



UCF Global Perspectives and International Initiatives

Maintaining Global Dialogue

A Message from our Executive Director



Exploring the World's Intractable, Lingering Problems

Last week, GPII and the American University in Cairo co-hosted an online kickoff event for a new initiative entitled, "What the Future Holds: A Discussion on US-Arab Relations." Former U.S. National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster and former Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy headlined the event. UCF Interim Provost

Michael Johnson offered a welcome to the audience, noting the need, "to look at emerging security threats and issues such as water, energy and food security." But Dr. Johnson also pointed out, "the Israel-Palestinian conflict sadly remains unresolved and on the agenda."

Both General McMaster and Minister Fahmy, who spoke just a week after Cairo mediated and Washington backed a fragile cease fire agreement in Gaza, dedicated portions of their talk to the lingering issue. Albeit from different perspectives, both statesmen recognize the issue has shaped much of the region's recent and not so recent history. The Israel-Palestinian conflict has resulted in frequent wars, violence against unarmed civilians, a struggle for resources, refugees, and lingering grievances which have fed extremist politics and worse. It has also shaped American involvement in the Middle East, including annual commitments of military and humanitarian assistance. One can only wonder what these many billions of dollars of funding could have done for the region had it been dedicated exclusively to education and development.

There is something to be said about the inability to address lingering problems such as that between Israelis and Palestinians. Ignoring them, papering them over, or simply pretending they are no longer relevant is not a solution. Because unresolved core issues tend to create a multitude of other problems, both directly and indirectly.

In April, the U.S. House of Representative's Natural Resources Committee held a high-profile hearing on the political status of Puerto Rico. The hearing featured a number of political officials from Puerto Rico or of Puerto Rican descent debating the merits of two pieces of legislation. One bill, introduced by Orlando's Darren Soto, calls for statehood. The other, authored by New York's Nydia Velázquez, would convene a "status convention" where Puerto Rican delegates determine their political course – statehood, independence, or something in between.

At best, the hearing was inconclusive, and thus can be seen as a microcosm of the larger debate. It is almost certain Puerto Rico will remain a "Commonwealth" for the indefinite future. The problem, as has been well known for years, is that the status quo has not served the people of Puerto Rico particularly well. Puerto Rico has been devastated by a series of natural disasters, the most destructive of which was Hurricane Maria in September 2017. But even without hurricanes and earthquakes, the island faced bankruptcy, antiquated infrastructure, deteriorating social services, and systemic economic problems which have been compounded by poor governance. One could fairly say the peculiar political status of Puerto Rico has been a prime inhibitor of growth and development in recent decades. Among other things, the political status question triggers plausible deniability, where no one is fully responsible for the island's precarious situation. Short-term decision-making has compounded deep-rooted problems, and permanent solutions all appear costly – devastatingly so. Prospects for rapid recovery and revitalization are bleak, and the people know it. The recent U.S. Census found that Puerto Rico's population declined by 11.8% in the last decade alone.

Solving entrenched problems is difficult and requires creativity, dialog, experimentation, study, and political will. GPII is an interesting unit in UCF Global which looks at global challenges, works across the university with our talented faculty and students, and finds opportunities for engagement. As a university, we cannot solve these and other intractable issues, but we can at least explore them and see how we can play a small role in addressing them.

– David Dumke, Executive Director, UCF Global Perspectives and International Initiatives



Turkey Talks: Hopes and Challenges

Thursday, June 24, 2021 from 10:00AM - 11:00AM

Join us for a discussion about social movements and civil society in Turkey featuring **Dr. Hakan Özoğlu**, Director of the Middle Eastern Studies at UCF, and **Sanem Güner**, Assistant Director of The Hollings Center for International Dialogue.

“Turkey Talks: Hopes and Challenges” will examine the Erdogan government’s interaction with social movements and civil society, economic challenges, the COVID-19 crisis, and questions about democracy and the rule of law. The speakers will provide historical and contemporary perspectives about Turkey including challenges, opportunities, and hopes for the future

[More Info](#) | **All are welcome** | [Register here](#)

In Case You Missed It



What the Future Holds: A Discussion on U.S.-Arab Relations

UCF Global Perspectives and International Initiatives in partnership with the American University in Cairo's Middle East Studies Center, has launched an ongoing series discussing the future of U.S.-Arab Relations in a changing world with emerging new security threats and global challenges.

The first session "What the Future Holds: A Discussion on US-Arab Relations" kicked off May 27 with Lt. General H. R. McMaster, former United States National Security Advisor; and Ambassador Nabil Fahmy, former Egyptian Foreign Minister. We were honored to have UCF Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Michael Johnson join us for an introduction as well.

[Start watching](#)

TV Show



Special Episode with Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves

Vincentian Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves discusses the volcanic eruption that occurred in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Gonsalves is also the political leader of the Unity Labour Party (ULP).

[Start watching](#)



Global Perspectives Hosts Nataly Chandia Viano, UCF Global's Associate Vice President

Nataly Chandia discusses the importance of exposing students to different cultures during their education.

[Start watching](#)



Global Perspectives Hosts Hibaaq Othman, Global Political Strategist

Hibaaq Othman discusses her work to end violence against women and promote women's participation across the Arab region. Othman is the CEO of Karama, a civil society organization that she founded in Cairo.

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GPII Podcasts

Listen to GPII's latest podcasts to get insights and news from around the globe. Check out these titles and much more:



Dr. Tom Crisman

Gives his perspective
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**Dr. Seema
Shekhawat**

Discusses farm
protests in India with
Ajay Chhibbe



Dr. Hakan Özoğlu

Discusses his new
book with Mirvate El
Jerdi

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More Important News



What Next for Afghanistan?

Owen Kirby, GPII's non-resident fellow and the former director of the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), writes in The Hill on the future of Afghanistan. "What next for Afghanistan?" discusses how elections, internet connectivity, and girls' education are some of the gains that need to be sustained amongst grave risks following the withdrawal of U.S troops.

[Read More](#)



UCF Global

UCF GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
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