

Emergent strategy and grand strategy

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Résumé ou extrait : "Is following a coherent grand strategy the key to achieving successful outcomes in American foreign policy ? For many experts in academia and Washington, the answer is yes. Policymakers usually face criticism when they take incremental actions based on short-term considerations. But could such actions actually converge into a successful emergent strategy over time ? Ionut Popescu conclusively shows that in some cases an emergent learning model leads to better overall strategic performance than a long-term strategic plan or framework. Popescu argues that it is time to rethink the origins of some of the most important successes and failures of America's tenure as a global superpower after World War II. Presenting empirical data culled from archival research and interviews with higher-ups, Popescu covers eight US presidential administrations, ranging from Truman to Obama, to demonstrate that senior policymakers should be skeptical of the idea that formulating and implementing a long-term grand strategy is the road to a successful foreign policy legacy. Instead, the book asserts, leaders should prioritize learning from the almost unavoidable mistakes they will make early in their careers and adapting their plans to unanticipated events and changes in the international environment. Emergent Strategy and Grand Strategy thus offers both scholars and practitioners of foreign policy an original theoretical framework to explain strategic success" (ed.)

"Ionut Popescu explores how successful American grand strategy comes about. For most experts in the

academic world of political science and in the Washington policymaking community, the answer lies in the design and implementation of a farsighted strategic plan or framework. The role of such a Grand Design is to guide the president's foreign policy actions and resource allocation decisions in the pursuit of specific long-term objectives. The alternative to following a Grand Design is usually said to consist of ad-hoc, incoherent, and ultimately unsuccessful foreign policy decision-making. But what if successful grand strategies are sometimes formed through an emergent process of learning and adaptation, instead of being the product of strategic planning and farsighted designs? Popescu argues that the Emergent Strategy model, adapted from the business strategy literature, explains some of the traditional success stories and failures of American grand strategy better than the prevalent Grand Design model. These findings suggest the need to shift the focus of policymakers away from planning for long-term objectives and toward short- and medium-term incremental learning and adaptation. Based on this new theoretical understanding of successful grand strategy being formed by either Design or Emergent elements depending on the circumstances, the book also offers a framework to help policymakers and strategic planners choose the right model and tools based on the level of uncertainty they face in the external environment" (ed.)

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