U.S. GRAND STRATEGY AFTER THE WARS:
The Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy

ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
Professor: Ambassador Thomas E. McNamara

Course Description
Periods immediately following major wars cause fundamental changes in strategic policies of winners, losers, and non-participants as they adjust to new power realities. In the 20th Century, the U.S. witnessed such basic shifts after: the Spanish-American War, WW I, WW II, and the Cold War, with adjustments after Korea and Vietnam. This course will examine these “hinge periods” to discern the origins, evolutions, and outcomes that affected foreign policy for years afterwards. The introductory classes will study hinge periods during the first century of American foreign policy, before turning in more detail to the 20th Century, the focus of the course.

We will study contemporary documents, which reflected and shaped the ideas and policies of the nation throughout its history, as the U.S. evolved into the superpower of today. These hinge periods and their impact at home and abroad are essential to an understanding of “The American Century.” They also offer perspectives on the nation’s place today and possibilities for the future.

Central to the course are assigned readings and a required report and a research paper on strategic issues.

MAIN TEXTS
George Kennan, American Diplomacy, University of Chicago Press, 1951 or 2012 editions
Walter Lippmann, Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic; Little, Bown; 1943.
Plus: contemporary documents and writings of statesmen and others from G. Washington to the present.

Schedule of Classes

WEEKS 1 & 2 – Introduction: The Roots of American National Strategy
A review of U.S. strategies from 1776 to the late the 19th Century, which built the foundations for American strategies in the 20th Century and beyond.

Week 3 – Spanish- American War – The Great Debate on Imperialism
The evolution of hemispheric power relationships and the beginning of great power status for the United States were main elements in the great national strategic debate, which argued America’s new role in the world.

WEEK 4 – Grand Strategy: Definitions and Concepts
An examination of strategic concepts and the role of strategy; how different elements of lesser strategies combine to produce grand strategy. The roles of diplomacy, intelligence, military force, economics, and social structures in grand strategy.

WEEKS 5 & 6 – World War I: The Great Debate on Wilsonian Internationalism
The Wilsonian revolution in strategic thinking, the birth of the Atlantic Community, and American strategy following the Wilson and Lodge disagreement at the start of the Interwar Period.

WEEKS 7 & 8 – Strategic Thinking at Mid-Century
The development of military, economic, and political thought as World War II ended; the birth of American global leadership.

**WEEK 9 -- Post World War II: The Great Debate on Containment**
The different concepts of "containment" and the resulting grand strategy for the Cold War period. Kennan vs. Lippmann vs. Nitze. Internationalism vs. nationalism vs. isolationism. Washington vs. Truman; the development of bloc diplomacy. The Eisenhower review and refinements.

**WEEK 10  Korea, Cuba and Vietnam Policy Adjustments**
The two major "hot wars" of the Cold War and a nuclear crisis produced debates and adjustments in national strategy, and led to the watershed events of the cold War in 1979-81.

**WEEK 11 & 12 -- Challenges to Strategic Thinking at Century's End**
The disappearance of one superpower and of bloc diplomacy present a host of new situations demanding definition, evaluation and restructuring of strategic thinking.

**WEEK 13 -- Post-Cold War & Post 9/11 Wars: The Failure to Decide**
Developing a grand strategy for the start of the 21st Century; internal and foreign challenges to resetting national goals and priorities for the coming decades.

**WEEK 14 -- Course Conclusion**
An Examination of the main elements of a possible national grand strategy.

**WEEK 15 -- MAKE-UP CLASS [if necessary]**

**FINAL EXAM  [exact date and time TBD]**