

Reinventing Grand Strategy

Workshop

Centre for Advanced International Studies (CAIS)

Strategy & Security Institute (SSI)

University of Exeter

Monday 3 June 2019, 14:00-16:15

Knightley Boardroom

After a long eclipse in Europe, grand strategy has undergone a significant revival in recent years. But the comeback occurs at a time when grand strategy is under siege, probably as never before. Some argue that grand strategy has a limited perimeter, as it only accounts for the action of a very select group of states, that is, “great powers” (e.g., China, the USA, Russia). Others question the very utility of the concept, arguing that it does not capture what happens in practice. States, they argue, have to navigate an environment that can turn on a dime. In short, planning of the type foregrounded by grand strategy, does not work. However, many hold that grand strategy is one of the most useful – if underdeveloped – concepts of International Relations, if only for the fact it equips scholars with the ability to focus their minds on how states align ways and means to exploit opportunities and redress menaces in the medium and long-terms. But is it?

Drawing on *Comparative Grand Strategy: A Framework and Cases* (Oxford University Press, Forthcoming), this presentation aims to take seriously each of these claims, with an eye toward developing a new approach to grand strategy. First, it argues that discussions over the utility of grand strategy puts the cart before the horses, as they are not derived from a clear understanding of grand strategy’s meaning. Second, the presentation explores how grand strategy operates, using different empirical vignettes to test states’ priorities in action. Finally, the presentation lays out guide points for a new, that is, comparative, study of grand strategies.

Presenters:



Thierry Balzacq is Professor of IR at Sciences Po and Professorial Fellow at CERI-Sciences Po Paris. He was formerly a Visiting Fellow at the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University (2017–18). In 2016, he was awarded a Francqui Research Chair (Belgium's highest academic title) and elected Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He was the Scientific Director of IRSEM, the French Ministry of Defense's research center (2014–16). Balzacq

held an Honorary Professorial Fellowship at the University of Edinburgh, where he was also Fellow for “outstanding research” at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. In 2015, he was awarded a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Diplomacy and International Security. He is author/editor of over fifteen books in English and French. He has held visiting positions at various universities, including McGill, the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, the National University of Singapore (NUS), The International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), Aberystwyth, and the University Abdou Moumouni of Niamey (Niger). He is currently co-editing (with Ron Krebs) *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*. Balzacq holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge and completed his Postdoctoral studies at Harvard in 2004.

Simon Reich is a Professor in the Division of Global Affairs and Department of Political Science at Rutgers, Newark and Associate Research Fellow at CERI-Sciences Po. Reich is author, coauthor and editor of eleven books and over sixty articles or book chapters. His work has been translated into Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Japanese, and Turkish. His most recent book (with Peter Dombrowski) is entitled *The End of Grand Strategy: Maritime Operations in the 21st Century* (Cornell, 2018). Reich also previously served as Director of Research and Analysis at the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House) in London and the inaugural Director of the Ford Institute for Human Security at the University of Pittsburgh. He is currently preparing two monographs on grand strategy with Thierry Balzacq.

