



**DEAKIN**  
UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

# IRAN IN THE WORLD

Old challenges and new opportunities in the  
changing Middle East | 9-10 October 2014



**9th October 8:30am - 5:00pm**  
**10th October 8:30am - 4:00pm**

Deakin University Melbourne City Centre  
3rd Floor, Deloitte Building,  
550 Bourke Street  
Melbourne

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## Welcome from the Chair

Dear colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 'Iran in the World' conference, hosted by the Middle East Studies Forum at the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University.

The Middle East has undergone significant change in the past two decades, with a number of new challenges emerging. Iran, as a key player in the Middle East, has not been shielded from these changes. Indeed, the toppling of the Taliban in Afghanistan brought US troops onto Iran's doorstep, the Arab revolutions have undermined Iran's ally in Syria, and the growing sectarian tension between Sunni and Shia communities has presented difficult questions for Iranian policy makers. All of this has taken place against a new international setting, where Iran is now seeking relief from sanctions and a resolution to the disagreement over its nuclear program.

Given the complexity of these challenges, it is important to explore the road ahead. What options are open to the government of President Hassan Rouhani? How is Iran planning to address these challenges? There are many questions that have gone unanswered.

This conference brings together scholars and diplomats from around the world to discuss the future of Iran. Over two days, we will hear insights from leading Iran researchers, including guests from the Institute for Political and International Studies in Tehran, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' think-tank. Delegates will interrogate the very foundations of Iran's foreign policy and international behaviour, so that we can build a fuller picture of what President Rouhani's election really means for Iran.

On behalf of the organising committee, I would like to thank all delegates for attending the conference, and hope that you will find the discussions thought-provoking. For the many conference attendees that have travelled from interstate or overseas, we also hope that you enjoy your stay in Melbourne and have a safe journey home.



Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh  
Chair, Organising Committee

## Conference Proceedings

### Day 1 - Thursday 9th October

**8:30am – 9:00am**

Conference registration and welcome coffee

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**9:00am – 9:30am**

Welcome addresses

Welcome address

*Professor Fethi Mansouri*

*Director, Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation & UNESCO Chair, Cultural Diversity and Social Justice.*

Formal opening of the conference

*Professor Brenda Cherednichenko*

*Pro-Vice Chancellor of Arts and Education.*

Introduction to the topic

*Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh*

*Conference Chair and Deputy Director of the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation.*

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**9:30am – 11:00am**

Setting the stage: President Rouhani's foreign policy

**Chair:** *Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, Deakin University.*

'What are President Rouhani's foreign policy objectives?'

*Dr. Mostafa Zahrani*

*Institute for Political and International Studies, Iran.*

'Iran and the changing regional strategic environment'

*Professor Amin Saikal*

*Australian National University.*

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**11:00am – 11:30am**

Morning Tea

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**11:30am – 1:00pm**

The changing landscape of Iranian foreign policy

*Chair: Dr. James Barry, Deakin University.*

*'Ahmadinejad's legacy'*

*Dr. Luciano Zaccara*

*Qatar University & Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar.*

*'From Idealism to Pragmatism: The changing faces of Iran's foreign policy'*

*Professor Liyakat Takim*

*McMaster University, Canada.*

*'How "foreign" is the Kurdish issue in Iranian foreign policy?'*

*Dr. Costas Laoutides*

*Deakin University.*

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**1:00pm – 2:00pm**

Lunch

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**2:00pm – 3:30pm**

## Justice, diplomacy and the US in Iran's foreign policy

*Chair: Dr. Naser Ghobadzadeh, Australian Catholic University.*

'Iran's US foreign policy from the Khatami administration to the Rouhani presidency'

*Morgane Colleau*

*University of Exeter, UK & Soran University, Kurdistan Region - Iraq.*

'Analysing Iranian revolutionary diplomacy in transition'

*Firouzeh Khoshnoudiparast*

*Australian National University.*

'Discourse analysis: Justice and Iran's identity'

*Mahdokht Zakeri*

*Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus.*

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**3:30pm – 4:00pm**

Afternoon tea

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**4:00pm – 5:00pm**

## Panel - Suffering from Sanctions: the impact on Iranian civil society

*Chair: Dr. Costas Laoutides, Deakin University*

'Misdirected Punishment – Sanctions and the Vulnerable'

*Professor Linda Briskman*

*Swinburne University of Technology*

'Penalties on Progress – Sanctions and the Arts'

*Dr Omid Tofghian*

*University of Sydney*

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## Day 2 - Friday 10th October

**8:30am – 9:00am**

Welcome coffee

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**9:00am – 10:30am**

Iran and its neighbours

*Chair: Dara Conduit, Deakin University.*

‘Iran’s position on Syria and the escalating sectarian divide in the Middle East’

*Alireza Miryousefi Aval*

*Institute for Political and International Studies, Iran.*

‘Mesopotamian nexus – Iran, Turkey, the Kurds and the West’

*William Gourlay*

*Monash University.*

‘Iran’s relationship with Hezbollah, Shi’a militia groups and Hamas in the Rouhani era’

*Dr. Rodger Shanahan*

*Australian National University/Lowy Institute.*

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**10:30am – 11:00am**

Morning tea

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**11:00am – 12:30pm**

## Foreign policy regionalism in Iran

***Chair:** Professor Amin Saikal, Australian National University.*

*‘Theology and geopolitics: Iran’s rivalry with Wahhabism’*

*Dr. Naser Ghobadzadeh*

*Australian Catholic University.*

*‘Exploring Iran’s soft power capability: Bonyads as determinants and vehicles of foreign policy and regional influence’*

*William Bullock Jenkins*

*Australian National University.*

*‘The UAE and Iran: The different layers of a complex security issue’*

*Associate Professor William Guéraiche*

*American University in the Emirates, UAE.*

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**12:30pm – 1:30pm**

Lunch

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**1:30pm – 3:00pm**

## Central Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States

*Chair: William Jenkins, Australian National University*

‘How does Iran view Central Asia and Afghanistan’s future?’

*Ziba Farzinnia*

*Institute for Political and International Studies, Iran.*

‘Iran’s changing relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan’

*Dr. James Barry*

*Deakin University.*

‘Iran media interference in Afghanistan and Iraq’

*Jacky Sutton*

*Australian National University.*

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**3:00pm – 3:05pm**

## Closing remarks

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh

*Conference Chair and Deputy Director of the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University*

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**3:05pm – 4:00pm**

## Closing coffee and Afternoon Tea

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## Abstracts and biographies

### Dr. James Barry

*Associate Research Fellow at the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. Dr. Barry was awarded a Ph.D (anthropology) from Monash University in 2013 for his dissertation on cross generation identity among the religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. He is currently involved in research on the role of Islam in Iranian foreign policy making, alongside a project on decision-making among Iranian and Afghan migrants in Indonesia.*

#### Iran's changing relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan

Iranian policymakers are working to deal with many challenges, including the unstable relations that exist between their neighbours, Armenia and Azerbaijan. This has continued under the newly elected President, Hassan Rouhani. When President Aliyev of Azerbaijan travelled to Iran in April 2014, Rouhani stated that Iran wished to be a balanced mediator, seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict with no change of borders in Azerbaijan's conflict with Armenia over the Karabagh region. While Azerbaijani officials thanked the Iranian leader for what they saw as recognition of their territorial integrity, the Armenian press interpreted the statement very differently. For them, President Rouhani was calling for Azerbaijan to recognise the geographic reality of Armenia's occupation. This gesture, and the differing interpretations, demonstrate the care given to diplomatic language by Iranian officials when dealing with volatile neighbours.

Over the past 20 years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly offered to mediate between Armenia and Azerbaijan. During the Karabagh War in the 1990s, the Armenian army occupied approximately 20% of Azerbaijan's territory and despite a ceasefire in 1994, the two countries remain officially at war. While successive Iranian administrations have fashioned themselves as unbiased arbitrators, they are frequently accused by Azerbaijan of siding with Armenia. This paper looks at the reasons why the Islamic Republic of Iran has favoured Christian Armenia over (Shi'a) Muslim Azerbaijan, before looking specifically at how President Rouhani has tried to reset relations with Azerbaijan while maintaining a close relationship with Armenia. This paper addresses the question: to what extent can Iran's pragmatism be explained by the official ideology of the Islamic Republic?

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## Professor Linda Briskman

*Professor of Human Rights at the Swinburne Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University of Technology. She previously held the Dr Haruhisa Handa Chair of Human Rights at Curtin University.*

### Misdirected Punishment – Sanctions and the Vulnerable

This paper examines the impact of sanctions on refugees. It first discusses the lack of infrastructure and supplies available for Afghan refugees within Iran and the difficulties they, and the relevant Iranian aid agencies, encounter as a consequence of sanctions. By first focusing on Afghan refugees in Iran, this paper explores the different dimensions of the plight of Hazara Afghans and the nature of international complicity and responsibility.

Then, by addressing the issue of Iranian migration to the west this paper contributes to the scholarship and debates regarding migration by analyzing the loss of homegrown academic/scientific research and the situation concerning economic stability within civil society. It explains how sanctions create hardship for Iranian citizens, contributing to a ‘brain drain’ exodus to western countries.

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## Morgane Colleau

*Ph.D Candidate at the University of Exeter and Lecturer in Political Geography at Soran University, Kurdistan Region - Iraq. Ms. Colleau’s research focuses on Iran’s foreign policy during the Ahmadinejad presidency. Morgane has published several pieces in Ethnopolitics, was the managing editor of a publication for the United Nations Association of the UK, and worked as an Associate Research Fellow for the UK Economic and Social Research Council.*

Iran’s US foreign policy from the Khatami administration to the Rouhani presidency: patterns of continuities, sources of opportunities and outstanding challenges

This paper focuses on Iran’s foreign policy towards the United States from the Khatami administration to the Rouhani presidency. In combining a constructivist approach with perspectives and methods drawn from the field of Foreign Policy Analysis, this paper makes two main contributions.

First, it argues that Iran's US foreign policy is characterised by significant continuity. On the one hand, these relate to Iran's reproduction of institutionalised images and practices of enmity towards the US, and to the significant deficits of trust and understanding between the two states since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. As such, enemy images and threat perceptions, more than balance of power considerations, have defined the dynamics of the US-Iran conflict in general, and Iran's US policy in particular. On the other hand, and quite paradoxically, Iran has repeatedly demonstrated an interest in reaching out to the world's superpower on issues of mutual interests. Analysts and policy-makers have taken little notice of these gestures focusing, instead, on the aforementioned pattern of continuity in Iran's US foreign policy. This paper argues that such attempts are critical: not only are they revealing of the Supreme Leader's willingness to mend ties with the US, but they also shed light on the conditions under which such a transformation of their relations could occur.

Second, this paper analyses, more specifically, the key internal and external factors that have underlined Iran's interest in pursuing forward-leaning policies of engagement with the US. It identifies several changing power dynamics within the Iranian political spectrum as well as significant geopolitical developments which are likely to act as long-term push or pull factors on Iranian foreign policy formulation; thus limiting the Rouhani administration's room to manoeuvre. This paper concludes that a transformation of the culture of anarchy between Iran and the US in the form of a less security-oriented relationship would enable Iran to re-negotiate its national identity narratives and its *raison d'être*, and to further anchor itself as an independent, constructive, and legitimate regional actor.

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## Ziba Farzinnia

*Director of the East Asia Studies Group at the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Iran. Ms. Farzinnia is the former-Managing Editor of the IPIS Foreign Policy Journal, and was the Deputy Director General of IPIS from 2009 until 2012.*

How does Iran see the future of Afghanistan and Central Asia? Are cultural and historical links between Iran and Central Asia more important than regional Realpolitik?

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian States have set into motion intense systemic changes in Iran's geo-political environment. These changes have increased Iran's geo-political significance. Growing U.S. unilateralism and the post 9/11 War on Terrorism and concentration of U.S. military forces along Iran's borders have enhanced changes in Iran's security environment.

The paper attempts to explore the basic features of this security environment and examines Iran's relations with Afghanistan and the Central Asia states. These evolving relations are seen as a catalyst for the analyses of the structural features of the regional security complex and role of global power in this region, and help to demonstrate how Iran sees the future of Afghanistan and Central Asia.

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## Dr. Naser Ghobadzadeh

*Research Fellow at the Australian Catholic University. Dr. Ghobadzadeh was the Editor-in-Chief of the foreign policy department at the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA), a Communication Officer with the UNDP and the chief of UNICEF's Information Resource Centre based in Tehran.*

### Theology and geopolitics: Iran's rivalry with Wahhabism

The current sectarian conflict in Middle East is rooted not only in the theological divide, but is also fuelled by the ideological doctrines of Shiism and Wahhabism. More importantly, this theological-ideological battle has been fuelled by a power struggle between two regional powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia. This paper suggests that for decades, sectarian rivalry was eclipsed by a shared resolve to fight external enemies (the USSR, Israel, and the USA). During this period, Shiism and Wahhabism competed over the level of challenge that they could impose on their external foes, a situation which lasted until approximately a decade ago. However, a Shiite revival, particularly after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, threatened this regional balance of power. The emergence of the Shia intimidated Wahhabis, many of whom termed the former "the near and dangerous enemy". Within these circumstances, the Arab uprising in Syria became enmeshed in a web of Iran-Saudi rivalry, providing a battleground for the Wahhabis and Shiites to shift their competition from a war footing to blatant confrontation.

The Assad-Iran alliance was by no means stimulated by sectarian causes. The secular Baath regime in Syria never subscribed to Iran's Shiite cause, and at no time did Iran's Ayatollahs consider Assad to be a religious partner. However, Iran's tenacious insistence on engaging in the Syrian crisis was interpreted by the Sunni world as based on both sectarian motivations and geopolitical strategy. Thus, one may argue that the conjunction of geopolitical and theological-ideological ambitions of the regional powers has been a major factor in Syria's apocalyptic disaster. This emphasises the necessity for rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia as the leading powers in this radicalised geopolitical and ideological contest.

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## William Gourlay

*Ph.D candidate at Monash University. His doctoral research focuses on notions of ethnicity and citizenship amongst the Kurds of modern Turkey. He has written on Turkish, Iranian and Kurdish politics for a range of publications including openDemocracy, The Conversation and Eureka Street.*

### Mesopotamian nexus: Iran, Turkey, the Kurds and the West

As middle-power non-Arab states in the Middle East, Iran and Turkey remain rivals for influence, and yet also share common interests. After following divergent political trajectories since the Islamic Revolution, the two countries have formed closer links in recent years as Turkey has looked to forge stronger relations with its immediate neighbours.

Both Iran and Turkey, mindful of their Kurdish minorities, have long harboured concerns about the intentions of the Kurds in Iraq. Spiralling events in Iraq have had further serious implications for both countries. Neither Iran nor Turkey welcomes the establishment of the so-called Islamic State (IS) on their borders. The threat from IS may impel Iran to work more closely with Turkey, or indeed with the West, an opportunity heightened for Iran by deteriorating relations between Ankara and western governments. Meanwhile, Iranian concerns at increasing Turkish influence amongst the Iraqi Kurds and at the prospect of a free-standing Kurdistan create significant challenges for policy makers in Tehran.

This paper will examine scenarios that arise for Iran's policy makers as regards collaboration and competition with Turkey, while also analysing the implications for Iran of shifting dynamics as a Kurdish state becomes an increasingly likely possibility.

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## Associate Professor William Guéraiche

*Chair of International Relations at the American University in the Emirates (Dubai). For several years, he has been working in Geopolitics, particularly the Geopolitics of the Middle East and Asia. He has written five books – the last one on the Geopolitics of Dubai and the UAE – and more than forty articles in French and in English.*

The UAE and Iran, the different layers of a complex security issue

On the surface, the UAE federation works alongside the US and the Saudi Arabia to ostracise Iran. The invasion of three Emirati islands before independence remains a bone of contention between the Iran and the United Arab Emirates. But Dubai is not like other Arab cities, and multiple exchanges between the two rims of the Gulf have created a special relationship between Dubai and Iran. The ajami (Iranians and Emiratis of Iranian origin) community in Dubai has kept the dialogue between Iran and the UAE alive. These personal relations enabled Dubai - until the last set of the UN/US sanctions in June 2009 – to be the main gateway to the Islamic republic. Although these sanctions have now hindered trade, commercial relations have not yet declined. In addition, this original partnership with Iran gives the federal government an option to work directly with Tehran to define an original stance on certain subjects, including the nuclear issue. This has meant that Abu Dhabi and the federal government have not taken a 180 degree turn in its relations with Tehran since 2009. While becoming more in line with the US requirements, they have retained a certain degree of unabashed flexibility on Iranian affairs.

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## William Bullock Jenkins

*Researcher on Iranian soft power, political economy, and foreign policy at the ANU Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies and School of International, Political, and Strategic Studies. He is also educational developer for ANU's Arabic and Persian Languages Online Project and has worked at the Australia-Arab Chamber of Commerce and Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade.*



## Exploring Iran's soft power capability: Bonyads as determinants and vehicles of foreign policy and regional influence

This paper investigates one original facet of Iranian international relations and foreign policy: the role of the parastatal foundations (bonyads) in Iranian foreign policy, regional relations, and soft power. The parastatal bonyads are key institutions of post-revolutionary Iran that have an extensive - if ambiguous - relationship with the Iranian state as well as far-reaching international operations, interests, and financial concerns. How do these parastatal foundations, the bonyads, of the Islamic Republic of Iran relate to the state and, consequently, how does this affect Iranian soft power capability and foreign policy?

The paper explores the bonyads' role as significant but overlooked vehicles of Iranian soft power and foreign policy based on new source research and interviews. The current study presents a much-needed update of the bonyad-state relationship, it problematises aspects of soft power theory in Iran's context, and accounts for transnational bonyad activities to explain their effect on Iranian foreign relations and soft power. The findings broach compelling broader implications for our understanding of Iranian soft power, foreign policy, and influence at a time of decisive regional reconfiguration with Iran at the centre.

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## Firouzeh Khoshnoudiparast

*Ph.D candidate at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University. Ms. Khoshnoudiparast worked for more than ten years with international specialized organisations as part of her career with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). She served as Member of the UNWTO Programme Committee from 2009 to 2013.*

### Analysing Iranian Revolutionary Diplomacy in Transition

Iran's post-revolutionary diplomacy provides a unique opportunity to analyse its achievements (strength and limits), notwithstanding the conceptual antagonism between 'revolution' and 'diplomacy'. When the two concepts are juxtaposed, there is an immediate sense of incompatibility, but Iranian diplomats could still transform their approach to ultimately bridge the conceptual gap. Contrary to many historical challenges inflicted by foreign forces on the Iranian nation's sovereignty and identity, Iranian diplomacy exhibits a substantial degree of resilience and adaptation, while the fear of being contaminated by foreigners again, yet remained alive.

The election of President Hassan Rouhani and his platform of “Prudence and Hope” (tadbir va Omid) were regarded as Iranian people signal to reform the status quo, suggesting a transition to prudent diplomacy. Unlike his predecessor, Rouhani and his major diplomats are like an open book (both from revolutionary and diplomatic perspective), with this transition from a revolutionary ideologue to politician and academic already being reflected vividly in his foreign policy approach. This highlights the beginning of a gradual change in Iranian revolutionary diplomacy, which simultaneously creates significant opportunities for the core powers in the international system to revise their policies towards Iran.

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## **Dr. Costas Laoutides**

*Lecturer in International Relations, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Deakin University, Australia. Dr Laoutides' research focuses on the relation between peace and justice in secessionist conflicts. In particular he is interested in the communicative and normative aspects of national self-determination movements and how these aspects influence attempts for conflict resolution.*

How “foreign” is the Kurdish issue in Iranian foreign policy?

The evolution of the Kurdish political agenda in Iraq, Turkey and Syria has generated a lot of discussion about the future of the Kurds in the Middle East. The prospect of an independent Kurdish state in Iraq along with the creation of a Kurdish statelet in Syria, and the ongoing unofficial peace talks between Turkish Kurds and the Turkish government have generated a number of challenges for Iran which has had its share of Kurdish grievance and mobilization. Although Iran follows a pragmatic approach towards the Kurdish Regional Government by adopting the logic of cooperation and exchange, it follows a more ideologically-informed policy when it comes to the Kurdish populations at home, which is based on the denial of minority or autonomy status. The Kurdish issue presents a paradox for Iran as it tests the boundaries of the inside/outside division of Iranian foreign policy. It is a call for maximising state security without compromising the revolutionary character of the regime but simultaneously it presents the challenge of dealing with a problem that transcends traditional lines of foreign policy formation.

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## Alireza Miryousefi Aval

*Director of the Center for Middle East Studies, Institute for Political and International Studies, Iran and former-spokesman for the Iranian Mission to the UN in New York.*

Iranian foreign policy towards Syria - how does the escalating regional sectarian divide inform Iran's interests in the region?

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## Professor Amin Saikal

*Director of the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies (The Middle East and Central Asia) at the Australian National University. Professor Saikal has been a Visiting Fellow at Princeton University, the University of Cambridge and the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. He was a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow in International Relations from 1983 until 1988, and in April 2006 was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).*

### Iran and the changing regional strategic environment

In a zone of volatility, the Islamic Republic of Iran has managed to remain a relatively stable constituent state. Despite all its domestic political and economic difficulties, severe Western sanctions and anomalous position in world politics, the country has maintained its resilience against all odds. It does not appear to have been fazed too much, at least so far, by the challenges arising from the debilitating strife in two of its neighbours, Afghanistan and Iraq, and its only Arab strategic partner, Syria. Nor has it been overwhelmed by Israel's constant military threat and the degree of apprehension displayed towards it by most of the Gulf Cooperation Council states. Iran also does not seem to have been undermined too much by the growing Shia-Sunni divide that has swept the region and has played, along with geopolitical factors, a critical role in complicating Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies to the point where the two sides are involved in a number of proxy conflicts. After more than three decades of hostilities, Iran has begun a process whereby it could possibly smooth out some of its major differences, especially over its controversial nuclear program, with the United States, and thus change the regional dynamics substantially.

This talk has three objectives. The first is to explore what has enabled Iran to deflect mounting regional and international pressures and be an influential regional actor. The second is to examine Iran's capacity in terms of its soft, smart and hard power, and the extent to which it may be capable of maintaining its position of influence in shaping the regional environment in accord with its ideological, geopolitical and security needs. The third is that if there is a serious breakthrough in the US-Iranian relations, what might be its implications for Iran and the region.

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## **Dr. Rodger Shanahan**

*A Visiting Fellow at the National Security College at ANU, non-resident Fellow at the Lowy Institute for International Policy and a part-time member on the Refugee Review Tribunal. His PhD was from Sydney University on Shi'a Political Development. Dr. Shanahan is a former army officer with operational service in South Lebanon and Syria, East Timor, Lebanon during the 2006 war and Afghanistan. He has also served in the Australian embassies in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.*

Iran's relationship with Hezbollah, Shi'a militia groups and Hamas in the Rouhani era

President Rouhani entered the presidency with a number of inherited and new foreign policy challenges. Amongst these is Iran's attitudes to its long-established allies in Hezbollah and Iraqi Shi'a groups, as well as a change to the estrangement that it experienced with Hamas but which appears to have been resolved as a consequence of the fighting in Gaza.

Whilst these relations are not the responsibility of Rouhani, they impact on the way in which Iranian foreign policy is executed and how Iran is perceived as a result. This paper will argue that Iran, along with the West is still feeling its way amongst the various crises that bedevil the region and its relations with a range of actors within the region reflects this uncertainty. The times may suit Iran, but it will take deft diplomacy to take advantage of a set of circumstances that offers opportunities, but only to those who are able to understand the dynamics both within the region and in the West.

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## **Jacky Sutton**

*Ph.D Candidate at the ANU Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies, focusing on international support for media development in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ms. Sutton has spent the last ten years with the UN and international development organisations in Iraq and Afghanistan working on media development and electoral support projects.*

## Iran media interference in Afghanistan and Iraq

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was one of the world's first mass mediated events, with smuggled cassette tapes of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini creating an informal but nationwide underground movement against the Shah. Over the last four decades the government in Tehran has spent millions of dollars in developing Iran's media infrastructure, including the Internet, to promote its brand of revolutionary Islam.

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and the Taliban in 2001 opened doors in Iraq and Afghanistan to donors, with millions of dollars subsequently spent on building up each country's media sector in accordance with western liberal ideas of public services and commercial broadcasting. The stated objective of this largesse was to create a platform for civil society in Iraq and Afghanistan to hold government to account, but it has had mixed success in both countries, more so in Afghanistan than in Iraq. Unstated objectives of this program included manufacturing domestic public consent to the invasion of both countries and support for the "War on Terror". This also had mixed success.

Iran too has invested millions of dollars in building media capacity in Iran and Afghanistan. What were the aims of these initiatives and how successful have they been? This paper will explore the different approaches to media development taken by the major donors from North America and Northern Europe, and that taken by Iran.

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## Professor Liyakat Takim

*Professor Liyakat Takim is the Sharjah Chair in Global Islam at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. Professor Takim's second book titled Shi'ism in America was published by New York University Press in summer 2009. His first book, The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam was published by SUNY press in 2006. He is currently working on his third book, Ijtihad and Reformation in Islam.*

### From Idealism to Pragmatism: The Changing Faces of Iran's Foreign Policy

The paper examines the dynamic processes of cultural maturation in Iran and suggests that a shift is occurring away from religious ideology toward pragmatic calculation of the national interest in the making and implementation of foreign policy decisions. This shift has become more pronounced since the election of President Rouhani. The roots of this transformation lie in Tehran's calculation of its standing in a changed regional and international environment.

Iran's fear of outside interference was partly responsible for the evolution of the "negative balance" doctrine that - at times - formed the basis of Iran's pre- and post- revolutionary foreign policy. The same views have also informed the fierce struggle in Iran for both political and economic independence (esleqlal) from foreign powers. However, the Iranian government has increasingly come out of this "seclusion mode" is now fully engaged in the international system. It is also playing the kind of assertive role expected of a regional middle power in the Middle East and North Africa. The obvious implications of this for US-Iran relations will be discussed.

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## Dr. Omid Tofghian

*ARC Research Assistant, Department of Philosophy, University of Sydney. He currently teaches and researches at the University of Sydney, is faculty at Iran Academia, a member of the Religion, State and Society Network (USyd) and organises art and cultural events focusing on cultural awareness and social justice. He also works with asylum seekers, refugees and young people from western Sydney.*

### Penalties on Progress – Sanctions and the Arts

This paper examines the impact of international sanctions on the arts community in Iran and highlights the consequences for intellectual life and social transformation. In recent years, hikes in sanctions have severely hindered artists particularly in terms of international collaboration, career development and community outreach.

Representatives of the art community practice and embody model principles and strategies and revise their vision in communication with regional and global movements. Also, a thriving and progressive art and cultural scene has traditionally promoted social reform, transnational relationships and civic virtue; institutions and projects promoting inclusivity, cultural awareness and social justice. This paper argues that the art community contributes to civil society in compelling ways and provides alternative models and insight for social and cultural development.

International sanctions on Iran weaken art societies and stunt projects and, therefore, are detrimental to progress. Also, the paper explains how the arts are used as a vehicle within Iran to draw attention to sanctions, raise international awareness and assist in overcoming the suffering of vulnerable people.

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## Dr. Luciano Zaccara

*Research Assistant Professor in Gulf Politics at the Center for Gulf Studies, Qatar University. He is also research fellow at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar; Director of the Observatory on Politics and Elections in the Arab and Muslim World, Spain; and Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Exeter University UK.*

### Ahmadinejad's legacy

The central focus of this paper is the legacy of Ahmadinejad's two terms in office for Iranian domestic and foreign policy. Iran has a determinant role in the Middle East and Persian Gulf balance of power, with bilateral and multilateral relations with the GCC countries drastically deteriorating during the Ahmadinejad's terms. The Arab Spring – particularly in Bahrain and Syria – further damaged Iran's image among its neighbours, although the victory of the more moderate President Hassan Rouhani has seemed to change this image. But to what extent was Iran's poor image a direct result of the policies implemented by Ahmadinejad? And, more importantly for this paper, will Ahmadinejad be remembered as the worst president of the Islamic Republic for the impact that his policies had? This paper will hypothesise that since Rouhani was elected, Ahmadinejad has been widely depicted as the main reason for the tension between Iran, the West and GCC countries, as well as the political and social discontent among Iranians. Other regional factors, policies and personalities appear to have been largely disregarded.

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## Dr. Mostafa Zahrani

*Director-General of the Institute for Political and International Studies, Iran. Dr. Zahrani joined the Iranian Foreign Ministry in 1981 and was posted to Vienna from 1982 to 1984. Dr. Zahrani then worked for the political deputy of then-Prime Minister Mousavi from 1985 to 1990, where he was part of the Iranian team that negotiated UN Resolution 598, which ended the Iran-Iraq war. From 1999 to 2004, Dr. Zahrani was posted to the Iranian mission to the UN in New York.*

What are President Rouhani's foreign policy objectives?

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## Mahdokht Zakeri

*Ph.D Candidate at Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus. Ms. Zakeri has taught at Eastern Mediterranean University, Allameh Tabatabaei University in Iran and Aria University in Afghanistan, and has published widely on the topic of Iran.*

### Discourse analysis: Justice and Iran's identity

This paper aims to analyze the ideational concepts in Iran's identity, with a particular focus on the Iranian's regime discourse towards the notion of 'justice'. Additionally, it will evaluate Iran's identity and role as a 'regional power,' viewing the discourse of justice as a key determinant of Iran's regional and international interests, and as an explanatory factor in its Islamic and revolutionary behaviour in the international arena.

This paper assumes that Iran's interests are constituted through its norms and identities, with the discursive constructions of key concepts like 'justice' and 'Iran's regional role' in the Middle East analyzed from a critical constructivist perspective. It argues that narratives on Iran's identity and role in the region are discursively constituted. This paper will employ linguistic elements such as metaphors and analogies, which have served as vehicles of identity building and interest construction.

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## The Organising Committee

### Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh (Chair)

Professor Akbarzadeh is a Research Professor at Deakin University and the Deputy Director (International) of the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation. He currently holds an ARC Future Fellowship (2012-2016) on the Role of Islam in Iran's Foreign Policy-making and a grant on Sectarianism in the Middle East from the Qatar Foundation.

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### Dr. James Barry

Dr. Barry is an Associate Research Fellow at the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. He was awarded a PhD (anthropology) from Monash University in 2013 for his dissertation on cross generation identity among the religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. He is currently involved in research on the role of Islam in Iranian foreign policy making, alongside a project on decision-making among Iranian and Afghan migrants in Indonesia.

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### Dara Conduit (Conference Secretary)

Ms. Conduit is a Research Assistant at Deakin University and is currently completing her Ph.D research on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood at Monash University. She teaches International Relations, Arms Control and International Security Studies at Monash University. She holds an M.Litt in Middle East and Central Asian Security Studies from the University of St. Andrews.

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## About the Middle East Studies Forum

The Middle East Studies Forum (MESF) is a cross-institutional, cross-disciplinary research group based at the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation. The MESF is a collaborative research network open to researchers, research students, policy-makers, media professionals and anyone interested in the region.

This thematic research group focuses on the following topics in relation to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA):

- The rapidly changing nature of civil society and democracy in the contemporary MENA
- Defining the 'Middle East' and examining how it has been constructed and understood in the 'West'
- The complex and overlapping histories of the region and its myriad languages, cultures and political movements
- The need for innovative undergraduate teaching and the supervision of higher degree work in the field
- Utilising inter-disciplinary approaches and methodologies as the basis for understanding the complexities of the region.

For further information, visit:

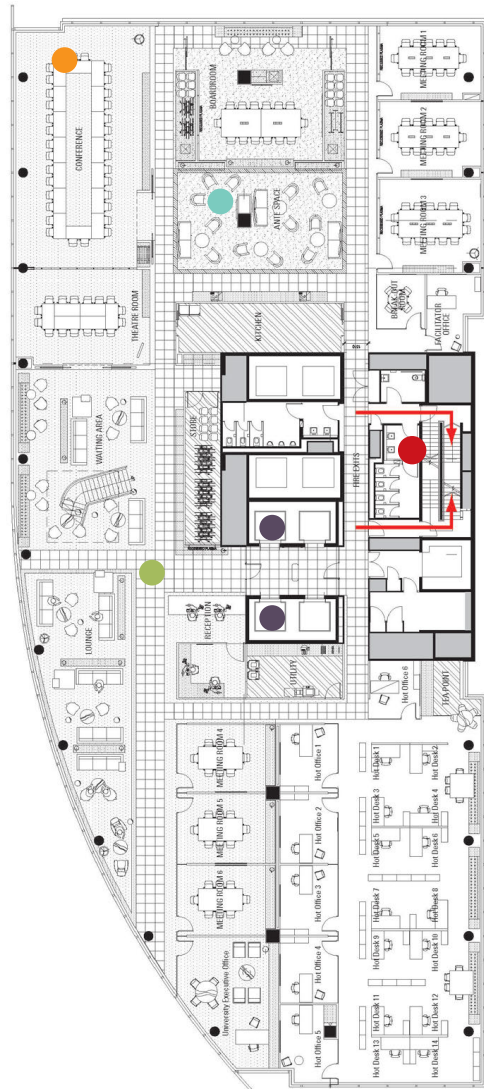
<http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/centre-for-citizenship-and-globalisation/research/research-networks/mesf>

## Deakin University City Centre map

Deakin University Melbourne City Centre  
3rd Floor, Deloitte Building,  
550 Bourke Street,  
Melbourne.

### Key

- Lifts
- Registration desk
- Conference room
- Lunch/Coffee room
- Restrooms



## IRAN IN THE WORLD

Old challenges and new opportunities in the  
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