



## **"THE YEMEN QUAGMIRE: GREAT POWER COMPETITION, INTERNAL WARS, AND THE GRAY ZONE"**

### **COURSE FORMAT**

Anticipate approximately 5 hours of work per week for 9 weeks. The format for the first 8 weeks is to read, view, and listen to the assignments then participate in a group discussion. The group discussion should be a constructive back-and-forth exchange of ideas and views, increasing understanding of the topic through a sharing of ideas and posing of questions. Grading of one's participation in the group discussions is entirely subjective. At the conclusion of week 8, the knowledge gained and familiarity with the course content will help you write a 1,200 – 1,500 word assessment paper during week 9.

### **COURSE INTRODUCTION**

Using the case of Yemen as a historical, current, and future security scenario to examine the national security and policy-making challenges the U.S. and its allies face operating and advancing their interests within a complex international security environment dominated by great power competition, gray zone coercion, and internal wars, this elective aims to introduce a

complex problem and inject further creativity and critical thinking into the problem framing and planning process'. Taken separately, the lessons in this course offer lessons learned for counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and foreign intervention in conflicts. On the whole, this course is meant to provide an academic forum for making innovative arguments towards identifying and meeting the challenges posed by revisionist actors competing in what has been described as the gray zone.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Revisionist powers, rogue regimes, and a range of non-state and 'hybrid' actors are competing across all dimensions of power, and have increased efforts short of armed conflict by expanding coercion to new fronts, violating principles of sovereignty, exploiting ambiguity, and deliberately blurring the lines between civil and military goals. Such a security environment is articulated in the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in particular, deteriorating domestic situations, the proliferation of technology and non-state actors, and regional competition have provided opportunities for revisionist actors to pursue such efforts. This elective will examine the multifaceted conflict in Yemen and the internal and external forces that have contributed to the seemingly endless political violence and insecurity, which continues to pose significant challenges to U.S. national security interests. For the final paper, students will identify and analyze a historical or current gray zone challenge, or period of internal war in which regional or international competition is taking place, and provide policy recommendations for meeting the challenges such an environment poses to U.S. national security interests.

### **Lesson 1, Revisionist Powers, Internal Wars, and Gray Zone**

**Coercion**, introduces the Gray Zone concept and provides a theoretical explanation for seemingly perpetual political violence, internal war, and foreign intervention in the Middle East region when compared to other regions.

### **Lesson 2, Ties that Bind and Divide: Elite Competition in Yemen,**

provides background on Yemen's internal dynamics and external forces that have contributed to political violence and internal war in Yemen, with a particular focus on the intersection of domestic elite competition, informal

patronage politics, and a divided tribal society, with the influence of external forces in periods of domestic political violence and internal war (namely the influence of great power competition, revisionist actors, and gray zone coercion on security and stability in Southwest Arabia).

**Lesson 3, Great Power Competition, Political Violence, and Internal War in The Yemens: 1962-1990**, examines political violence and conflict, both within and between, the northern Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and southern Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) during the Cold War period and the impact of great power competition in the region on political stability and security in The Yemens.

**Lesson 4, Unification and Secessionist Movements in Yemen**, examines the unification of the northern YAR and southern PDRY with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War in 1990, the 1994 Civil War in the regional and international context, and the evolution of southern secessionist movements in their aftermath.

**Lesson 5, International Terrorist Organizations and the Yemen "Safe Haven"**, examines the evolution of al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Yemen and assesses the U.S. and international counterterrorism strategies in Yemen.

**Lesson 6, From Insurgents to "Hybrid Actors": Evolution of the Houthi Expansionism in Yemen**, examines the evolution of the Houthi insurgency by first focusing on the broad spectrum of local causes that help to explain the conflict's onset, persistence, and expansion, before then turning to the impact of external forces and foreign intervention in the conflict.

**Lesson 7, Elite Competition, Internal War, Foreign Intervention, and State Failure**, revisits the evolution of "ruling bargains" in Yemen alongside the convergence of a myriad of security, political, and social issues resulting in popular uprisings in 2011, Yemen's failed political transition, and an insurgent coup leading to foreign military intervention in 2015, linking Yemen's multifaceted internal war to broader geopolitical competition and a wider regional cold war.

## **Lesson 8, Warlordism, Revisionist Powers, and the Gray Zone,**

examines Yemen's security sector and civil-military-regime relations amidst elite and geopolitical competition amongst revisionist actors and reviews the mixed results of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and broader security strategies that have been pursued in Yemen by a host of domestic, regional, and extra-regional actors (including such strategies as by, with, and through; train, advise, and assist; and building partner capacity), and their effectiveness in meeting the challenges posed by the types and levels of competition taking place in Yemen, and more broadly in the gray zone.

### **ASSESSMENTS**

Learners will be evaluated through two types of assessment activities: 60 points for discussion contribution and 40 points for the essay final examination. There are a total of 100 points. A mastery score of 80 points for the entire course is required to pass.

### **FACULTY BIO**

Adam C. Seitz is a research assistant professor for Middle East Studies at the Marine Corps University (MCU) Brute Krulak Center, where his research focuses on the civil-military relations, the security sector, the role of armed non-state actors, and conflict studies in Yemen and Iran, and the Red Sea and Gulf regions. Previously, Mr. Seitz was a research associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy. Mr. Seitz also served in the U.S. Army as an Intelligence Analyst and is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mr. Seitz earned his B.A. in International Affairs from the University of Colorado at Boulder and his M.A. in International Relations and Conflict Resolution from American Military University. His publications include *Iranian Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Birth of a Regional Nuclear Arms Race?* (Praeger Security International, 2009), co-authored with Dr. Anthony Cordesman, "Ties That Bind and Divide: The 'Arab Spring' and Yemeni Civil-Military Relations" in *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition* (Saqi Books, 2014), "Patronage Politics in Transition: Political and Economic Interests of the Yemeni Armed Forces" in *Businessmen in Arms: How the Military and Other Armed Groups Profit in the MENA Region* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), and "The Tribal-Military-Commercial Complex and the Challenges to Security Sector Reform in Yemen" in *Addressing Security*

*Sector Reform in Yemen: Challenges and Opportunities for Intervention during and post-Conflict (CARPO, 2017).*

