



With a broad focus on International Studies but a closer focus on the Middle East, Josef Korbel School student Roy Baran plans on creating change

MA International Studies, Josef Korbel School of International Studies
BA Communications, University of Texas, San Antonio

Tell us a bit about yourself:

I am half-Indian, half-Syrian, and was born in Dubai, UAE. I moved to this country at a very young age and grew up mostly in South Texas. I grew up with an international view on all issues, and as an undergraduate I studied International and Intercultural Communication. I'm in the second year of my Master's degree, in the [International Studies program](#), with a [regional concentration in the Middle East](#). I love to travel and go back to the Middle East and India whenever I can, the most recent time being this past summer.

What brought you to the Josef Korbel School?

The combination of theoretical and practical really drew me to the school. Its reputation for academic excellence and some of its well-known graduates also played a part.

Tell me about some of the classes you've enjoyed at the Josef Korbel School.

U.S. Foreign Policy with Professor Brent Talbot, Modern Islamic Political thought and Great Books of the Middle East with [Professor Nader Hashemi](#) were three influential classes. I know I've said it previously but what I really liked about Hashemi's classes was the mix of theoretical and practical applications – both the real-world and the “head in the clouds” kinda stuff. The depth of material was excellent and Hashemi exposed me to writers with whom I was unfamiliar and I really learned how influential they were to the region and how the influence politics up until today.

Why did you choose International Studies?

Originally I was drawn to the International Security program but I liked the way the IS degree lets allows for more customization of the degree in-line with my interests which are Middle East and South Asian politics.

What do you enjoy about life in Denver?

Surprisingly I like the cold winters, which we don't have in San Antonio. I like the plethora of outdoor activities which are available to me. Denver is a great place to live. I like that it's a very active city – everyone's out doing things all the time, people are in shape.

You're currently participating in the Josef Korbel School in D.C .program. Please tell me a bit about your impressions of the program?

The [program](#) has been great. It combines a different set of voices from the Syracuse professors along with real-world experience in the D.C. environment which is where most people in my world are professionally employed. I really like living in D.C., I like my walk to and from work, I like the house I live in and I like my roommates – who are other Korbel students doing interesting things as well.

What classes are you enjoying in the Josef Korbel School in D.C. program?

Security and Development Policy. It's taught by two professionals with Ph.D.s who are well-versed in their field. One ran the USAID program in Haiti and the other is high-ranking official in IOM (International Organization of Migration) who ran relief efforts in Sudan. So we really have so much practical experience embodied in the professors in that class – I really like it and it has changed my perspective on so much.

Tell me a bit about your internship in D.C.

I work at the South Asia Center in the Atlantic Council. It's a think-tank that does research and presents ideas to the government and the great policy community in DC and beyond on security and development issues in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Iran. We have a two-year Iran project currently being headed by former Senator Chuck Hagel. Upon completion we will present the U.S. government with options on dealing with Iran and hopefully the goal is to send a fact-finding team to Tehran to try and forge ties between the two states.

What is your opinion on how the U.S. should approach the situation, specifically the issue of nuclearization, with Iran?

The U.S. should try and build a dialogue process with Iran, directly and indirectly, and it should involve the international community. The U.S. can't attempt to enforce sanctions on a state with which it has no ties – it doesn't make sense.

During the summer of 2010 you participated in an academically-oriented trip to Beirut. Can you tell me a bit about that experience?

It was recommended to me by Professor Hashemi and is run through Mideast Wire. I consider it one of the most rewarding academic experiences of my life. We were able to meet with virtually every high-ranking Lebanese politician in the country including representatives from all Lebanese factions represented in the government. I was also able to tag a trip on the end to Dubai, which I really enjoyed.

Is Lebanon an interest of yours?

It is. Lebanon is one of the most relevant countries in the Middle East today and holds the potential for conflict in the very near future.

Where do you see yourself in the future?

I'd like to work at a think-tank or in a government/multinational organization. I'm interested in shaping policy towards the Middle East and South Asia. I think too many people currently involved in the policy creation process don't have enough cultural and relevant knowledge to the area and that's something I've really tried to incorporate in my MA process.

Thanks Roy.

**-Shane Hensinger, MA candidate in International Security
Josef Korbel School of International Studies**