

September Meeting Summary
What should the US do about Syria?

Larry Goodson
scribed by Brett Rudder

Dr. Goodson began his presentation by outlining the US Foreign Policy and National Security Policy. One of the key notes he mentioned was that the US had to make sure they balanced US Values with US Interests. The interests noted were ensuring US security and economic prosperity, while the values were respecting universal values and leading a peaceful and cooperative world order.

Along with these interests and values, Dr. Goodson presented the group with President Obama's six *core* interests, or interests *within* the general United States interests listed above. These specific interests consist of the halting of terrorism, the elimination of nuclear weapons, enabling the free flow of commerce, the security of all regions, and also the specific security of Israel.

All of the policy noted above was in place prior to the Syrian conflict. Once news of the violence in Syria reached the US, President Obama made an initial statement wanting to in essence "oppose the Syrian government's treatment of Syrians" which, as Dr. Goodson pointed out, implied no action. However, on September 7th, 2013, President Obama changed pace stating that Syria was a "threat to national security" – meaning that Syria now threatened one of the United States' interests.

With the basic outline of policy presented, Dr. Goodson moved on to discuss Syria itself. Ruled by Ba'athist dictators since the 1970s and currently under the Assad regime, Syria has limited economic development, has been engaged in civil war since 2011 killing any income from tourism, and has essentially now cut itself off from the surrounding world.

So the question must be asked – what should the US do about Syria? The Arab League and the UN have basically failed in solving the issue, and the US is left to make a decision. With the incredible mix of organizations for and against both sides of the war (including the pro-government Hezbollah and the anti-government Islamic Front), the US cannot legally aid one side or the other without partially aiding a violent terrorist organization. However, without action, the US leaves alone what President Obama has labeled a 'threat to national security'.

Dr. Goodson concluded his presentation with a few good and possibly bad suggestions, and then a rather dim outlook. As he stated, the United States can maintain and use relations with Syrian's neighbors, which could have a

negative or perhaps zero effect, utilize humanitarian assistance which in the case of Syria may be too late, or use violence in support of one of the sides. There are no clear or easy answers to solve the Syrian conflict.

2013-2014 Program Topics / Schedule

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| October 24 | Working for Gender Equity in Afghanistan |
| November 12 | 37 th Annual International Reception at U.S. Army War College |
| December 12 | Afghanistan – 2014 and Beyond |
| January 23 | The Future of the Transatlantic Relationship from a European Perspective |
| February 27 | Korea – Will It Explode or Implode? |
| March 27 | The Role of National Intelligence in the 21 st Century |
| April 24 | The International Drug War and Implications for Foreign Policy |
| May 15 | Post Castro Cuba |

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