The Art and Science of Grand Strategy

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: Welcome to *Horns of A Dilemma*, the podcast of the *Texas National Security Review*. I'm Sheena Chestnut Greitens, the editor-in-chief of *TNSR*, and I'm here with Dr. Ryan Vest, our executive editor.

We're really pleased to have with us today, Dr. Marina Henke, author of the article, "Best Practices in Grand Strategy Design," featured in Volume 8, Issue 2 of the journal. Marina is a Professor of International Relations and Director of the Center for International Security at the Hertie School in Berlin. She also serves as the Helmut Schmidt Distinguished Visiting Professor at SAIS Johns Hopkins in Washington, DC.

Marina, welcome to *Horns of a Dilemma*. It's great to have you on the show.

Marina Henke: Thank you Sheena and Ryan for having me. I'm delighted to be here.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: Great. Thanks so much. Well, can you tell us—to get us started today—can you tell us a little bit about what motivated you to write the piece, and in particular, what was it that led you to conclude that this article needed to be written and published in 2025?

Marina Henke: So I moved to Germany in 2019 after 12 years in the United States, and so I was able to witness live, how Russia's invasion of Ukraine destroyed German grand strategy. And in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the German government decided that for the very first time in German history, they would actually sit down, and write a national security strategy.

And so they started this process, and it came out in 2023. And immediately it got criticized very heavily. I was one of the critics in Germany, but also internationally. And then, a government affiliated institution approached me and said–truth be told, we didn't even know how to write a grant strategy–quote unquote, “a national security strategy”–and would you be willing to come up with some kind of guidelines or best practices of how to do this? And so I agreed because I had been so harsh on them. And I went to work and started reading a lot of, you know, they had been published in history, and political science, and strategic studies, but also in the business literature, on what actually good practices are in strategy design, but also in grant strategy design.

So I submitted my report then to the German government, and the spinoff is, so to speak, the article that I published with you. And the objective here was really to kind of come up with some basic guidelines for people who work in governments of how to think about grand strategic design. And, you know, I got criticized of the article being too basic.

But I've been doing a lot of seminars and lectures now for practitioners all around the world, by the way, on this topic. And every single time I still have students then in my class who, you know, kind of think that this is actually quite novel–what I outlined in this document.

So, to some folks in the US government, it might be obvious, you know, what a grand strategic goal is, and a grand strategic challenge. But I think there are a lot of folks out there, who find it beneficial to just lay down some kind of markers of what a good grand strategic document entails.

Ryan Vest: So I tend to agree with the many of those that you've gotten feedback from that sometimes the concept of grand strategy is not as obvious as we may think it is. I know many of our listeners have probably studied, or been involved in grand strategy design, but people often have different ideas of exactly what grand strategy is. So going back to that idea of sticking to the basics, I was wondering if you could just walk us through your definition of grand strategy and how you see grand strategy.

Marina Henke: So my thinking has evolved a little bit over the years and my current definition of a grand strategy is actually that it's the art, but also the science of allocating resources, to achieve a state's core strategic goals under conditions of uncertainty. So, that's quite dense, I know.

But let me break it down for you. So first and foremost, I think the most important part of a grant strategy involves resources. And I would say that every single state on this planet has a grand strategy, whether they know it or not. And you know, like if you want to detect what their core strategic goals are, you just need to look at the budgets that they develop, and you can see what they spend their money on.

But of course, this allocation of resources or of budgets that can happen in a controlled and thought through fashion. And then you have some kind of strategic document, that guides the allocation of resources, but it can also happen in a much more kind of ad hoc fashion. Then you just have a budget.

And I would still say you can detect the grand strategic objectives of the state, but it's not guided by a process. And sometimes, of course, that's the third scenario. You have a strategic document, and then you have a budget, and they don't really coincide. But what I am most interested in here, is how can the document be produced?

So the strategy that kind of undergirds the budget allocation.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: That's really interesting. I remember being quite struck when China passed its first national security strategy document in 2015, and at the time it wasn't public, and we actually waited 10 years until China made its national security white paper publicly available, and actually just translated it into English after a few months.

So I find this idea of writing down, and codifying these principles that might exist ad hoc or in practice, but the idea of putting them in a document really interesting. What do you think is the purpose and the value added of having these strategic documents? Why do they matter?

And maybe tell us a little bit about what components should good ones have? If you're thinking about writing down a grand strategy for a country like Germany or China for the first time, what should policy makers think about including?

Marina Henke: So I would say that these grand strategic documents, they come in all sorts of shapes and forms. Of course, there's this official national security strategy, or national security review, or a strategic document, that the Chinese government publishes.

But then very often you see classified strategies that only get declassified after a while, and then you can find them in archives. And, for me, you know, you certainly don't need to have the title of this as the Grand Strategy, or this is the National Security Strategy. I would say a grand strategic document contains the following three items:

The first one is that there is some kind of core strategic goal that gets enumerated. And this is an overarching goal, so it describes the overarching priority that a state, or a government wants to achieve over kind of a, you know, more or less long-term timeframe. That's number one. So you need to have this core strategic objective.

The second one is there needs to be some kind of discussion of the core strategic challenges that the state faces in this particular moment. And the third one also

is a somewhat coherent, what I call, a logic of action. So some kind of logic how this entity, how the state, wants to overcome the identified challenges to reach the goal.

If I see these three elements in a document, I would say it's actually a grand strategic document. But also, I think you need to distinguish between just a document that has been written, and of course afterwards, also a document that has been implemented. And for me, so I'm actually currently writing a piece, because I feel that we need to open this Pandora's box of what is a grand strategy. And I think we need to define all kinds of related siblings of this concept. I think the field of strategic studies kind of needs its vocabulary, because I think we have grand strategies, but then we also have grand strategic postures. We have grand strategic documents, we have grand strategic questions.

So I think there's an entire terminology that needs a definition. But you know, to go back to your question, what's the purpose of this grand strategic document? I think in the big picture of things, it does reflect the core strategic thinking that is present, either in this group of actors that designs the strategy in this particular moment, or maybe just in one actor.

But I do think it reflects to a certain degree, the kind of theory of how this person, or this group of people thinks, of how the world works. So I think there's actually some kind of like truth to it, and I do think that in most governments, like this is Germany, this is the United States, this is China, it has an impact on government actions, because it sets priorities and especially, lower levels of practitioners do take hints from those documents on what the priorities are of the government, and what they should be working toward.

Ryan Vest: To keep following along that line of thinking, in your article, you pose a rather obvious question at the beginning. You ask, why should democratic governments try to do grand strategy well, rather than poorly? And when I first read that line, I kind of laughed, but I think it's actually an important question. Why do you think it's important to highlight explicitly, even to an audience of scholars and practitioners, this idea?

Marina Henke: Well, I think we are all taxpayers in one form or another. And I want that my taxpayer money to be allocated in the most efficient, and effective way. And we also know, and I think also from our personal lives–if you just put down one moment in time, your goal and maybe the obstacles that stand in the way of reaching the goal, and then to some kind of strategy of how to overcome that goal.

The probability of you reaching that goal just increases. It doesn't make it for certain, but it increases. And so, I'm demanding from my government, in a democracy and as a taxpayer, that the government tries to allocate our money in the most efficient, effective way possible. So this is the efficiency argument.

That's why I think, you know, strategy at the lower level, but also at the grand strategic level is absolutely critical. Because it, you know, provides accountability. And the second one, I think, concerns morality, and particularly the use of force. If we, as a state, want to make the argument that it's necessary to use military force, I think we need to legitimize it by using strategy.

If we use military force without strategy, then it's just violence, state violence, and I think we cannot justify, we cannot legitimize it.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: Those seem like two really important points. The follow on question from that is, if this is so important for governments to do, both normatively, and strategically, and functionally in the world, why is it so hard to do well?

Marina Henke: Because it is really difficult. A good strategy is all about prioritizing. And we all know, there are a lot of competing interests in the world out there, and to say no to all sorts of dreams, and hopes, and aspirations is really hard. And particularly in a competitive political field, and that's why I think a lot of governments have huge difficulty writing good strategy, because it is really, really hard choosing what really matters, and what should be done.

Ryan Vest: In this article, you use a five step model to explain your ideas on grand strategy, which I thought was really fantastic. It laid out the fundamentals really well and made it very clear. In your model, the first step is to define a state's core strategic goals, which you say reflect the highest purpose of state in action, the absolute priorities of a government. How is this achieved, and what are the consequences of missing this crucial first step?

Marina Henke: So it's actually a really, really hard step. Some, you know, would say like–Oh, you know, like setting goals, that's easy–but then, very often, they come up with a laundry list, or a wishlist. My own country, Germany, in its national security strategy, I think failed miserably in this very first step.

Because, you know, very often it's assumed–well, this is all about national security. But then they realize–oh no, it's not just about national security–it's

also about economic prosperity, and it is about democracy, and it's about social equity, and it's about sustainability, and whatever you want to have.

And so instead of what I just said, making these really tough decisions on whether national security matters more than economic prosperity, or whether economic prosperity is more important than democracy, they put it just all in, and put it on that wishlist. And so why is it so important? Because of course, you know, one can say like, well just put it all in there.

Right? It doesn't really matter. Well, it does matter, because every single one of those goals requires some trade-offs. You cannot, you know, have national security and economic prosperity if you define it as, you know, some kind of equal distribution, or fairly equal distribution of wealth, at the same level, right?

So, you know, I mean, Germany is faced with this very difficult choice right now–if it wants to maintain its generous welfare state, it cannot increase its defense spending, right? It needs to cut, or it needs to increase its debt level, but that's also over the long term, it's not sustainable.

And the same also applies to national security and democracy. If you really want to focus on national security, you need to somehow either keep certain segments of your policy and politicking secret. But also, very often, you need to curtail, for example privacy laws, because you need to implement surveillance of parts of your population and so forth, right?

So you cannot have it all. It's a big dilemma of a state not being able to have it all and needing to decide what is more important, what is my key priority? And of course, you know, like to a certain degree you can find some kind of balance. And I think most governments have tried to do this, right?

They go for–we want to have economic prosperity from our population, but also international security, or national security, is important. But then there, they need to, you know, find a good equilibrium and every once in a while, also on the spot, need to make a decision. What right now is more important–going for national security or for prosperity.

But the bottom line is, there needs to be an open discussion, and there needs to be some kind of prioritization of these goals. And that's really, really hard.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: So that in and of itself is hard. And then you turn to the second step, which is to identify the challenges that get in the way of the state; getting, achieving, those strategic objectives, if they can clearly identify

them. What do you think is the most effective way for a state to go about identifying, and analyzing, and defining those challenges in that second step?

Marina Henke: So I think, the most effective way is thinking broadly, but only in the beginning, right? So I think it doesn't hurt to come up with a list. And this is by the way, where security studies scholars, and you know, political scientists, sociologists, economists come in, right? Ideally, a national security strategy gets written with a lot of "scholarly input," right?

But not necessarily, I think like on the objectives and goals front. In a democracy, I think this should be, you know, that the process of different parties, proposing different objectives, and you know, should be decided in an election, right? But in this assessment of what challenges lie in between the state reaching the goals, I think this is where a lot of kinds of social science and, you know, other sciences come in and can be really helpful.

But then, you know, once you have this broad array of challenges and obstacles in the way, I think it again comes to filtering and prioritizing. And it's really a question of what is absolutely critical. So when it comes to national security, I always say–what can really threaten the survival of the state? And not just hurt it or harm it?–but what can really threaten its survival. And everything else, should not be a part of these core strategic challenges that come into a national security strategy.

And then, you know, I think the second big step is actually understanding what are the drivers, or kind of like what causes this, you know, particular challenge to be so powerful. And here it goes back to kind of trying to understand what is actually the disease, or the virus, that makes you sick?

And I think here we also need to understand, if you really want to find a good treatment, we need to understand how does it function internally. So it's a question about if you, for example, identify Russia or China. I think it's really worthwhile, doing a deep dive into what is driving the Chinese behavior, the Russian behavior, that makes it so threatening to the survival of our nation, or of our core values.

Or even if you would identify AI as one of these challenges, and really kind of open this black box, and it's like–what is it actually about AI, or about some kind of other technology, or whatever you wanna define as your strategic challenge, that makes it so dangerous. And I think only then can we proceed to the next step of identifying what means and measures can be used to overcome it.

But I think very often in these national security strategy development processes, actually the diagnosis of the challenge gets overlooked. But I think it is actually absolutely critical.

Ryan Vest: In your article, when you get to the third step of grand strategy, you say that developers must design a logic of action. In fact, you write that the logic of action concept directs and constrains policy, without fully defining its content. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about some real world examples of this two-step process of designing a logic of action.

Marina Henke: So logic of action we are all familiar with actually. So containment is a logic of action. Restraint, right, is a logic of action. Non-alignment in the India case, is a logic of action. And, you know, most of you might have heard of, kind of German grand strategic logic of action, such as ostpolitik or westbindung, very often what kind of becomes actually the term that is used to describe a grand strategy in short. But, you know, the idea here is, that this is kind of like an overarching logic, that provides coherence to the individual means, and measures, and policies, that get implemented. And, you know, most of, probably the listeners have heard at one point, of Eisenhower's project Solarium.

And I think this is the best known exercise of really developing, and testing such a logic of action. Stalin was dead, and Eisenhower wanted to kind of rethink, at least in a more formal way, of how to proceed with US grand strategy. Whether the containment logic should be implemented further or whether, you know, some kind of major grand strategic changes should occur under his presidency. And so he invited literally, you know, like a bunch of really smart people from academia, from different departments, also from the military and, you know, like the intelligence services and so forth.

And they kind of created three different groups, and each one of those groups came up with a different logic of action, or a different grand strategic posture. One focused on the continuation of containment. The second one focused on a logic that was much more reliant on nuclear weapons. And the big kind of advantage here, or the selling point was, that it could be much cheaper than containment. And the third one was a much more aggressive posture than containment, called roll back. And so you're not actually accepting the borders from the Potsdam Agreement in 1945, but, you know, using Soviet weakness and pushing back.

And so each one of those groups then went away, and had time to prepare, over several weeks, and then Eisenhower invited them all back, and then over two

days they all had to present the strengths and weaknesses of their individual grand strategic postures, or logic of actions, and also presenting different assumptions and, you know, kind of scenarios how this would play out.

The bottom line was that Eisenhower, you know, kind of stuck to the containment logic with some adjustments. But, I think, the big takeaway lesson here is that to really come up with a logic of action that is suitable. It is very important to test it, right? Not just to invent something, or kind of take something which is a legacy product, and then kind of implement it in a new situation, but really engage in those intellectual exercises of coming up with alternatives.

And then really testing them in a battle right? By red teaming it. And we see in, for example, in the United States, but also kind of starting in Europe, that there are these kinds of, you know, competitive settings, but more [so] outside of the government space, right? So, in the United States, until very recently, you had a competition of liberal internationalist ideas, competing with restraint, or kind of like new isolationists ideas, and, you know, also kind of remnants of neo-conservatism. And you saw in all sorts of outlets, at conferences, folks representing these different positions and, you know, kind of battling over which one was the best. And you know, also in Europe we see a similar kind of battle of a grand strategic posture that is still focused on NATO, and the Transatlantic Alliance, and others, which focus more on a kind of European strategic autonomy ideas.

And you know, like in the German context, there's also the idea of Germany alone, right? I mean, Germany building up its defense, for Germany itself. And in the end, you have three different logics of action that, you know, provide some kind of solution over how to overcome the challenges that are identified to reach a goal, which is, you know, in the end, national security and prosperity.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: That's really interesting, this idea of the logic of action, and I'm struck by the idea that it directs and constraints policy, but doesn't fully define its content. Because then the next step that you talk about, is the step where you define the content, and you translate this broader logic of action into much more concrete steps that policy makers then need to take, in terms of implementation. So, how do decision makers make that translation step, to coming up with what might–without the logic of action that precedes–it might look like just a sort of a list. Or I hesitate to say laundry list, because there's so much work that goes into generating it, but a list of actions that emerges from that logic of action.

How do they get to that list?

Marina Henke: So this is then when the departments come in, right? Or the agency, because in the end now it really gets into the nitty gritty. And here I think, you know, the scholars and academics again, need to leave the room because this is for practitioners. And this is really, you know, like–What should the State Department do in Africa? And, you know, what should the agriculture department do when it comes to soybean exports? And, you know, what should we do when it comes to technology transfers, right?–All of these kinds of nitty gritty, almost kind of like micro policy fields, they need to be determined. What is important though, and this is why I think the logic of action needs to proceed, then the kind of description of concrete means and measures, is that ideally there is some kind of coherence among all these different policy decisions.

And so for example in the European case, if you now opted for European strategic autonomy, then you know, whether you talk about trade policy, or whether you talk about agricultural policy, or cultural policy, education policy, they all would need some kind of refitting, toward this idea of European strategic autonomy.

But how are they implemented in detail? I think, you know, like doesn't need to go into a national security strategy document. It doesn't even need to be spelled out in detail, right? There just needs to be a logic of it. And I think the translation of this logic into these very specific policy fields can be fairly easily done, once this logic is established.

And I think also, you know, like if you, for example, want to implement restraint, you know, all sorts of fields fairly easily, you could deduct what it would mean for different policy fields in the US context. And that's why, in my opinion, the real hard work is actually the logic of action. It's not coming up with this catalog of means and measures.

Ryan Vest: As a final step in the process, you argue that good leaders have to constantly update the assumptions, considerations, and calculations that inform a grand strategic document. What do leaders need to be thinking about to do this well? How can they do this better, or where are the pitfalls, where they don't do so well?

Marina Henke: What you see very often is, that actually a really smart group of people work on developing some kind of strategic document. And then they put this in the drawer and they think the work is done. And then, you know, this very smart group of people kind of gets tasked to do other things.

And I think this is a huge mistake, because any kind of grand strategic document needs to be a living document. And so the world is constantly changing. You have, of course, crises, but also, you know, kind of like your antagonists are, of course, updating their own strategies. They will react to your strategic moves.

And so for this document to have value, you constantly need to check whether the assumptions that this document is built on are still valid, whether they have changed. Germany, I think, in the early 2000s, developed a pretty smart strategy. They saw globalization was rising, and China was getting, you know, like a really important actor. And the market was very attractive. And the Russians wanted to have good relations with the West, and they were offering their oil and gas to, you know, pretty affordable prices. So they jumped on it. Right, and they could fuel their economic growth over a decade. But what the Germans completely overlooked was how these dynamics changed.

They didn't update their grand strategy, and this is why then, you know, this grand strategic concept–which I call global Germany–collapsed, when Russia invaded Ukraine. So, I think, even if you had, at one point, really good strategic insights, and come up with a strategic framework that works for a little while, you cannot stop updating.

And that's why this last point is so critical, because I think this is where a lot of mistakes are made. That initial good ideas get destroyed over time, because the updating doesn't happen.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: That's really interesting. The example of Germany's really striking. We're having this conversation in the week after the United States released its national security strategy. And so you're highlighting a flaw in the German process of–in this fifth step–about the failure to update. But, you know, your pieces offer a criticism, that many recent grand strategy documents have design flaws. And so I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the flaws in process and in content. The most common mistakes that you've observed. And then I feel like I would be remiss if I didn't ask you for an assessment of how the new United States National Security Strategy performs against the process that you've outlined, and the sort of benchmarks for success you've laid out.

So, in general, what are the common mistakes, and then if you could talk about what you make of the new US National Security Strategy, that'd be great.

Marina Henke: There are a lot of different mistakes, but I think the most critical mistakes that I saw–and this is kind of the most recent documents from US allies. So I looked at the Japanese National Security Strategy, and the South Korean one, and the French one, and the British one, and the one that got produced by the European Union, of course, and then the German one. And, you know, there are also some other strategies. So even Switzerland, you know, produced a national security strategy. So it's, it's more, kind of, you know, widely produced than one might think.

But the first big mistake is that states have a lot of difficulty finding their core strategic goals. And it's not just that they have an entire laundry list of goals–so Germany, I think like put 12–but very often, they also mix up goals and means. So, for example, having a powerful military. Or what the French say, having a nuclear force, or you know–in the German context–it's about, our strategic goal, is the maintenance of the European Union and the United Nations. All of this, a powerful military, a nuclear force, the European Union, the United Nations, all of this are means, right? I mean, so you first need to determine, you know–I want to live in peace and security and stability, and my strategy to achieve that goal is using the United Nations, or using the European Union, or using nuclear deterrence, and using a powerful military, right? But, kind of having the military as a core strategic goal, I think is wrong, right? Because, you know, that means you want military power, for the military's sake, or for power's sake.

And I think in democracies that's not ideal. And actually, we see this mistake also in the national security strategy that just got published last week. So I think there's a lot of confusion over these kinds of goals and means. So there's this attempt to kind of say, previous national security strategies where these laundry lists and wishlists, and now we really focus on certain goals.

And of course, you know, we all kind of know a lot now about the Trump administration. Certain kinds of like ideological inclinations. But if I had no clue about Trump, and we're just reading this document, I would not understand what this document was after. Because I don't think it actually says what the United States really wants, what the key priorities are.

There's all sorts of stuff in there. And most importantly, it doesn't talk about challenges, right? So like it's all somewhere, you know, between the lines. But it doesn't actually list what the core strategic challenges of the United States are. It's not there. And I think, you know, if you don't really list your goals, if you don't prioritize what you actually want to achieve, and you don't list what stands in your way, I think it's a bad strategy.

And this is, you know, just from a logical perspective, right? What I also said at the outright of the article–I'm not making a normative judgment. I'm making a judgment based on the logic of a document, right?–If A plus B actually equals C. And I think, you know, if these basic principles are not there, if the logic isn't there, then it's not a particularly good document.

Ryan Vest: In your article, you talk a little bit about how policies sometimes tend to view grand strategy as an academic indulgence. Why is that wrong? Why is it important for busy practitioners to take the time to really think through, and explore their instincts, and improve the quality of their policies, by thinking about grant strategy?

Marina Henke: So it goes back to this efficiency question. And I think, you know, again–going back to our own lives–even if you don't want to admit it, but, you know, if you want to build a house, right? It's not very smart to just go to a hardware store and buy bricks, and you know, kind of like windows and maybe some kind of kitchen, and then try to put it all together, right? You first need to have a plan, right?

You need to kind of understand what is it actually you would like to construct. And once you have the plan, then you can start, you know, purchasing the necessary ingredients. And I think this goes back to also practitioners, right? Very often, there is this idea of, we understand the world, and especially we understand our particular field that we work in.

And I absolutely believe that most of them also do, but sometimes they lack a little bit, the big picture, or the bird's view perspective, right? Where is it actually where we want to go as a nation, and where does my field fit in? And especially in the military for example, very often you see that, you know exactly of what kind of, you know, air capabilities you want, or naval capabilities you want.

But in the big picture of things, what is actually, you know, like the overarching objective that we as a nation want to achieve? And then how does the military, or how does technology, how does, you know, even education policy fit in? And so I think, to kind of take a step back, and take the bird's view, I think is also a grand strategy process.

Even if it sounds sometimes as this, as I said, you know, an intellectual exercise, as kind of like–Why should I do this intellectual exercise? You know, like it's a waste of time–I think it's actually very important for the overall coherence, and also efficiency, in the allocation of a state's resources.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: You make a really interesting argument in the piece about the nature of the connection between grand strategy and democracy, both again, analytically and normatively. The last sentence of the piece, in particular, emphasizes the role of the public in demanding that governments invest serious effort in getting these grand strategic documents right–which is something, you know, we talked a few moments ago about. And so I'm wondering, you know, how should policymakers get the public engaged in these discussions about grand strategy, about why it's more than an academic indulgence, and how can civic pressure translate into better outcomes? And in particular, what are the risks if the public remains disengaged? Are there ways in which public engagement can be problematic? Particularly I'm thinking about cases in, you know, you mentioned South Korea, and strategic documents, and processes in South Korea or in the United States where political polarization has become a really entrenched phenomenon. So how do you think about making civic pressure, first of all, just getting it to happen, and second, making it constructive in this process of forming a grand strategy?

Marina Henke: So I think the first thing is that, especially journalists, but also you know, kind of intellectual leaders working at think tanks, and universities, they should help the public understand how certain policies fit into the larger grand strategic framework. So, for example, [the] Trump administration says that migration is the core challenge that the United States faces.

And you know, I think everybody should hold, you know, like still for a second, and say–okay, so I get it–But what is actually the core strategic goal that we are working to work? And, you know, explain to me how migration is the core strategic challenge, in order to get to the goal that we want to reach, right?

And, you know, if there is a certain logic to it–as a citizen now–I'm willing to believe it. But if I don't fully understand the logic, then let me ask a question, right? And maybe let me entertain an alternative core strategic challenge that I find more convincing. And I think here, it's helpful that in schools, and universities, but also in the general public discourse, that we raise these grand strategic questions.

Where do you actually wanna go with this, right? What are you actually after? And I think here, the public, sometimes maybe doesn't have the vocabulary, or kind of also doesn't have this kind of like overview. And I think it's important to bring it back in, because in the end, this is what this is all about.

In the end, we are constantly discussing grand strategic questions. In Germany right now, like all these questions–Should we help Ukraine?–It's a grand

strategic question, right? And so I need to explain [to] my students in the classroom, but also the German public, constantly why Ukraine matters to the security of Germany.

Because to a lot of them, that's not obvious, right? It's close, but still fairly far away. Why should we spend so much money on this other country, right? So I think we are constantly, no matter where, you know, like confronted with actual grand strategic questions. And we're asked our opinion about it, but we very often, I think the population, doesn't fully understand that it is actually a grand strategic question.

It is being portrayed as, you know, kind of a smaller scale question. And so to help them understand, you know, like–this is defined as the core strategic challenge, this is where we're trying to go, this is how a and b fit together–I think this is very important. But in the end, I would just like to elevate the entire discourse, you know, so that people understand better the logic behind this. Because I do think–I think the Trump administration pursues a certain logic, Germany pursues a certain logic, China pursues a certain logic–most countries actually pursue a certain logic. But it's not always transparent, and to help people understand what is actually there, and often it's not even that hard to describe the logic, right? And it's just [that] you have to verbalize it and explain it. And then, you know, like ask them–do you understand the logic or do you think their logic is flawed?

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: Thank you for joining us today on *Horns of a Dilemma*, the podcast of the *Texas National Security Review*.

Our guest today has been Marina Henke, author of the "Best Practices in Grand Strategy Design" article, which as always can be accessed for free on our website, TNSR.org. Marina, thank you so much for joining us for today's conversation.

Marina Henke: Thank you, Sheena. It was a pleasure.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: If you enjoyed this episode, please be sure to subscribe and leave a review wherever you listen. You can always find more of our content, both articles and podcasts at tnsr.org. Today's episode was produced by *TNSR* Digital and Technical Manager, Jordan Morning, and made possible by the University of Texas Systems. This is Sheena Chesnut Greitens and Ryan Vest. Thanks again for listening.