



What Good Is Grand Strategy?: Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush

Hal Brands

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Grand strategy is one of the most widely used and abused concepts in the foreign policy lexicon. In this important book, Hal Brands explains why grand strategy is a concept that is so alluring—and so elusive—to those who make American statecraft. He explores what grand strategy is, why it is so essential, and why it is so hard to get right amid the turbulence of global affairs and the chaos of domestic politics. At a time when “grand strategy” is very much in vogue, Brands critically appraises just how feasible that endeavor really is.

Brands takes a historical approach to this subject, examining how four presidential administrations, from that of Harry S. Truman to that of George W. Bush, sought to “do” grand strategy at key inflection points in the history of modern U.S. foreign policy. As examples ranging from the early Cold War to the Reagan years to the War on Terror demonstrate, grand strategy can be an immensely rewarding undertaking—but also one that is full of potential pitfalls on the long road between conception and implementation. Brands concludes by offering valuable suggestions for how American leaders might approach the challenges of grand strategy in the years to come.

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