



February 2019 Monthly Report

NESA Region Trends

Participant discussions throughout The NESA Center's February programming ranged from national, regional, and international efforts to counter terrorism, to the future of technology in warfare, to forecasting flashpoints in international relations.

- **“Black Swans” and the problems of probability:** International relations and political statecraft have been roiled throughout history by seemingly “unpredictable” events, from the causes of wars to the collapse of the Soviet Union, phenomena now popularly called “Black Swans”. Participants of NESA’s February programming expressed anxiety about—and a desire to circumvent—policymakers’ general aversion to predictions.
- South Asian participants discussed a potential “Black Swan” scenario involving the splintering of South Asian nation-states giving rise to transnational crime and deep instability. North African participants worried about consequences from the increasing prevalence of groups once shunned as terrorists by the international community forging a path to negotiations, political legitimacy, or even sovereign power. Central Asian participants expressed concern over potential conflict arising from border disputes; Gulf participants worried about cyberattacks, while Levantine participants worried about potential impacts of population imbalance on socio-political destabilization.
- **The future of technology as a double-edged sword:** The battlefields of the future will bear little resemblance to the war zones of today, with participants expressing major anxieties about terrorist organizations exploiting artificial intelligence (AI), cyber, and—in particular—cryptocurrencies on an institutional level.
- Conversely, if participants fear that the increasing application of AI and cyber by terrorist groups and other malicious actors is unstoppable, participants at the same time regard technological advancement as the only method of “getting ahead” of these groups. In particular, participants regard drone technology as a low-cost but highly impactful new tool in modern warfighting.
- **Analyzing best practices in counterterrorism:** The practices, military tactics, and political strategies underpinning counter-terrorism (CT) and de-radicalization was a recurring topic of discussion, with participants not always unified on what should be considered CT priorities: North African participants emphasized the importance of pre-empting radicalization of vulnerable individuals before it begins, while Central Asian participants emphasized stemming the flow of terrorist financing.
- **Skepticism—and pessimism—from the Gulf:** Participants from key Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states expressed skepticism about major U.S.-led regional security initiatives: many policymakers and stakeholders from NESA states are extremely dubious that the proposed Middle East Strategic Alliance will succeed, and regard it as another in a series of aborted attempts to construct a regional alliance. The White House's Kushner-led peace mission is regarded by Gulf participants with a similar degree of doubt, as they view the opportune moment for brokering a deal as passed: the recent U.S. midterm elections and the upcoming Presidential elections are seen as having sapped the Trump Administration of momentum, while the Arab side is reluctant to move forward at least until after the 2019 Israeli legislative elections.
- GCC states also characterized the Qatar crisis as a “new normal”, describing little impetus on the blockading side to settle, and the Qatari side as having adapted to weathering the blockade. Iran's ambitions in the Arab world remains an acute anxiety, as a recurring view from Gulf and some Levantine participants is that Iran is essentially unchecked as it pushes into Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, and continues to wield significant influence in Yemen.

NESA Senior Executive Seminar “The New World Order”

4—8 February



From February 4-8, 2019, The NESA Center conducted the Senior Executive Seminar (SES), “The New World Order: Challenges and Opportunities”, attended by 36 participants from across the Near East and South Asia region. The NESA Center’s Senior Executive Seminars are a flagship NESA program designed to provide senior-level policymakers from the region a comfortable and critical forum to discuss key geopolitical issues under the Chatham House rules of non-attribution.

The SES “The New World Order” was led by Professor Anne Moisan, and featured guest lectures by VIPs in politics, academia, and Mideast affairs including Mr. Adam Smith, former Senior Advisor to the Director of the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control and former Director for Multilateral Affairs at the National Security Council; Stephen McInerney, Executive Director of the Project on Middle East Democracy; and LTG (ret.) Terry The Wolff, Director of the NESA Center and former Deputy Envoy to the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS, a role he held until February 2019.

Discussions over the course of the SES primarily focused on “Blacks Swans”—unforeseen watershed events— that the NESA region could realistically face, the impact of technological advancement (including drone warfare) on the region, changing views of religion, and counter-terrorism strategies.



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NESA Washington Seminar Luncheon, February 2019

5 February



In conjunction with the NESA Senior Executive Seminar “The New World Order”, the NESA Center hosted its first Washington Seminar Luncheon Discussion of 2019 on 5 February at the Army Navy Club in Washington, D.C. The luncheon, “A Conversation on Sanctions & Tariffs”, featured Mr. Adam M. Smith, a partner in the D.C. office of law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher and former Senior Advisor to the Director of the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and former Director for Multilateral Affairs on the National Security Council. The discussion was attended both by participants of the Senior Executive Seminar as well as diplomatic officials from the NESA region and partner countries.

The Washington Seminar luncheon series is designed to provide senior diplomats and stakeholders from the NESA region and U.S. partner countries with a forum for candid and substantive discussion on issues of critical importance to national and regional security.

NESA Professor Brianne Todd acted as moderator of the 5 February discussion, which focused on the effectiveness and ethics of economic sanctions. Participants were keenly interested in examining how sanctions and tariffs are used as a means to achieve national political objectives, as well as the degree to which sanctions should be held to moral and ethical scrutiny.



Attendees of the Washington Seminar Luncheon included NESA faculty and staff. Pictured at left are NESA Professor Dr. Jennifer Jefferis and NESA intern Alex Yung.

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NESA-SOCAFRICA Senior Leadership Seminar

19—20 February



On February 19th and 20th, The NESA Center, in coordination with Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRICA) hosted a senior leaders seminar for the Exercise FLINTLOCK 2019 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The seminar was designed to facilitate interagency cooperation in countering violent extremism (CVE) and to promote the role of vulnerable populations in lasting stability efforts across North and West Africa. In particular, the seminar focused on the critical—and sometimes under-utilized—roles of multi-national, governmental interagency, and civilian organization coordination in CVE. NESA Professor Dr. Jennifer Jefferis acted as Course Director, with support from LTC Karen Radka, NESA’s U.S. Army War College Fellow.

Seminar panel presentations and small group discussions highlighted a variety of agencies and resources (both international, federal, and civilian) that can be applied towards CVE in Western Africa. Featured seminar speakers included NESA Center Director LTG (ret.) Terry Wolff, who shared unique insights and best practices in counterterrorism and de-radicalization from his recent tenure as the Deputy Presidential Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

Complementing the seminar, the U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou also hosted a “Women Peace and Security” themed reception at the U.S. Ambassador’s Residence, attended by key NESA faculty and leadership, as well as seminar participants.



NESA Center Director LTF (ret.) Terry Wolff provides opening comments at the SLS.



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NESA-USAFRICOM Tunisian Phase I/III

The NESA Center, in partnership with USAFRICOM, executed Phase I of a three part Tunisian National Defense Institute (NDI) security seminar program 31 January 2019 in Tunis, Tunisia. Professor Anne Moisan served as the the lead NESA Faculty, and Mr. Jeffrey Hoaglund (Project Lead, Secure Commerce and Border Systems, Sandia National Laboratories) led two workshops at the Tunisian NDI. Mr. Hoaglund briefed and led a security group of 18 Ministry of Defense security force auditeurs while Professor Moisan conducted a workshop with 29 auditeurs from 16 non-security ministries to include four from the President’s Office, four Parliamentarians, as well as an additional four NDI faculty. These workshops focused on this year’s Ministry of Defense assigned research theme “Border Areas Development Strategy”. The class of 2018-2019 will come to Washington, DC 25 March - 4 April 2019 for Phase II/III.

NESA-Saudi SAR Senior Leader Strategic Leadership Course

NESA Professors Dr. Daniel Baltrusaitis and Professor Richard Wiersema taught two iterations of a one week-long Senior Leader Strategic Leadership Course for O6/O7 grade Saudi Armed Forces (SAF) officers, from 3-14 February, at the SAF Command and Staff College (CSC) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Each iteration consisted of 20 contact hours, and included classes on strategic thinking, acting, and influencing, as well as team building and organizational culture. The seminar included instructor presentations, group discussions, and practical exercises. A total of 38 SAF officers received certificates and were welcomed into the ranks of NESA’s alumni. SAF CSC requested that NESA provide the course as part of our ongoing assistance in evolving the War Studies Wing of the SAF CSC into a full senior professional military education (war college-level) program.

Engaging the Policy World & Think Tank Community

On 6 February, NESA Professor David Des Roches was a speaker at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations' public affairs briefing "Strategic Implications of Recent U.S. Decisions on Syria".



On February 22, NESA Professor Ali Jalali was a featured speaker at a panel discussion hosted at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "US withdrawal from Afghanistan: is peace possible?"



CASA DMI Conference



Tampa, Florida



4 - 6 February 2019



advancing stability in central and south asia through military intelligence

NESA Professor John Wood was a featured speaker at the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Central Asia / South Asia Directors of Military Intelligence Conference (CASA DMI), hosted at the CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, Florida 4 - 6 February. Senior-ranking Intelligence officers from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as the Defense Attaché from Turkmenistan, numbered among the conference participants.



NESA Prof. Dr. Gawdat Bahgat

educating the defense community about the iran threat

On 28 February, NESA Professor Dr. Gawdat Bahgat gave a presentation on the Iran threat at the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command Professional Development Coordination Seminar, hosted at the Norfolk Naval Station. Among other dimensions of the complicated U.S.-Iran relationship, Dr. Bahgat discussed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the way forward for the Trump Administration.



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Upcoming NESAC events: March—April 2019

NESA Executive Seminar “Security Along the ‘Seams’ and ‘Border Areas’”: 4-15 March, Washington, D.C.

NESA-AFRICOM “Global Trends, International Players, and Future Security Challenges” Workshop: 4-8 March, Casablanca, Morocco

NESA-AFRICOM Tunisia National Defense Institute Seminar, Phase II: 25 March-3 April, Washington, D.C.

NESA Washington Seminar Luncheon Discussion “The Era of the Enduring U.S. Military Presence”: 18 April, Washington, D.C.

NESA Silk Road Future Leaders Seminar: 1-5 April, Washington, D.C.

NESA Afghanistan Building & Sustaining Governance Capacity: 3-10 April

NESA-AFRICOM “Tying Border Security and Illicit Commons: Making The U.S. More Secure” Workshop: 23 April -3 May, Tunis, Tunisia



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