airport. In fact, the airlift eventually was managed with a light UN force of some 1,000 Canadian and French forces at Sarajevo airport.” And she notes how Scowcroft conceded that the military estimates might have been “inflated.”37

In contrast to Yugoslavia, however, a humanitarian crisis in Somalia at the end of his presidency led Bush to send US troops under a UN mission to deliver food aid and medical supplies. Still, the administration delayed for more than a year between the time it vowed to send aid and the time it decided to commit US troops to deliver the aid. Colin Powell highlighted many of the possible pitfalls of an intervention given the chaotic situation on the ground and the dubious prospects for a quick transition from US-led mission to a UN peacekeeping force. Unlike the case of Bosnia, the President decided to proceed in Somalia despite some objections from the military leadership. Explaining this inconsistency

36Bush, “News Conference.”
10Power, Problem from Hell, 283.
compared to Bosnia, Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger told the *Washington Post* that Bush and his top civilian advisers felt that "this is a tragedy of massive proportions, and, underline this, one that we could do something about. We had to act." However, a detailed study by former State Department Bush-era official Jon Western concludes that the real reason might be that, following the failure to win re-election in 1992, "Bush and his advisers decided that Clinton would likely alter public attitudes toward Bosnia and launch some form of military action there. Unable to control the spin on each crisis, Bush and Powell concluded that if the United States was going to intervene in response to a humanitarian crisis, it would be in Somalia and not Bosnia."  

The Bush administration’s responses to these two crises appeared to deviate in some important ways from the plans laid out in their strategic designs in the 1991 NSS, leading some scholars to conclude that Bush’s approach was ad-hoc and that the administration did not have a coherent, strategic rationale underlying its moves. The refusal to intervene militarily in Yugoslavia, and particularly in Bosnia, where the worst atrocities occurred, is not what one would have expected given Bush’s 1991 NSS and his speeches at the time about the New World Order. Its 1991 designs on the use of force envisioned a different type of challenge than the ones they had to face. Rather than another Gulf War situation, it faced intra-state wars and civil violence, and the international community was deeply divided on how to answer and what resources to commit. The administration did not successfully predict in its plans the kind of challenges it would face in its plans, and there was no emergent doctrine yet forming on how to handle these thorny

38 Oberdorff, “The Path to Intervention.”
39 Western, “Sources of Humanitarian Intervention,” 140.
40 Brands, *From Berline to Baghdad*, 96; Suri, “Clear Skies on the Horizon”; Diebel, “Mastery and Inaction.”
situations either. As such, the humanitarian intervention in Somalia undertaken in the last weeks of his presidency, and the non-intervention in the deteriorating situation in Bosnia, presented the next president with an uncertain legacy in terms of a strategic principle for dealing with military intervention in intra-state conflicts to combat regional instability and gross human rights violations. On this issue, it is appropriate to classify the actions as ad-hoc, as his critics do, because they were not part of a design, nor were they yet part of an emergent strategic principle. A more consistent and nuanced approach to stability interventions would have to wait for the later part of the Clinton administration.

Having said that, the President's efforts to lay out a grand strategic framework after the Gulf War did lead to some other important elements of the AGL grand strategy, even though not in a way congruent with some of the more liberal internationalist rhetoric of the New World Order. Critics are right that NWO was not a lasting grand strategy, but they underestimate some other emergent principles that crystallized from the lessons learned from that conflict for American leadership and use of force. In particular, the unique global leadership role for the United States in the post-Cold War era, its responsibility for building coalitions and if necessary using force to maintain international stability, the preference for multilateral action and UN approval but willingness to use force even without them if it must (“This aggression will not stand,” declared Bush days after the crisis), all these elements of AGL came out of the Gulf War experience. Moreover, lessons learned from the war also had an impact on the development of the First Principle of AGL (global alliances and leading military presence) as well, thanks not to the White House, but to the parallel process of strategic thinking and planning done in the Pentagon.
Geopolitics: Global Alliances and Defense Planning

As the Soviet Union rapidly lost its status as a peer superpower and the Cold War threat receded, the Department of Defense faced increased pressures to reduce defense spending and adapt US forces to the post-Cold War world. Under the civilian leadership of Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz, and Principal Deputy Undersecretary for Strategy and Resources Lewis “Scooter” Libby, the Pentagon engaged in a multi-year process of overhauling America’s defense strategy and force structure, culminating with the classified 1992 Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) and its unclassified version, the Regional Defense Strategy (RDS) published in January 1993. At the same time, the military under Joint Chiefs Chairman Colin Powell prepared a parallel review that produced the "Base Force" concept. The goal of these parallel reviews was to manage the coming military drawdown in a strategically sound manner that would not put the United States national security at risk down the line: as Cheney warned a Congressional committee, “never in this century have we ever gone through one of these periods of downsizing the force and done it right.”

The Pentagon planning efforts caused a stir in Washington at the time not mainly for its military planning recommendations (cut force structure by about 25 percent from Cold War level), but for its grand strategic analysis of the US role the coming post-Cold-War strategic era. An early draft of the DPG leaked to the New York Times stated as “the prime objective” of American strategy “to prevent the reemergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that

posed formerly by the Soviet Union.” When a story on the DPG appeared on the front page of *The New York Times* in March 1992, the Bush administration came under criticism for the blunt language and the seemingly hegemonic approach to the post-Cold-War era. Some anonymous members of the administration in the White House and the State Department targeted the draft’s language, distancing themselves from its analysis and recommendations.

Grand strategy scholars described the document and its fate in harsh terms: historian Andrew Bacevich attributed the leaked draft directly to Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz by calling it “Wolfowitz’s handiwork,” and described it as “a blueprint for permanent American global hegemony” that was “quickly disowned” by the Bush administration; the revised version of the DPG, Bacevich argues echoing the conventional view, “purged of all offending references suggesting big-enchilada like aspirations.” Similarly, political scientist William Wohlforth referred to the DPG as the “rise and sudden demise of an official strategy for preserving primacy.” In short, this group of critics regarded it as a plan for global hegemony that Bush 41 rejected. Hence, they deny that the document had an important role in designing America’s grand strategy after


*Tyler, “U.S. Strategy Plan.”*

*The most comprehensive behind the scenes account of the formation of DPG, the many misconceptions surrounding it, and its legacy is offered in Edelman, “The Strange Career.” Edelman worked for Libby and Wolfowitz in the Pentagon and is one of the drafters of the DPG. Previous detailed accounts can be found in Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, 208-214, and Chollet and Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars*, 44-47.*

*Bacevich, *American Empire*, 44-45. See also Brands, *From Berlin to Baghdad*, 97. Brands has called it “pure power politics,” “essentially a blueprint for U.S. domination of the international order” that “went unheeded” following the media fire-storm and lack of public support.*

*Brands, *From Berlin to Baghdad*, 99; Wohlforth, “Stability of Unipolar World,” 5. Other scholars saw it as a precursor to Bush’s 2002 National Security Strategy, when some of the “neoconservatives” such as Paul Wolfowitz returned to government. For examples of this and a convincing debunking of this particular argument, see Edelman, “Strange Career,” 72-74.*
the end of the Cold War. A different criticism is made by Jeremi Suri, who attacked the generality and “boilerplate” he perceived in the final Regional Defense Strategy: he said it is “strategically banal” because of its focus on uncertainty as opposed to more specific threats, and for saying “almost nothing about Iraq or China.”47

A closer look at some recently declassified drafts of the DPG and its public RDS version, along with the published recollection of its top drafters and interviews with them, present a very different picture of the Pentagon’s defense planning between 1990-1993, one much more in tune with the principles of AGL. And unlike what the scholars above argued, the ideas present in DPG/RDS and the Base Force were actually more influential in the long-run than they had been given credit for, thus providing support for the continuity argument and for the design model. Eric Edelman already began a much-needed reassessment of DPG by carefully tracing back many of the misconceptions surrounding it.48

For example, contrary to Bacevich’s claim that the leaked draft was Wolfowitz’ blueprint for hegemony, in fact not Cheney, nor Wolfowitz, nor Libby saw the draft that was leaked to the New York Times.49 In future versions that benefited from top leadership editing under Libby’s and Wolfowitz’s direction, the idea that “preventing a new rival” is the “first objective” of US defense strategy is no longer present. This change did not represent a toning down of the rhetoric to mollify critics following the controversy caused by the leaked draft, but rather an effort to bring the DPG in line with the actually strategic direction

48 For more of the many misconception and hyperbolic comments surrounding the leaked draft of the DPG, see Edelman, “Strange Career,” 63-64.
favored by the top Pentagon leadership all along.\(^{50}\) Wolfowitz explains that the early draft and the hegemonic idea of a “sole superpower” did not represent his thinking or that of the final DPG and RDS. Instead, the focus should be on alliances and security commitments in key regions to avoid them falling under the influence of a hostile power:

It proposed to preserve and extend the strategic depth achieved with the end of the Cold War by shaping developments in the three regions of greatest strategic significance – Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf – not through the use of force, but by shaping the expectations of both friends and potential adversaries.

This was a direction that was very different from that suggested by either a ‘new world order,’ in which strategic competition simply disappeared, or a ‘sole surviving superpower’ that would be able to dominate all others by itself.\(^{51}\)

The DPG in fact represented a culmination of the thinking going in the Defense Department over the previous four years. Indeed, the shift from global containment to a regional defense strategy was first aired by Bush in a speech at Aspen in August 1990, the substance of which is in line with the final DPG/RDS and contains no references to “preventing peer rivals” or other language to that effect.\(^{52}\) The final document calls for the U.S. “to strengthen our alliances and to extend the zone of peace to include the newly independent nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union…. Together with our allies, we must preclude hostile non-democratic powers from dominating critical regions and otherwise work to build an international environment conducive to our values”\(^{53}\)

---

\(^{51}\) Wolfowitz, “Shaping the Future,” 60.
\(^{52}\) “Our new strategy must provide the framework to guide our deliberate reductions to no more than the forces we need to guard our enduring interests -- the forces to exercise forward presence in key areas, to respond effectively to crisis, to retain the national capacity to rebuild our forces should this be needed. Important American interests in Europe and the Pacific, in the Mediterranean and in the Persian Gulf -- all are key reasons why maintaining a forward presence will remain an indispensable element of our strategy. “ Bush, “Remarks at Aspen Institute.”

\(^{53}\) Cheney, RDS, 1.
A key contribution of the strategy was the shift away from a “threat-based” force planning construct, which had been suitable during the Cold War’s overarching Soviet threat, to one that was defined by the new US global leadership role, and what the RDS called “shaping the future security environment” and preserving the “strategic depth” earned after the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, countering the Soviet Union’s capabilities provided a convenient guidepost for the structure and size of US military forces. With the disappearance of the Soviet threat, the American military establishment refocused its attention from containing the Soviet Union to providing the necessary forces to support the new grand strategy of AGL with its vision of a unique world-ordering role for the United States military. As then-Joint Chiefs Chairman Powell jokingly put it in 1991, just planning based on visible threats would not be enough: “I’m running out of villains, I’m down to Castro and Kim Il Sung.” Instead, the United States should size its military based on the new role as chief guarantor of global security in key regions of the world:

One of the most striking features of this new world we face is that America is the sole remaining superpower. We are also the preeminent force for stability in the world....

You’ve got to step aside from the context we’ve been using for the past forty years, that you base [military planning] against a specific threat. We no longer have the luxury of having a threat to plan for. What we plan for is that we’re a superpower. We are the major player on the world stage with responsibilities [and] interests around the world.

Absent an overarching threat, the 1993 Regional Defense Strategy listed four major objectives for US military forces in a post-Cold-War world, all of which would remain staples of US defense policy in the post-Cold War era: deter or defeat an attack against US

---

54 Ibid., 6-9.
55 Powell, as quoted in Army Times, April 5, 1991.
56 Kaufmann and Steinbrunner, Decisions for Defense, 47.
territory or that of its allies, strengthen the alliance systems binding democratic nations, preclude any hostile power from dominating a region critical to US interests (Europe, East Asia, the Middle East/Persian Gulf, and Latin America), and, last, help preclude conflict by reducing sources of regional instability and limit violence should conflicts occur. These are the ways to play the leadership role needed to “shape the future” and “maintain strategic depth” in the Pentagon’s view at the time.

Even though the Republican Bush administration was replaced by the Democratic Clinton administration, these general principles outlined contours of the defense policy, planning, programming and budgeting that supported American grand strategy for the next two decades, including in the aftermath of 9/11. The exact military force structure required by this post-Cold War grand strategy was a matter of some debate throughout the 1990s and beyond, but the broad objectives remained remarkably similar across a number of defense planning reviews, from Bush 41’s Base Force to Clinton’s Bottom-Up Review and the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) to Bush 43’s 2001 and 2006 QDRs. These requirements included maintaining a large enough military edge to dissuade hostile powers from attempting to challenge US interests in key regions, maintaining forward deployed troops in key regions where the US had alliance obligations, maintaining the ability to conduct two Major Regional Contingency (MRC) operations in quick succession (Clinton’s first Defense Secretary Les Aspin initially suggested a one-and-a-half war planning construct, but ultimately reverted to accepting the two-war planning paradigm), and assuring unimpeded access to the “global commons” (air, sea, space, and later cyberspace). In order to secure these ambitious goals, successive US administrations continued to invest

---

57 Cheney, RDS, 3.
far more resources in defense than any other country. Even if Clinton reduced the size of the military and the resources allocated to it, he did not reduce its security commitments or its forward deployed posture, thus preserving America’s global dominant military presence.

Rather than being a plan for American hegemony as its critics alleged, the defense strategy that the Pentagon actually promulgated in the final DPG 1992 and the Regional Defense Strategy 1993, and the Base Force construct designed to provide the capabilities to carry it out, in fact matched the logic and the First Principle of the AGL framework: provide US leadership, maintain and expand a system of global alliances, and a dominant military forward deployed. In the Requirements section, the RDS lists “alliance system,” “high quality personnel,” and “technological superiority” as the three core needs for accomplishing the strategy’s goals. Another section notes that U.S leadership, maintaining leading edge military capabilities, and enhancing collective security among democratic nations are what is needed to achieve the strategy’s goals of “strengthening cooperative defense arrangements with friendly states and precluding hostile, non-democratic powers from dominating regions of the world critical to us.”

Another criticism of the Pentagon’s planning challenging my claim that the DPG/RDS planning is congruent with the AGL framework refers to the perceived unilateralism in the document not only in terms of “sole superpower,” but also in its

58 The US Defense Spending far surpassed that of its potential rivals such as Russia or China for the entire 1991-2008 period under study. SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2012 accessed online at http://milexdata.sipri.org/. Date of access: June 1, 2013.
59 This is also the conclusion of James Mann: “After an initial review of defense issues, the Clinton administration preserved the general outlines and structure of the post-Cold War force structure that had been worked under Cheney.” Mann, Rise of the Vulcans, 214.
60 Cheney, RDS, 10-11.
discussion of use of force. Chollet, Goldgeier and Suri quote the following language from RDS to substantiate this claim:

While we favor collective action to respond to threats and challenges in this new era, a collective response will not always be timely and, in the absence of U.S. leadership, may not gel. While the United States cannot become the world’s policeman and take responsibility for solving every international security problem, neither can we allow our critical interests to depend solely on international mechanisms that can be blocked by countries whose interests may be very different from our own.61

The administration officials rejected the charge of unilateralism by pointing out that the role of allies and the preference for multilateralism was emphasized throughout the classified and unclassified final versions of the report, as well as by senior administration officials at the time.62 This point is also made by Edelman’s study of the DPG. He quotes another passage of the document that reads “In the end, there is no contradiction between U.S. leadership and multilateral action; history shows it is precisely U.S. leadership [that] is the necessary prerequisite for effective international action.”63 This was one of the lessons of the Gulf War for the DPG, that the US needs to show that it is willing to go unilaterally to get others to come along.64 In an interview, Wolfowitz elaborated on the misunderstood

61 Ibid., 4.
62 Secretary Cheney elaborated on this element of the DPG in a New York Times op-ed: “No Administration has worked more closely or successfully with its allies and friends in international security efforts, from the worldwide coalition we assembled to fight aggression in Operation Desert Storm to the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Far from being against greater efforts by our allies, we regard such efforts as essential. We have pressed our allies in Europe and Asia to take on a larger share of responsibility. The U.S. has helped revitalize U.N. leadership in peacekeeping and security affairs. We’ve helped design and lead cooperative humanitarian efforts such as Operation Provide Comfort, to aid refugees in northern Iraq, and Provide Hope, to support democratic reform in Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union. We’ve participated in a sweeping revision of NATO’s strategic concept, emphasizing multinational forces. Cheney, “Active Leadership?”
notion of a hegemonic sole superpower which became associated with the DPG following the press leak:

It's a mistake to use that terminology, not only because it comes across as preening arrogant, but it also places a misleading emphasis on our ability to act alone. It is important to be able to act unilaterally when necessary, but the core of American strength is rooted in our alliances, not just the fact that we're stronger than anyone else in the world, but that the collection of countries aligned with us is unbelievably stronger than anyone else. And the goal should be to keep it that way. One of the great benefits of being able to act unilaterally is that it often encourages others to act with us.65

This captures well how the United States from the beginning of the post-Cold War era regarded an active leadership role as necessary to improve the chances for successful cooperation with its allies and partners, something Clinton learned as well after his initial failed efforts in Bosnia. It also captures that the Second Principle of the AGL framework (on use of force) takes precedence over the Third Principle (on good great-power relations and preference for multilateralism). When a tough trade-off was unavoidable, at the end of the day the United States did not allow other great powers (or even its own formal allies) a veto on its use of force decisions: that was true for Clinton in Kosovo (primarily against Russian opposition), and later for Bush 43 in Iraq (against Russian, French, and German opposition).

Suri’s criticism that the document did not talk about what to do about Iraq or China is correct, but administration officials contend that the role of the document was not as a road-map. Wolfowitz explained that in his view “strategy is not a detailed road map. The purpose of a strategy is rather to provide a set of principles and capabilities that enable you to deal with both expected and unexpected developments as they occur.” As for the RDS, he persuasively claimed that “it defined, with considerable success, the military capabilities

65 Paul Wolfowitz, interview with the author, June 4, 2013.
needed to 'shape the future' and preserve 'strategic depth' in the face of uncertainty. Like the containment strategy at the beginning of the Cold War, it identified certain principles, geographic areas, and capabilities as key to future U.S. security." Suri also references the line that "other threats endure, and new ones will arise." as proof that Pentagon's thinking was "strategically banal." However, this misunderstands the shift from a threat-based strategy such as Containment to a shaping strategy as envisioned by the Pentagon planners: uncertainty was a key factor in the RDS strategy, and one lesson from Iraq's surprise invasion of Kuwait further reinforced this for Cheney, who declared in its aftermath that "we cannot base our security on a shaky record of predicting threats."66

In addition to providing resources for a global military presence, Washington also maintained and extended the Cold War alliance structure, the other side of the First Principle. NATO gained new members and new missions outside of its traditional geographical areas, even if that interfered with the lower-priority Third Principle on building good relations with a great power such as Russia. The dual-policy of pursuing NATO expansion while also working on building a good relation with Moscow is most often associated with the Clinton administration and thus will be more fully discussed in the next section, but it should more properly be considered a staple of the entire post-Cold War period. Its origins lie with the first Bush administration, while the second Bush administration adopted and implemented it as well.67 In the first step towards the path to membership for former Warsaw pact states, at the Rome NATO Summit in 1991, the Bush

67 The expansion of NATO proceeded in two rounds. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined the organization in the first round in 1999 during the Clinton administration, while Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania joined NATO in 2004, during the Bush 43 administration.
administration launched a North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) that established official ties between NATO and the Central and Eastern European countries, along with annual meetings at the ministerial level. Even though the Bush administration did not take more formal steps towards expansion of NATO and the White House did not support this policy, the Pentagon’s RDS was in favor of NATO enlargement, and Cheney made his support public: “I, for one, would advocate that eventually we will want to expand NATO and move it to the East.”

In conclusion, DPG/RDS and the Base Force did provide the rationale and guidelines for maintaining American global military presence and expansive alliances in key regions of the globe. On this principle of the AGL framework, Bush left an important legacy to his successor. Ironically, the Bush White House did not adopt DPG/RDS as its own official strategy, and the incoming Democratic Clinton administration had no interest in being seen as adopting a Bush document, particularly after the controversies stirred by the leaked version. Therefore, the impact was not due to an effort to implement it. Rather it is best understood as a de facto approach whose direct or implied recommendations such as NATO enlargement or a two-war force-sizing construct were followed by Clinton and Bush because they fit their own views of AGL. The formation of the First Principle of the AGL framework therefore has both elements of design and emergence: the force structure size was more planned and can be coded as such, but the commitment to strengthening democratic alliances, while advocated in the Pentagon planning, was nevertheless not

---

68 As former Bush 41 official Robert Zoellick recalls,” The U.S. and German governments recommended creating the North Atlantic Cooperation Council to enable NATO to reach out to Central and Eastern Europe. Our thought was to assist these states to become partners of NATO and potential members.” Zoellick, “Architecture for U.S. Strategy,” 30.
69 Goldgeier, Not Whether but When, 18.
implemented by Bush and it emerged as official US policy, as it will be shown, later on in the Clinton administration.

**Free Trade and Democracy Promotion**

In the realm of foreign economic policy, a vital domain of grand strategy for a global capitalist power such as the United States, the post-Cold War era witnessed a concerted effort on the part of Washington leaders to liberalize international trade by pushing bilateral free-trade agreements on the one hand, and working with other states to set up a global trade organization on the other. At the end of the Cold War, the U.S. had only one free-trade agreement, with Israel. During the 1991-2008 period, the U.S. signed and ratified agreements with sixteen more states. At the same time, the U.S. worked with other members of the international community, first during the Bush administration to finish the Uruguay Round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), then under Clinton to create the World Trade Organization on January 1st 1995 (replacing the Cold-War era GATT), and finally under the second Bush administration on the Doha Round of trade liberalization.

The forceful promotion of free trade had its origins in Bush 41’s commitment to a North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), despite some powerful opposition at home from protectionist interest groups, congressional members from districts adversely affected by lowering trade barriers, and populist/isolationist politicians such as Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan. Secretary of State Baker described the effort to form institutions like NAFTA as

---

70 In the post-Cold War era, the US signed free trade agreements with the following countries: Mexico, Canada, Jordan, Australia, Chile, Singapore, Bahrain, Morocco, Oman, Peru, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. It also negotiated three more agreements that were eventually ratified in 2011, with Panama, Colombia and South Korea. Presidents George H.W. Bush and Clinton negotiated, and, respectively, worked to ratify NAFTA, while the other agreements all came under George W. Bush.
being inspired by the building of international institutions such as NATO, GATT, the IMF, and the World Bank following World War II and in the early stages of the Cold War. Just as statesmen such as Truman and Acheson created these institutions that in turn contributed to a successful American grand strategy for the next era, Baker argued that “at a time of similar opportunity and risk, I believed we should take a leaf from their book.... . The geostrategic revolution of my years at State would be matched by an economic one. Our stake in its outcome were vast.... . Interdependence was inexorably bounding our domestic economy to the outside word.”

71

The 1991 NSS promised to “promote an open and expanding international economic system, based on market principles, with minimal distortions to trade and investment, stable currencies, and broadly respected rules for managing and resolving economic disputes.” On more specific issues, the document listed the importance for the new world order to complete the Uruguay Round of global trade negotiations, and also mentioned the lowering of bilateral trade barriers with Japan and the expansion of the US-Canada free trade agreement to include Mexico as key for advancing trade liberalization. While the administration, from the President on down, understood the importance of expanding free trade for the American grand strategic vision of a liberal world order, and also believed in the positive economic impact of it on the struggling US economy, the negotiations with both the external partners (Mexico and Canada) and with Congress and myriad domestic interest groups were highly complex. The President’s strong personal involvement contributed to the signing of the NAFTA agreement in Mexico City on December 17, 1992, shortly before he left office. In conclusion, Bush 41 implemented the trade agenda he laid out in the 1991 NSS

to a remarkable degree. Therefore, the planning model is well-supported on the initial formation of this Fourth Principle of the AGL grand strategy.

On the fifth and last principle of the post-CW grand strategy, democracy promotion and human rights, the Bush administration also set up some of the building blocks for its successors, though its inconsistent record in a number of cases (China, Ukraine) makes the ad-hoc criticism more persuasive on this principle. The 1991 NSS, like all future such documents during the Clinton and Bush era, claimed that the United States would work to “strengthen and enlarge the commonwealth of free nations that share a commitment to democracy and individual rights.” On the one hand, the administration indeed pushed for strong international sanctions to restore Haitian democracy in the aftermath of a military coup in September 1991, and it made an effort to support the new independent democratic states in Eastern and Central Europe, in the Caucasus, and even in Russia where a new democratic leader, Boris Yeltsin, rose to power replacing Gorbachev. Initially, the administration was cautious in its support of Yeltsin, given Gorbachev's positive image as a key figure in ending the Cold War peacefully, but eventually key figures in the administration, including Secretary Baker and the President himself, worked closely with the new Kremlin leadership to assure a smooth continuation of relations between US and the newly formed Russian state succeeding the now defunct USSR. The Bush team also launched a process of supporting Russia's young democracy economically and reassuring it diplomatically, a policy that was continued by Clinton when he took office.

Having said that, this Fifth Principle of the AGL grand strategy was superseded in importance when other considerations required trade-off to be made. The most important exception to this support for democracy came in US relations with China, where, particularly in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square crisis, Chinese leaders were very
sensitive to a US push for democracy promotion and human rights. The Bush administration generally avoided these topics in its dialog with Beijing in order to maintain good relations with the Communist party leadership. The Third Principle (great power relations) in this case took precedence. As David Callahan observed, “It was one thing to aid democrats who opposed the government in strategically vital China, quite another to support democracy through international sanctions in a backwater like Haiti.” The designed 1991 NSS document does not prioritize democracy promotion versus other interests, thus giving the impression that the halfhearted support the administration paid to this issue is reflective of ad-hoc behavior. However, Bush’s seemingly contradictory actions on democracy-promotion in fact could be interpreted to reflect the order of priorities in the emerging AGL framework, not ad-hoc behavior, and therefore provide support to the emergent model. All in all, the evidence is very mixed on this issue and no model has a clear explanatory advantage over the others.

**Bill Clinton and AGL in the 1990s**

Bill Clinton came into office in January 1993 after a campaign in which he criticized Bush for being too cautious in supporting the massive shift towards democracy and free markets in the world, and for being stuck in an old Cold War mindset, all too ready to support dictators instead of encouraging the spread of democracy. He called for “An America that will not coddle tyrants, from Baghdad to Beijing. An America that champions the cause of freedom and democracy from Eastern Europe to Southern Africa and in our own hemispheres, in Haiti and Cuba.” Along the same lines of blaming Bush for being too

---

72 Callahan, *Between Two Worlds*, 116.
73 Clinton, “Accepting the Presidential Nomination.”
cautious in his actions around the globe where dynamic forces were threatening the status quo, he warned: “Having won the Cold War, we must not now lose the peace.” While some of these statements can be attributed to campaign rhetoric, after a difficult start Clinton nevertheless embraced America’s role as a global leader and he pursued it more vigorously than Bush 41 did.

Humanitarian and Stability Operations: The Clinton Wars

The Clinton team came into office more willing than its predecessor to engage in stability and humanitarian operations than its predecessor, and they spent several tumultuous years working on developing a doctrine for the use of force in such circumstances. The administration was populated at high levels by many foreign policy experts (Anthony Lake, Richard Holbrooke, Les Aspin, and Madeleine Albright) favorably disposed to using military force in order to prevent humanitarian catastrophes in internal conflicts like the Bosnian War. In a direct rebuke to Colin Powell’s opposition to such missions, incoming Secretary of Defense Les Aspin mentioned in his confirmation hearing that the Powell Doctrine “might set the threshold for using force too high for many of the problems that the United States will face in the post-cold war era,” while Madeleine Albright

74 For more details on Clinton’s attacks against Bush for being too cautious on foreign policy, see Chollet and Goldgeier, American Between the Wars, 36-42.
75 So named after Colin Powell, also more properly should be called Powell-Weinberger doctrine, the doctrine lists a set of demanding questions that would need to be answered before committing troops to war. They include: “Is the political objective we seek to achieve defined and understood? Have all other nonviolent policy means failed? Will military force achieve the objective? At what cost? Have the gains and risks been analyzed? How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences?” See Powell, “U.S Forces: Challenges Ahead.”
also made the same point when she asked Powell “What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?”

Clinton’s first encounter with matters of war and peace was his effort in early 1993 to adopt a “lift and strike” strategy in Bosnia, that is lifting the arms embargo in order to better arm the suffering Bosnian Muslims and beginning air strikes against Serb artillery positions. Clinton approved this policy in May, but opposition from European allies prevented its implementation because they sensed Clinton is not fully committed to a strong approach; in other words, Secretary Christopher’s “listening tour” of Europe was perceived as a failure. Moreover, Clinton was also embroiled in a politically sensitive public dispute with the military leadership over “don't ask, don't tell.” Chairman Powell’s opposition to that policy created further civil-military friction, and made it all the more difficult for the President to contemplate sending the military on a type of mission Powell publicly warned against.

After these initial troubles, the administration planned to regain the momentum in the fall of 1993 with a series of speeches laying out its strategic vision. In September, the administration rolled out a grand strategy of Enlargement purposefully designed to replace Containment as the guiding framework for America’s role in the world. In a series of speeches that fall, Clinton, Lake, and Albright laid out their principles and vision for the United States in the post-Cold War era. The overarching goal of preserving the leadership of a liberal world order permeated their views. Clinton told the United Nations General Assembly that the “The United States intends to remain engaged and to lead…. In a new era of peril and opportunity, our overriding purpose must be to expand and strengthen the

76 Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “Considerations of Honorable Les Aspin,” 6. Albright, Madam Secretary, 182.
world’ community of market-based democracies.” He went on to ground his worldview in the theoretical framework of the democratic peace: “The habits of democracy are the habits of peace…. Democracy is rooted in compromise, not conquest. Democracies rarely wage war on one-another.”

His national security adviser, Tony Lake, fleshed out the administration’s grand strategic ideas in a speech suggestively titled “From Containment to Enlargement.” Lake presented Enlargement as the new grand strategy: “The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement -- enlargement of the world’s free community of market democracies.” The speech began with an assessment of the international system and the US role in it. Much like Bush’s view, the Clinton administration asserted that the United States should act as the leading global power:

We are its [the world’s] dominant power. Those who say otherwise sell America short. The fact is, we have the world’s strongest military, its largest economy and its most dynamic, multiethnic society. We are setting a global example in our efforts to reinvent our democratic and market institutions. Our leadership is sought and respected in every corner of the world...Our interests and ideals compel us not only to be engaged, but to lead.

Therefore, in terms of its global leadership vision, the Clinton administration adopted largely the same ideas as its predecessor. And the same goes for the First, Fourth and Fifth principles, on the US status as global superpower and promoter of free trade and democracy. Clinton’s first National Security Strategy formalized Clinton’s vision for US global leadership (“American leadership in the world has never been more important”), and the enthusiastic support for free market democracies. The 1994 NSS lays out “the three central components of our strategy of engagement and enlargement: our efforts to enhance our security by maintaining a strong defense capability and promoting cooperative security

---

77 Clinton, “Remarks to UN General Assembly.”
78 Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement.”
measures (AGL First Principle); our work to open foreign markets and spur global economic growth (AGL Fourth Principle); and our promotion of democracy abroad (AGL Fifth Principle).”79 The planning model, therefore, is well supported on these areas of policy.

However, the Second and Third Principles (on use of force and multilateralism) were more problematic and Clinton spent a large part of his first term working out these issues. On the question of use of force in intrastate conflicts, Clinton had not inherited any clear strategic guidance as to how such operations fit into the grand strategic framework of US global leadership. As documented in the following pages, scholars and commentators critical of Clinton’s interventions argued that his actions did not follow from his initial plans, and hence they must have been ad-hoc, based on political expediency, and thus not strategic. The emergence model provides another possible way to interpret the historical record: even if the pattern of interventions might not have followed from a set plan, was there an emergent strategy taking shape through trial-and-error and lessons learned?

The Clinton administration in fact went through three different stages before it settled on a doctrine for the use of force in stability/humanitarian wars. The first stage lasted from the oath of office until the searing experience of Mogadishu where nineteen US servicemen were killed and dragged through the streets. The second stage reflected the lessons of that debacle. The third stage began with the lessons learned from the non-intervention in Rwanda, continued with the lessons learned from the mission to restore democracy in Haiti and to end the war in Bosnia, and lasted for the remaining of the presidency, as manifested most clearly by the intervention in Kosovo. The end result was a doctrine briefly stated as follows: for such an intervention to be worthwhile, it must present

79 The White House, NSS 1994, 1,2.
a threat to international/regional stability interests in addition to any humanitarian ones, and NATO allies will be willing contribute their share. If the U.S. does decide to intervene, it should take the lead militarily, act multilaterally and with a UN mandate whenever possible, and have a very strong preference for airpower and allied manpower over using US ground troops.

Clinton’s initial attempts to apply the logic of Enlargement to the issue of military intervention in civil conflicts proved just as problematic as Bush’s New World Order. In the initial planning stages of Enlargement, the administration hoped for a leading role for the United Nations in peacekeeping operations, with US forces in a supportive role. This was the idea behind Madeleine Albright’s doctrine of “assertive multilateralism,” a concept that envisioned the US military working together with beefed-up UN capabilities on peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.\(^80\) The White House debated a Presidential Review Directive (PRD 13), which according to press reports would have asked U.S. forces to “help plan, train and participate in U.N. peace-keeping activities when justified by general U.S. interests, not just when the United States could make a unique military contribution.”\(^81\) This document has been regarded by historians such as Hal Brands as signifying an “ambitious expansion of U.S. humanitarianism efforts worldwide,” and as evidence that “armed humanitarianism” became one of the two dominant aspects of Clinton’s foreign policy, along with free trade.\(^82\)

This interpretation of the administration’s initial plans for humanitarian intervention exaggerates the actual support for US participation in armed interventions,

\(^{80}\) Smith and Preston, “Wider Role in U.N. Peace Keeping.”
\(^{81}\) Ibid.
\(^{82}\) Brands, *From Berlin to Baghdad*, 123, 125.
even before Somalia. First of all, Brands incorrectly claims that Clinton signed a Presidential Decision Directive 13 (PDD-13) in July of 1993, when in fact the draft study Presidential Review Directive 13 did not become a Decision Directive and was not signed by the president until May 1994, by which time it incorporated the lessons of Somalia and was far less enthusiastic in regards to armed humanitarianism.\(^{83}\) When Anthony Lake and Madeleine Albright addressed humanitarian intervention in their September 1993 speeches articulating the tenets of Enlargement, they did so rather cautiously. Lake stated that the strategy of Enlargement has four components, the last of which is pursuing a humanitarian agenda in a number of ways. The criteria for intervening would be an assessment of numerous factors in addition to the humanitarian impulse: “cost; feasibility; the permanence of the improvement our assistance will bring; the willingness of regional and international bodies to do their part; and the likelihood that our actions will generate broader security benefits for the people and the region in question.” When considering these fairly demanding conditions, Lake concluded, “there will be relatively few intra-national ethnic conflicts that justify our military intervention.” However, he also did go on to say that “Where we can make a difference, as in Somalia and Northern Iraq, we should not oppose using our military forces for humanitarian purposes simply because these missions do not resemble major wars for control of territory.”\(^{84}\) In conclusion, the administration’s initial design to the use of force in civil conflict could be summarized as one of planning to

\(^{83}\) White House, “PDD-25.” The evidence that the initial draft, PRD 13, was in fact not signed by the president can be found on the Federation of American Scientists website on the introduction to the unclassified text. The final form of the document was re-numbered PDD 25. See “Presidential Decision Directive 25” entry in the bibliography.

\(^{84}\) Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement”; Madeleine Albright made an argument along the same lines a couple of days later. Albright, “Use of Force.”
intervene when others are there to shoulder a large part of the burden, and where the prospects for long-term success appear favorable.

This seemed rather unobjectionable, until the Mogadishu tragedy shocked the administration and caused a rethinking of the willingness to intervene in any such conflicts. The killing of nineteen US servicemen in Mogadishu on October 3, 1993, and the political nightmare amplified by the disturbing images of some of the bodies being dragged through the streets, forced Clinton to reconsider the thorny issues of use of force in places like Bosnia or Somalia. To compound the administration’s misery, a week after the Battle of Mogadishu, a US navy ship without adequate military support was turned away from docking in Haiti by an angry mob, reinforcing the image of a weak Clinton administration in strategic disarray. The critics are thus persuasive that Clinton’s actions following Mogadishu were ad-hoc.

The first turning point in the evolution of the administration’s thinking on intervention in intra-state conflicts began with the hard lessons learned from Somalia regarding the difficulty of conducting multilateral UN peacekeeping operations in the midst of conflict-ridden states, and the believed low tolerance for casualties on the part of the American public for such missions. Clinton concluded “the average American doesn’t see our interest threatened to the point where we should sacrifice one American life.” The Administration’s new policy statement on multilateral peace operations, PDD-25, reflected a newly found skepticism compared to the “assertive multilateralism” campaign rhetoric and

---

85 Friedman, “Clinton’s Foreign Policy.” It is also important to note that some, but not all of the lessons of Somalia pointed towards non-intervention: Lake declared soon after the debacle that one lesson the administration learned is that “America does have interests and values at stake in places like Bosnia, Haiti and Somalia, however limited, and that the Administration needs to do a better job of explaining to the public what they are because it can be costly when you get involved.” Ibid.
86 Quoted in Stephanopoulos, All Too Human, 214.
warned that in certain cases the "turmoil may not be susceptible to the efforts of the international community." The policy debate on the criteria for the use of force was also reflected in the drafting of the 1994 NSS. As one of the main drafters of the document, Peter Feaver, remembers, “Mostly what the friction was, it was frustration at the text level with what was evident at the policy level, namely that the president had high aspirations but low willingness to pay the price to actually see it through, very reluctant to wield American power if it risked American casualties.” The initial reluctance induced by Somalia, however, was not the last step in Clinton’s views on this matter.

Rather than symbolizing, as some critics believed, the “unmaking of Enlargement” and that “Clinton’s experiment in peacekeeping was over,” the Mogadishu debacle was only the first event shaping the administration’s evolving policy on stability and humanitarian interventions. There was a second stage in the evolution of Clinton’s strategic approach. The Somalia experience in the fall of 1993 highlighted the costs and risks of intervention, but the genocide in Rwanda in the spring of 1994 made painfully clear to the Clinton administration the potentially horrendous costs of non-intervention. As the President recalled in his memoirs, “neither I nor anyone in my foreign policy team adequately focused on sending troops to stop the slaughter.” Two military operations in

87 White House, “PDD-25.”
88 Peter Feaver, interview with the author, May 23, 2013. The language in the 1994 NSS, reflecting PDD-25, is reflective of this cautious view: “Our engagement must meet reasonable cost and feasibility thresholds. We will be more inclined to act where there is reason to believe that our action will bring lasting improvement. On the other hand, our involvement will be more circumscribed when other regional or multi- lateral actors are better positioned to act than we are. Even in these cases, however, the United States will be actively engaged at the diplomatic level.” White House, NSS 1994, 10.
89 Brands, From Berlin to Baghdad, p.135
90 For the best account of the costs of non-intervention, see Power, A Problem from Hell.
91 Clinton, My Life, 593. In a later trip to Rwanda, he remorsefully declared: “We in the United States and the world community did not do as much as we could have and should have done to try to limit
the following two years, in Haiti and Bosnia, brought some clarity to the administration's thinking after the contradictory lessons of Somalia and Rwanda.

In July 1994, the Clinton administration persuaded the UN Security Council to pass a resolution authorizing “all necessary means” to force the ruling junta in Haiti to allow ousted President Bertrand Aristide to return to power. When the generals refused to compromise, Clinton approved a military invasion of the island. On September 18, with US warplanes on their way and the threat of invasion imminent, the junta relented and reached an agreement with an American delegation on the ground that allowed for the return of the illegally deposed former president and the restoration of democracy. Some 20,000 American troops deployed to Haiti to implement the agreement, thus achieving the first military success of the administration. Even though no shots were fired, Washington used the threat of force to restore a democratically elected leader, thus acting in accordance with the leadership vision and the Fifth Principle of the AGL framework. Top leaders of the administration made it clear that they saw this intervention as a part of their commitment to democratic enlargement. Lake declared that US foreign policy “reliability” was at stake in the crisis: “We must make it clear that we mean what we say about removing Haiti's military leaders.... Haiti is a critical test of our commitment to defend democracy, especially where it is most fragile.”92 State Department Policy Planning Director Jim Steinberg even stated in an interview that the “Clinton's administration strategy is probably

__________

92 Devroy and Groshko, “Reservists for Haiti.”

183
best captured in Haiti, where the argument was that you cannot let democracy be interrupted. You have a very powerful interest in not having democracy interrupted.”93

Contemporary and later critics of the president did not see the decision as part of a grand strategy, and did not give him much credit for its success. Their main arguments, succinctly summarized by Josef Joffe, are that “grand strategy played no role, [but rather] domestic interests carried the day: the weight of the Black Caucus in Congress and human rights activists in the White House, the political weakness of a reluctant defense establishment, and the president’s need to assert his credibility in the light of so many non-executed threats.”94 These arguments are not persuasive for the following reasons. First, despite some efforts from human-rights activists, in the aftermath of Somalia the public and Congress were highly skeptical of another such military intervention for non-traditional reasons like the promotion of democracy. The records of the Clinton administration show plenty of evidence of how worried the administration was of the negative political risks the intervention entailed.95 Clinton even sardonically remarked that by taking this decision “we’ll finally have something to show those people who say I never do anything unpopular.”96 Second, some of the critics were viewing grand strategy through a Realist frame and a narrow interpretation of the national interest; they did not consider such an intervention as part of grand strategy because it could not be closely connected with

93 James Steinberg, interview with the author, May 16, 2013.
94 Joffe, “Bismarck or Britain,” p.94. For more criticisms, see Naim, "Clinton’s Foreign Policy," 34; Mandelbaum, “Foreign Policy as Social Work”; Haass, "The Squandered Presidency"; Brands, From Berlin to Baghdad, 139-142. Brands contends that Clinton was "lucky" that the negotiations worked, without explaining why the threat of the imminent invasion was not the main contributor to the resolution of the crises, as oppose to sheer good fortune. Given the lack of reliable data from the military Junta, It is impossible to know for certain what caused them to give up, but a reasonable argument can be made that the US warplanes flying in had a major impact.
95 For more details on the internal debate prior to the invasion see the discussion in Chollet and Goldgeier, American Between the Wars, 95-98.
96 Stephanopoulos, All Too Human, 308.
security or economic concerns, but rather with a commitment to democratization. Even though Clinton made it clear the latter was at the core of his grand strategy, many scholars of a Realist persuasion took that to mean that he had in fact no grand strategy. And third, the fact that Clinton overcame the reluctance of his military establishment to get involved in such non-traditional conflicts is not a sign of non-strategic behavior, as Joffe implies, but rather of healthy civil-military relations: the preferences of the President prevailed. It is therefore appropriate to code the Haiti intervention as a planned action, as it is congruent with Clinton’s stated strategic priority of democracy promotion.

The small-scale success in Haiti was reinforced the following year by the US-led NATO intervention in Bosnia, culminating in the Dayton Peace Accords and 60,000 NATO troops (20,000 of them American) deployed to implement the peace agreement. After his unsuccessful push for a policy of “lift and strike” early in 1993, Clinton did not attempt any major initiative to address the ongoing Bosnian conflict until the Serb massacre of Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica in July 1995. The horrific images represented not only a humanitarian disaster, but also a vivid display of the failure on the part of the United States to lead the international community in bringing about a solution to this conflict. With his passivity during the genocide in Rwanda fresh in his mind, the President decided to risk the use of force if that was what it would take to end the conflict. He reversed the previous Bosnia policy that allowed European allies and the U.N. to eschew stronger military action

97 See in particular Joffe, “Bismarck or Britain”; Mandelbaum, “Foreign Policy as Social Work”; Haass, “The Squandered Presidency,” Suri, “Clear Skies over the Horizon,” and Brands, From Berlin to Baghdad. This is an argument that will reoccur in the case of Bosnia and Kosovo, and will be more fully addressed at the end of this section.
98 For the definitive accounts of the decision-making process leading to the intervention in Bosnia, see Daalder, Getting to Dayton, and Holbrooke, To End A War.
99 In the words of one anonymous senior adviser, it was a “cancer” on Clinton’s foreign policy that threatened his entire foreign policy agenda. Quoted in Power, Problem from Hell, 436.
against the Serbs, and he charged Tony Lake to come up with a more aggressive “endgame” scenario; he also designated the hawkish Richard Holbrooke, a well-known advocate of a NATO bombing campaign, to conduct his Bosnia diplomacy. The bombing campaign began on August 30, after the Serbs’ shelling of a marketplace killed scores of civilians. By October 10, a cease-fire was reached and in the next month Holbrooke brokered a peace treaty between the three Bosnian warring parties in Dayton, OH. The Bosnian intervention is rightfully regarded by Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier as a true “turning point” in Clinton’s foreign policy, as it provided the administration with a number of important lessons for the future.

First and foremost, the President decisively acted on his emerging grand strategic vision regarding the special global leadership role of the United States, and with the emergent doctrine of combating regional instability and crimes against humanity. As he explained the intervention to the American people, Clinton touched on both of these goals: “In fulfilling this mission, we will have the chance to help stop the killing of innocent civilians, especially children, and, at the same time, to bring stability to Central Europe, a region of the world that is vital to our national interests. It is the right thing to do.” And, significantly, Clinton tied this intervention to the past experiences in Iraq and Haiti in order to highlight his growing belief in the need for US-led interventions to maintain the post-Cold War international order (AGL’s Second Principle): “As we saw in the Gulf War and in Haiti, ...
many other nations who share our goals will also share our burdens. But when America
does not lead, the consequences can be very grave, not only for others but eventually for us
as well.” Second, Washington managed to get the desired outcome even though it relied
solely on air-strikes in the combat phase of the intervention, thus limiting the risk of
American casualties and in turn making the mission more politically sustainable. This
strong preference for reliance on technology over ground troops manifested itself for the
rest of the conflicts of the era. Third, the UN was removed from the decision loop on
targeting so as to free the hand of the United States to act more aggressively against the
Serbs, a shift from the earlier vision of close US-UN cooperation and a harbinger of things to
come in future interventions in Kosovo and Iraq. And fourth, the intervention strengthened
NATO and gave it a new purpose in fighting the new type of missions the West would likely
get involved in given that the Soviet menace had disappeared. This last issue is very
relevant because, as former Clinton NSC staffer Jeremy Rosner put it in an interview, “a
failure to deal with a major war within Europe would weaken the entire transatlantic
relationship.” Such an outcome would be a blow to the First Principle of the AGL
framework, as it would harm the US alliance system.

Many of the lessons learned from Bosnia shaped Clinton’s last military intervention,
the war in Kosovo. The years following the end of the Bosnian conflict witnessed

103 Clinton, “Speech on Bosnia.” In a later speech, Clinton expressed even more clearly the key role
played by US military interventions in the post-Cold War era: “Imagine what the Persian Gulf would
look like today if the United States had not stepped up with our allies in Desert Storm. Then two
years ago, we had to do it again to stop Iraqi aggression. Imagine the ongoing reign of terror and the
flood of refugees to our shore had we not backed diplomacy with force in Haiti. Imagine the shells
and the slaughter we would still be seeing in Bosnia had we not brought our force to bear through
NATO.” Clinton, “Coast Guard Academy Commencement.”
104 Jeremy Rosner, interview with the author, June 14, 2013.
105 A comprehensive politico-military account of the war can be found in Daalder and O’Hanlon,
Winning Ugly.
increasing tensions between the ethnic Albanians inhabiting the Kosovo province and the Serb military and police forces controlling the area. As the former issued greater demands for autonomy and independence, the latter used more and more brutal techniques, including artillery shelling of civilian areas, to suppress them. US diplomats and their European allies made a final effort to stop the ethnic violence by peaceful means at the Rambouillet conference, but Serbian President Slobodan Milošević refused to cede military control of the province and allow NATO peacekeepers to come in. When a final ultimatum in February 1999 was rejected, NATO, under US leadership, began a bombing campaign in March. Initially limited in scope, the campaign was incrementally expanded to target Serbian civilian infrastructure in addition to military targets. Despite the Serbian resolve when confronted with intensifying aerial bombings, Clinton stuck to his initial principle of no ground troops for the first months of the war. In May, however, the president declared that “all options are on the table,” and NATO began amassing troops south of Yugoslavia to convince the Serbs that a ground invasion was a distinct possibility. At the same time the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) grew in strength and intensified its operations on the ground against the Serb forces. As a result of all these factors, Milošević accepted NATO’s peace offer on June 3rd and started to withdraw all his troops from the province. The following year, he lost the presidential elections and in 2001 he was arrested and taken to The Hague to be tried for the crimes against humanity and genocide perpetrated under his command.

The Kosovo war fits well with the vision and Second Principle of AGL, and shows that Clinton's new doctrine on intervention in civil/humanitarian conflicts had reached its final shape after Bosnia. Clinton's different but interconnected reasons for the war and his decisions about how to pursue it are consistent with his previous pattern of behavior, and
consistent with the theoretical logic behind America’s post-Cold War grand strategy. Three reasons are worth emphasizing here, particularly given that my interpretation of them partly differs from that of other scholars and critics of the President. First, by 1999 the administration fully embraced and was willing to act on the grand strategic vision of America as the “indispensable” global leader in charge of defending and expanding a 21st-century liberal world order. Kosovo would be a great test of Washington’s role on the world stage, and Clinton was determined to pass it. Second, in his address to the nation explaining his reasons for the war, Clinton highlighted three major ones: humanitarianism (“protect thousands of innocent people in Kosovo from a mounting military offensive”), regional stability (“prevent a wider war, to defuse a powder keg at the heart of Europe that has exploded twice before in this century with catastrophic results”), and strengthening the NATO alliance and maintaining its credibility. This combination of three factors—humanitarian concerns, regional stability concerns, and strong allied support—describes well enough the pattern of interventions (and non-interventions) in intra-state conflicts that characterized the US post-cold war grand strategy. And third, the preference for airpower over ground troops even at the risk of a longer conflict is also consistent with previous behavior and the lessons learned from past experiences in Somalia and Bosnia. As

106 In his second inaugural, President Clinton called American “the indispensible nation,” and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright repeated that phrase a number of times in her tenure. 107 Clinton explained at length how this war fits into his grand strategic vision about American leadership: “Most of us have this vision of a twenty-first century world with the triumph of peace and prosperity and personal freedom; with the respect for the integrity of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities; within a framework of shared values, shared power, shared plenty; making common cause against disease and environmental degradation across national lines, against terror, organized crimes, weapons of mass destruction. This vision, ironically, is threatened by the oldest demon of human society – our vulnerability to hatred of the other. In the face of that, we cannot be indifferent, at home or abroad. That is why we are in Kosovo.” Clinton, “Millennium Evening.” 108 “Imagine what would happen if we and our allies instead decided just to look the other way, as these people were massacred on NATO’s doorstep. That would discredit NATO, the cornerstone on which our security has rested for 50 years now.” Clinton, “Airstrikes Against Serbian Targets.”
the President declared on national television the night the bombing started, the actions in Kosovo were a direct result of the learning process that followed Bosnia: "We learned that in the Balkans inaction in the face of brutality simply invites more brutality, but firmness can stop armies and save lives. We must apply that lesson in Kosovo before what happened in Bosnia happens there, too."\(^{109}\)

Scholars and commentators criticized the administration's Balkan wars in a number of ways, and these criticisms also evolved into a more general critique of Clinton's approach to the making of grand strategy.

The first type of criticism, as Gaddis frames it, is that "There is an absence of any grand design. The consistent pattern I see is one of responding to crises. There's a kind of incrementalism and adhocism to things."\(^{110}\) This type of criticism conflates two elements that according to the strategy theory developed in this paper should be treated separately: the failure to follow a grand strategic plan, and the absence of a grand strategy guiding one's actions. When it came to military intervention in intrastate conflicts, Clinton indeed acted in a way that could not be traced back to his grand strategic planning found in documents such as the National Security Strategy documents. Hal Brands is right to argue that the original designs of "assertive multilateralism" were not followed after Somalia, but they were modified rather than abandoned.\(^{111}\) The administration did develop an emerging approach to military intervention that was consistent with its broader goals and vision for American grand strategy. The pattern of intervention developed throughout the 1990s presented

\(^{109}\) Ibid.


\(^{111}\) Brands, \textit{From Berlin to Baghdad}, 128-129.
above fits well with the principles of the post-Cold War grand strategy stipulated earlier in this chapter. The actions appeared ad-hoc or non-strategic only if one judged them mainly by looking for evidence of advanced planning, rather than analyze the possible existence of grand strategy even in the absence of a plan. Instead, Clinton's approach to the use of force fits with the emergent model's process hypothesis.

To remind us, the emergent model contends that strategy comes from the interplay of actions and events, lessons learned from trial and error, and that implementation and formulation are not sequential phases but rather interactive processes. Strategic principles become crystallized via actions, not fully planned in advance. The narrative above provides numerous references to such processes. Moreover, the evidence also leads to the conclusion that the emergent approach was intentional; rather than wavering from crisis to crisis, Clinton's team consciously adopted a flexible approach and focused on learning from experience. Second-term National Security Adviser Sandy Berger put it best when he explained the administration's approach thus: “We tried to establish common law rather than canon law. We set to build out a new role for the U.S. in the world by experience rather than doctrine.”¹¹² His predecessor, Tony Lake, echoed the same argument “I believe that you best promote general goals not through absolute doctrines, but through a determined pragmatism that then can give substance to the general principles.”¹¹³ President Clinton himself offers further support to this view in a remark that was later misinterpreted as evidence for his unwillingness to have a grand strategy. In discussing his approach to the world, he likened himself to FDR and Truman. But rather than accepting the narrative that Containment came out of a grand design, Clinton's reading of new biographies of the two

¹¹² Chollet and Goldgeier, America Between the Wars, 219.
¹¹³ Friedman, “Clinton's Foreign Policy.”
presidents led him to conclude that they simply had “powerful instincts about what had to be done, and they just made it up as they went along.”\textsuperscript{114} In other words, they had emergent grand strategies, just like he did.

A related criticism is that Clinton did not articulate a consistent “use of force” doctrine, and instead only intervened when domestic, non-strategic factors forced his hand.\textsuperscript{115} The administration officials first responded to this criticism by arguing that spelling out such a doctrine is counterproductive.\textsuperscript{116} Later they offered a laundry list of seven criteria without specifying in advance what combination of them would trigger an intervention.\textsuperscript{117} While the argument that the administration did not have a preplanned doctrine on when to use force is fairly persuasive, the key question nevertheless is whether its actions and statements reveal the existence of an emergent doctrine. As argued above, the lessons learned from the early experiences in 1993-1995 did lead to a broadly accepted principle

\textsuperscript{114}Talbott, \textit{The Russia Hand}. This comment is used by Gaddis as evidence that Clinton resigned himself to having no grand strategy. Gaddis, “What is Grand Strategy?”
\textsuperscript{115}A good summary of the large literature making this argument is found in Campbell and Rockman, \textit{The Clinton Legacy}, 246-49.
\textsuperscript{116}See Albright, “Use of Force.” This is the key passage for this argument: “For years, a debate has raged about whether it is necessary to spell out a set of specific circumstances—a checklist—describing when America will or will not contemplate the use of military force. This Administration has wisely avoided the temptation to devise a precise list of the circumstances under which military force might be used or of repeating the State Department's mistake concerning Korea 43 years ago when it defined too narrowly the scope of America's interests and concerns. Too much precision in public, however well intentioned, can impinge on the flexibility of the commander in chief or generate dangerous miscalculations abroad.”
\textsuperscript{117}Tony Lake provided such a list in a speech on the use of force following the intervention in Bosnia: “I would cite seven circumstances which, taken in some combination or even alone, may call for the use of force or military forces: To defend against direct attacks on the United States, its citizens and its allies; To counter aggression; To defend our key economic interests, which is where most Americans will see their most immediate stake in our international engagement; To preserve, promote and defend democracy, which enhances our security and the spread of our values; To prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and international crime and drug trafficking; To maintain our reliability, because when our partnerships are strong and confidence in our leadership is high, it is easier to get others to work with us; and For humanitarian purposes, to combat famines, natural disasters and gross abuses of human rights. Lake, “Defining Missions, Setting Deadlines.”
that the US would intervene in intrastate conflicts when grave humanitarian concerns are present, and regional stability is threatened, and the NATO allies are willing to share the burden. The interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo fit all three criteria, while non-interventions in conflicts such as Angola, Sudan or Congo did not.

Second, another version of the argument that the Balkan Wars were not part of a grand strategy comes from some Realist scholars who disagreed with the (partly) humanitarian objectives of these interventions. These scholars assume that "grand strategy" must deal with great-power relations and other such traditional geopolitical concerns, and therefore issues like humanitarianism or democracy-promotion are inherently lesser concerns not connected to grand strategy. As Richard Haass lamented, "Only the absence of a framework can explain extraordinary attention paid to humanitarian military intervention" as contrasted with the "limited effort spent forging post-Cold War relationships with major powers in a position to affect vital U.S. interests." However, the administration’s statements and actions show that it did follow a framework and thought of the Bosnian and Kosovo interventions in terms of the US leading role in maintaining stability, working with NATO allies and thus strengthening the organization, and preventing or stopping ethnic cleansing and genocide. These actions are congruent with the vision of the AGL framework, and with its First and Second Principles because they acted on a vision of US leadership, helped strengthen alliances, and restored regional stability in a key area, in addition to saving innocent lives. These interventions may not have been explainable, or advisable, from a Realist view of grand strategy, but that is a different argument than suggesting they were not part of any grand strategy at all. On a more general note, much of

118 Haass, “The Squandered Presidency.” A similar argument is made in Mandelbaum, “Foreign Policy as Social Work,” and Suri, “Clear Skies over the Horizon.”
the criticism of US post-Cold War grand strategy comes from a disagreement with the
idealistic nature of this strategy, contrasted, say, with Kennan’s realist designs. It is fair to
claim, as many scholars do, that US post-Cold-War grand strategy was not Kennanesque in
its substance, but as the previous chapter showed, neither was the version of Containment
that emerged during the Cold War. In light of this, the longing for a new Kennan to write
down the grand strategy for the post-Cold War era, and the subsequent criticisms of the
Bush and Clinton administrations for failing to rise to the occasion, need to be reconsidered.

Third, the last version of the argument that the interventions were not part of grand
strategy is that they interfered with the pursuit of other national interests, such as
maintaining good relationships with other great powers such as Russia or China. Hence,
some scholars viewed this as proof of logical inconsistency among the various stated
principles of Clinton’s framework, and therefore strategic incoherence. Hal Brands among
others makes this point in his discussion of Bosnia’s and Kosovo’s negative impact on US-
Russian, and to a lesser extent, US-Chinese relations. He attributes it to the alleged lack of a
grand strategy: “In the absence of a firm overall strategy, policy makers lost sight of the
relationships among various policies, or they concentrated on regional affairs without
reference to the larger global picture.”119 This argument is not persuasive, because the
Clinton administration did make serious efforts to avoid alienating Russia and
accommodated Russian interests and concerns as long as they did not interfere with the
main goals of the interventions.120 As the AGL framework would expect, the administration

119 Brands, From Berlin to Baghdad, 206. See also Bacevich and Cohen, War Over Kosovo; Haass,
120 For the most elaborate insider account of these efforts, see Talbott, The Russia Hand, 299-313.
Part of the reason for this criticism may be that many scholars took too literally Washington’s stated
commitments to build good relations with other great powers as a pillar of post-Cold War grand
decided that the trade-off between the two competing goals should be judged in favor of the Second Principle (use of force), against the Third Principle (great power relations). Clinton’s critics may have preferred him to focus on building great-power relations more so than going to war in Bosnia or Kosovo, but disagreement with the trade-offs chosen is different than arguing that there was not a grand strategy behind those choices. In conclusion, after the initial hesitations and uncertain approaches to intrastate conflicts in the first years of the post Cold-War era, the Clinton administration developed an emergent doctrine based on the lessons learned from its early, troubled experiences.

The NATO Enlargement and US-Russia Relations

Another important element of America’s post-Cold War grand strategy was the policy of enlarging NATO, while at the same time trying to maintain good relations with Russia. This dual approach was highly controversial at the time, because the first policy certainly made the second one more difficult to achieve, thus creating the impression of strategic incoherence. In fact, John Gaddis uses this decision as the prime example of a supposed “grand strategy deficit” that plagued the three post-Cold War administrations. Referring to what he calls the Clinton administration’s “single most important foreign policy initiative – the decision to expand NATO to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic,” Gaddis argued that it violated “strategy principles.” Writing in 1998, he expressed a strategy. While such efforts were indeed undertaken, an important caveat is that the United States attempted to integrate the new rising powers in the American-led world order. When other powers interfered with US actions in pursuit of its vision for a desirable world order, Washington more often than not persevered with their world-ordering goals despite the damage done to the relations with Russia or China. In other words, the strategic principle correctly specified was to build good relations as long as other powers do not challenge the current American-led liberal world order. This might have been be too undiplomatic to admit in an official strategy document, however.
common position inside academia when he urged the Senate to put a hold on the administration's expansion plans:

[Historians] – normally so contentious – are in uncharacteristic agreement: with remarkably few exceptions, they see NATO enlargement as ill-conceived, ill-timed, and above all ill-suited to the realities of the post-Cold War world... A significant gap has thus opened between those who make grand strategy and those who reflect upon it: on this issue at least, official and accumulated wisdom are pointing in very different directions.121

Prominent political scientists such as Michael Mandelbaum, Bruce Russett and Allan Stam, Dan Reiter, and Charles Kupchan, among others, similarly expressed strong opposition to this decision and the lack of strategic reasoning behind it.122 However, with the benefit of hindsight, interviews with the participants, and of new materials available, a fresh analysis of the process and the outcome of NATO enlargement leads to a conclusion at odds with this interpretation. The decision-making process, while not following a set plan, nevertheless fits well with the tenets of the emergent strategy model rather than being ad-hoc or decisively influenced by non-strategic factors such as domestic politics.

121 Gaddis offers the following anecdote to explain his motivation for beginning to teach a grand strategy class at Yale University: “Let me begin with the event that caused us to begin teaching this class. The date was September 24, 1998. A NATO briefing team had invited itself to Yale to make the case for the Clinton administration’s policy of expanding the alliance eastward. There would be no problem about including the Czechs, the Poles, and the Hungarians, the briefers told us, because so much effort had gone into reorganizing committees in Brussels to make them feel welcome. The briefing concluded after about half an hour, and questions were called for. Our colleague Bruce Russett raised his hand and asked whether NATO expansion might not cause difficulties with the Russians, perhaps undermining President Yeltsin’s efforts to democratize the country, perhaps creating an awkward situation for the new or prospective members of the alliance as Russian power revived, perhaps even driving Russia into some new form of cooperation with the Chinese, thereby reversing one of the greatest victories for the West in the Cold War, which was the Sino-Soviet split. There was a moment of shocked silence. Then one of the briefers exclaimed, in front of our entire audience: “Good God! We’d never thought of that!” Gaddis, “What is Grand Strategy?”; Second quote is from Gaddis, “Grand Strategy and NATO Enlargement.”

The Clinton administration followed a broad strategic vision for European security similar to its predecessor, one focused on the dual-goals of strengthening and eventually expending NATO on the one hand, while also working with Moscow leaders to promote good relations and politico-economic reforms on the other. This is in line with the First and Third principles of the AGL framework, with the first one taking priority over the third one when a trade-off needed to be made. Strobe Talbott, the main Russia policy “hand” in the administration and principal negotiator with Moscow, recalls that from the beginning of the Clinton administration there was a strategic view that “pan-European integration depended both on the Central Europeans joining the major structures of the West, including NATO, and on Russia’s remaining on a reformist track internally and a cooperative track in its foreign and defense policies. These goals were in tension but not necessarily irreconcilable.” President Clinton similarly thought of both goals as part of his grand strategic vision of providing US leadership in pursuit of expanding the politico-economic liberal world order: “I came to office convinced that NATO can do for Europe’s East what it did for Europe’s West: prevent a return to local rivalries, strengthen democracy against future threats, and create conditions for prosperity to flourish.” In fact, the President saw the NATO and Russia policies as so tightly related that he even suggested to Yeltsin the possibility of inviting Russia to join NATO at a future date. Given that the administration’s self-described grand strategic vision of Enlargement and Engagement is so congruent with the decision to admit the newly democratic Central/Eastern Europe countries in NATO, and

---

124 Talbott, The Russia Hand, 94.
125 Clinton, “Remarks in Detroit.”
also with the support offered to a (relatively) democratic and market-oriented leader such as Yeltsin in the Kremlin, it appears somewhat puzzling that most grand strategy scholars criticized Clinton’s policies as being incoherent and non-strategic. The critics made two different types of arguments, first relating to the substance, and second relating to the decision-making process. Both of these criticisms are ultimately not persuasive, as they misunderstand the principles of post-Cold War grand strategy, misread some parts of Clinton’s record, and also fail to take into account the possibility of an emergent strategy.

First, as Gaddis emphasizes in his talks about Clinton’s supposed lack of grand strategic thinking, critics contend that the administration failed to see the connections between the two policies (NATO enlargement and a positive relationship with Russia) and the negative impact of the former on the latter, as well as of letting non-strategic concerns such as an emotional commitment to the fate of Eastern Europeans unduly influence decisions. Or, as Stephen Sestanovich put it at the time, “a strong commitment to expand NATO made policy towards Russia increasingly contradictory and incoherent.” However, a close examination of the historical record surrounding the debates inside the administration on NATO enlargement shows that its members were fully aware of the connections between the two policies, and that they took proactive decisions to mitigate them. Clinton and Talbott worked assiduously with Yeltsin and his top advisors over a

---

128 In his memoirs, Strobe Talbott even recounts a story where Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin repeats the anti-expansionism arguments that Gaddis implies the administration did not think about, including harming Yeltsin’s position and a possible Russia-China rapprochement, but which Talbott correctly points out that opponents of enlargement were making in very visible forums such as George Kennan’s “A Fateful Error” prominent op-ed in the New York Times, and the series of columns of Tom Friedman questioning the rationale behind enlargement. Talbott writes that in a meeting with Russian and American diplomats, Chernomyrdin “reprised threats and warning we’d been hearing for years: there would be dire consequences for Russian reform; there would be military and political countermeasures (no ratification of outstanding arms control treaties,
number of years to keep what they referred to as “the Russia train” and the “enlargement train” running on parallel tracks. For example, Clinton delayed the announcement of new NATO members until after the Russian elections of 1996 specifically so as to help the pro-Western Yeltsin’s political fortunes. And before the 1997 NATO summit at which enlargement offers were made, high-level American and Russian officials finished negotiations on the NATO-Russia Founding Act, which was meant to alleviate some of Russia’s concerns and set up a more formal partnership between NATO and Moscow. Jim Steinberg corroborates this in an interview:

You had the same voices from the outside, the argument that Kennan was making in foreign affairs, Strobe [Talbott] was making internally in the government, so it’s not like people didn’t know the argument. It was a question of which is the better course: accommodate the Russians, and dismay the Central and Eastern Europeans; or, deal with the problem with the insecurity and the integration of Eastern European and then try to manage the Russian relation. And so the two debates were, which is more important, and which should you prioritize?130

Therefore, rather than not being aware of the potential trade-offs and the tensions, as its critics claimed, the Clinton administration simply chose its priorities differently than many experts would have preferred. As James Goldgeier accurately pointed out many academic experts opposing enlargement were Russian specialists who favored a grand greater Russian reliance on nuclear weapons, stronger ties with Iran and China. Talbott, The Russia Hand, 232-33.

129 In addition to Talbott’s memoir supporting this view and former Pentagon adviser Walter Slocombe’s essay cited above, the most extensive academic book-length treatment of these efforts to keep the two objectives in balance is offered in Goldgeier, Not Whether but When. In his concluding section, Goldgeier writes that “Numerous administration officials said in interviews that President Clinton did not view these objectives as contradictory; he did not view NATO enlargement as anti-Russian, and, his advisers say, he believed he could convince Yeltsin of his attitude. He was certainly conscious of the trade-off, however, since he told Yeltsin in 1994 that he would delay being explicit about the NATO enlargement until after the 1996 Russian presidential elections.” Goldgeier, Not Whether but When, 160.

130 Jim Steinberg, interview with the author, May 16, 2013.
strategy focused more on securing good relations with Russia and less on alliance commitments such as inviting newly democratic states into NATO. Much like the case of Kosovo, the administrations judged the trade-offs differently, but that did not make their approach non-strategic. It just followed a different strategy than what critics thought advisable. 131 As the AGL framework hypothesized, and similar to the previous discussion on Kosovo/Russia, the Third Principle (good great power relations) was superseded by a higher priority one, in this case the First Principle (alliances in key areas). Moreover, the NATO Enlargement also helped with advancing the Fifth Principle (democracy promotion) and thus made the choice even more clear in the context of the AGL framework. In many ways, grand strategy is often about having one’s cake and eating it too. However, in the real world tradeoffs often have to be made, the principles are not reinforcing each other in specific situations as much as one might wish, and seemingly contradictory goals might be pursued simultaneously giving the false impression of incoherence. Clinton’s approach, however, was in line with the logic and priority order stipulated in the AGL framework. Therefore, his decision was not incoherent or for domestic political gain from voters of Eastern European descent, but rather consistent with his grand strategy.

Second, Clinton was accused of deciding in isolation instead of promoting a more formal strategic planning process.132 The argument that the NATO enlargement decision did not follow from a careful plan has merit, as Clinton’s cabinet never decided on this in a formal NSC debate, but the emergence model allows for coherent policies to emerge even in

131 The expert opinion was not all opposed to enlargement. Even among the highest regarded American grand strategists, George Kennan strongly opposed NATO expansion, but Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski favored it, and even criticized Clinton for going too slow and being too conciliatory towards Moscow. Kissinger quoted in William Drozdiak, “Poland Urges NATO Chief Not to Appease Russia: The Smell of Yalta is Always with US,” The Washington Post, March 17, 1997.
the absence of planning. Rather than being an example of ad-hoc/bureaucratic politics, as Goldgeier contends, there are two ways in which NATO enlargement actually fits the tenets of the emergent strategy model better than the bureaucratic politics paradigm. First, the policy that emerged in 1994 and 1995, while not agreed upon in a formal setting, was nevertheless consistent with the administration’s overall grand strategic vision of supporting and enlarging the community of market democracies. Goldgeier is right to note that when cabinet principals met in October 1993 they actually chose to focus on the Partnership for Peace rather than enlargement. However, when Tony Lake and Richard Holbrooke pushed through enlargement over the next two years, they were able to do so because their actions were congruent with President’s Clinton overall vision for the US role in the world. Second, as the emergent model predicts, the formulation and implementation processes were hard to separate. They constantly influenced each other rather than being purely sequential with one coming before the other. Talbott was still working on laying out a detailed rationale for the expansion in 1995, well after Clinton decided in January 1994 that enlargement was no longer a question of “whether” but “when and why.” That formulation demonstrates that even if the policy emerged in an incremental way it nevertheless was guided by an overall objective flowing from the President’s view, and therefore not ad-hoc or determined by bureaucratic forces. If anything, the Pentagon’s military and civilian bureaucracies strongly opposed expansion, and the fact that this policy

133 Goldgeier, Not Whether but When, p.40
134 Clinton Public Papers, 1994, p.40; Strobe Talbott, “Why NATO Should Grow,” New York Review of Books, August 10, 1995. Clinton also supports this view that formulation and implementation of the strategy were interacting closely “This whole year, 1995, was to be devoted for the rationale for expanding NATO and then determining how it might be done, with no consideration whatever of who would be in the included membership and when that would be done. Clinton, “The President’s News Conference With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia in Moscow” Clinton Public Papers
did go through is a testament of its importance to the administration’s overall grand strategy.

**NAFTA and Free Trade**

President Clinton followed in the footsteps of George H.W. Bush in expanding free trade as a component of a post-Cold War American grand strategy. The advent of free trade has been regarded as leading to the advance of a peaceful and prosperous liberal world order abroad, but also as necessary for America’s own economic success in an age of globalization.135

Consistent with the overall vision of American leadership and the Fourth Principle of the AGL framework, Clinton followed in the steps of Bush 41 and proclaimed the need for the United States to take charge of advancing this agenda of economic liberalization. On the verge of signing the NAFTA agreement in 1993, Clinton declared that: “For this new era, our national security we now know will be determined as much by our ability to pull down foreign trade barriers as by our ability to breach distant ramparts. Once again, we are leading. And in so doing, we are rediscovering a fundamental truth about ourselves: When we lead, we build security, we build prosperity for our own people.”136 Three years later, the same view was evident in a memo prepared for incoming Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: “At no time since our colonial period has American prosperity depended more profoundly on effective participation in, and leadership of, the world economy.” 137

---

135 This was a constant theme in Clinton’s efforts to gain approval for NAFTA and the free trade agenda. “I believe we have made a decision now that will permit us to create an economic order in the world that will promote more growth, more equality, better preservation of the environment, and a greater possibility of world peace. We are on the verge of a global economic expansion that is sparked by the fact that the United States lit this critical moment decided that we would compete, not retreat.” Clinton, “Remarks on Signing of NAFTA.”

136 Ibid.

Despite its continuity throughout this era, the “free trade” Fourth Principle of America’s post-Cold War grand strategy elicits far less attention and controversy in the scholarly literature than the security-oriented topics discussed earlier in this chapter. Some scholars have ignored this issue altogether in discussions of American grand strategy: in a seminal article on the topic in the 1990s, Barry Posen and Andrew Ross did not include trade (or anything about the international economy) in any of the dimensions of their analysis of competing grand strategies.\(^{138}\) Historians such as John Gaddis and Jeremi Suri similarly analyzed post-Cold War grand strategy without any discussion of free trade or economic globalization. A more balanced and accurate view is offered by Hal Brands, but ultimately his interpretation is also questionable. He does present Clinton’s emphasis on free trade as a co-equal pillar of foreign policy, but ultimately dismisses it as part of a “post-Cold War fad in geopolitical thinking.” He contends that it failed because throughout the 1990s free trade and globalization did not win widespread domestic support.\(^{139}\) This argument implies that the popularity of a policy or of a strategic principle should be the measure of its significance.\(^{140}\) Such a view gives undue importance to public opinion: most elements of a strategy are controversial at some point - the key test is whether they can weather the criticism and maintain their impact. When it comes to the issue of free trade, Brands admits that “Clinton extolled the benefits of free trade and pushed (with some

\(^{138}\) Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S Grand Strategy”; Gaddis, “What is Grand Strategy?”; Suri, “Clear Skies Over the Horizon.” Curiously, at the other end of the spectrum there is a small resurgence in some circles of a school of neo-Marxist interpretation adopted by Layne (and Bacevich to some extent) which regards the free trade agenda as continuing an “Open Door” policy of economic imperialism. This view borders on conspiratorial theories about large corporations controlling US foreign policy for their own profit motives. Layne, The Peace of Illusions. Bacevich, American Empire.

\(^{139}\) Brands, From Berlin to Baghdad, 111, 156-157.

\(^{140}\) Brands writes explicitly that “mounting opposition showed that Clinton had not established the domestic backing necessary to enshrine free trade and global openness as defining principles of foreign policy.” Ibid., 155-56.
success) for new economic agreements,” but he claims that “the oratorical emptiness of U.S. policy was probably more significant.” Brands’s basic argument is that Clinton’s reluctance to use the word “Enlargement” in later years when describing his grand strategy showed that he abandoned it and moved to a “post-bumper sticker” ad-hoc conduct of foreign policy. On the contrary, my analysis reveals the coherence and consistency of the actions taken, and on the strategic principles and goals justifying those actions. In other words, should there be coherence and consistency in a pattern of behavior, the name used to refer to that pattern (or lack of a name, in this case) is irrelevant for the strength of my argument. In conclusion, the Clinton administrations followed through on its plans of expanding free trade. The planning model receives support in this policy arena.

**AGL after 9/11: George W. Bush and the War on Terror**

In light of the highly interventionist foreign policy pursued after 9/11, it is instructive to remember that George W. Bush came into office having campaigned on a platform critical of the global leadership vision he associated with the Clinton administration. Bush and his advisers, most prominently Condoleezza Rice, talked about a return to a narrower focus on national interest, and competition against other great powers such as a rising China, which they viewed as a “strategic competitor” rather than a strategic partner as Clinton called it.\(^\text{141}\) In a presidential debate, Bush talked about the importance of being “humble” on using US military power abroad, or otherwise the United States risks being perceived as arrogant and resented: “I’m not so sure the role of the United States is to go around the world and say this is the way it’s got to be.”\(^\text{142}\) In contrast to Gore’s more

\(^{141}\) Rice, “Promoting the National Interest.”

\(^{142}\) Bush, “Presidential debates excerpts.”
interventionist vision, Bush talked about limiting the missions of the military to traditional 
war-fighting (“Our military is meant to fight and win war”), more in line with the Powell 
document than the Clinton-era doctrine of involvement in stability and nation-building 
operations, which Rice derided as using the 82nd Airborne division to “escort kids to 
kindergarten.”143

Regarded with the benefit of hindsight, Bush’s foreign policy departed significantly 
from this limited strategic vision for America’s global leadership role, particularly after the 
terrorist attack of 9/11. Before addressing the War on Terror and its relation with the AGL 
framework, it is worth noting a number of other areas in which Bush’s policies and actions 
are congruent with the AGL principles in place throughout the 1990s. This will put Bush’s 
overall grand strategic approach in some context and provide important evidence for the 
continuity argument, before discussing the changes that took place after 9/11 regarding his 
more highly controversial decisions on the use of force, the Second Principle of AGL. As 
mentioned before and discussed in detail below, a common view in the literature claims 
that Bush 43 brought about a planned, dramatic change in American grand strategy, and 
therefore the evidence for lack of change is also implicitly evidence against the predictions 
of the design school. Furthermore, the fact that Bush’s initial plans for his foreign policy as 
 stated during the campaign changed so much while he was in office is also evidence refuting 
the design school’s view that grand strategies follow from plans.

143 “Carrying out civil administration and police functions is simply going to degrade the American 
capability to do the things America has to do. We don’t need to have the 82nd Airborne escorting kids 
mission quoted in Chollet and Goldgeier, America Between the Wars, 282. Not surprisingly, influential 
Republican foreign policy commentators who favor of an active global leadership role for the United 
States such as Bill Kristol supported John McCain in the Republican primary.
On the first principle of the AGL framework, regarding alliances and a global, dominant, military presence, Bush 43 continued and built upon the policies of his predecessors. He pushed for further NATO enlargement, and the organization added Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania in 2004, while also initiating membership talks with Croatia and Albania.144 The US maintained support for a globally forward-deployed military ready to support its security commitments in key regions and maintain leading edge capabilities by funding the “Base Budget” (roughly speaking, non-war related expenses) at a steadily growing pace, despite the added costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.145 On the Third Principle, there are two important points to make. First, the Bush administration pursued good power relations with emerging powers in much the same way as its predecessors: China was to be seen as a “responsible stakeholder,” Bush personally invested significant time and effort in building a closer partnership with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the administration accomplished a strategic partnership with India. More controversy surrounded the second component of this principle, about the preference for multilateral action, an issue on which Bush was accused of deviating from that principle and preferring to relying on unilateral use of force.146

---

144 These last two states joined in April 2009.
146 Among many others, Benjamin Miller argued that the Bush Doctrine represented a “shift from multilateralism to hegemonic unilateralism,” while Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay wrote that part of the administration’s “foreign policy revolution” was Bush’s reliance “on the unilateral exercise of American power rather than on international law and institutions to get his way. The main counterargument to that claim is that Bush rejected the advice of Vice-President Cheney in the fall of 2002 to circumvent the UN, and instead went with Secretary Powell’s recommendation to invest time and resources to secure the support of as many partners as possible. I do not address this debate more fully because for the purposes of this thesis the issue of unilateralism is not very relevant for testing the planned vs. emergent vs. ad-hoc hypotheses. This is because Bush’s NSS and other
Bush 43 also supported the expansion of free trade, the Fourth Principle. His 2002 NSS echoes the same view of free trade as a core component of US grand strategy that Bush 41 and Clinton shared: "A strong world economy enhances our national security by advancing prosperity and freedom in the rest of the world... Free trade and free markets have proven their ability to lift whole societies out of poverty—so the United States will work with individual nations, entire regions, and the entire global trading community to build a world that trades in freedom and therefore grows in prosperity." And rather than being just a rhetorical commitment, Bush 43 worked hard to expand the number of bilateral free trade agreements from three in 2000 to seventeen when he left office, with three more negotiated and later approved during Obama’s presidency.

Lastly, on the Fifth Principle of democracy promotion, Bush’s “freedom agenda” rested on the same theoretical principles that Clinton’s “indispensable nation” rhetoric invoked: the United States needs to lead the world in maintaining and expanding the community of liberal democracies. Both administrations invoked the tenets of the democratic peace theory in justifying their democracy-promotion agendas, and both drew a direct link between America's national security interests and its idealistic tradition of democracy promotion. In language very similar to Clinton’s, Bush made this point clear in an interview: “Let me make sure you understand. I believe the United States is the beacon of freedom in the world. And I believe we have a responsibility to promote freedom that is as

documents unsurprisingly talk about a preference for multilateralism as much as those of his predecessor. Miller, “Change in U.S. Grand Strategy”; Daalder and Lindsay, America Unbound. 147 The White House, NSS 2002, Preface, 18.

148 Jordan, Australia, Chile, Singapore, Bahrain, Morocco, Oman, Peru, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. It also negotiated three more agreements that were eventually ratified in 2011, with Panama, Colombia and South Korea.
solemn as the responsibility is to protecting the American people, because the two go hand-in-hand. [emph. orig.]”\textsuperscript{149} Second, the stated long-term objective of US grand strategy in the War on Terror, as expressed in the 2006 National Security Strategy, was to “help create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. This is the best way to provide enduring security for the American people.”\textsuperscript{150} There is nothing here that is significantly different from the role democracy promotion already had in the AGL framework before 9/11.

\textbf{9/11 and the War on Terror – A New Grand Strategy?}

The longest and most expensive wars after the Cold War era came after the terrorist attacks of September 11, when the United States overthrew the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in late 2001 and then Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq in the spring of 2003. Many analysts regarded these conflicts as part of a larger “War on Terror” grand strategic paradigm instituted by President George W. Bush after 9/11. The massive terrorist attack of 9/11, and the possibility of even worse ones to come, clearly raised the threat of terrorism against the US homeland to the highest priority. Indeed, the second Bush administration’s foreign policy came to be shaped in large part by its responses to that tragic event. But did Bush’s “Global War on Terror” really represent a “revolution in foreign policy,” a “radical grand strategy,” and the adoption of a new “preemption” doctrine on the use of force, as many analysts claimed?\textsuperscript{151}


\textsuperscript{150} The White House, \textit{NSS 2006}, 2.

\textsuperscript{151} See fn. 4 for bibliographical references to this literature.
Scholars who perceive a dramatic change in America’s post-9/11 grand strategy describe the new Bush Doctrine in a number of somewhat overlapping ways, and they mostly refer to the 2002 National Security Strategy document (for the plan) and the launching of the second Iraq War (for the evidence) to make their argument. For example, Gaddis lists four elements: preemption, hegemony, good relations with great powers, and democracy promotion; Lieber perceives preemption, military supremacy, multilateralism when possible, and spread of democracy; similarly, Jervis lists a focus on domestic form of government, preventive war, willingness to act unilaterally, and the perceived need for the U.S. to assert its primacy; lastly, Daalder and Lindsey focus on preventive war for regime change, unilateralism and disregard for multilateral institutions and allies, good relations with great powers, all under a hegemonic worldview. Some of these elements (such as good relations with great powers and maintaining global military superiority) were in fact shown to have been present in the AGL framework all along, and therefore they are not relevant for analysis of the changes brought by 9/11. Instead, I will address two broad sets of arguments that critics make and that, if convincing, would represent evidence of a planned change from the pre-9/11 grand strategy and thus support the critics’ point that Bush designed and implemented a new grand strategy. If the decisions and policies are not part of a new planned grand strategy, they will be analyzed in further detail to determine whether they were an emergent adaptation consistent with the principles of the AGL

152 Gaddis, *Surprise, Security*; Lieber, *The American Era*; Jervis, “Understanding the Bush Doctrine”; Daalder and Lindsey, *America Unbound*. Some of these elements (such as good relations with great powers and maintaining global military superiority) were in fact shown to have been present in the AGL framework all along, and therefore they are not relevant for my attempt to analyze the changes brought by 9/11.
framework, part of a new emergent strategy different than AGL, or best understood as ad-hoc.

First, the critics contend that following September 11th, Bush 43 articulated and followed a highly militaristic doctrine of preventive (or pre-emptive) war and regime change. Echoing this common argument, Walt claimed that “preventive war [was] the centerpiece of U.S. national security policy,” while Jervis wrote that the Bush Doctrine was grounded in the principle that “great threats . . . can be defeated only by new and vigorous policies, most notably preventive war.” George Packer, tracing this back to the alleged influence of neoconservatives in a display of what Frank Harvey’s book on the origins of the Iraq War called “neoconism,” expressed a common view when he described the new Bush Doctrine as making a “decisive break with the foreign policy establishment... Even as Bush and his war cabinet made their particular case on Iraq, they laid out a far-reaching grand strategy for the use of American power in the world... Rogue states and global terrorists could not be deterred. America, preeminent and without rivals, would ensure the peace in part by preempting threats to peace.” The critical passages in the NSS 2002 document most often quoted by such critics are worth quoting in their entirety:

Traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy whose avowed tactics are wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents; whose so-called soldiers seek martyrdom in death and whose most

---

153 “For the debate surrounding the use of these two terms, see Levy, “Preventive War and Democratic Politics.”
154 Walt, ”In the National Interest”; Jervis, “Understanding the Bush Doctrine.” See also Levy, “Preventive War and the Bush Doctrine,” and Litwak, Regime Change, as well as the other works references in fn 4.
155 Packer, The Assassins’ Gate, 63. Harvey describes “neoconism” as “the dominant narrative” to explain the war in Iraq, a theory that “claims that the Bush administration, guided by neocon advisers, constituted a necessary condition for the invasion.” The “neocons” in the Bush administration are usually Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, and Scooter Libby. Harvey, Explaining the Iraq War, 1. See also Mann, Rise of the Vulcans.
potent protection is statelessness. The overlap between states that sponsor terror and those that pursue WMD compels us to action....

We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries. Rogue states and terrorists do not seek to attack us using conventional means. They know such attacks would fail. Instead, they rely on acts of terror and, potentially, the use of weapons of mass destruction—weapons that can be easily concealed, delivered covertly, and used without warning.

As was demonstrated by the losses on September 11, 2001, mass civilian casualties is the specific objective of terrorists and these losses would be exponentially more severe if terrorists acquired and used weapons of mass destruction. The United States has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security.

The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction — and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.156

And second, Bush was also said to have embarked on a planned grand strategy of imposing democracy by force in the Middle East as the ultimate antidote to Islamic terrorism. Critics of the president argued that the administration followed such a grand design, and refer to the Iraq War as the first step in such a grandiose endeavor. Among Bush’s critics, John Mearsheimer deplored that “by pursuing this extraordinary scheme to transform an entire region at the point of a gun, President Bush adopted a radical grand strategy that has no parallel in American history.” Paul Pillar similarly contends that Bush’s “decision to topple Saddam was driven by other factors than WMD—namely, the desire to shake up the sclerotic power structures of the Middle East and hasten the spread of more

Even scholars more sympathetic to Bush’s vision (at least around 2002), like Gaddis, agreed with the idea that the administration was following a highly ambitious new grand strategic design, calling it “truly a grand strategy, ... a plan for transforming the entire Middle East: for bringing it, once and for all, into the modern world.” As evidence for this interpretation, Gaddis refers to a number of passages from the 2002 NSS and a previous speech at West Point to make the connection between bringing democracy to the Middle East as the long-term solution to the War on Terror. Gaddis writes that in the President’s thinking the causes of terrorism go back to “resentments growing out of the absence of representative institutions in their own societies,” which in turn meant that

the only outlet for political dissidence was religious fanaticism. Hence, Bush insists the ultimate goal of the U.S. strategy must be to spread democracy everywhere. The United States must finish the job that Woodrow Wilson started. The world, quite literally, must be made safe for democracy, even those parts of it, like the Middle East, that have so far resisted the tendency.

Both sets of arguments listed above are ultimately flawed for the following reasons.

There was not a single Bush Doctrine, a single planned über grand strategy for the War on Terror centered on either preventive war, or on democratizing the Middle East, or on both. Analyzed from a distance, the War on Terror brought a number of important changes in US foreign and national security policies, but these complemented and adjusted rather than replaced the pre-9/11 AGL grand strategic framework. And even more relevant to the

---

157 Pillar, “War in Iraq.” Haass points to the same kind reason for the war, although he admits that there might have been other reasons as well: “[Bush] wanted to change the course of history, transforming not just a country but the region of the world that had produced the lion’s share of the world’s terrorists and had resisted much of modernity.” Haass, War of Necessity, 235.
theoretical concerns of this thesis, the process by which the administration formed the strategic principles that guided the President's decision-making in the War on Terror is better explained by the emergence model than either the planning model or the ad-hoc model.

In the first weeks following 9/11, Bush adopted a series of innovative strategic principles for fighting the War on Terror that shaped his actions for the remaining of his presidency. First of all, the President made the consequential decision to treat the terrorist attack as an act of war against the United States by a global terrorist network determined to attack again, and therefore to direct his response to the prevention of another attack. On the night of Sept 11, Bush told a grieving nation that "Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks." And on September 12, the told his senior Pentagon leadership that “We believe we are at war and we’ll fight it as such. I want us to have the mindset of fighting and winning a war.”160 Bush’s decision to treat 9/11 as an act of war and thus to focus the response on preventing the next attack is rightly viewed by the former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith as “strategically the single most important decision the president made in eight years; everything that happened in the war on terrorism was in the service of that.”161 Bush basically made that decision in the aftermath of 9/11 based on his instinctive view of the situation rather than engaging in a more planned approach to determine what course to take: "The most important thing that happened was his immediate instinct about what had to be done, and the fact that we weren't going to dither and study it to death and have a lot of meetings, that we're going to

160 Bush, Selected Speeches, 57; Feith, War and Decision, 12.
161 Douglas Feith, interview with the author, June 4, 2013.
take this network down... . We're going to do what it takes to get that done. You now have as much authority as you need; come back and tell me how you're going to do it."162 Rumsfeld confirms this interpretation as well: "He made an immediate decision that he was going to go to war." The emergent model emphasizes the lasting impact of initial crisis response as opposed to careful deliberations in the making of strategy, and therefore it receives support from the above account.

The implications of this initial decision to treat 9/11 as an act of war as opposed to law enforcement shaped policy decisions in a variety of ways, many of them rarely talked about in the literature on Bush’s grand strategy referenced above. It led to major efforts in the realm of homeland defense, from the creation of the Department of Homeland Security to shifting the focus of Justice Department and FBI to counter-terrorism to legislative changes such as the Patriot Act and the terrorist surveillance program. It also led to the President's issuing of broad powers to the CIA on September 16 to conduct covert operations in more than eighty countries around the world to kill or capture al-Qaeda-linked terrorists, and to treating captured terrorists as enemy combatants, hold them at Guantanamo Bay, using enhanced interrogation techniques, and trying them in military tribunals.163 Yet another vital policy initiative was launched to curb terrorist funding, as a former senior Treasury official recollects: “The first shot [of the War on Terror] was fired September 24, 2001, when the Bush administration froze Al-Qaeda’s assets and, through a concerted diplomatic effort, assembled a coalition of 172 countries to join in the freeze—

163On September 16, the President already signed a top secret presidential intelligence that would authorize the CIA to undertake a far-reaching and unprecedented worldwide covert war against terrorism. He also approved Tenet’s proposal for CIA paramilitary teams to go into Afghanistan.” Woodward and Balz, “Ten days in September.”
which was essential in preventing terrorists from moving funds from a bank in one country to a bank in another to escape the freeze." All of these non-military yet critical components of the War on Terror, many of them still in place, represent essentially emergent adjustments to the dangers of the post-9/11 world, and developed at least initially in incremental fashion in various parts of government and through executive presidential decisions rather than being part of any grand master plan. They do not figure prominently in the grand strategic analysis of the Bush administration, although they arguably represented a much more central part and lasting legacy of the War on Terror than its more controversial military component discussed in the remaining of the chapter.

Nine days after 9/11, following intensive consultations with his administration and his direct involvement in drafting this speech, the President laid out in front of Congress and the public his early strategy for the War on Terror, and the first version of what commentators called the "Bush Doctrine." In this speech, Bush tackled the basic questions such as "who is the enemy?" and "how are we going to fight and win this war?"

Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them. Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.

Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success.

We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism.

Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that

---

164 Taylor, “Financial Reinforcements.”
continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.165

One of the most consequential decisions coming out of the internal debates leading to this speech was the definition of the enemy as a global network of terrorists and their state supporters.166 However, this did not mean that the United States planned on going to war against states supporting terrorism. The phrasing “continues to harbor and support” was carefully debated inside the administration and ultimately chose by Bush in order to emphasize the choice that even rogue regimes can make in changing their behavior.167 The language in this first iteration of the Bush Doctrine is different from the common critique of a Bush grand strategy based on forceful regime because it calls for persuading even rogue states to join the fight against al-Qaeda. Bush’s public statement that every nation “has a choice to make” was echoed in private conversations, and administration officials even hoped that the Taliban might give up bin Laden if pressed hard enough. Bush wanted to signal military resolve in order not only to persuade the Taliban to give up al-Qaeda, but also to convince states with a history of supporting terrorism to change their behavior. In addressing the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the president made that point clear: "Let's hit them hard. We want to signal this is a change from the past. We want to cause other countries like Syria and Iran to change their views."168

In addition to the principle that states harboring terrorists should be treated the same as the terrorists themselves, which led to the overthrow of the Taliban later that fall

165 Bush, Selected Speeches, 69.
167 As Woodward and Balz summarized the atmosphere in the first few days after 9/11, “at that point nobody other than Tenet was even talking about dislodging the Taliban, only threatening to punish the regime if it didn't break with bin Laden.” Woodward and Balz, “Ten Days.”
168 Ibid.
after they refused to hand over Bin Laden, another important issue emerged from the early debates. At an NSC meeting on September 13, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld raised an argument that would become a key part of Bush’s strategy in the War on Terror:

As awful as 9/11 was, it would have been deadlier by orders of magnitude if the attackers had used chemical or (especially) biological or nuclear weapons. Though some terrorist groups might be capable of producing such weapons themselves, a more likely source would be a state supporter. And we knew that the list of leading state supporters of terrorism coincided with the list of so-called rogue states who were notorious for pursuing (and, in case of Iraq, using) weapons of mass destruction.\textsuperscript{169}

In the coming weeks and months, the anthrax scare in Washington combined with reports from Afghanistan that al-Qaeda had been actively seeking WMDs raised the fears among senior administration officials of a truly catastrophic attack that would, as Vice President Dick Cheney put it, “change history” and potentially destroy America’s constitutional system and way of life.\textsuperscript{170} In this context of a devastating follow-on terrorist attack being perceived as a distinct possibility, early and dramatic success against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan led the Bush administration to contemplate the next phase in the War on Terror.

The administration’s statements and actions between early 2002 and early 2003 period is key for scholars who claim that Bush designed a grand strategy of preventive/preemptive war and implemented it in the removal of Saddam Hussein. I will rebut this view in two steps. First, I will show that while the administration did embrace a restrictive view of preempting threats under certain specific and rare circumstances, “preventive war” was not at the center of its grand strategy as Walt or Jervis claimed. Second, while fully analyzing the causes of the war in Iraq is beyond the scope of my thesis, the critical task for my argument is to analyze whether the evidence supports the critics’

\textsuperscript{169} Feith, \textit{War and Decision}, 19.
\textsuperscript{170} Cheney, \textit{In My Time}, 344.
view of the Iraq War as a manifestation of a newly adopted preemption/prevention
document for the use of force, or, alternatively, whether the emergent or ad-hoc models
provide more explanatory power. Thus, I attempt to show that not only was there no new
overall grand strategy based on preventive war, but not even on the narrow issue of use of
force (Second Principle of AGL) does the evidence support the designed preemption view to
the extent claimed by its proponents.

The planning narrative rests on the fact that President Bush and other senior
administration officials used language supporting the "preemption" idea in public speeches
and in the unclassified 2002 NSS, and then justified the war in Iraq mostly in a way
consistent with the notion that Saddam’s pursuit of WMD programs posed a threat that
needed to be addressed preemptively. However, despite what critics like Walt contended,
there was no such thing as a planned doctrine of preventive war, much less a grand strategy
centered around it. No one in the administration argued anything resembling such a
widespread claim for the preference for preemption. What some in the administration did
argue was that in very rare cases a situation can occur in which the preemptive use of force
might be needed to address a grave danger, such as when a terrorism-supporting state with
a history of aggression is about to develop WMDs. And even than, this should be attempted
only after all other means have been tried. As Rice put it in an interview in 2002:

> There are certain kinds of regimes that, if they acquire weapons of mass
destruction, we must consider a danger because we know their history. The
history here is extremely important. Anticipatory defense should not be used as
a cover for aggression. It really should be a rare occurrence... Finally, there is a
difference between preemption of capabilities and regime change. They are not
the same. You may more often, as the United States has done in the past,
preempt capability. But preempting for regime change ought to be a very rare
occurrence.\(^{171}\)

Despite the clumsy “axis of evil” phrase in the president’s 2002 State of the Union speech, there is no evidence available that the administration prepared for, or even contemplated, a regime change/preventive war against any other country except for Iraq, as could be expected if this were indeed the new grand strategy or use of force doctrine for the War on Terror. On the contrary, at the Defense Department, an analytical exercise conducted by the Joint Chiefs Vice-Chairman General Peter Pace and Douglas Feith developed a grid of the states with WMD ambitions that might provide them to terror groups, and arrayed for each the range of options on how to convince them to end support for terrorism and drop the pursuit of WMD. The policies ranged from “diplomatic measures through economic pressure and multinational sanctions – to blockade, limited strikes, and regime change by military force.” The study, for example, found Syria and Libya to be likely to respond to diplomatic pressure based on their history. For Iran and North Korea, there were still plenty of diplomatic, UN actions, economic sanctions and other operations short of war. It was only Iraq, Feith writes, echoing Rice and Bush, that “the United States had exhausted virtually every means short of war to end the danger from the Iraqi regime.”

Lastly, the architects of the 2002 NSS themselves, admittedly with some reason to do so after the controversies create by the document and the lack of WMDs in Iraq, deny that the strategy represented anything like a new doctrine for preemptive or preventive war. As Stolberg’s detailed study of the formation of NSS 2002 documents it, “the material on the preemption of terrorists had originally been developed by [Philip] Zelikow in one of his early drafts. NSA Rice deleted some of that material and moved it to the document’s WMD section. NSA Rice requested NSC Legal Advisor John Bellinger to review that section

172 Feith, War and Decision, 229-33.
in detail and modified it based upon Bellinger's advice." This description is confirmed by the accounts of Zelikow and Rice: In writing about the formation of the document, Zelikow contends that "The origins of the famous ‘preemption’ language itself had little to do with grand strategy. The actual story behind that bit of drafting does not come close to living up to the large inferences that have been drawn from its placement in the document."\footnote{Zelikow, “Strategic Planning,” 116. In a recent studies of all the memoirs coming from the Bush administration former officials, Melvyn Leffler similarly observes that: Notwithstanding its visibility at the time and its place in the journalistic and scholarly literature, Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Tenet, and Feith spend little or no time discussing it. Rice and Haass point out that it was drafted by Philip Zelikow, a friend of Rice’s and former colleague on the National Security Council (NSC) staff.” Leffler, “Foreign Policies of the Bush Administration”}

Instead, the term came from one of the lawyers who worried about justifying US interventions in the context of current international law. Rice adds that "Contrary to popular views, the only novel aspect of our articulation of the preemption strategy was the way in which we had to adapt the concept of ‘imminent threat’ to contemporary realities."\footnote{Rice, No Higher Calling, 154.}

Surely the administration’s NSS 2002 would not have attracted so much attention and controversy had it not been for the war in Iraq, which was viewed by its critics as an example of the new grand strategy or doctrine. But was the war in Iraq a part of Bush’s alleged new preemption doctrine? A study of the recent memoirs of former Bush administration officials and the admittedly selectively declassified materials they make available, interviews with high-level former officials, as well as behind-the-scenes accounts of the internal deliberations all lead to the conclusion that, while the WMD/terrorism nexus was surely a concern, the decision to remove Saddam does not indicate the existence of a new planned doctrine of preemptive war as critics described it. Some of the most influential arguments in favor of the war were not about pre-empting Iraq from developing WMDs that
could end up in the hands of terrorists, but rather about maintaining US credibility as a world leader, about the international community's credibility in future cases of rogue states disregarding UN resolutions, and about avoiding further threats to the Middle East and international stability caused by Saddam's erratic behavior and his aggressive tendencies.

Condoleezza Rice was the only senior adviser asked directly by Bush whether he should go to war, and her answer had little if anything to do with preemption. Rather, her reasoning was based on protecting the credibility of US and of the international community and on maintaining regional stability. It was thus congruent with the pre-9/11 view on use of force stated in the Second Principle of the AGL framework. In Bob Woodward's reporting,

‘What do you think?’ he had asked her a few weeks before. ‘Should we do this?’

‘Yes,’ she said. "Because it isn't American credibility on the line, it is the credibility of everybody that this gangster can yet again beat the international system." As important as credibility was, she said, 'Credibility should never drive you to do something you shouldn't do.' But this was much bigger, she advised, something that should be done. "To let this threat in this part of the world play volleyball with the international community this way will come back to haunt us someday. That is the reason to do it."

---

175 Bob Woodward, “Behind Diplomatic Moves, Military Plan Was Launched,” The Washington Post, April 18, 2004. As Rice also wrote later in her memoir: "Saddam Hussein was a cancer in the Middle East who had attacked his neighbors, throwing the region into chaos," and she expressed some doubts, similar to Rumsfeld and Feith, about how the administration made the public case for the war to be more about WMD/terrorism than Saddam's threat to international stability: "what really should have anchored the argument was the problem of WMD in the hands of Saddam, not just the problem of WMD per se [emph.added]...Somehow all that Saddam had done and what he meant to stability in Middle East was getting lost in the discussion." Rice, No Higher Honor, 197-98. George Tenet also recounts in his memoir a conversation he had Sir Richard Dearlove, the head of the British MI-6, who after a meeting the Bush administration top officials came out with the impression that "that the momentum driving it was not really about WMD but rather about bigger issues, such as changing the politics of Middle East. The United States did not go to war in Iraq solely because of WMD." Along the same lines, Tenet writes that “In my view, I doubt it was even the principle cause. Yet it was the public face that was put on it.” Tenet, At the Center of the Storm, 310, 321.
Her deputy at the time and future successor, Stephen Hadley, echoed the same arguments in an interview:

I believe that it was not a war of preemption. I do not believe it was a war of choice. I believe it was a war of last resort, that the international community over 12 years had exhausted all the tools it had to deal with Saddam Hussein. If after all this run-up with Saddam -- a war, a ceasefire, 17 UNSC resolutions, no-fly zones, dumb sanctions and smarter sanctions, use of military force against him in 1998, regime change being formal policy of our government since 1998, and Saddam’s continued defiance-- if after all of that we would say ‘that’s okay, we didn’t mean it,’ we’d never be able to deal with any other outlaw dictator in the future.176

Advocates of the war in the top three positions at the Defense Department had also made arguments for the war that had nothing to do with preemption. Secretary Rumsfeld wrote a memo at the time stating that the focus on WMD was distracting attention from other similarly important reasons for attacking Iraq, “My concerns about Iraq,” he said, “went beyond Saddam's support of terrorism or any involvement with al-Qaeda...

Intelligence evidence about WMD had a way of taking pride of place in the litany of reasons for going to war. In fact, that should have been only one of the many reasons. There was a long list of other charges against Saddam Hussein’s regime – its support for terrorism, its attacks on American pilots in the no-fly zones, its violation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions, its history of aggression, and its crimes against its people... Obviously the focus on WMD to the exclusion of almost all else was a public relations error that cost the administration dearly.”177 Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz believes that the introduction of the preemption language in the 2002 NSS in fact “misrepresented what the issue was. You start talking about preemption and suddenly it appears to be the reason to go after Iraq, as opposed to saying that for twelve years Saddam has been violating the terms of the original

176 Steve Hadley, interview with the author, June 5, 2013.
177 Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 422, 435.
ceasefire, and finally the time has come to put up or shut up. Basically, if the UN resolutions mean anything, you have to insist on compliance with them."\textsuperscript{178} And Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Feith also argued that the war was about so much more than the WMD issue. \textsuperscript{179}

Lastly, as historian Melvyn Leffler’s recent study of the Bush administration observed, “In the run-up to war, Bush was the key decision-maker...Future histories of the Iraq War will need to put Bush at the very center of the administration that he headed.”\textsuperscript{180} Therefore, his account for what drove him to invade Iraq is an important piece of evidence worth examining, with the usual caveat that statesmen have certain biases in how they present their memoirs. One thing that is fairly clear from the President’s recollection is that 9/11 led him to see Saddam’s case differently: “Before 9/11, Saddam was a problem America might have been able to manage. Through the lens of the post-9/11 world, my view changed... The lesson of 9/11 was that if we waited for a danger to fully materialize, we would have waited too long. I reached a decision: We would confront the threat from Iraq, one way or another.”\textsuperscript{181} The reference to the lessons-learned process here supports the emergent model. As he further explained his rationale, he laid out the unique nature of the Iraqi threat, providing support for the view that this case was a multi-faceted threat, and not part of a new grand strategy centered on preventive war against rogue states with ties

\textsuperscript{178}Wolfowitz, interview with the author, June 4, 2013.
\textsuperscript{179}“The President had an honest, well-grounded rationale, one that was not undermined by our failure to find WMD stockpiles in Iraq... Deciding how to keep the United States security is a large responsibility. President Bush approached the task with a sense of peril heightened by the 9/11 catastrophe. He reviewed the ways that the Unites States and other had tried to counter the Iraqi threat over the last decade: diplomatic protests, Security Council resolutions, weapons inspections, economic sanctions, no-fly zones, no-drive zones, and limited military strikes. We had attempted every reasonable means short of war.” Feith, \textit{War and Decision}, 224.
\textsuperscript{180}Leffler, “Foreign Policies of the Bush Administration,” 214.
\textsuperscript{181}Bush, \textit{Decision Points}, 229.
to both terrorism and WMD proliferation. "There were state sponsors of terror. There were sworn enemies of America. There were hostile governments that threatened their neighbors. There were nations that violated international demands. There were dictators who repressed their people. And there were regimes that pursued WMD. Iraq combine all those threats. "\(^{182}\)

More pertinent to the process of reaching the decision to invade, Bush seemed to have made it without much formal deliberations or discussion of how Iraq is part of a new grand strategy of preventive war. The process by which the Iraq war decision came about was less planned and structured than the design model would expect. As the war in Afghanistan seemed to be winding down after the fall of the Taliban regime and the routing of al-Qaeda, the Bush administration moved towards confronting Iraq in an incremental fashion.\(^{183}\) As Rumsfeld remembers it, "While the President and I had many discussions about the war preparations, I do not recall his ever asking me if I thought going to war with Iraq was the right decision. The process toward war had been incremental." CIA director George Tenet corroborates this view "There was never a serious debate I know of within the administration about the imminence of the Iraqi threat." When asked about this, President

\(^{182}\) Ibid., 228.

\(^{183}\) "Over the next nine months (since 9/11), the administration would make Iraq the central focus of its war on terrorism without producing a rich paper trail or record of key meetings and events leading to a formal decision to act against President Saddam Hussein, according to a review of administration decision-making based on interviews with more than 20 participants. Instead, participants said, the decision to confront Hussein at this time emerged in an ad hoc fashion... In July, the State Department’s director of policy planning, Richard N. Haass, held a regular meeting with Rice and asked whether they should talk about the pros and cons of confronting Iraq. Don’t bother, Rice replied: The president has made a decision. Glenn Kessler, “U.S. Decision On Iraq Has Puzzling Past: Opponents of War Wonder When, How Policy Was Set,” Washington Post, January 12, 2003.
Bush said that there was no need for this because he knew where his principals stood on this issue. 184

As for the argument that the United States invaded Iraq as part of a grand strategy of “transforming the Middle East” (Gaddis) or “brining democracy at the point of a gun” (Mearsheimer), the critics misunderstand the sequence and thus the direction of the causal arrow between launching the Iraq War and the promotion of democracy in the Middle East. The latter was primarily a consequence, not a cause, of the former. As the quotes above suggest, of the many reasons advocated for the war by various officials, spreading democracy to the Middle East was not one of them.185 Instead, at a meeting shortly before the invasion Bush asked his senior advisers what kind of a leader should replace Saddam Hussein after the war. The decision was made that rather than installing a more friendly military dictator, the US owed the Iraqi people the chance to help them build a democratic state.186 And at that point, as Steve Hadley remembers in an interview:

As we thought about those ideas, we thought that it was not just for the Iraqi people, but we came to this idea that if that if you could in Iraq build a democratic peace where Sunni, Shia and Kurds were all working together in a democratic framework for the future of the country, that would be a good example for the Middle East. But the reason we went to war with Saddam was the national security was the national security concerns and the credibility of the international community and of the United States.187

---

184 Woodward, Plan of Attack, 119; Tenet, At the Center of the Storm, 305; Rumsfeld, Known and Unknown, 435; Bush, Decision Points, 250-252.

185 Leffler’s reading on this is similar to mine: “What is clear in the memoirs is that the administration went to war in order to deal with a range of perceived threats—not to promote democracy, not to transform the Middle East, and not to secure supplies of oil. All these matters, according to Bush, Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld, Feith, and Tenet, were of secondary or tertiary importance, and mostly influenced behavior after ‘formal’ military hostilities ended in early April 2003.” Leffler, “Foreign Policies of the Bush Administration.”

186 This meeting and debate is referenced by Rice in her memoir, and confirmed by Hadley in an interview. She confirms the sequence: “We did not go to Iraq to bring democracy any more than Roosevelt went to war against Hitler to democratize Germany, though that became American policy once the Nazis were defeated. Rice, No Higher Honor, 187.

187 Steve Hadley, interview with the author, June 5, 2013.

225
In addition, only after the administration did not find WMDs in Iraq did Bush shift markedly the rationale for the war to democracy promotion.\textsuperscript{188} In November 2003, in a prominent speech on promoting democracy in the Middle East titled “Remarks on the Freedom Agenda\textsuperscript{189},” the President laid out the emerging view of Iraq as the central battlefield in bringing about the much needed political liberalization of the Middle East:

The failure of Iraqi democracy would embolden terrorists around the world, increase dangers to the American people, and extinguish the hopes of millions in the region. Iraqi democracy will succeed — and that success will send forth the news, from Damascus to Teheran — that freedom can be the future of every nation. The establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution.

Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe — because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export.\textsuperscript{190}

The way in which democracy promotion came to become a central part of US strategy in Iraq after the invasion fits with the emergent model’s view of continuous dynamic interaction between formulation and implementation: while the United States did not go in Iraq to spread democracy, when it got there democracy-promotion became a key goal and eventually emerged as a more central component of the War on Terror than before.

\textsuperscript{188} Feith tabulated references to Threat/Saddam’s Records versus Iraqi Democracy/Political Future before and after the war, and noticed a dramatic reversal from 13.7 avg paragraphs on threat as opposed to only 3.4 on democracy between Sept’02-Jul’03, to 1.1 for threat and 10.1 for democracy promotion between Jul’03-Sept’04. Feith, \textit{War and Decision}, 476.
\textsuperscript{189} “Freedom Agenda” is another name that came to be associated with the Bush Doctrine.
\textsuperscript{190} Bush, \textit{Selected Speeches}, 186.
All in all, the Bush administration’s thinking about the War on Terror relied on a strategic framework that incorporated many different elements and lines of action, both military and non-military, but there was not a new grand strategy or a single Bush Doctrine on the use of force. When he joined the NSC staff in Bush’s second term, Peter Feaver recalls that “by 2005 already, if you asked someone what’s the Bush Doctrine you could get: preemption, states sponsors of terror will be treated as terrorists, freedom agenda as the answer to terrorism, one regarding development, unilateralism, at one point I counted nine different things that had been called the Bush Doctrine. I was given the assignment to write “the one” that links all of these together, shows the coherence across these.” The overarching document Feaver was asked to write, however, “wasn’t going to change what we're doing going forward, but rather to identify what was the logic that held these three, five, or however many together... It was not a plan, but something that would make sense of what we’re doing.”191 As the emergence model expects, “retrospective sense-making,” in business theorists Karl Weick’s terminology, is a key ingredient to the formation of strategy, and Feaver’s experience supports this expectation on the Bush administration’s internal strategy-making process. At the same time, it casts further doubt on the view that Bush grand strategy was a single grand strategy centered on of preventive war or democratization of Middle East, as critics contended.

The way Bush’s War on Terror changed America’s foreign policy was not mainly at the highest level of grand strategy principles, but in how it conceptualized the threats to US national security interests in light of an elevated risk environment to the homeland, as well as the role of more decisive military power in responding to these threats. For Clinton,

191 Peter Feaver, interview with the author, May 23, 2013.
threats to international stability coming from nuclear proliferation, terrorism or ethnic conflict threatened American interests and the goals of US grand strategy, but he did not see an imminent threat to the American homeland. Pre-9/11 American use of force was aimed at what the 1993 RDS called “shaping the environment” and “maintaining strategic depth,” in part through intervening in crises that threaten regional stability and American interests. As a consequence of the lack of a direct threat to the US homeland, the use of force needed to be carefully justified to a skeptical Congress and public. In the aftermath of 9/11, and particularly contemplating the catastrophic possibility of a WMD attack on US soil, the risk tolerance and the political constraints changed considerably. The Bush administration was far more willing and able to use military force abroad in its efforts to combat the nexus between global terrorism and the spread of WMD, and to deal with perceived sources of instability such as rogue regimes. Harvey even made a plausible, yet controversial, book-length argument in favor of the counterfactual that a Gore president would have also launched the War in Iraq.192

192 See Harvey, Explaining the Iraq War. After Saddam repeatedly interfered with the UN inspections in the 1990s, by the end of 1998 Clinton decided to use military force to degrade Saddam’s nuclear program. Operation Desert Fox, a U.S.-British joint bombing campaign of Iraqi military facilities, was placed by the president in the context of his grand strategic vision of US as the protector of international peace and of an American-led world order: “If we’re serious about WMD being the biggest threat to the twenty-first century, we’ve got to be ready to use force... If Saddam defies the world and we fail to respond, we will face a far greater threat in the future. Saddam will strike again at his neighbors. And mark my words, he will develop weapons of mass destruction. He will deploy them, and he will use them...If Saddam can cripple the weapons inspections system and get away with it, he would conclude the international community, led by the United States, has simply lost its will.” Foreshadowing the arguments later made by his successor, Clinton also brought up the issue of regime change, even though he did not pursue that goal militarily at that time but only through financial support to opposition groups: “The best way to end that threat once and for all is with a new Iraqi government -- a government ready to live in peace with its neighbors, a government that respects the rights of its people.”192 James Bennet, “Clinton Describes Goals for a Strike on Iraqi Arsenals,” The New York Times, February 18, 1998; CNN, “Text of Clinton Statement on Iraq”, February 17, 1998. http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/02/17/transcripts/clinton.iraq/
Looking at it over the eight-year span, Bush’s grand strategy did not deviate significantly from the principles of post-Cold War grand strategy. Rather than a planned “revolution” in grand strategy, Bush’s approach continued the Post-Cold War principle of providing global leadership to address new threats to the international order like terrorism and WMD proliferation. The most controversial issue of the Bush era, preemptive/preventive war, represented at most a short-lived deviation largely caused by Saddam's unique circumstances rather than a new doctrine meant to guide America's military in future circumstances. The main innovations of the Bush War on Terror were the post-9/11 decisions on homeland security, terrorist surveillance, the legal framework for treating terrorists, the targeting of terrorists wherever they are found, and to prevent physical sanctuaries for al-Qaeda terrorists even if that violates the sovereignty of host governments. These represented emergent lessons learned in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks rather being part of any new grand strategic design.
Chapter 4: Conclusions

The central task of this thesis was to explain the making of American grand strategy get made by comparing and contrasting three theoretical models: design, emergent learning, and ad-hocery. A common implicit or explicit view in the strategic studies literature is that grand strategies are constructed either formed by design and planning, or not at all; in other words, policies and actions that are not part of a designed grand strategy are generally considered ad-hoc. My thesis hypothesizes that the emergent learning model, a paradigm adapted from concepts present in the business strategy literature, can offer a useful way to understand the formation of coherent grand strategies even when leaders don’t consciously follow a master plan. In order to test this contention, I examine the plans, policies, and decisions taken by US presidents during two eras of America’s history: the Cold War (1948-1991), and the post-Cold War (1991-2008). The analysis shows that, in broad terms, a grand strategic framework composed of a set of guiding principles was present in each era. The thesis also shows that elements of design, emergence, and even ad-hocery all explained various parts of the whole, but also that the emergent model received more support, on balance, than either the design or the ad-hoc models.

This concluding chapter begins by summarizing these findings for both strategic eras. And second, it proposes a way to extend the analysis in future research by presenting a “plausibility probe” for normative arguments derived from the theoretical models discussed in the study. While this thesis focuses on explanation and on the development of an alternative theory to explain strategy-making, a more policy-oriented future study could analyze when and how the proponents of the design and emergence models are persuasive
when they argue that that their preferred approach leads to successful outcomes. I end by offering tentative answers to that question, by drawing on the analysis of various dimensions of grand strategy discussed in the dissertation.

**The Interplay of Design and Emergence in American Grand Strategy**

**The Cold War**

On balance, the Cold War chapter shows that the process by which Containment came about fits better with the tenets of the emergent model, even though important elements of design and even some of ad-hocery were present. As we have seen throughout the chapter, even the key statesman regarded as the archetypical grand strategists during the Cold War, George Kennan, expressed serious doubts about how much impact his strategic designs actually had. Such doubts were expressed as much during his time in government as later on, and thus could not be attributed primarily to the hindsight bias common in autobiographies. The vision that shaped the conduct of American foreign policy and influenced its key decisions came out primarily in an emergent fashion and less so from planning documents. Early on in its formative stage, the most elaborate plans laid out by George Kennan did not gain the approval of Harry Truman and Dean Acheson, and consequently Kennan’s realist-based vision and objectives for Containment were different than the more idealist/globalist ones that came to define the strategy in practice. NSC-68, the other key grand strategic effort from the Truman administration, swung on the other extreme and painted an overly ideological picture of hyper-aggressive Soviet communism hell-bent on conquering the world as part of a “Kremlin design,” something that soon proved to be far too simplistic a depiction of the Cold War challenges. The grand strategy evolved from immediate responses to crises in places like Iran, Greece, Turkey, or Korea,
combined with a constant process of learning from each experience and using analogies with recent experiences to reach decisions. Kennan’s Long Telegram was indeed influential in the conception of containment as an idea, but his views on what should be contained and where were not heeded. Even though the impact of impact of NSC-68 was evident in the Korean War military build-up, the document was rejected by the Eisenhower administration and its substance and recommendations soon became obsolete when communists states ceased to be perceived as a collective monolith.

Even the classic example of strategic planning, Eisenhower’s Project Solarium, supports the design model to a lesser extent than its supporters suggest. The document coming out of the exercise, NSC-162/2, represented more or less what Eisenhower wanted to begin with: the existing Containment grand strategy with the massive retaliation twist to reduce costs. Its implementation was so problematic that it caused the Eisenhower administration to shift to other strategic avenues to combat the spread of communism, such as covert operations and supporting local anti-communist leaders. The one period in which a more designed grand strategy significantly dominated decision-making was during Kissinger’s era of détente. However, even during this time, the process of achieving a designed strategy was not one based on elaborate planning reviews but rather on the highly centralized control of foreign policy in the hands of one or two persons, Kissinger and the President. Détente did not signify a permanent shift from Containment, however, and the more traditional elements of the Truman-era Containment grand strategy dominated the end of the Cold War under Ronald Reagan’s tenure.

During Reagan’s presidency, the initial

---

1 Once again, to address one possible counterargument, even the most “idealistic” presidents, Truman and Reagan, sometimes adopted “realist” policies such as supporting anti-communist but non-
plans his administration laid out, NSDD 32 and NSDD 75, contained some ideas such as rollback and a more forceful push for democracy-promotion worldwide, but the plans were soon overtaken by events due to the new developments inside USSR and arguably due to Reagan’s change in his policy views in the second term. Thus, Reagan’s grand strategy ended up more emergent than planned as well. The following table lists some of the important policies and decisions discussed throughout the Cold War chapter, and highlights the preponderance of emergent over designed and ad-hoc ones. Given that the Truman administration set the foundations of Containment, as stated in the five principles, the majority of the policies in the table have started during his time. Another type of evidence in favor of the emergent model consists of failed attempts at planned changes from these principles, such as the Kennan balance-of-power and Reagan's initial rollback strategy.

democratic actors in the third world. Those instances, however, were exceptions to the core tenets of their grand strategy, not a planned-design part of a realpolitik worldview as they were for Kissinger.
Table 1: Summary of Cold War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Design, Emergent or Ad-Hoc?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Aid to Greece &amp; Turkey</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Truman Doctrine (extend aid to anti-communist forces globally)</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Containment as Concept</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Scope of Containment</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Global leadership</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Liberal political/economic world order</td>
<td>Mixed (WWII-era planning influence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Marshall Plan</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>NATO, formal alliances and Forward Deployment of military forces</td>
<td>Mixed (Emergent/Ad-hoc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Intervention in Korea</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Military build-up post-Korea</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>Massive Retaliation</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>Covert ops</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixon</td>
<td>Détente/linkage/arms control (SALT)</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixon</td>
<td>Opening to China</td>
<td>Mixed (informal design)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan</td>
<td>Military build-up, SDI</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan</td>
<td>Reagan Doctrine/Third World policies/Democracy Promotion</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan</td>
<td>USSR strategy/Gorbachev relations</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan</td>
<td>Nuclear weapons reductions</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Post-Cold War Era

The formation of post-Cold War grand strategy also provides some level of support to all three models, but as the chart below shows a majority of the evidence fits the emergent model. First and foremost, neither one of the three presidents’ initial designs called for a role for the US as a leading, world-ordering superpower, even as they ended up pursuing policies more congruent with this strategic vision than any other alternative. Bush 41’s New World Order envisioned world powers working together and sharing the burden
posed by new security threats. Clinton's assertive multilateralism envisioned a much more important role for the UN and multilateral institutions than his administration's view in later years of America as the indispensable nation, “standing tall and seeing farther than other countries into the future.” And Bush 43 came into office proclaiming a humble, non-interventionist foreign policy, focused on distant threats such as a rising China. They each came to the vision of American leadership through an emergent learning process as they progressed through their tenures.

While the situations in Bosnia and Somalia were initially handled in an ad-hoc manner, and while the planning model explains some parts of the decisions leading to Afghanistan and Iraq, the emergent model nevertheless is better supported on balance on the crucial issue of use of force. Bush 41’s Gulf War, Clinton’s Balkan Wars and Bush 43’s military actions as part of the War on Terror were all shaped significantly by emergent developments more so than a grand design or ad-hocery, and in turn they shaped subsequent conflicts through the “lessons learned” mechanisms emphasized by this model.

On another highly controversial grand strategic decision, the way the United States proceeded with the enlargement of NATO also supports the emergent model hypothesis. Lastly, Bush 43’s Freedom Agenda applied to the Iraq War, and partly to other parts of the Middle East, came up in an emergent fashion following the US invasion of that country for other reasons.

Other parts of the AGL framework and key decisions are better explained by ad-hocery or design. The initial Bush 41 and Clinton decisions in handling intra-state violent conflicts and humanitarian crises in Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda were mostly ad-hoc, as

---

2 Albright, “Today Show.”
their critics alleged, before Clinton finally took a stronger leadership role in Bosnia and developed an emergent doctrine that he later applied to Kosovo. As for the design model, one area that was always part of the grand strategic plans across the three administrations and where actions fit well with the designs was supporting the expansion of free trade. In addition, the early Pentagon planning during the first Bush administration, as summarized in the DPG/RDS and the Base Force, led to decisions on military planning, force structure, and global, forward-deployed posture that provided the foundation for maintaining US leading-edge military power throughout the era under study. This is also true with respect to the security commitments to US allies in three key regions of the world (Europe Persian Gulf, Northeast Asia). Therefore, the design model receives a significant amount of support as well for this post-Cold War era, although on balance not as much as the emergent one.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President (s)</th>
<th>Policy, Decision, Doctrine</th>
<th>Design, Emergent or Ad-Hoc?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41, Clinton, Bush 43</td>
<td>Vision for American global leadership/ US as leading superpower</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41</td>
<td>Gulf War/Desert Storm</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41, Clinton, Bush 43</td>
<td>AGL P2: Use of force doctrine to address broader international security threats and US interests in key regions</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41</td>
<td>Bosnia &amp; Somalia</td>
<td>Ad-Hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41</td>
<td>AGL P5 Democracy Promotion</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41, Clinton, Bush 43</td>
<td>AGL P4: Free Trade Agenda</td>
<td>Planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41, Clinton, Bush 43</td>
<td>AGL P1: Strengthening global alliances in key areas</td>
<td>Mixed (Some planning, some emergence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41, Clinton, Bush 43</td>
<td>AGL P1: Leading Edge Military Capabilities, Forward Presence, Two-MRC construct</td>
<td>Planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41, Clinton, Bush 43</td>
<td>AGL P3: Preference to military intervene through UN-sanctioned multilateral coalitions, but option to go without when considered necessary</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 41, Clinton, Bush 43</td>
<td>AGL P3: Build relations and partnerships with other great powers</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Use of force doctrine on Hum./Stability Ops</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Ad-Hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>AGL P5: Democracy Promotion</td>
<td>Planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>NATO Enlargement</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>Planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 43</td>
<td>GWOT &amp; Afghanistan</td>
<td>Mixed (Some planning, some emergence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 43</td>
<td>Bush Doctrine(s)</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush 43</td>
<td>Iraq War</td>
<td>Mixed (Some planning, some emergence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Question of Success: Tentative Conclusions and Implications

Having a grand strategy, be it emergent or designed, is no guarantee of success in world politics. Factors entirely outside of one’s control, such as the quality of the enemy’s strategy and his resources, or the impact of chance, are often important to the ultimate success of one’s strategy. Moreover, in theory a state can be successful even without having a grand strategy at all and instead acting in a purely ad-hoc manner. There is nevertheless a widespread presumption in both the academic and policy communities that grand strategies can contribute to the achievement of a state’s long-term goals. This study introduced the emergent model of strategy formation as an alternative explanation of how strategies can form, but so far made no explicit arguments about the relative merits of an emergent approach relative to a designed one.

Henry Kissinger once wrote: “In retrospect all successful policies seem preordained. Leaders like to claim prescience for what has worked, ascribing to planning what usually starts as a series of improvisations.” 3 This frank admission of the archetypical modern-day grand strategist to the contrary, the assumption that deliberate planning followed by a vigorous implementation effort is needed for the creation of successful grand strategies is a common one in the strategic studies community. Most of the literature either explicitly or implicitly conceptualizes successful strategy-making as requiring deliberate strategic

---

planning. On the contrary, Mintzberg and other business theorists dispute this claim contending that in certain conditions emergent strategies are likely to be superior to planned strategies. This begs the question: in the national security realm, are emergent strategies significantly more successful than designed strategies? A different kind of research design would be needed to determine the conditions in which emergent strategies are more likely to succeed than planned strategies, and vice-versa, a task future scholarship could embark upon.

The present examination of US grand strategy does, however, present a “plausibility probe” for the hypothesis of business scholars that emergent strategies can at times be more successful than planned ones. The emergent model, it must be emphasized before moving any further with the analysis, does not claim that emergent strategies are always better, only that they can be under certain conditions, which will be described later in this section. Nor does it claim that strategic planning is useless. There are many advantages to formal strategic planning reviews, including thinking through ideas and weeding out bad ones, testing assumptions, scenario-planning, figuring out logistics, and others. However, the contention is that designing a new strategy is not usually one of these virtues.

One intriguing puzzle about American grand strategy is that while scholars and even many practitioners have severely criticized the US strategic planning process both during and after the Cold War, as exemplified throughout this dissertation, Washington nevertheless achieved considerable successes on the international scene during these years.

---


5 For Mintzberg’s criticism of strategic planning, see Mintzberg, *Rise and Fall*. One of the most influential business strategy books on the need for an emergent approach is Courtney, *20/20 Foresight*. 
These positive outcomes may of course be due to an overwhelming abundance of material resources, to the incompetence of other governments, or to good fortune, but to the extent that one attributes at least part of it to the US grand strategies, then the emergence model can account for how successful strategies came about even in the absence of a rigorous strategic planning process. There are, of course, no commonly accepted standards for categorizing “success” or “failure” when it comes to grand strategies or even to their sub-components, particularly for the post-Cold War era, and therefore the following analysis is bound to be controversial and speculative to some extent. The key issue examined below is if successful strategic outcomes are generally associated with careful planning and implementation, as the design model predicts, or with learning and adaptation, as stipulated by the emergent model; lastly, ad-hocery is usually associated with poor outcomes.

The Cold War

Many scholars and analysts regard the Cold War grand strategy of Containment as the exemplar of American planning success, one worthy of emulation in the post-Cold War era. In the 1990s, George Kennan’s reputation soared to almost mythical proportions as the farsighted grand strategist who laid out the plan that allowed the United States to prevail over the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Clinton administration’s quest for a grand strategic concept to replace containment was termed by the media “The Kennan Sweepstakes.” The editor of Foreign Affairs, Gideon Rose, launched a challenge to contemporary scholars to rise to the occasion and provide a new grand strategy similar to the one Kennan did in his “X” article: “Now that the Cold War is over, we are looking for another X, someone who can

---

6 Slaughter and Ikenberry, Forging a World; Shapiro, Rebuilding a Strategy; Howard, “A Long War?”; Record, Bounding the Global War on Terror; Lettow and Mahnken, "Getting Serious."
7 Some details on this search are provided in Brinkley, “The Enlargement Doctrine.”
come along and write the single article laying down the architecture that will shape our foreign policy for the next forty years.”

In the 2000s, a three-year, bipartisan effort, the Princeton Project on National Security, was set up with the specific goal to “write a collective ‘Article X’” to guide US grand strategy as Kennan had done in the Cold War era. The two co-chairs of the project remarked how “Throughout the Cold War, U.S. policy was grounded in the doctrine of containment, first articulated by George Kennan, which aimed to prevent the spread of communism.” And on the dust jacket of Kennan’s recently released official biography, Brent Scowcroft restates this Washington conventional wisdom: George Kennan was the great architect of the Cold War strategy of containment.”

Another Truman-era grand strategic planner, Paul H. Nitze, is also held in high regard for his role in drafting NSC-68. Historian Ernest May, the editor of an entire volume dedicated to the formulation and impact of the NSC-68, remarked that some writers “hailed it as the master plan that brought victory in the Cold War,” and, “citing the need for a post-cold war strategy, they called for a new NSC-68.” In addition to the nostalgia for Truman-era planning, Eisenhower’s Project Solarium has also received widespread praises and calls for emulation in recent years. The policy community therefore largely regards Containment as the exemplar of a successfully planned American grand strategy. This thesis accepts the common view in policy circles that Containment was at least partly responsible for America’s success in the Cold War, but concludes that the emergent elements of Containment were more responsible for this positive outcome than its planned components.

---

8 Quoted in Friedman, “Rethinking Foreign Affairs.”
9 Slaughter and Ikenberry, Forging a World 2, 4.
10 Gaddis, Kennan, dust jacket.
11 May, Cold War Strategy, 16.
12 For the recent nostalgia for the Eisenhower Era and Project Solarium see Flournoy and Brimley, "Strategic Planning"; Friedberg, "Strengthening U.S. Strategic Planning."
The evidence is mixed, but there is nevertheless a relatively strong case for the emergent model. Since Containment has been shown in this dissertation to have been broadly-speaking an emergent strategy during the Truman era rather than following from Kennan’s plans, a lot of the early successes such as the Marshall Plan and US policy to combat the advance of communism in Southern Europe are attributable to emergence. The Marshall Plan, an emergent dimension of Containment, provided economic assistance to the recovery of Western Europe and set the stage for further economic and political integration along liberal democratic lines. Another policy opposed by Kennan’s vision of Containment, the formation of NATO, offered the security umbrella needed to reassure Europeans of American support for their defense. NATO provides partial support for the emergent model, as it was a combination of emergence and ad-hocary/bureaucratic politics. As we have seen, neither NATO nor the Marshall Plan came out of the grand strategic plans existing at the time, and both of them were consonant with the emergent Truman Doctrine and the principles of the Containment grand strategy taking shape at the time. This confirms that successful, long-term initiatives can sometimes come from learning and incremental decisions rather than implementing advanced plans. Both the Marshall Plan and NATO were responses to the immediate crises facing policymakers. Along with the Truman Doctrine they constituted three incremental steps of great importance in the formation of two of the principles that defined the Containment grand strategy, a commitment to economic aid to combat the appeal of communism and forward-deployed troops operating within formal military alliances.

As already mentioned, the successful impact of two later planning efforts, NSC-68 and Project Solarium (NSC 162/2), has also been exaggerated by recent commentators. The Cold War discussion showed that both documents had only limited impact, and did not
fundamentally altered the main principles of Containment, nor were they associated with any particularly successful long-term development. Truman’s NSC-68 was important for a short time in the post-Korea military build-up, but the Eisenhower administration explicitly rejected what it considered the document’s alarmist recommendations for permanent high levels of military spending. Later on, the document’s monolithic view of communism and its repeated references to a “Kremlin design” for world domination also became discredited. While the United States maintained high levels of spending, it did not do so based on the analysis or recommendations of NSC-68. In the case of Project Solarium, the chapter showed that its main result, the NSC 162/2 document outlining the doctrine of Massive Retaliation also had a short lifespan because its promises to secure the goals of containing communism at a relatively low cost failed to materialize. Eisenhower himself began to move away from this doctrine later in his presidency when he focused more on expanding covert operations instead of threatening nuclear war as his preferred Containment tactic. Eisenhower’s successor, John F. Kennedy, explicitly advocated “Flexible Response” in lieu of Massive Retaliation, and not future president returned to Eisenhower’s attempted strategic innovations. Moreover, towards the end of the Cold War the Reagan administration engaged in a military build-up of conventional forces directly at odds with Eisenhower’s concerns for keeping defense costs down by investing in relatively cheaper nuclear weapons. In brief, despite recent praise for NSC-68 and NSC 162/2, neither of these plans had the lasting impact needed to support the argument that they were a significant factor in winning the Cold War.

In the case of Kissinger and détente, determination of success and failure is more complicated. Despite some successes such as the opening to China and arms control agreements with the USSR, Kissinger’s détente strategy came under heavy criticism from
both ends of the political spectrum, and its reputation remains controversial. Some of the disapproval had to do with Kissinger’s hierarchical and secretive style, which alienated and irritated many people both inside and outside the government. This resistance made it very hard to assure a continuation of détente after its chief architect left the scene. However, serious doubts emerged about its substantive strategic principles as well. Democrats and liberals, including incoming President Jimmy Carter, opposed the support given to anti-communist dictators in the Third World grounded in realpolitik calculations, and its lack of concern for human rights abuses and for promoting American values and ideals. On the right, conservatives such as Ronald Reagan accused Kissinger of being too soft on the Soviet Union at a time when the USSR was increasing its military and strategic nuclear arsenals relative to the United States, and when Soviet “adventurism” in the Third World seemed to be on the rise. The overall record of the Détente design therefore left an ambiguous legacy, making it difficult to code it as either as a success or a failure. It therefore provides weak support for the success hypotheses of either the design or emergent views.

One final important case for this success metric is how one judges Reagan’s contribution to the end of the Cold War. The emergence model provides a better explanation of the ultimate success of the United States in the Cold War than the design model. The historiographical debate on the causes of the end of the Cold War, and whether Ronald Reagan should get primary credit for this success or whether other factors like the actions of Gorbachev were more important, appears to have reached some level of consensus that both Reagan and Gorbachev deserve credit for their actions, but also that long-term socio-economic trends outside their control played an essential role, along with

---

13 For a balanced recent analysis, see Suri, Henry Kissinger.
good fortune.\textsuperscript{14} If one accepts the idea that Reagan's grand strategy deserves at least some credit for winning the Cold War, as this thesis does, the question most relevant to my theory is whether this success can be mostly attributed to the early designs or to the emergent strategy that dominated the latter part of the administration's tenure.

While the rhetoric of Reagan's early pronouncements and of his NSDD directives certainly shows that his goal was to defeat rather than merely contain the Soviet Union, his actions were a lot more grounded in a Containment grand strategic framework than his early plans or speeches. And if Gorbachev's reforms were some of the main contributors to the eventual demise of the Soviet system, then Reagan's closer relations with the Soviet leader in his second term had more of an impact on the final outcome than his more bellicose rhetoric from his early days.\textsuperscript{15} There is one common counter-argument used by some scholars who claim that Reagan had a designed grand strategy to win the Cold War. Peter Schweizer offered the most forceful treatment of this argument, but his contention that Reagan's "secret strategy" based on the military build-up and use of CIA covert operations hastened the end of the Cold War is not supported by the available evidence on how the Cold War actually came to a close.\textsuperscript{16} Will Inboden also credits SDI with playing a direct role in ending the Cold War, but there is not yet enough evidence to settle that claim: as Suri points out, "This is an area of research that requires more attention. No one has written a detailed study of Soviet responses to SDI from 1983 to 1991."\textsuperscript{17} In conclusion, to the extent that Reagan's grand strategic shift back to the original strategy of Truman's era,
combined with the second-term shift to adapt to Gorbachev's overtures, deserve the most credit for the positive outcome of the Cold War, then the emergent model's hypothesis receives stronger support.

There is also some evidence, however, that refutes the emergent model by showing that some emergent elements of the strategy led to policy failures, and that planned initiatives led to success. In the first category, the global expansion of containment to places like Vietnam clearly represented a mistake, and in that case the emergent nature of the strategy can be blamed for the failed incrementalism commonly associated with that intervention. In the second category, the opening to China was partly the result of Kissinger and Nixon's designed détente, and it represents a success for the planning model in the Cold War. The same is true for the SDI and Reagan's military build-up: while Inboden may exaggerate somewhat when he writes that “using his NSC to protect and promote SDI, he achieved the outcome he desired of a strategic surprise that led directly to the end of the Cold War,” as more documents become available from Soviet archives future historians might confirm that Reagan's planned build-up had a strong impact in the successful end of the Cold War. Having said that, despite this evidence pointing the other way, the preponderance of evidence appears to support the emergent model on the success metric when the Cold War is analyzed in its entirety.

**Post-Cold War**

While some consensus is emerging in the historical literature judging Containment's success, that is not the case for the post-Cold War era. It is still too soon to offer any definitive judgments on many of the key controversies. I will nevertheless examine a few contentious parts of US grand strategic performance during this time in order to determine how the success/failure metric matched the expectations of the models. The First Principle
of AGL has been misinterpreted and subjected intense criticisms in the scholarly grand strategy community, with some Realist scholars such as Christopher Layne even mistakenly reducing the entire post-Cold War framework to a quest for military hegemony. Even though the majority of the literature still considers the First Principle of AGL to be misguided, other scholars such as Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry and William Wohlforth have recently defended America’s dominant global military presence and its ongoing security commitments to key regions of the world. While the success or failure of this principle of the post-Cold War grand strategy will surely remain a contested topic in the literature given the speculative counter-factual analysis involved in imagining the costs of a world without a US global military dominance, and the inherent benefits Washington derives from its current position, a few tentative conclusions can nevertheless be put forth.

First, the United States military’s cutting-edge capabilities and its forward presence in Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf have allowed Washington to use military force or threat to use military force in those regions when needed, and the result of the interventions in pure military terms during the were generally in America’s favor. The jury is still out there on the ultimate outcome of the long-term occupations of Afghanistan or Iraq, but the initial military campaigns overthrowing the Taliban and the Saddam Hussein regime were impressive demonstrations of American military force. Second, the US has so far prevented potential hostile powers from dominating a key region of the world, as the 1993 RDS set as a goal. Third, as Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth point out, the costs of

---

this US military supremacy in terms of the share of national resources devoted to national
security have been modest by historical standards and remained affordable even
accounting for the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, the relative success
on this first principle supports the planning model’s expectations.

Throughout the 1990s, the enlargement of NATO was criticized for harming rather
than advancing America’s nation interest, and hence called an “error” in statecraft. In
retrospect, as William Wohlforth has observed, most of the dire predictions by opponents of
the NATO enlargement have failed to come to pass.\(^20\) Expanding NATO did not cause Russia
to form a counterbalancing alliance with China against the United States. Moreover, after
9/11 Bush and Putin cooperated relatively closely on a number of important security issues
involving the War on Terror despite another round of NATO enlargement in 2004, including
even the Baltic States. The military and financial burden of expanding NATO, another
counter-argument to enlargement, also paled in comparison to the annual defense
expenditures of the United States. Rather than representing a drain on NATO resources, in
fact, the newly admitted members contributed troops to the U.S.-led war in Iraq even as
many of the older NATO members refused to do so.\(^21\) Perhaps most importantly, the
objectives of increased security and political and economic freedoms in Eastern Europe
were met, as no country admitted to NATO later reneged on its commitment to free-market
democracy and peaceful relations with its neighbors. The emergent model receives more

\(^{20}\) “If you read the debate of the 1990s, you will be struck by the size, intellectual cohesion, and
stridency of expert opposition. Many of their arguments cannot be evaluated now, and history may
well come to favor them. But their near-term forecasts of costs – precisely the arguments of most
relevance to pragmatic policymakers – were wildly off the mark.” Wohlforth, “The Experts,” 174.
support on this issue, as this successful policy was shown to be more emergent than planned.

On the use of force, the emergent model receives some further support. In the Gulf War, the United States successfully reversed Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait and sent a strong deterrent message through its display of military prowess that it will not tolerate regional aggressors. However belatedly, it intervened in the Balkans in both Bosnia and Kosovo to prevent further bloodshed and bring peace to a troubled region at an overall modest cost to the American taxpayers. Each of these three interventions were coded as being part of the emergent AGL grand strategy, and thus their relative success supports that model. A definitive analysis of Bush’s success in conducting the War on Terror will have to wait for more time to pass until their impact is fully understood. The more emergent initial phase of the War on Terror, such as the initial decisions on denying physical sanctuaries to al-Qaeda, attacking them with lethal force in Afghanistan and wherever else they are found, and treating them as enemy combatants, led to the consistent degrading of al-Qaeda’s leadership and a successful worldwide anti-terrorist campaign that protected the United States homeland from another terror attack. This was the most important goal of Bush’s post-9/11 presidency, and he was successful in achieving it. This lends some support to the emergent model, even though there were some planning elements in that response as well, so the conclusions are not clear cut on this instance. The second phase of the War on Terror under Bush’s watch came to be dominated by the War in Iraq. The contentious debate on the ten-year anniversary of the Iraq war recently demonstrated how proponents and opponents of the war continue to vigorously argue its merits and long-term implications. Regardless of how one judges this, for the purposes of my study it is not very relevant because explanations for the origins of the war did not fit well into either the planning,
emergence, or ad-hoc models and therefore does not help discriminate between their respective expectations on the success metric.

**Extending the analysis and making recommendations**

The tentative conclusions above show that there are times when emergent approaches led to more successful outcomes, and times when planned approaches did so. Therefore, in order to draw policy implications, future scholars must not only analyze in further detail whether emergent strategies or planned strategies are generally more successful, but even more importantly the conditions and policy areas under which they might be so. The business world offers a good place to start in framing this task by offering a heuristically useful classification. Hugh Courtney of McKinsey&Co. argues that strategy-making at its core is about managing uncertainty, and that there are four general levels of uncertainty strategists have to confront:

- **level 1**, where linear projections are fairly reliable;
- **level 2**, where there are a limited number of known possible outcomes;
- **level 3**, where there is a range of outcomes with relatively known upper and lower boundaries but no information about the exact options between those boundaries;
- **level 4**, true ambiguity where “black swan”-type events and wild swings are possible and indeed rather common.

His framework holds that the more the level of uncertainty increases, the more one should move from a deliberate strategy-making process based on analysis and advanced planning to one characterized by emergent learning.\(^22\)

---

\(^{22}\) Courtney, *20/20 Foresight*, 4-5.
One of the key take-aways from the business world is that planned strategies usually fail because they rely on unreliable forecasts and poor implementation. Therefore, on issues in which prediction is very difficult, it is not the thoroughness of the advanced planning that is key to success, but rather how well leaders learn and adapt as they navigate the unexpected challenges and opportunities they encounter while in office. On such matters, leaders must prioritize adaptation and continuous learning, rather than planning and implementation. This was arguably confirmed in my study by how emergent processes dominated periods and issue areas with the highest uncertainty levels, such as Truman’s early cold War, Bush 41’s Gulf War intervention in the beginning of the post-Cold War era, and Bush 43’s actions launching the GWOT following the shock of 9/11. Crisis response and incremental learning were most evident during such times, and arguably led to better outcomes than it might have been the case if they had followed more intently a grand design. A somewhat ironic twist in the current literature on Bush 43 is that, unlike Bush 41 and Clinton, who were often criticized by the strategic community for not following a more coherent design, GWB was blamed for having too “grand” of a design, i.e. launching a preemptive war in Iraq to bring democracy to the Middle East. The conclusion from this interpretation must be that following a wrong-headed plan was worse than following no plan at all. While this thesis found that interpretation of Bush 43 unpersuasive, it nevertheless raises an interesting point worthy of further research because it further questions the connection between design and success.

Conversely, the issues in which the planned approach had most influence and arguably led to successful outcomes were the ones where forecasts were more dependable and where plans and decisions had a longer shelf-life, or “stickiness” in policy jargon. Force planning, defense budgeting and global military posture examples of such policy areas: the
impact of the Bush 41 Pentagon planning on the shape of post-Cold war military was quite significant, and NSC-68 and Reagan’s military build-up/SDI were another examples of planned designs that made an impact on element of grand strategy. Promoting international trade was another area in which administrations in general were able to follow through on their plans to spread free trade through bilateral and, less often, multilateral agreements.

In conclusion, future scholarship should tease out in greater detail the relation between planning/emergence/ad-hocery and success not solely in the aggregate, but also across the various principles of a grand strategy representing separate policy domains with different uncertainty levels. The same goes for different times when the international system appears relatively stable; an argument could be made that by the 1960s-1970s US-USSR relations were on a relatively stable and so predictable footing, making planning efforts more likely to succeed than in the late 1940s. To sum up, the initial policy implications of my study suggest not only the unremarkable observation that a dichotomous view of either design or emergence is misleading, given how real-world grand-strategic principles are often some combination of both, but also that there are cases and issues on which a more designed approach is suitable, and others where emergent learning should be the main focus.
References


257


—.—. "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?" *Foreign Affairs* 52, no. 2 (1974): 386-402.


Leffler, Melvyn P. "9/11 and American Foreign Policy." Diplomatic History 29, no. 3 (2005): 395-413.


276


Biography