**IAFF6378: Iran in the Middle East.**

**Elliott School of International Affairs**

**The George Washington University**

**Fall 2022**

Instructor: Sina Azodi

Time: Mondays 5:10pm-7:00pm

Location: ESIA, B16

Office:

Office Hours: By Appointment.

Email: [sinas69@gwu.edu](mailto:sinas69@gwu.edu)

*\*\*Note: I also hold non-office, office hours at both Gelman & Gelbucks. If you have a question or need anything, come say hello.*

**Course Description:**

Iran has long played a critical role in the international relations of the Middle East –historically one of the most tumultuous regions in the world.  In this graduate course, we will critically discuss Iran's foreign and security policies, against the backdrop of its controversial nuclear program and its contentious relations with other regional players, especially Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Israel. The aim of this course is to familiarize students with goals, characteristics, and evolution of Iran’s regional policies and the daunting challenges it faces.

Some of the questions that this course aims to address:

*How do Iranians look at the region?*

*What are Iran’s strategic goals in the Middle East?*

*How does the rest of the region look at Iran?*

*What are the driving forces behind Iran’s foreign and security policies?*

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students taking this course should:

* Improve their ability to critically analyze Iran’s foreign and security policies, especially with regard to the Middle East.
* Deepen their knowledge of key events and issues pertaining to Iran’s standing in the Middle East.
* Advance their research, drafting, and presentation skills focusing on key regional issues in the Middle East.

**General Course Requirements:**

**Attendance** is mandatory, especially because we meet once a week. Students are expected to attend the class, having read the assigned readings in advance. I understand that unforeseen events happen. If you are feeling sick and going to miss a class due to illness, please write me a note and let me know that you will not be attending. Unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

**Participation** is mandatory. This is a **graduate level course** and I expect all students to participate in the discussion both positively and actively. **Simply talking is not participation**. You are required to contribute to the learning objectives of this course. Students should engage in a lively discussion of points raised by the instructor and your peers. Remember, this is an academic environment, so thinking out of the box is strongly encouraged.

***I also expect all students to actively engage with new pieces written on Iran. If you see something, share it with others.***

**Individual Presentation:** Each class, one student will be asked to take the lead to summarize the readings and expand the ideas and raise questions for class discussion. Presentations should take no longer than 15 minutes; I reserve the right to stop you. When you present, avoid getting into the details of the readings. Rather, focus on the general theme and argument. Presenters will be responsible for encouraging and leading the discussion.

**Take Home Exam:** More details will be announced as we approach the date. Take Home exam will be due at **midnight October 10, 2022.**

**Final Paper:**  Students will submit a 20-25 page paper - double spaced- at the end of the semester. Come see me to discuss your final paper topic first. A draft proposal of your final paper is due on **October 17**. Submit a hard copy to me in class.

**Grading Criteria:**

Participation 30%

Individual Presentations 15%

Take Home Exam 15%

Final Paper 40%

*Note: I expect all students to stay updated with Iran related news. Each class we will spend 10-15 minutes and will discuss latest news from Iran. Be prepared to bring the class up to date and critically analyze. Remember: “think out of the box.”*

**Late work policy:** Deadlines for written work should be taken very seriously. Unexcused late submissions will lose a third of a grade for each day they are late (e.g. A >>> A-). Extensions will only be granted in case of emergency, and with the instructor’s prior approval. Come see me if you have a question.

**Workload Requirement:** In this three credit graduate course students will have 110 minutes of direct instruction, in addition to roughly 300 to 350 minutes of independent work per week.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** The University wishes to remind students of the GW Code of Academic Integrity, which states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

**SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

*DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)*

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. Any student with three final examinations within a twenty-four hour period is entitled to take an alternate exam at a mutually-agreed time and place. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

*UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC)****202-994-5300***

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

* crisis and emergency mental health consultations
* confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

**htt**[**p://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices**](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices/)

**Required Books.**

* Solomon, J., 2016. *The Iran Wars: Spy Games, Bank Battles, and the Secret Deals that Reshaped the Middle East*. Random House Incorporated
* Banai, Hussein, Malcolm Byrne, and John Tirman. *Republics of Myth: National Narratives and the US-Iran Conflict*. (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2022)
* Tabatabai, Ariane. *No Conquest, No Defeat: Iran’s National Security Strategy*. (Oxford University Press: New York, 2020)
* Tabaar, Mohammad Ayatollahi. *Religious statecraft: The politics of Islam in Iran*. Columbia University Press, 2018
* Gause III, F. Gregory. The international relations of the Persian Gulf. Cambridge

University Press, 2009.

* Trita Parsi, Treacherous Alliance - The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the US (Yale University Press).
* Patrikarakos, David. *Nuclear Iran: the birth of an atomic state*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020 (First edition is OK.)

**Schedule of Class**

*I reserve the right to change the schedule if deemed necessary.*

**Week 1: 08/29**

**Introduction, expectations, and overview. Come prepared with latest Iran news, having read the following:**

Solomon, J., 2016. *The Iran Wars: Spy Games, Bank Battles, and the Secret Deals that Reshaped the Middle East*. Random House Incorporated. Prologue & Chapter 1

Walt, Stephen. *Does Anyone Still Understand the Security Dilemma?* July 26, 2022. Foreign Policy.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/26/misperception-security-dilemma-ir-theory-russia-ukraine/>

Ross, Dennis. *The United States Needs a Better Strategy to Deter Iran.*  July 6, 2022. Foreign Affairs.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2022-07-06/united-states-needs-better-strategy-deter-iran>

Nasr, Vali. “Iran Among the Ruins.” March/ April 2018 Foreign Affairs. [*https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2018-02-13/iran-among-ruins*](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2018-02-13/iran-among-ruins)

*Recommended*:

*Parsi, Trita & Petti, Matthew. No Clean Hands: The Interventions of Middle Eastern Powers, 2010-2020.* [*https://quincyinst.org/report/no-clean-hands-the-interventions-of-middle-eastern-powers/*](https://quincyinst.org/report/no-clean-hands-the-interventions-of-middle-eastern-powers/)

**Week 2: 09/05**

**Labor Day.** *No Class.*

**This is a fantastic documentary. While it primarily focuses on the nuclear issue, it also incorporates a number of other topics that we cover in the course.**

*Watch the first episode of Iran and West- Nuclear Confrontation*[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yfkqf\_wWEsM**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yfkqf_wWEsM)

*Watch the second episode of Iran and West Nuclear Confrontation:* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rwDqHjouUU*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rwDqHjouUU)

# *Watch the final episode of Iran and West Nuclear Confrontation*

[***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uci0bNVbyHU***](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uci0bNVbyHU)

* *Write me a report and tell me what you think. (Double spaced. Two pages maximum) Submit by midnight September 5, 2022.*

**Week 3: 09/12**

*Iran’s National Security Strategy*

Tabatabai, Ariane. *No Conquest, No Defeat: Iran’s National Security Strategy*. (Oxford University Press: New York, 2020)

Roham Alvandi, Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The Origins of Iranian Primacy in the Persian Gulf, Diplomatic History, Volume 36, Issue 2, April 2012, Pages 337–372, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2011.01025.x> (Available on Blackboard)

Azodi, Sina. *How Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine is Shaping National Security Debates in Iran.* June 2, 2022. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/how-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-is-shaping-national-security-debates-in-iran/>

**Week 4: 09/19**

*Security and Strategy in the Persian Gulf.*

Gause III, F. Gregory. The International Relations of the Persian Gulf. Cambridge

University Press, 2009.

Milani, Mohsen. *Iran’s Transformation from Revolutionary to Status Quo Power in the Persian Gulf.*  <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/event/MohsenMilaniFinal.pdf>

Abdolrasool Divsallar (2021) Shifting Threats and Strategic Adjustment in Iran’s Foreign Policy: The case of Strait of Hormuz, British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, DOI: [10.1080/13530194.2021.1874873](https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2021.1874873)

Hunter, Shireen. *Iran’s Policy Toward the Persian Gulf: Dynamics of Continuity and Change.*

InEhteshami, Anoushiravan., Neil. Quilliam, and Gawdat. Bahgat. *Security and Bilateral Issues Between Iran and Its Arab Neighbours*. Edited by Anoushiravan. Ehteshami, Neil. Quilliam, and Gawdat. Bahgat. 1st ed. 2017. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017.

**Week 5: 09/26**

*Religion and Ideology in Iran's foreign policy*

Tabaar, Mohammad Ayatollahi. *Religious statecraft: The politics of Islam in Iran*. Columbia University Press, 2018

Ramazani, R. K. "Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran's Foreign Policy." *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 4 (2004): 549-59. Accessed July 29, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4330062>

Ansari, Ali. *Civilizational Identity and Foreign Policy.* in: Shaffer, Brenda. (ed) *The Limits of Culture : Islam and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge, Mass. ;: MIT Press, 2006

**Week 6: 10/03**

*Iran- Israel*

Trita Parsi, Treacherous Alliance - The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the US (Yale University Press), Ch. 1- 10.

Feltman, Jeffrey. *Hezbollah: Revolutionary Iran’s Most Successful Export.* Brookings.

[*https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/hezbollah-revolutionary-irans-most-successful-export/*](https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/hezbollah-revolutionary-irans-most-successful-export/)

Simon, Steven. *Israel and the Persian Gulf: A Source of Security or Conflict?* Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

<https://quincyinst.org/report/israel-and-the-persian-gulf-a-source-of-security-or-conflict/>

Behravesh, Maysam. *Israel’s Peace Deals are a Strategic Nightmare for Iran.* Foreign Policy.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/14/israels-peace-deals-are-a-strategic-nightmare-for-iran/>

Fassihi, F, Kingsley, P & Eric Schmitt. *Israel’s Shadow War with Iran Moves out to Sea.* New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/26/world/middleeast/israel-iran-shadow-war.html>

**Week 7: 10/10**

**\*\*Take home exam is due. \*\***

*Saudi Arabia and Iran: The Struggle for Religious and Political Domination*

Frederic Wehrey, Theodore W. Karasik, Alireza Nader, Jeremy Ghez, Lydia Hansell, Robert A. Guffey. 2009. “[Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implications for U.S. Policy](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG840.pdf)” *RAND*

Al-Badi A. (2017) Saudi-Iranian Relations: A Troubled Trajectory. In: Ehteshami A., Quilliam N., Bahgat G. (eds) Security and Bilateral Issues between Iran and its Arab Neighbours. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43289-2_9>

# Fisher, Max. *How the Iranian-Saudi Proxy Struggle Tore Apart the Middle East.* The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/world/middleeast/iran-saudi-proxy-war.html>

Madawi al-Rasheed, What Fuels the Saudi Rivalry With Iran?, New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/23/opinion/international-world/saudi-iran-prince-mohammed.html>

The Iranian–Saudi Hegemonic Rivalry.” Iran Matters, October 25, 2017, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/iranian-saudi-hegemonic-rivalry>.

# Wezerman, Pieter. *Saudi Arabia: Armaments and Conflict in the Middle East.* SIPRI

# <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2018/saudi-arabia-armaments-and-conflict-middle-east>

**Week 8: 10/17**

***\*\* A draft proposal of your final paper is due. Two pages maximum. \*\****

*Iran and Iraq: Bitter enemies, bosom friends*

Solomon. *Iran Wars.* Ch.2, 3

Walsh, James. *Iran and Iraq;* InEhteshami, Anoushiravan., Neil. Quilliam, and Gawdat. Bahgat. *Security and Bilateral Issues Between Iran and Its Arab Neighbours*. Edited by Anoushiravan. Ehteshami, Neil. Quilliam, and Gawdat. Bahgat. 1st ed. 2017. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017.

Segal, David, “The Iran-Iraq War: A Military Analysis,” *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1988, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/1988-06-01/iran-iraq-war-military-analysis>

Barzegar, Kayhan. *Iran, New Iraq and the Persian Gulf Political- Security Architecture.* <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/ISIP.pdf>

Arango, Tim, James Risen, Farnaz Fassihi, Ronen Bergman & Murtaza Hussain. *The Iran Cables: Secret Documents Show how Tehran Wields Power in Iraq.* New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/18/world/middleeast/iran-iraq-spy-cables.html>

**Week 9: 10/24**

**Fall Break: No Class.**

**Week 10: 10/31**

*Iran and the United States*

Banai, Hussein, Malcolm Byrne, and John Tirman. *Republics of Myth : National Narratives and the US-Iran Conflict*. (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2022)

Jamie M. Fly and Gary Schmidt, “The Case for Regime Change in Iran,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 17, 2012 *(*<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137038/jamie-m-fly-and-gary-schmitt/the-case-for-regime-change-in-iran?page=show>

Scott Sagan, and Benjamin A. Valentino, “Revisiting Hiroshima in Iran: what Americans Really Think about Using Nuclear Weapons and Killing Noncombatants,” International Security (2017): 41-79.

Bolton, John. *To Stop Iran from Bomb, Bomb Iran.* New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/26/opinion/to-stop-irans-bomb-bomb-iran.html>

Beinart, Peter. *Bolton Keeps Trying to Goad Iran into War.* The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/06/bolton-keeps-trying-goad-iran-war/592108/>

**Week 11: 11/08**

*Iran, Ballistic Missiles and Regional Implications.*

Watch the following short clips(required):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejudkZgs5Vg&t=26s> (April 2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtVB7fEpYck> (2019)

Glaser, Charles & Kaufman Chaim. *What is Offense Defense Balance and How Can we Measure it?* <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.22.4.44>

Fitzpatrick, Mark. *Uncertain Future : The JCPOA and Iran's Nuclear and Missile Programmes*. Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.

(Chapter Three: *Evaluating Design Intent in Iran’s Ballistic Missile Programme)*

*Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance.* DIA. <https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf>

*Open-Source Analysis of Iran’s Missile and UAV Capabilities and Proliferation.* IISS

[*https://www.iiss.org/blogs/research-paper/2021/04/iran-missiles-uavs-proliferation*](https://www.iiss.org/blogs/research-paper/2021/04/iran-missiles-uavs-proliferation)

Azodi, Sina. *Historical Traumas Underline Iranian Reliance on Missiles.* December 18, 2018. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/historical-traumas-underline-iranian-reliance-on-missiles/>

# Erasto, Tytti. *Dissecting international concerns about Iran’s missiles*. SIPRI. <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2018/dissecting-international-concerns-about-irans-missiles>

**Week 12: 11/ 15**

*Iran's nuclear program: Struggle for Security and Modernization*

Patrikarakos, David. *Nuclear Iran: the birth of an atomic state*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020 (First edition is OK.)

Kibaroglu, Mustafa. *“Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran's Quest for Nuclear Power.” Middle East Journal*, vol. 60. no. 2. (Spring 2006): 207-232

Sagan, Scott D. "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb." *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996): 54-86. [muse.jhu.edu/article/447446](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/447446).

Sagan, Scott& Kenneth Waltz. “A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster”

*Recommended: Solomon, Iran Wars. Ch.V*

**Week 13 : 11/ 22**

*Iran and Turkey*

Iain William MacGillivray (2020) The paradox of Turkish–Iranian relations in the Syrian Crisis, Third World Quarterly,41:6, 1046-1066, DOI: [10.1080/01436597.2020.1730692](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1730692)

Gulden, Ayman. Turkey and Iran: Between Friendly Competition and Fierce Rivalry.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.13169/arabstudquar.36.1.0006.pdf>

Hashem, Ali. *Why Iran stood with Erdogan?* Al-Monitor.

[*https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/07/iran-reactions-turkey-coup-attempt-zarif-erdogan.html*](https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/07/iran-reactions-turkey-coup-attempt-zarif-erdogan.html)

*Turkey and Iran: Bitter Friends Bosom Rivals.* Crisis Group. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran/b051-turkey-and-iran-bitter-friends-bosom-rivals>

Zaman, Amberin. *Turkey Iran Tensions Spike Over Azerbaijan.* Al-Monitor. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/12/turkey-iran-tensions-erdogan-azerbaijan-arrests-drug-baron.html>

Tehran Times: <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/455701/Poem-dispute-fails-to-undermine-ties-built-on-historical-roots>

# *More Iranians buy homes in Turkey as a 'plan B' under sanctions*. Christian Science Monitor: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2019/1001/More-Iranians-buy-homes-in-Turkey-as-a-plan-B-under-sanctions>

**Week 14: 11/29**

*Iran in Syria*

# Solomon, *Iran Wars. Ch. IX*

Milani, Mohsen. "Why Tehran won't abandon Assad (ism)." *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2013): 79-93. <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/24384/uploads>

Hassan Ahmadian, Payam Mohseni, Iran's Syria strategy: the evolution of deterrence, International Affairs, Volume 95, Issue 2, March 2019, Pages 341–364, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiy271>

Fred H. Lawson, “Syria’s Relations with Iran: Managing the Dilemmas of Alliance,” *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 29-47. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4330355?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

Azodi, Sina. *Iran’s Durable Alliance with Assad’s Syria.*  <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/iran-s-durable-alliance-with-assad-s-syria/>

**Week 15: 12/06**

*Iran and the Non-state actors*

Solomon, *Iran Wars.* Ch. IV

Abbas William Samii. “The Shah’s Lebanon Policy: The Role of SAVAK.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 1 (1997): 66–91. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283847>

Juneau, Thomas. *How War in Yemen Transformed Iran-Houthi Relationship.* <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2021.1954353>

Behravesh, Maysam. *Iran’s Unconventional Alliance in the Middle East and Beyond.* The Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/irans-unconventional-alliance-network-middle-east-and-beyond>

Azizi, Hamidreza and Nancy Ezzedin. *Iran’s Increasingly Decentralized Axis of Resistance.* War on the Rocks. July 14, 2022. <https://warontherocks.com/2022/07/irans-increasingly-decentralized-axis-of-resistance/>

Esfandiari, Dina & Ariane Tabatabi. Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_docs/INTA91_1_01_Esfandiary_Tabatabai.pdf>

**Week *16:* 12/12**

***Final Papers are due.***

***Guest Speaker***