



American Security Policy Fall 2020

Instructor:

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Zoom Office Hours: Tues 12:00-1:00 pm
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Course Overview

Pandemics. TikTok. Rising authoritarianism. Nuclear proliferation. Terrorism. Cyber attacks. Failed states. Syria. Iran. Afghanistan. Global warming. North Korea. China. The list of potential threats to U.S. national security is a long one. The debates over what to do about these threats are complex and contentious.

This course provides an introduction to American national security policy. Through a combination of historical, theoretical, and case study readings students will gain an appreciation of the players, processes, and politics of American national security policy and of the challenges the U.S. faces in creating a coherent and effective grand strategy.

By the end of the course students should be able to critically discuss the following major questions:

1. What are the major threats to U.S. national security and what policy options do we have to confront them?
2. How does the U.S. government make national security policy?
3. How do domestic politics and public opinion shape U.S. national security policy?
4. What are the competing camps with respect to U.S. national security policy?

Course Requirements and Grading

More information about the assignments is available on Blackboard and will be discussed in class.

Country Desk Updates (25%) Each student will be assigned a “desk” this semester, with the duty of providing analytical updates on a particular country of interest for the National Security Council. Students will write ten updates throughout the term, responding to specific questions posed by NSC decision makers. We will use the discussion board feature for this assignment.

Regional Security Forecast Memo (25%) Students will combine their country analysis with a broader regional focus to produce a regional security forecast for NSC decision makers. The four regions will meet twice on Zoom with the Graduate Teaching Assistant to discuss themes and ideas, ask questions, etc.

Midterm (25%) The midterm will be delivered via Blackboard on 22 October during our normal class period. The midterm will be predominantly multiple-choice, will draw from both your readings and lecture materials, and will cover material from the first half of the course.

Final Exam (25%) The final will be delivered via Blackboard on 15 December during the exam period. Like the midterm, it will draw from both readings and lectures. Though the exam will focus most heavily on the last section of the course it will be cumulative, asking students to consider the whole sweep of the course.

I use the following non-curved grading system:

98-100	A+	87-89:	B+	77-79:	C+	67-69:	D+	<60:	F
94-97	A	84-86:	B	74-76:	C	64-66:	D		
90-93	A-	80-83:	B-	70-73:	C-	60-63:	D-		

Note: There are no opportunities for earning extra credit in this course. If you know you have to miss an exam you must notify me at least two days prior to the exam. Make up exams will happen at my discretion and are granted only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a verified illness or family emergency (be prepared to provide documentation). If you already know you can't make an exam date for travel or some other reason, please drop the course and take it another time.

Course Materials

Required book: Ian Bremmer, *Superpower: Three Choices for America's Role in the World* (Portfolio 2015). The book is available at the GMU bookstore as well as online retailers.

Blackboard: All other course readings, announcements, and other relevant materials will be available on the course Blackboard site.

How the Course Will Work

Mondays: The Week Ahead Email

Every Monday morning you will get an email from me outlining the week ahead: what's coming due, what we're reading and talking about, etc. This is designed as yet another touchpoint so that we don't get lost in cyberspace.

Tuesdays and Thursdays: Live Zoom Sessions

In the never-ending effort to figure out how to deliver world-class education online, this semester we will use live Zoom sessions as our starting point. We will hold class at the regularly scheduled time; please show up on time because I will start right at 10:30am.

We will typically start each session with a quick round up of relevant news. This term you'll be tracking a country of your own, so you may have interesting updates on that score, along with whatever other things are happening. To keep things from descending into chaos, I'll ask you to raise your hand using the little Zoom tool or shoot a note into the chat stream so I can call on you to unmute yourself and share. We'll see how it goes and innovate as necessary.

After that, class will typically involve a lecture. I will also ask questions. Students should feel free to ask questions. Again, I will ask you to use the chat function to ask questions. The GTA will collate those and I will take occasional breaks to answer questions. If we're feeling confident, we'll also use the quiz feature on Zoom to take the temperature of the class on various issues and debates.

Attendance at these sessions is not mandatory, though I strongly recommend it for the obvious reasons that it will be more interesting to be part of it "live" and consuming them will be beneficial to your grades. It will also be more fun for everyone if we have a lively group. You don't need to turn your cameras on, but I think we'll have a better experience if most of us have them on, most of the time.

Please note that we will be recording all the Zoom sessions as well as posting a separate file with the lecture slides on Blackboard so if your pandemically-influenced schedule prohibits you from making the live session, you won't miss anything.

Assignments & Exams

Each student will be responsible for tracking his or her own country this term. Most weeks you will have an update due before class on Tuesdays. Those dates are marked on the syllabus and you'll see links to them and reminders about them throughout the course.

The midterm and final will both be online, of course, and we'll use Blackboard for them.

Quick Note on Classroom Decorum

In this course we engage issues of the utmost importance to the United States and to the world. We debate questions of life and death; conduct detailed discussions of horrible tragedies, heinous crimes, and strategies for killing people. Given this it is extremely important that we maintain an environment of respect for the people and issues involved in national security policy making and also for your peers in class. Differences of opinion will be the norm. I encourage debate but I will also expect respect for opposing viewpoints. To this end I will tolerate neither personal attacks nor inappropriate language.

Course Schedule

I. FOUNDATIONS

25 August | National Security and National Interests

- A. What is national security and how should we measure it?
 - B. What is a threat and how do we know?
 - C. What is the national interest and how should we determine it?
 - D. What is grand strategy and why do we need it?
- Nye, "Redefining the National Interest," (15)
 - New York Times, "[Transcript: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech](#)," (12)
 - Biden, "Why America Must Lead Again," (12)

27 August | The Shifting International Context

- A. How does the international system work and why does it matter?
 - B. What is power and how does it work?
 - C. How have both the system and power changed over time?
 - D. Where does the U.S. fit in the international system?
- Bremmer, *Superpower*, Introduction – Chapter 2 (46)

1 September | Assessing Threats

- A. How do nations perceive threats?
 - B. How should we assess and prioritize threats?
 - C. What threats does the United States face today? In the future?
- Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," Read pp. 1-6; the rest is highly recommended if you've enjoyed the first six pages! (6)
 - Coats, "Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community," Read pp. 1-17, skim the regional threats and pay special attention if your country is discussed! (17)

Regional Profile Due before Class

3 September | The National Security Toolkit

- A. What tools does the U.S. have at its disposal to achieve security and pursue other national interests?
 - B. What can our military do; what can't it do?
- Posen, "Command of the Commons," (43)
 - Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," (16)

8 September | The National Security System and Policy Making Process

- A. How does the president shape national security policy making?
 - B. Who advises the president on national security issues?
 - C. How does the national security system really work to produce decisions?
- Hadley, "The Role and Importance of the National Security Adviser," (13)
 - Rothkopf, "Inside the Committee that Runs the World," (5)

Desk Update #1 Due before Class

10 September | The Debate over Grand Strategy Today

- A. What's the track record of the current grand strategy?
 - B. What are the main alternatives to today's strategy?
- Bremmer, *Superpower*, read at least half of Chapters 3-5 (58) and plan to read the rest before the midterm!

II. THREATS AND RESPONSES

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

15 September | The Strategic Logic of Nuclear Weapons

- A. How and why does nuclear deterrence work?
 - B. What are the international political effects of nuclear weapons?
 - C. Is proliferation of nuclear weapons actually such a bad thing?
 - D. How does missile defense fit in to the deterrence equation?
- Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," (15)
 - Office of Technology Assessment, *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons*, Read executive summary (15) and skim Chapter 2 until you're terrified.

Desk Update #2 Due before Class

17 September | Nuclear Proliferation: How Big a Threat?

- A. Why do (some) countries want nuclear weapons?
 - B. How worried should the United States be about them having nukes?
 - C. What should the United States do about them?
- Sagan et al, "A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?" (16)
 - Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?" (33)

22 September | Terrorists and Nuclear Weapons: Nightmare or Nonsense?

- A. Can terrorists build, buy, or steal a nuclear weapon?

- B. How would terrorists use a nuke if they had one or two?
- C. How should the U.S. respond to threat of WMD terrorism?

- Ferguson and Potter, *The Four Faces of Nuclear Terrorism*, Chapter 1 (11)
- Nuclear Control Institute, *Can Terrorists Build Nuclear Weapons?* (11)
- Mueller, "The Truth about Al Qaeda," (2)

Desk Update #3 Due before Class

24 September | Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation Policy

- A. Should the U.S. retain a nuclear force or try to move to Global Zero?
 - B. Should the U.S. continue building a missile defense system?
 - C. What kind of new arms control agreements should the U.S. pursue?
- Arbatov, "Mad Momentum Redux? The Rise and Fall of Nuclear Arms Control," (30)

29 September | Debate: The Iran Nuclear Deal

- A. Was the JCPOA a good or bad deal for the United States?
 - B. Is current U.S. policy toward Iran making proliferation more or less likely?
 - C. Is keeping Iran from getting nuclear weapons worth a military conflict?
- Rubin, "Iran's Nuclear Deal Was Doomed from the Start," (5)
 - Ariane Tabatabai, "Preserving the Iran Nuclear Deal: Perils and Prospects," (12)
 - Ashford and Glaser, "Unforced Error: The Risks of Confrontation with Iran," (24)

Desk Update #4 Due before Class

TERRORISM & FAILED STATES

1 October | The Strategic Logic of Terrorism

- A. What is terrorism? Can you fight a war against it?
 - B. What causes terrorism? Can you cure it?
 - C. What is the strategic logic of terrorism?
- Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," (36)
 - Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism," (8)

6 October | Transnational Terrorism

- A. How scary is Al Qaeda these days?
- B. What about the Islamic State?
- C. How big a threat is terrorism generally to the United States?

- Riedel, "Al Qaida today, 18 years after 9/11," (3)
- Byman, "Worried about an Islamic State comeback? Here's why that's unlikely," (3)
- Zimmerman, "The Never-Ending War on Terror,"

Desk Update #5 Due before Class

8 October | Failed States, Civil Wars, and Genocide

- A. How big a threat are failed states and civil wars to U.S. national security?
- B. Does the U.S. and/or the "international community" have a duty to prevent genocide, prevent governments from killing their own people, or to end civil wars?

- Rice, "The New National Security Strategy: Focus on Failed States," (8)
- Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," (8)
- Evans and Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect," (12)

Regional Security Forecast Assignment Handed Out & Discussed Today

13 October | NO CLASS

15 October | Debating the Responsibility to Protect

- A. What tools should the U.S. use to deal with failed states and civil wars?
- B. When is military intervention justified and warranted?

- Pape, "When Duty Calls," (40)
- Kuperman, "Libya: A Model Humanitarian Intervention?" (31)

20 October | End, Endure, or Expand the War on Terrorism?

- A. What have the results been from the GWOT so far?
- B. How aggressive does the US war on terror need to be?
- C. Should the US intervene abroad to reduce terror risks?

- Cronin, "The 'War on Terrorism': What Does It Mean to Win?" (24)
- Pollack, "Fight or Flight: America's Choice in the Middle East," (8)
- Petraeus and Serchuk, "Can America Trust the Taliban to Prevent Another 9/11?" (7)

22 October | Midterm

GREAT POWER COMPETITION

27 October | Russia Resurgent?

- A. What threat does Russia represent to the United States and its interests?
- B. What strategies has Russia used to pursue its security and interests?
- C. What should the United States do about Russia?

- McFaul, "Russia As It Is," (7)
- Nuland, "Pinning Down Putin," (11)
- Dobb, "Why Russia Is a Threat to International Order," Read pp. 1-6 and skim appendices (23)

Desk Update #6 Due before Class

29 October | The Chinese Century? Assessing the Threat from China

- Is America in decline relative to the rest of the world?
- Will China be a threat to the U.S. as it rises?

- Mearsheimer, "Can China Rise Peacefully?" (3)
- Brands, "The Chinese Century," (12)
- Brands and Sullivan, "China Has Two Paths to Global Domination,"
- Shifrinson, "Should the U.S. Fear China?" (10)

3 November | Concede, Contain, or Confront? U.S. Strategy Towards China

- How should the U.S. engage China?

- Friedberg, "An Answer to Aggression," (12)
- Devore, "[To Deter Communist China, Japan Must Join America as a Peer](#)," (3)
- Allison, "The New Spheres of Influence," (12)
- Shifrinson, "How Donald Trump Should Handle China's Growing Power," (5)

Desk Update #7 Due before Class

POLITICS, PANDEMICS, & THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN SECURITY POLICY

5 November | Emerging Technology and National Security

- How do rapid developments in technology affect security?
- What can/should the United States do about these trends?

- Hammes, "Technologies Converge and Power Diffuses," (16)

10 November | Robots, Drones, and Skynet

- Are drones and other autonomous killing vehicles a good idea?
- What about military robots?
- Will Skynet eventually destroy mankind?

- TNSR Policy Roundtable: Artificial Intelligence and International Security (25)

Regional Security Forecast due today

12 November | COVID-19 and National Security

- Power Problems podcast, "COVID-19 and International Security"

17 November | Climate Change: It's the End of the World (As We Know It)

- A. How is climate change affecting international relations?
- B. How might climate change affect national security?
- C. What can/should the U.S. do about climate change?

- Busby, "Climate Change and U.S. National Security," (45)

Desk Update #8 Due before Class

19 November | Hawks, Doves and Owls

- A. Why do people disagree so much with each other about national security?
- B. What do people think are the big threats we face and why?
- C. How much does public opinion matter for national security policy?

- Kertzer et al, "Moral Support," (14)

24 November | Will the Public Support the Mission?

- A. How do people form opinions about war?
- B. What explains support for particular foreign policies and wars?
- C. Why has there been a dip in support for international engagement?

- Jentleson and Britton, "Still Pretty Prudent," (23)

Desk Update #9 Due before Class

26 November | NO CLASS

1 December | Millennials, Zoomers, Trump, and U.S. Foreign Policy

- A. What does the Millennial Generation think about war and foreign policy?
- B. Why and why does it matter?

- Thrall and Goepner, "Millennials and U.S. Foreign Policy," (15)
- Brands, "Is American Internationalism Dead?" (10)

Desk Update #10 Due before Class

3 December | Wrapping Up: How Secure Are We? Will We Be?

- A. What things are you more worried about now than before the course?
- B. What things are you less worried about now than before the course?
- C. What sort of grand strategy should the U.S. adopt today? Why?
- D. How secure is the nation today?

E. How secure will the nation be tomorrow???

- Zakaria, "The Future of American Power," (26)
- Bremer, *Superpower*, Chapter 6 (28)

15 December | Final Exam 10:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

University Policies & Information

Blackboard and Zoom:

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use both Zoom and the Blackboard learning system, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher. You can check your speed settings using the speed test on this website.)

Course Materials and Student Privacy

Video recordings of class meetings that are shared only with the instructors and students officially enrolled in a class do not violate FERPA or any other privacy expectation. Video recordings that only include the instructor (no student names, images, voices, or identifiable texts) may be shared without violating FERPA (but see below, University Policies: Privacy, for some qualifications and recommendations)

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

- Video recordings — whether made by instructors or students — of class meetings that include audio, visual, or textual information from other students are private and must not be shared outside the class
- Live video conference meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio, textual, or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household or recorded and shared outside the class

Honor Code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. Read the Mason honor code here: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>.

Disabilities: Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability

Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Email: Mason uses only Mason email accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason email account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class.

Writing Center: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

“Ask a Librarian” <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (703) 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>

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