U.S.-IRAN Relations: Conflict/Reconciliation

SIS 619-016 Fall 2017 Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone Thursdays 5:30-8:00 fsimone@american.edu

Course Description

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed in 2015 by Iran and the permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany was a historic achievement, a victory of diplomacy, perseverance, and political sense over political posturing and threats of military actions. It was also the first official agreement between Iran and the United States since 1979 Iranian revolution. President Obama considered implementation of the JCPOA as an opportunity for a better relations with Iran in pursuit of common goals.

Two years after the deal's success in achieving its explicit goal in halting Iran's nuclear program, in exchange of broad sanctions relief, many challenges remain. The Trump administration seems determined to take a hard stance toward Iran replacing reconciliation with confrontation as the guiding principle of the US policy toward Iran. The US has imposed tough new sanctions and Trump has threatened to deny certification of Iran's compliance, determined to pull out of the accord reached after years of painstaking negotiations between the United States and international .powers.

Iran was a major ally of the United States throughout the Cold War period ,but the Iranian revolution of 1979, overthrow of Iran's pro-American regime ,and the hostage crisis altered the friendly relationships to an enduring hostility and distrust. The JCPOA while limited in scope, proved that outstanding issues between adversaries can be resolved through diplomacy and open communication.

Iran is strategically important country located at the crossroad between Europe, Russia, Central and South Asia with a longest shoreline on Persian Gulf. It is an ancient empire, ethnolinguistically diverse with a strong sense of cultural identity, national pride, and historical continuity. It is a solid state with functioning institutions, with an industrial base, large reserves of oil and natural gas, and significant economic and military potentials It has a vibrant civil society, and demographically young and educated population that is pro- American unlike many Arab states.

Rouhani administration has no interest in escalating tension with Washington, but the US finds Iran's ballistic missile program and its activities in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen provocative and threatening to its regional allies and its own interests in the Persian Gulf.

This course examines history of U.S.-Iran alliance and deterioration of relationship, Iran's foreign policy objectives, its relations with neighboring countries, Obama's diplomatic outreach and Trump administration policy in the context of the current situation and future challenges.

Course Objectives: The course will provide a historical understanding of the U.S. Iran relations with focus on the key issues in U.S.-Iran relations, and Iranian foreign and domestic policies. We analyze different scholarly approaches and viewpoints and discuss points of controversy and disagreement in the context of US politics and Iran's relations with its neighbors.

The course will be conducted as a graduate seminar, part history and part policy analysis, on both American and Iranian sides. We discuss the future of nuclear deal ,Iran's relations with European Union , military and economic ties with Russia and China ,and the domestic and foreign policy challenges facing Iran and the US in the region,. We discuss the need for a new approach beyond the nuclear agreement for the cause of stability and order in the Middle East.

Topics: We review the U.S. Iran alliance at the end of WWII. Readings include the Cold War partnership with Iran; the ways that issues of security and access to oil shaped the U.S. policy and its intervention, both overt and covert in Iranian politics .We study newly released CIA documents of the US role in the 1953 coup and its consequences, crisis of cultural identity leading to the 1979 revolution, and the hostage crisis. We discuss the Iran-Iraq war, the US policy of containment, and the controversy over Iran's nuclear program. Readings include Iran's regional policies, its capabilities and potentials as a major regional player, sectarian violence and geopolitical rivalry between Iran - Israel, Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Persian Gulf. We discuss Obama administration's policy to engage Iran, the nuclear agreement, civil war in Syria, instability in Iraq and its impact on the Islamic Republic's crucial ties with its regional allies. We study transformation of the society under the clergy, demographic shift, Iran's economic crisis, its regional political ambitions and its implications for the future state of Iran's relationship with the United States in Trump administration.

The course encourages critical thinking and analysis of current issues and debates through class discussions, documentary films, videos, scholarly papers, and occasional guest lectures.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate: Ability to critically assess the historical and political developments of U.S.- Iran relations, Appreciate wide range of alternative views, question and rethink their "understanding" of Iranian history, politics and society.

Analyze America's strategy in the Middle East and US policy toward Iran since 1979 revolution. Identify differing Iranian/American framing of the conflict, and provide insight into viable alternative policy options that could avoid further escalation with unintended consequences.

Required

1- Trita Parsi, **Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran and the Triumph of Diplomacy**, (Yale University Press 2017)

Recommended

- 1- Ervand Abrahamian, A History of Modern Iran, (Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- 2- Misagh Parsa, **Democracy in Iran** (Harvard University Press, 2017).

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Selected Websites

http://iranicaonline.org

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/806268.stm

http://countrystudies.us/iran/

http://iranprimer.usip.org

www.gooya.com (Iranian media)

www.iranian.com (Iran's news and views)

www.albawaba.com (Middle East gateway)

www.merip.org (MERIP)

http://payvand.com

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middleeast (BBC World Service)

http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2008/mapping_Irans_online_public

Country Profile Iran: BBC

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/790877

US Iran Relations chronology http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-archive-articles.html

Iran: Politics, Human Rights ,and U.S. Policy

Congressional Research Service

www.crs.govRL.32048

Foreign Relations of the United States Iran 1951-54

http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951-54iran/pg I

James Risen, "Secrets of History: the CIA in Iran-Special Report" New York Times

http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/16/world/secrets-history-cia-iran-special-report

Iran and the West, BBC Documentary 3 parts

http://www.bbc.com.uk/worldservice/documentaries/2009/07/090720

Course Requirements and Evaluation

1 - Class Participation: 30 % of your final grade.

Readings: Syllabus includes assigned texts as well as additional readings that will be posted on Blackboard throughout the semester.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes and be well prepared to discuss weekly topics. Attendance is mandatory and prepared class participation is ESSENTIAL to your grade. In addition to being physically present, you are expected to be actively engaged in class discussions, make comments, raise questions, and analyze the issues. You are expected to complete all assigned readings before each class meeting. You will not be able to do well in class discussion if you did not complete the readings .The purpose is to be engaged in class and be well prepared prior to each week's class meeting . The class will be conducted as graduate seminar ,part lecture ,part discussion in which each person assumes responsibility for

sustaining discussion and contribute constructively to an environment of mutual learning. It is crucial that you come to class well prepared, having read and thought about the assigned texts, and participate in class discussion. Your class participation grade will be based on your preparation, and contribution to class discussion. Your grade is evaluated by the quality of your comments and questions.

2- Short paper 20% of the final grade.

Write five to seven pages report on any of the required or recommended books listed in the syllabus. **Due October26**

- **3-Class Presentation**: **20** % **of your final grade**. Each student is charged with formulating a policy recommendation on contemporary issues related to U.S.-Iran relations in the regional context and follow these general guidelines:
- a) Introduction :Clearly state the issue /problem you are investigating ,clarify it and make your classmates realize the nature or the scope of the issue /problem .
- b) Investigate your topic from historical perspective. Present in a logical ,clear manner, include any pertinent background information, current range of thinking about the issue ,and present opposing views /positions objectively.
- c) Conclude with policy recommendation and thoughtful questions for class discussion .

Each presentation should be about 15 minutes, with slides, maps, videos, and other relevant materials.

The presentations should have a clear focus, articulating the topic's main points.

Present opposing themes objectively with well-argued position

Do Not read from the notes or use the computer as a teleprompter.

Suggested topics for class presentation:

- 1- The United States ,Iran ,and the Syrian Civil War.
- 2- The United States and Iran: Nuclear and other Issues.
- 3- Iran and the Surrounding World.
- 4- U.S.-Iran in Trump Era: should nuclear deal be revoked? What Policy do you recommend for the U.S. administration? Please indicate controversies, opposing views, and concerns of U.S. traditional allies?

5-Iran,Iraq , and IS.What are the implications for Iran , the U.S. policy and its national security concerns in the region ?

- 5- Future of Iran's nuclear program
- 6- Regime change once again?
- 7- The crisis of regional order in the Persian Gulf
- 8- How Iran views its regional role?
- 9- Diplomacy or military confrontation and consequences?
- 10- Impact of sanctions on Iran's economy and domestic politics.
- **4- Final Research Paper 30% of final grade**. You are expected to write a research paper fifteen to twenty pages , and to undertake an in-depth analysis of a particular issue covered in the course syllabus . Topics to be considered :

The US-Iran relations under the Shah,

Iranian revolution of 1979 in comparative perspective,

How religion became a political ideology in the regional conflicts.

Challenges to Iran's domestic and foreign policy since the nuclear deal,

The role of IRGC in domestic and regional affairs ,and political economy of the Islamic Republic .

Iran and regional rivalry, Iraq crisis and its impact on neighboring Iran,

Nuclear deal, sanctions and the impact on Iran's political economy,

US policy in the Persian Gulf and its impact.

Iran-Russia military cooperation in Syria and beyond .

The assessment of your paper will be based on the quality of your research, analysis of the issue, clarity, creativity, and coherence. The choice of subject for the final paper should be cleared in advance with the instructor. No two students can write on the same topic. List of recommended books will be provided. Please note: final paper is **Due December 7.**

Grading:

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A 100% - 95% A- 94% - 90%
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B + 89%-87 % B 86%-82%

B- 81%-78% C + 75-77%

C 74%-71% C-70-73%

D 67-70% F 66%

Academic Integrity: Students are required to follow rules and regulations of Academic Integrity Code. Please make sure you read it closely and be sure to ask me if you have any questions. The code is available online at:

HTTP://WWW.AMERICAN.EDU/PROVOST/REGISTRAR/REGULATIONS/REG80.CF

Class Sessions

August 31: Introduction to the Course

- **Syllabus:** We will go over the syllabus week by week and review outline of the course structure, readings, and requirements. We will discuss the current state of U.S. –Iran relations and watch interviews regarding JCPOA and Trump administration's policy toward Iran.
- Video The Iran Nuclear Deal Two Years Later

PBS news hour: Trump signals he might pull out of the Iran nuclear deal (July 26,17)http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6WzV6XuAc

• Democracy Now: Is Trump trying to sabotage the nuclear deal? (July 24,17) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iy6316Z4OvD

September 7 Construction of Modern State: Pahlavi Era (1921-1979)

- Kamyar Ghanebassiri,"US Foreign Policy and Persia 1856-1921," <u>Iranian Studies</u> 35 vol. .1/3 (winter-summer 2002):145-175.
- E.Abrahamian , A History of Modern Iran, chap.3
- M.Boroujerdi, "Triumphs and Travails of Authoritarian Modernization in Iran", in S.Cronin (ed.), The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Reza Shah (Routledge, 2003),pp.146-154.
- H.Chehabi, "Staging the Emperor's New Cloths: Dress Codes and Nation –Building under Reza Shah," <u>Iranian Studies</u>, vol.26, nos. 3&4 (Summer/Fall 1993): 209-229.

September 14: Cold War and the US-Iran Alliance

- John Limbert, "The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1945-47", Negotiating with Iran, chapter 2.
- A.Abrahamian , A History of Modern Iran , chap. 4
- Talia Yerogova, "The Iran Crisis of 1945-46: A View from Russian Archives" http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/working%20paper%20%2315.pdf
- US Diplomatic Report December 12,1946
 http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v07/d425

September 21: Regime Change: US and the 1953 Coup

- CIA Confirms Role in 1953 Iran's Coup http://nsarchive.gwu/NSAEBB435/
- Foreign Relations of the United States :Iran 1951-54.

Http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951-54Iran/pg_1

- E.Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran", Sience & Society, vol. 65, issue 2 (Summer 2001):182-215.
- -----, "New Revelations of the U.S.in Iran." Lobelog (July 4,2017) http://lobelog.com/new-revelations-of-the-us-in-iran/
- M.Gasiorowski, "New Details on the 1953 Coup in Iran." Lobelog(July 12,2017) http://lobelog.com/new-details-on-the-1953-coup-in-iran/
- S.Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, chap.12 and Epilogue.

• **Video**: Democracynow.org. Newly Declassified Documents Confiem US backed 1953 Coup in Iran http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBxbyjjoUf1

September 28: From Coup to Revolution

R.Alvandi, "Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: the origins of Iranian primacy in the Persian Gulf' <u>Diplomatic History</u>, 36/2 (April 2012):337-372.

- Amin Saikal," Iran in the US orbit,1953-79," in *Iran at the Crossroads*, pp.26-37.
- Ahmad Ashraf, "From the White Revolution to the Islamic Revolution," in Saeed Rahnama & Sorab Behdad eds., Iran after the Revolution: crisis of an Islamic State.
- Misagh Parsa, "State, Class, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution", <u>Comparative Studies of South Asia</u>, <u>Africa</u>, and the Middle East, vol. 29/no.1(2009):3-17.

David Frost interview with the Shah www.youtube.com/watch?v=KerIO4YXZyM

Declassified-Ayatollah Khomeini http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYt80jfYwPQ

October 5 Politics and Society in Islamic Republic

- Mehrzad Boroujerdi & Rahimkhani, "The Office of the Supreme Leader: Epicenter of a Theocracy," in Brumberg&Farhi eds., *Power and Change in Iran* chapter 4 pp.135-165.
- Wilfried Buchta,"Iran's Security Sector :An Overview
 Working Paper ,no.146(Geneva:DCAF,2004)ev_geneva_04071113_Buchta.pdf.
- Abrahamian, "Why the Islamic Republic has Survived," MERIP vol.39 (Spring 2009)
- Misagh Parsa , Democracy in Iran , chapter 1,pp.1-30.
- Christopher de Bellaigue, "Iran : Still Waiting for Democracy," <u>NY Review of Books</u>, July 13,2017.

October 12: Policy challenges: US and Iran-Iraq War

• Stephen Kinzer, "Thirty five years after Iranian hostage crisis, aftershock remains," Boston Globe, November 4, 2014.

- Nida Alahmad&Arang Keshavarzian, "A War on Multiple Fronts" <u>MERIP</u> vol.40(Winter 2010)
- Joost Hiltermann,"Deep Trauma ,Fresh Ambitions," <u>MERIP</u> vol.40(Winter 2010)
- Ariane Tabatabaie&Annie Tracy Samuel, "What the Iran-Iraq War Tells us about the Future of the Iran Nuclear Deal" <u>International Security</u>, vol.42, issue 1 (Sumer 2017):152-185.
- Kenneth Katzman, "US-Iran Relations and US Policy," <u>Iran :Politics ,Human Rights</u>, and U.S. Policy http://fas.org/sop/crs/mideast/RL3204

October 19: Nuclear Diplomacy part 1

- •Trita Parsi , Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran, and the Triumph of Diplomacy, Chapters. 1-8
- Jessica Mathews, "Nuclear Diplomacy: From Iran to North Korea", <u>NY Review of Books</u>, August 17, 2017.

October 26: Nuclear Diplomacy part 2

- Trita Parsi ,Losing an Enemy ,chapters 9-16
- -----, "For Netanyahu and Saudis opposing diplomacy with Iran was never about enrichment" The Intercept (8/11/207)

http://theintercept.com/2017/08/11/netanyahu-israel-saudi-iran-deal-enrichment/?

November 2: Iran and the Persian Gulf States

- Kayhan Barzegar, & Divsalar, "Political Rationality in Iranian Foreign Policy", Washington Quarterly, vol.40.issue 1 (2017):39-53.
- Gregory Gause, "Ideologies, Alignments and under balancing in the new Middle East Cold War", PS: <u>Political Science&Politics</u>, vol.50, issue 3 (July 2017):672-675.
- Riham Bahi,"Iran, the GCC and the Implication of the Nuclear Deal: Rivalry vs.Engagegment", International <u>Spectator</u>, vol.52, issue 2 (2017):81-101.
- John Bradley, "Unlikely Allies :Israel and the Saudis", <u>Spectator</u>
 http://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/06/unlikely-allies-israel-and-the-saudis/
- Graham Fuller "Dark Signs in the Persian Gulf", Lobe log (August 8,2017) http://lobelog.com/dark-signs-in-the-persian-gulf/#more-40668

November 9: Iran and Regional Conflicts

- Joost Hiltermann, "Syria :The Hidden Power of Iran," <u>NYR Daily</u> (April 13,2017) www.nybook.com/daily/2017/04/13/syria-hidden-power-of-iran/
- -----,"The Houtis are not Hezbollah," <u>Foreign Policy.com/2017/02/27</u>
- Ewan Stein, "Ideological Codependency and Regional Order: Iran, Syria, and the Axis of Refusal", <u>Political Science & Politics</u> (July 2017676-680.
- Milad Jokar,"War in Syria: Geopolitics of the Conflict,"
 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/milad-jokar/war-in-syria-geopolitics-b_2378683.html
- Tim Arango, "Iran Dominates in Iraq after U.S ' handed the country over',

New York Times, (July 15, 2017)

http://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/15/world/middleeast/iran-iraq-iranian-power.html

- Giorgio Cafiero,"Addressing Iranian Influence in Iraq," (8/3/2017)http://lobelog.com/addresing-iranian-influence-in-iraq/
- Dmitri Trenin," Fateful Triangle: how does Russia position itself between Iran and Israel in the middle East," (March 4,2017) http://carnegie-mec-org/diwan/68257

November 16: U.S. Strategy toward Iran

- Monshipour & Dorraj, "U.S.-Iran Relations after the Nuclear Deal,"
 <u>Georgetown Journal of International Affairs(November 2016)</u>
 http://journal.georgetown.edu/u-s-iran-relations-after-the-nuclear-deal/
- Suzanne Maloney ,"Under Trump .U.S. policy on Iran is moving from accommodation to confrontation," Brookings (May 11,2017)
 http://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/05/11/under-trump-u-s-policy-on-iran-is-moving-from-accomodation-to-confrontation/
- Ali Vaez,"Rouhani2.o vs. The hawks in Washington and Tehran,"
 New York Times, (August 4, 2017)
- Paul Pillar,"The Persistence of Falsehoods about the Iran Nuclear agreement,"
 Lobelog.com/
- New York Times Editorial. "Before you Rip up that Iran deal," August 14, 2017 http://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/14/opinion/before-you-rip-up-that-iran-deal.html? r to Trump,"

Robin Wright,"Iran's moderates win election. But it won't matte <u>New Yorker</u>, (May 20, 2017)

Josh Rogin,"The war over the Iran deal," Washington Post, (August 7, 2017)

 Cornelius Adebar, "Trump, the EU, and Iran Policy: multiple pathways ahead," http://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/01/31/trump-eu-and-iran-policy-multiple-pathways-ahead-pub-67836

November 23 Thanksgiving Holiday

November 30: Iran's Sanctions and 'Regime Change'

• Krishnadev Calamur, "The Latest U.S. Sanctions against Iran," <u>The Atlantic</u> (July 18,2017)

http://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2017/07/iran-sanctions/534003/

- Hassan Hakimian, "Iran's Long Economic Journey," <u>Project Syndicate</u> (August 15,2017)http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/iran-rouhani-election-economy-by-hassan-hakimian-2017-05
- Bijan Khajehpour,"The real footprint of the IRGC in Iran's economy,"
 Al-Monitor (August 2017) http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/pt/contents/articles/original/2017/08/iran-irgc-economy-footprint-khatam-olanbia.html
- Ray Takeyh, "It's time to prepare for Iran's political collapse,"
 <u>Washington Post</u> (July 5, 2017) http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/07/05/its-time-to-prepare-for-irans-political-collaps/?utm term =0fb717c90a74
- Raymond Tanter, "Preparing for Regime change,"

http://washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/preparing-for-regime-change-in-iran

- Elizabeth Rubin, "An Iranian Cult and it's American Friends,"
 New York Times (August 13, 2011)
 http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/14/opinion/sunday/an-iranian-cult-and-its-american-friendshtml.
- Seymour Hersh, "Our Man in Iran?" <u>New Yorker</u> (April5,2012)
 http://www.newyorker.com/news-desk/our-man-in-iran

Majid Rafizadeh, "Senior U.S. Senators meet Iran opposition leaders in Albania," <u>Huffington Post</u> (8/12/17) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/senior-us-senators-meet-iranian-opposition-leaders-in us 598f68fae4b063e2ae058020

December 7 Facing the Future: From Conflict to Confrontation

- Jeff Faux, "Why is Iran our Enemy?" The Nation, June 13, 2016.
- Trita Parsi,"the Mask is off:Trump is seeking war with Iran," http://lobelog.com/the-mask-is-off-trump-is-seeking-war-with-iran/
- Michael Axworthy, "Regime Change in Iran would be a Disaster for Everyone," Foreign Policy (July 18,2017)http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/18/regime-change-in-iran-would-be-a-disaster-for-everyone/
- Peter Jenkins, "Provoking Iran into tearing up the 2015 nuclear deal,"(8/2/2017)
 http://lobelog.com/provoking-iran-into-tearing-up-the-2015-nuclear-deal/
- Hossein Mousavian, "Understanding Iranian threat perception," (July 14,2017) Al-Monitor http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/07/iran-threat-perceptions-regime-change-regional-dialogue.html/
- Course Review and Group Discussion
- Final Paper Due

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the event of an emergency , American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and / or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of an emergency ,students should refer to the AU Student Portal , the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university – wide information ,as well as contact their faculty and / or respective dean's office for course and school / college-specific information .