

HERTOG POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM 2014 SUMMER FELLOWSHIP WEEK 4 – THE IRANIAN CHALLENGE Washington, DC

Section 3 – Michael Doran, senior fellow, Brookings Institution

Nothing in American foreign policy is more controversial than how to deal with Iran's nuclear program. In November 2013, the debate entered a new phase with the signing of the interim deal between Iran and the so-called P5+1 (the United States, China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom). Supporters of the Obama administration depict the agreement as a major breakthrough, one that will possibly lead to an historic reconciliation between the United States and the Islamic Republic. Its detractors, however, see the deal as a capitulation that ultimately will leave the United States in a relatively weakened position.

One's attitude toward the agreement is colored by one's understanding, more generally, of the Iranian threat. One school of thought argues that the Islamic Republic is essentially a defensive power. Its days are numbered; in these, its twilight years, it can easily be contained. According to this school, if the United States and its ally, Israel, will simply avoid rash military action, then they will certainly prevail over Iran. Alternatively, a second school of thought sees Iran as an offensive power. It emphasizes Tehran's hegemonic ambitions, and argues that Iran is hell-bent on acquiring a nuclear weapon, and that it poses a serious danger to regional order, not to mention American primacy. Countries threatened by the Iranian nuclear program, so the thinking goes, will inevitably acquire their own arsenals, and the Persian Gulf, which contains two-thirds of global oil reserves, will become the focal point of a multi-sided nuclear stand-off.

After a brief survey of the historical background, this seminar will investigate the Iran debate in depth and will conclude, on the last day, with a war game.

Tuesday, July 15, 2014

9:15 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Group Breakfast
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10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Speaker LTG Frederick Hodges , commanding general, NATO Allied Land Command
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1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. **The 1953 Coup: An Historical Analogy**

- Michael Axworthy, *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind*, Ch. 7
- James Risen, "Secrets of History: The C.I.A. in Iran," *New York Times*, April 16, 2000
- Daniel Yergin, *The Prize*, Ch. 23

Questions:

1. Was the United States wise to topple Prime Minister Mosaddeq?
2. What was the alternative?
3. What is the proper role of the United States in the Persian Gulf?

Essay Question 1:

Discuss: "Toppling Mosaddeq caused more problems than it solved."

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Semiweekly Group Lunch
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Wednesday, July 16, 2014

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. The Dilemma Defined

- Michael Axworthy, *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind*, Chs. 8–9, Epilogue
- James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh, "After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and Its Complications," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2010)
- Eric S. Edelman, Andrew F. Krepinevich, and Evan Braden Montgomery, "The Dangers of a Nuclear Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (January/February 2011)
- Fred Wehrey et al., *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War*, Ch. 2, "An Altered Strategic Landscape: The Shifting Regional Balance of Power"

Questions:

1. How would you distinguish the nature of the Iranian nuclear threat?
2. What distinguishes a national interest from a *vital* national interest?
3. Is Iran an implacable enemy of the United States?

Essay Question 2:

Evaluate: "There is no need for the United States to be inordinately concerned about the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Thursday, July 17, 2014

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. The Nuclear Deal, For And Against

- Colin Kahl, "Still Not Time to Bomb Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, January 7, 2014
- Mark Landler, "Potent Pro-Israel Group Finds Its Momentum Blunted," *New York Times*, February 3, 2014
- Kenneth Katzman and Paul Kerr, "Interim Agreement on Iran's Nuclear Program," Congressional Research Service, December 11, 2013
- Michael Doran, "I Don't Bluff," *Mosaic Magazine*, February 6, 2013
- Mohammad Javad Zarif, "What Iran Really Wants," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2013)

Questions:

1. What is the purpose of Iran's nuclear program?
2. What is the best deal that the United States can realistically expect to get from Iran?

Essay Question 3:

Discuss: "A bad deal is better than no deal."

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Speaker
Charles Murray, author, *Coming Apart*

Friday, July 18, 2014

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **Policy Exercise/Debate**

At the end of class on Thursday you will be presented with a scenario depicting the United States on the brink of war with Iran. The class will divide into two groups—hawks and doves. Both groups will be called upon to defend their positions before the President in a model National Security Council meeting on Friday.

12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Semiweekly Group Lunch