FROM SEA TO SPACE:

CHALLENGES FOR ENERGY, TRADE, AND NATIONAL SECURITY

SCHAR SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GOVERNMENT
George Mason University

10 YEARS 2016-26

Explore how the war with Iran underscores the vital role of maritime security, and how the growing importance of space could shape our energy future.

FEATURING



Charles A. Richard
President, Institute for Defense Analyses



David M. Hart
Council on Foreign Relations



Rian Bahran
Chief Nuclear Officer, Antares



Ellen Laipson
Center for Security Policy Studies



Richard Kauzlarich
Center for Energy Science and Policy



Hina Kazmi
Affiliate Faculty Schar School

EVENT DETAILS

OCTOBER 7

8 A.M. TO 5 P.M.

MASON SQUARE (ARLINGTON)

SCAN TO REGISTER

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6GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY'S CENTER FOR ENERGY SCIENCE AND POLICY (CESP)
AND CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY STUDIES (CSPS) INVITE YOU TO:

The 8th Annual Mason Energy Forum

"From Sea to Space: The Challenges for Energy, Trade and National Security"

DATE and TIME	LOCATION	JOINT SPONSORS
October 7, 2026 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Mason Square Campus Van Metre Hall Multipurpose Room 126	CESP and CSPS George Mason University

Why Now and Why Schar:

Physical and digital flows that the global economy depends on — energy, trade, data — are concentrated in and through maritime chokepoints that are now demonstrably weaponizable, and the U.S. capacity to guarantee them is being questioned.

If existing infrastructure (seabed cables, Hormuz, the terrestrial grid) is vulnerable and constrained, space-based economic, energy, and data solutions are a strategic hedge. Along with the future of nuclear and geothermal power, space represents the next horizon of national security, energy resilience, and economic statecraft.

Schar School is marking our **10th Anniversary** under the banner of "Building on a Decade of Impact." We are honoring the faculty, students, partners, and leaders who have driven transformative research while accelerating our mission for the decade ahead. A core pillar of the Schar School's vision for the next ten years is tackling evolving global vulnerabilities through specialized centers such as the Center for Security Policy Studies (CSPS) and the Center for Energy Science and Policy (CESP).

1. The Converging Inflection Point

The 8th Annual Mason Energy Forum convenes at a pivotal strategic juncture for George Mason University and Northern Virginia. In 2026, three institutional milestones intersect: the 10th anniversary of the Schar School of Policy and Government, the opening of the Fuse at Mason Square innovation hub (housing the Institute for Digital Innovation), and the maturation of GMU's applied research assets—including the NuScale Energy Exploration (E2) Center simulator and the George Mason University Space Innovation Center (GMUSIC). Together, these platforms address a crucial challenge: as AI energy consumption strains regional power grids, global conflict threatens maritime supply networks where resilient energy and data infrastructure originate. How will these domains be governed as space becomes a feature?

2. Symposium Panel Focus

• **Panels 1 and 2: Maritime Chokepoints, Global Supply Chains and Peace and Security**: These panels examine the underlying dynamics that bring energy security and national security together. They explore disruptions in energy supply chains and trends in naval and commercial shipping, and consider the status of international law, naval readiness, and different strategies in distinct energy-producing regions of the world.

• **Panel 3: Space as the New Energy Resource Infrastructure.** With the ongoing boom of the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) economy, industry experts discuss how space infrastructure and technologies are enabling new energy resources. These capabilities include orbital and lunar data centers and advancing nuclear energy capabilities to power lunar bases and commercialization of deep space exploration. The panel will also discuss if expansion of space-based energy infrastructure demands new regulatory and international law framework.

• **Panel 4: SMR and Geothermal Enclaves for Data Center Development and Grid Security:** Northern Virginia's energy demand is driven by explosive AI data center growth. Space-based and terrestrial options abound to meet this demand. Panel 4 explores behind-the-meter generation, Small Modular Reactor (SMR) enclaves, geothermal microgrids, and the challenging economic question of how hyperscalers will deploy next-generation power solutions, as well as the challenges these new solutions (including space-based solutions) pose for grid security.

3. Sponsoring Centers

Center for Security Policy Studies (CSPS)

CSPS trains students to lead crisis simulations, policy conferences, and workshops. The center advances the study and practice of strategic thinking on international security problems by convening an annual symposium for practitioners and scholars, conducting simulations with experts from both the military and civilian communities, and publishing monographs on security challenges. The scope of security studies continues to expand beyond the familiar terrain of great power rivalries and changing dynamics in international politics. In the 21st century, states grapple with ever-changing challenges from porous borders, uneven access to natural resources, and emerging technologies that are difficult to manage.

Center for Energy Science and Policy (CESP)

CESP is a joint initiative of the Schar School of Policy and Government, the College of Science, and the School of Business. It is a multidisciplinary, vibrant, energy science and policy hub at George Mason University. The Center focuses on developing innovative, integrative applied science and policy solutions for the energy security, sustainability, and resilience challenges of Virginia and beyond. This external reach is reflected in the MOU it has developed with the Bundeswehr University in Munich, Germany. The Center's research and analysis emphasize in-depth qualitative studies, as well as statistical and economic analyses. In addition to energy research, the Center offers innovative educational opportunities through interactive workshops with practitioners, policymakers, and academics on key issues related to energy security, sustainability, and resilience.

4. Official Symposium Agenda (October 7, 2026)

TIME	SESSION / TITLE	SPEAKER / FOCUS DETAILS
8:00 AM – 8:30 AM	**Registration & Refreshments**	**Van Metre Hall Lobby** Check-in and morning networking.
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	**Opening & Introductory Remarks**	**Ambassador (ret.) Richard Kauzlarich, Professor Ellen Laipson**.
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	**Morning Keynote: 'Maritime Security and the Iran War'**	**Admiral Charles Richard (Retired) – President, Institute for Defense Analyses IDA** Analyzing strategic chokeholds, naval escort capacity, and physical supply vulnerabilities.
9:45 AM – 10:45 AM	**Panel 1: Maritime Security: 21st Century Challenges**	**Expert Panel** Colin Gabrow, CATO Amit Pandya, Consultant on Public International Law Steve Wills Center for Maritime Strategy Setting out the fundamental energy, national security, and governance issues in the maritime domain .
10:45 AM – 11:00 AM	**Morning Coffee & Networking Break**	**Foyer** Networking break
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	**Panel 2: Implications of the Iran War for Energy and National Security**	**Expert Panel** Matt Reisener, Center for Maritime Strategy Karen Young, Middle East Institute and Columbia U. Scott Snyder, President of the Korean Economic Institute Assessing the geopolitical consequences of the Iran war for energy producers and consumers .

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	**Working Lunch Keynote Conversation**	**Dean Mark Rozell – Schar School Welcome** **David Hart, Council on Foreign Relations** **Keynote: Energy Security, Technological Innovation, and American Leadership)** .
1:00 PM – 1:30 PM	**Afternoon Keynote: Space as the New Energy Frontier**	**Keynote Address** **Rian Bahran, Chief Nuclear Officer, Antares**
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM	**Panel 3: Space as Economic Infrastructure**	**Expert Panel** **Alex Gilbert, Principal & Field Director, Rocinante Fieldwork** **Jacob Matthews, Founder and CEO, Potomac** **Courtney Stadd, Executive Vice President, Beyond Earth Institute** **Moderator: Professor Hina Kazmi, Schar School** **Examining the feasibility, economics, and governance of space-based energy infrastructure.**
2:30 PM – 2:45 PM	**Afternoon Coffee Break**	**Foyer** **Networking break.**
2:45 PM – 3:45 PM	**Panel 4: Nuclear Power and Geothermal Solutions**	**Expert Panel** **Julianne Szyper, Founder and President, Navigator Consulting** **Dan Zachary, Johns Hopkins (Baltimore)** **Jeffrey Eppink, President & Founder, Enegis, LLC** **Moderator: Dr. Anna Broughel, Johns Hopkins (DC)** **Evaluating behind-the-meter microgrids, SMR viability and costs, natural gas trade-offs, and geothermal energy prospects.**
3:45 PM – 3:55 PM	**Closing Remarks and Conference Summary**	**Ambassador Kauzlarich, Professor Laipson**

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	**Conference Reception**	**Van Metre Hall Plaza** **Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Schar School of Policy and Government.**