Draft Syllabus

The Middle East: Security Challenges and U.S. Responses, POGO-750

Mondays and Wednesdays, 7:20 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., summer session B

June 1 through July 23, 2020

Instructor: Professor Gregory Aftandilian

Classes taught via Blackboard Collaborate

e-mail: gaftandilian@verizon.net

cell phone: 703-402-9134

Office Hours: Arrangements can be made with the instructor for private Blackboard Collaborative meetings in the absence of regular office hours.

Course Description:

This class is an elective in the Master's program in International Security. Drawing on current and historical cases, the course provides a deep understanding of major developments in the Middle East from the immediate post-World War II period to the present day, and how the United States responded to these events. Students will come to understand the political, ideological and social contexts of these regional events and crises, why and how they posed a challenge to U.S. security interests, and how U.S. policymakers responded to them. The last class will deal with an unfolding crisis—the conflict with Iran and examine the Trump administration’s response to it as well as the dilemmas of keeping military forces in the region.

Course Goals:

Effective participation in international security analysis and policy action requires a range of skills. Individuals must be able to assess and evaluate the threat environment in the Middle East region since 1945 and the drivers of security challenges and crises. They must understand why these developments and crises came about, and what were the constraints on decision makers from domestic and international sources. They also need to address how strategies are developed, and what mechanisms monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of various strategies. The course is intended to provide a solid foundation for further study of specific security challenges in the Middle East, why regional actors pursued certain policies, and why and how U.S. policymakers responded to those challenges.
Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students should have acquired:

◼ fundamental knowledge about major crises that have affected the Middle East region since 1945, why that region has been so important to U.S. security interests, and why and how U.S. policymakers have responded to these crises.

◼ improved understanding of the evolution of the Middle East threat environment that sets the international security policy agenda

◼ improved critical reasoning skills regarding the decision-making process and the motivations and behavior of participants in domestic and international security forums

◼ expanded skills in communicating in written and oral formats about major international security issues

Course Materials

The course will draw on academic literature, think tank studies, and pertinent press reports involving major events in the modern Middle East.

Required Books:


F. Gregory Gause, The International Relations of the Persian Gulf (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010). In paperback. Referred to in readings section as the “Gause book”

Other readings, such as journal articles or chapters in books, are available through electronic library reserve. Some other articles are available on the Internet. Students are also expected to keep up with current Middle Eastern developments by reading one major newspaper (in print or online) every day.

Student Requirements:

Students are required to complete all assigned readings prior to class. They are expected to engage constructively in class discussions, and to complete their research paper on time.
Failure to do the readings and hand in their research paper on time will result in a lower grade. Students are expected to attend all classes and will only be excused because of illness, a religious holiday, or a genuine family or work emergency.

**Grading** for the class will break down as follows:

- Participation in class discussions: 25 percent
- Mid-term exam: 25 percent
- Research paper: 25 percent
- Final exam: 25 percent

Course grading is not on a curve; class members are not competing with each other for marks.

**Academic Accommodations for a Disability:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

**Schar School Policy on Plagiarism:**

The following is Schar School policy on plagiarism:

“The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of F. This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1, J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Codes; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. ([http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook](http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook))”

**Class Schedule (subject to change):**

**June 1:** Introduction. Wartime rivalries and the importance of Middle East oil for the United States. Overview of the course and student responsibilities. Lecture on the
importance of the Middle East and the strategic asset of oil during World War II. The
discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia by American oil companies in the late 1930s, the building of
the Dhahran air base near the oil fields, and the forging of the U.S.-Saudi strategic alliance.
U.S. participation in the occupation of Iran during World War II to send war supplies to the
Soviet Union, suspicions of Soviet and British interests in Iran, and the Allied wartime
pledge to withdraw all troops and restore full Iranian sovereignty after the war.

June 3: Early Cold War period in the Middle East. The Iranian Azerbaijani and
Kurdish crisis of 1946 and the U.S. security response.

Readings: Richard Phau, “Containment in Iran, 1946: The Shift to an Active Policy,”
Diplomatic History, Fall 1977, pp. 359-372. (available on electronic library reserve)

Hahn book, chapter 1, "National Security. The Genesis of U.S. Involvement in the Middle

137-139.

Archie Roosevelt, Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," The Middle East Journal, July
1947, pp. 247-269. This article can be accessed through this link:

https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/1p9t2q3/alma9946876232404105

June 8: The emergence of nationalist movements and leaders in the Middle East.
The ideological appeal of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism among the peoples
of the Middle East, and the initial, favorable views towards the United States.

Contacts Between the Officers and the USA” and “The United States and the Egyptian
Ltd, 1989), pp. 33-50, 51-70. (available on electronic library reserve)

and Haas book, pp. 79-89.

Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1979), pp. 206-242. (available
on electronic library reserve)

Rashid Khalidi, “The Superpowers and the Cold War in the Middle East,” in Lesch and Haas

June 10: U.S. covert interventions in Iran and Syria in the 1950s and the differences
between the Truman and Eisenhower administrations


Douglas Little, “Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958,” Middle East Journal, Winter 1990, pp. 69-75. This article can be accessed through this link:

https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/1p9t2q3/alma9946876232404105

Hahn book documents, pp. 143-144.

June 15: The Suez War of 1956, the U.S. Response, and the aftermath

Viewing in class of the BBC documentary, “The Other Side of Suez”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFs9IKVHJNo


Hahn book, pp. 35-46.

June 17: Attempts by the Kennedy Administration to reach a rapprochement with Nasser and why it failed, and efforts to press reforms on the Shah of Iran

Readings: April R. Summit, “For a White Revolution: John F. Kennedy and the Shah of Iran,” Middle East Journal, Autumn 2004, pp. 560-575. This article can be accessed through this link:

https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/1p9t2q3/alma9946876232404105

Douglas Little, “The New Frontier on the Nile: JFK, Nasser, and Arab Nationalism,” Journal of American History, September 1988, pp. 501-527. This article can be accessed through this link:

https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/1p9t2q3/alma9946879241304105
June 22: Take-home mid-term exam due before the start of class (sent to students the day before). The Johnson Administration, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and viewing the region through U.S.-Soviet rivalry


Hahn book, pp. 47-57; 147-154

June 24: The British military withdrawal from the Persian Gulf, U.S. Twin Pillar Strategy, and the indulgence of the Shah of Iran


Hahn book, pp. 69-71; 155-157

June 29: The Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Carter Doctrine.


Hahn book, pp. 72-78; 144-146.

July 1: The Reagan administration and the pursuit of ‘Strategic Consensus’ with Israel and some Arab states, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the George H.W. Bush decision to protect Saudi Arabia and push back Iraqi forces out of Kuwait (but not go to Baghdad), and dual containment of Iraq and Iran.


Hahn book, pp. 78-91; pp. 158-159


Hahn book documents, pp. 170-175.
July 6: The Iraq war of 2003 and its ramifications for U.S. security policy


Viewing of PBS—Frontline documentary, “The Secret History of ISIS.” This is the link:

https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/the-secret-history-of-isis/

July 8: The Iran nuclear program, the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1, and the U.S. attempt to mollify Gulf Arab states


“Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal,” delivered at American University, Washington, D.C., August 5, 2015. Available on this link:

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/05/remarks-president-iran-nuclear-deal

“Here is what is in the Iran nuclear deal that the country withdrew from,” Business Insider, January 10, 2020. Available on this link:

https://www.businessinsider.com/iran-nuclear-deal-explained

Jeffrey Goldberg: “The Obama Doctrine,” The Atlantic, April 2016. Available on this link:

https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/

July 13: The GCC crisis and the future of Gulf security


“Joint Statement of the Inaugural United States-Qatar Strategic Dialogue,” U.S. Department of State, Media Note, January 30, 2018

**July 15: The Syrian crisis and policy dilemmas for the Trump Administration**

*Readings:* Secretary of State Tillerson’s policy speech on Syria at the Hoover Institution, January 17, 2018. This is the link:

[https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/01/277493.htm](https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/01/277493.htm)

Robert Burns, “Trump backtracks on Syria after talks with French leader,” *Associated Press*, April 24, 2018

Julian Borger and Martin Chulov, “Trump shocks allies and advisers with plan to pull US troops out of Syria,” *The Guardian*, December 19, 2018


Dan Lamothe, “U.S. troops angry over Trump’s rapid Syria pullout, see betrayal of loyal ally,” *Washington Post*, October 10, 2019

Missy Ryan, “After decision to withdraw from Syria, U.S. military aims to pivot quickly,” *Washington Post*, October 18, 2019

Karen DeYoung, “U.S. plans to leave up to 600 troops in Syria,” *Washington Post*, November 11, 2019

**July 20: Research papers due. Trump administration, confrontation with Iran, and Gulf security**

*Readings:* “Mike Pompeo Speech: What are the 12 demands given to Iran?” *Al Jazeera*, May 21, 2018


“How Pompeo convinced Trump to kill Soleimani and fulfilled a decade long goal,” *CNN*, January 11, 2020. This is the link:


Gregory Aftandilian, “Gulf Arab States Still Worried About a US-Iran War,” Arab Center, Washington, D.C., January 23, 2020. This is the link:

http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/gulf-arab-states-still-worried-about-a-us-iran-war/


**July 22: Final Exam (take-home exam) sent to students, to be returned to instructor on July 23**