OUTLINING A COURSE ON COMPETITIVE SHAPING

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Assuming a 12-week course for advanced undergraduates and graduates, a competitive shaping course ought to focus on something resembling the following narrative. State, non-state, and quasi-state actors compete frequently in world politics. The method of competition may operate directly on the behavior of an opponent or indirectly to change the structure of the environment that influences the opponent's decision-making. The former has been well-covered in traditional theories of world politics and national security, the latter is generally not. This course focuses on the latter, lesser-included methods. Generalized questions the course asks are as follows:

1. What role does guile vs. strength play in world politics?
2. How can integrated and competitive minded strategies of the state accomplish actors' political objectives?
3. How do non-state and quasi-state actors utilize integrated strategies?
4. How should competitions be assessed?
5. What are the various theories and approaches to competitive shaping; how do they differ; and what are their advantages and disadvantages?
6. When does competitive shaping work, and when does it not?
7. How do different types of regimes vary in their usage of competitive shaping?
8. What kind of broader patterns emerge from a study of competitive shaping?
9. How does use of competitive shaping interface with other means of power?

The composition of the survey course is up to the discretion of the instructor, but it is recommended that a balance be made between the following thematic topics:

- Competition in politics (domestic, international, and world politics)
- Competitive theories, approaches, and perspectives
- Instruments, tools, and techniques on subnational, national, international, and cross-national levels
- Particular componential elements that must be considered
- Historical, comparative, and contemporary cases
Whenever possible, students should be encouraged to select past cases for review and assessment. Student grades will be assessed by how well they identify the structure of the competition, discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and asymmetries between competitors, and analyze the nature, effects, and relationships of competitor strategies and tactics.

Students should also select current cases and present their assessment of U.S. and/or competitor opportunities, interactions, and strategies. If possible, exercises and simulations of competitive dynamics could also be employed within the classroom utilizing the model of a policy game/simulation, though it is not strictly necessary. A possible exercise could be student actors picking a target to support or counter, identify opportunities, strategy, required capabilities to achieve objectives, and assess conditions for success.

As befitting the eclectic nature of the material, instructors have a wide range of options for use in teaching. They will obviously gear the course toward their particular interests and areas of expertise. It is recommended, however, that readings balance the varying permutations of competition as described in this paper, including not only state and military/intelligence organizations, but also business, social movements, interest groups, and other similar competitors.

A proposed 12-week course syllabus is offered on the following pages.
Week 1—Power and Competition


Week 2—Deception, Guile, and Indirect Strategies


Week 3—Competitive Strategies

Week 4—Soft Power, Smart Power, and their Critics


Week 5—Political Warfare and Political Action


Week 6—Information Operations, Warfare, and Propaganda

- Richard I. Aldrich, “Putting Culture into the Cold War: The Cultural Relations Department (CRD) and British Covert Information Warfare,” *Intelligence & National Security* 18, No. 2 (Summer 2003), 109-133.
- Jonathan Reed Winkler, “Information Warfare in World War I,” *Journal of Military History* 73, No. 3 (July 2009), 845-867.
Week 7—Tools of Competitive Shaping

- Nadia Schadlow, *Organizing to compete in the political terrain* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010).

Week 8—The Contemporary Security Environment


Week 9—Historical Case Study: The US and the Early Cold War


### Week 10—Case Study: Russia

- Emilio J. Iasiello, “Russia's Improved Information Operations: From Georgia to Crimea,” *Parameters* 47, No. 2 (Summer 2017), 51-63.

### Week 11—Case Study: China

- Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, *The People's Liberation Army's General Political Department, Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics*, Project 2049 Institute, September 14, 2013.
Week 12—Case Study: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State

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