

THE SCHOOL FOR  
**Conflict Analysis & Resolution**  
Commonwealth Center for Excellence

**US-Iran Conflict: Beyond current the discourse**

Given the renewed focus on US-Iran relations in recent months, it is critical to understand the challenges the Iranian regime poses to principles of human rights, gender equality and secular democratic movements in the region. Scholars and practitioners will come together to examine the US-Iran relations and explore the importance of including human rights and women's rights as an imperative tactic during current negotiations with Iran.

Speakers will engage in roundtable discussions on how Washington continues to overlook other policy options by limiting its talks with Tehran to nuclear issue, while calling on students and faculty to embark on an academic inquiry in enhancing the current discourse.

**Keynote speaker: Dr. Walid Phares**

Author, Expert and Scholar on Middle East studies, anti-terrorism and comparative politics. Adviser to the Anti-Terrorism Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives and a co-secretary general of the Transatlantic Euro-American Caucus Legislative Group on Counter Terrorism

Roundtable:

- Dr. Donna Hughes, Eleanor M. and Oscar M. Carlson Endowed Chair in Women's Studies at the University of Rhode Island and leading international researcher on trafficking of women and children.
- Dr. Ivan Sascha Sheehan, Director of Negotiations and Conflict Management Graduate Program at University of Baltimore
- Dr. Ramesh Sepehrrad, Scholar and practitioner from School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University

Date: Saturday November 23, 2013

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution

George Mason University

5183 Metropolitan Building, Arlington Campus

**Online registration for the event:**

*Lunch will be served.*

*The Virginia Square Metro stop is only 2 short blocks to the GMU Arlington camp*

## **Welcome message by the Dean of School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution**

**11:00-11:15 a.m.**

**11:15 a.m. - 12 noon**

**Keynote speaker: Dr. Walid Phares**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Meet the Scholars Lunch:**

**Noon to 1:00**

\*\*\*\*\*

**1- 1:30 p.m.**

**Topic:** Analysis of US-Iran conflict and path forward for resolution

***Dr. Ramesh Sepehrrad***

**Synopsis:** The US-Iran conflict is characterized by the prolonged and often hostile posturing where recognition, security, and acceptance have been at the core of the conflict for Iran since the inception of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the last two decades, the nuclear issue has profoundly influenced the US-Iran conflict. The IRI continues to press for international recognition of “rights to enrichment” while refusing to accept the Additional Protocol that allows the IAEA to verify Iran will not be using its nuclear programs for nuclear-weapons purposes. The IRI also continues to view international sanctions as threat to its security, goals to achieve and be accepted as the regional hegemon. This paper argues, by looking at the conflict beyond the nuclear dispute, and including issues such as the human rights situation and Iran’s regional ambitions, the United States can broaden its policy options to reach a more sustainable path for resolution.

\*\*\*\*\*

**1:30-2:00 p.m.**

**Topic:** Should the rights and status of women in a country be considered in formulating foreign policy?

***Dr. Donna Hughes***

**Synopsis:** In formulating foreign policy and relations between states, the rights and status of women are usually given a very low priority, if considered at all. Although women make up approximately 50 percent of the population of a country, their experiences are not considered to be politically relevant. Their lives are relegated to the private sphere, culture and traditional practices. In Iran, since 1979, many international agencies have reported on the discrimination against women as central to the Iranian theocracy’s political and religious ideology, yet discussion of their status never gets beyond the non-governmental organization level. Indeed, most people would consider women’s rights in Iran as far removed from the issue of nuclear weapons containment. This discussion will focus on the question of whether women’s rights should be a factor in determining foreign policy. It will include a discussion of the ideas put forth by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi in a 1996 speech in London on the need to include women’s rights and leadership in foreign policy to form a worldwide front against Islamic fundamentalism.

\*\*\*\*\*

**2:00- 2:30 p.m.**

**Topic:** Conflict Management in the Iranian Context: Engagement vs. Democratic Change from Within

***Dr. Ivan Sascha Sheehan***

**Synopsis:** Washington policymakers concerned with the Iranian regime's human rights violations, proxy violence, and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction are frequently presented with a false dichotomy of prolonged negotiations and tactical military strikes. Such framing treats the Iranian regime as a fixture of the Middle East landscape and forecloses any potential for democratic change from within. This discussion will challenge conventional assumptions about conflict management in the Iranian context by exploring the unintended consequences of the U.S. policy of engagement as well as the military option. The discussion will also explore the prospect of regime change from within via the organized Iranian opposition

***2:30- 3:00 p.m.***

***Presentation by Sara Hassani***

***Graduate Student, University of Ottawa: Research Challenges & Academic Biases***

***3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.***

***Roundtable with all speakers***