**9-30 Speaker Presentation Summaries**

**Bijan Khajehpour**

“The Impacts of Internal and External Tensions on the Iranian Economy”

Iran’s economic and political developments are closely interrelated. The country’s economic performance is continuously affected by external parameters (such as sanctions and the international oil price) as well as internal processes such as subsidy reforms, economic mismanagement and inappropriate trade policies. Khajehpour’s presentation will identify these interrelationships and discuss the country’s current economic situation as well as its prospects in light of internal and external tensions.

**Shaul Bakhash**

“The Security State and its Fractured Elites”

Since the contested 2009 presidential elections, Iran's Revolutionary Guards and security agencies have tightened their hold on Iranian society. The definition of acceptable political ideas and approaches to the issues facing the country has grown more constricted, even among the ruling elite. Yet this increasingly narrow government elite is itself divided and fractured, and focused on ideological rather than practical solutions to the country's problems.

**Roberto Toscano**

"Education in Iran: National Pride, Regime Prejudice"

The Iranian regime, as all totalitarian/authoritarian regimes, sees education in terms of ideological control and indoctrination, but at the same time needs to maintain the high standards that have traditionally made Iran an educationally advanced country, as well as a country where culture is highly considered. To address this contradiction, the regime tries, periodically, to establish an artificial distinction between technical and scientific subjects on one hand (promoted) and the humanities (which it hopes to control and curtail). But it will fail once more, just as it did in the past.

**Rouzbeh Parsi**

“That Other Track, That Other Partner: The EU and Iran”

The EU and Iran have maintained a relationship despite numerous instances and periods of near total shut down. To some degree this relationship exists in its own right, but it is also the function of the EU's transatlantic relationship and philosophy and Iran's symmetrical lack of the same. Thus many hopes are pinned on the EU and Iran being able to engage with one another in ways Iran cannot with the United States - yet the very reason everyone turns to the EU to make up for the void of the United States is also the reason why it is unlikely that the EU would be able or willing to act independently enough to jolt its relationship with Iran out of the status quo. This picture becomes more complicated and interesting when looking at individual Member States.

**Afshin Molavi**

“Iran and the Persian Gulf States: From Conflict to Détente to Conflict Again?”

For nearly twenty years after the 1979 revolution, Iran’s relations with its Persian Gulf neighbors – many of whom offered financing and support to Iraq during the brutal 1980-88 war with Iran -- have been tense and fraught with conflict, though the severity of tensions ebbed and flowed and relations with individual countries differed. For example, Oman and Iran generally maintained cordial ties and the emirate of Dubai – a major trade partner -- tends to view Iran commercially rather than geo-politically. During the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), a détente emerged between Iran and the GCC states, most notably with regional heavyweight, Saudi Arabia, that altered the conflict-prone environment. That détente has been deteriorating in the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-present) and in the wake of the 2003 Iraq war, and has escalated into a severe war of words today over the crisis in Bahrain and differing outlooks on “the Arab Spring.” Molavi will explore the key drivers of this current round of tensions and place it into a regional geo-political and geo-economic context

**Michael Adler**

“Stubborn Nuclear Program, Stubborn Foreign Policy: Iran's Face-Off with the United States”

Iran has managed to persevere against intense international opposition to develop its nuclear program. Indeed, Iran's alleged drive to develop nuclear weapons can be seen as a metaphor for the Islamic Republic's foreign policy -- a weak state's stubborn use of threat to maximize its ability to project power. Iran has many levers to pull -- from Hezbollah to atoms -- in its ongoing campaign to confound the United States and its allies and to advance its interests. The current wave of change in the Arab world, especially in Syria, may force Iran to change tactics but the Islamic Republic will not waver in its policy.