



June 2019 Monthly Report

NESA Region Trends

Key participant discussions from the NESA Center's June programming explored wide-ranging touchpoints: rising U.S.-Iran tensions, prospects for Israel-Palestine peace, and the deepening interconnectedness of the NESA region, Europe, and Africa.

- **U.S. Iran policy confuses friends and foes, participants say:** While displeased with Iran, European and some Arab participants described the Trump Administration's Iran policy as inconsistent and sowing confusion. Participants cited actions like the U.S. deployment of 1,000 troops to the Middle East by a President who campaigned upon pledging to draw down U.S. troop presence in the region, as well as perceived bellicose rhetoric contrasted by measured responses to Iranian aggression. While European participants agree that the full scale of Iran's malign actions around the world are destabilizing and must be comprehensively dealt with, they regard the United States as further complicating the security situation by pulling out of the JCPOA with what they describe as lack of planning.
- Middle Eastern participants are more divided than Europeans in regards to the U.S.' Iran policy, with Israel and Gulf states generally supportive of a hardline stance against the Islamic Republic. Notably, participants from one of the Middle East's largest and crucial countries described *not* viewing Iran as a direct threat, urged the U.S. to directly negotiate with Tehran, and vowed to not get "pulled in" in the event of U.S.-Iran military conflict.
- **Poor expectations for Israel-Palestine peace:** A high number of European and Arab participants voiced frustration about U.S. ambitions—or a perceived lack thereof—in meaningfully and equitably resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Participants are highly skeptical of the Trump Administration's more economic than diplomatic approach to resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, expressing that while catalyzing Palestinian economic growth is key, it cannot be achieved independently of a comprehensive solution to the socio-political and humanitarian situation on the ground for the Palestinian people. Participants from across the NESA region expressed meager expectations the Administration's then-upcoming "Peace to Prosperity" conference discuss economic investments in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.
- **For better or for worse, the NESA region, Europe, and Africa will mutually shape each other:** Across the Middle East and the African Sahel, non-state actors and militias are accessing weapons with increasing ease, including sophisticated weapons with powerful capabilities. Meanwhile, concerns continue to heighten about an arms race among Middle Eastern powers. The interconnectedness of the NESA region—in particular to Europe and Africa—was a key talking point throughout NESA's June programming: European participants expressed serious and continuing concern about spillover effects of instability in Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and described the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis as "waking [them] up" to a recognition of MENA's strategic importance, in part because the region's socio-economic situation is consequently closely intertwined with that of Europe.
- Security operation—involving NESA region, U.S., and European actors—to address terrorist threats across sub-Saharan Africa was also discussed, as were the spillover effects on neighboring non-Sahel countries and regions. Participants from the NESA region, U.S., and Europe, reaffirmed the critical role of security cooperation, with a focus on counterterrorism objectives, in maintaining peace.



NESA-IEMed Strategic Forum

12-13 June

The NESA Center sponsored a two-day meeting in Barcelona, Spain, June 12-13 in partnership with IEMed, a leading Spanish think-tank, which focused on examining opportunities and challenges in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. NESA alumni from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority as well as European experts participated in the strategic forum. The NESA team was led by Professor Richard Russell, Professor Gawdat Bahgat, and Senior Program Planner Mr. Omar Sedky.

Representative discussion topics included the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iran's malign activities across the broader NESA region, and uncertainty over U.S. foreign policy towards MENA and consequences of a perceived sense of U.S. withdrawal from the region. NESA-region participants debated topics like the feasibility of the U.S.-led initiative to establish an "Arab NATO" and U.S. President Donald Trump's "deal of the century" to economically empower Palestinians and resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. European participants expressed concern about the "spill over" effects of instability across the Middle East and North Africa and agreed with NESA-region participants about a perceived sense of U.S. retrenchment from the region. In the final closing session, participants distilled their key discussion points into a set of recommendations for the United States Government's foreign and defense policy community.



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NESA-AFRICOM “Changing Nature of Conflict” Workshop

17—21 June

The NESA Center, in partnership with U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), conducted a “Changing Nature of Conflict Workshop” 17-21 June 2019 in Casablanca, Morocco.

The focus of the workshop was on the factors and evolving global and technological trends that will shape the world in the decades ahead, and how these factors will impact stability, crises, and security. Factors including demographic changes, mobilization of populations, emerging technologies (such as Artificial Intelligence, cryptocurrency, cognitive and social media warfare, drones, etc.) were heavily discussed. There was consensus that quality of governance, and the variety of transnational threats (terrorism, crime, climate change, natural disasters, illegal immigration, climate refugees and internally displaced persons) will continue to call on governments and security forces to radically evolve to cope. The program embraced a “whole of government and whole of society” approach examining the changing world reality and changing role/concept of the “state-citizen contract”, as well as the much needed evolution in the nature, role and cooperation of security forces.

Increasingly non-traditional, non-kinetic and asymmetric threats will place new demands on the state and security forces. The emphasis on violent non-state actors (VNSA) also highlighted the need and increasing importance of good governance, rule of law, effective anti-corruption laws, as well as a better understanding of the concept of citizenship addressing

the changing security arena. Rounding the discussion were insights of RAND’s and USAFRICOM’s vision for Africa and a review security assistance programs to build partner capacity. Concluding the workshop was a Case Study presented by LTG (Ret.) Terry Wolff, Director of NESA and former Deputy Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. The discussion examined the lessons learned from the coalition war on ISIS and personal perspectives on the evolution of ISIS in Africa, their use of social media, and the challenges of returning fighters.

The Workshop had 24 participants from Egypt, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Tunisia, the U.K., and U.S. Presentations were provided by subject matter experts including LTG (Ret.) Terry Wolff, Director of NESA; Dr. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, CEO, Valens Global; Dr. Jennifer Moroney, Senior Political Scientist, RAND Corporation; and LTC Jordan Simmers, Security Cooperation Plans Officer, USAFRICOM.

The workshop was led by NESA Professor Anne Moisan and supported by Mr. Fahad Malaikah, Program NESA Alumni and Overseas Program Coordinator.

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NESA Combating Terrorism Senior Executive Seminar “After ISIS”

10—21 June

From 10-21 June, the NESA Center hosted the Combating Terrorism Senior Executive Seminar (CT-SES) “After ISIS: Major Regional and Non-Regional Actors’ Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism” at the NESA Center facilities at the National Defense University. The CT-SES is a flagship NESA program designed for senior-level professionals active in the foreign and defense policy space across the NESA region. This year’s CT-SES rigorously examined best practices in countering violent extremism (CVE) as well as the unique socio-political and even legal challenges of prosecuting and/or reintegrating jihadi fighters returning from the vanquished ISIS caliphate to their home countries.

Participants—numbering over 40 and from countries including Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Egypt, the United States, and Iraq—heard from subject matter experts including NESA Director LTG (Ret.) Terry Wolff, the former Deputy Special Presidential Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS ; Dr. Frances Brown, Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace ; Dr. Timothy Shah, Director of International Research at Georgetown University’s Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs; and Nicholas Rasmussen, Senior Director for National Security and Counter-terrorism Programs at the McCain Institute for International Leadership.

One day of the two-week program was designed for participants to hear firsthand insights from policy practitioners from the U.S. Department of State, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Pentagon officials (including from the Joint Chiefs of Staff), who provided real-world examples of theoretical legal and moral challenges relating to national and international laws and the prosecution and / or de-radicalization of those who have fought with ISIS. Speakers emphasized the FBI and Department of Justice’s need for collective exploitable material to arrest fighters returning to the United States, and framed key challenges to current jihadi prosecution/rehabilitation regimes as lack of evidence, lack of information sharing between domestic and international agencies, and the lengthy processes behind de-classifying information that could be used as evidence.

The CT-SES was led by NESA faculty member Dr. Jennifer Jefferis and Dr. Sam Greene, former Assistant Professor at the NESA Center and currently an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Global Studies at Shepherd University, with operational support provided by Program Planner Mr. Magoumba Dieye.



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Central Asia-Afghanistan Security Executive Seminar “Water Security in Central Asia”

24-28 June

During the NESACenter's annual Central-Asia Afghanistan Security Executive Seminar from June 24-28, 2019, participants from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan explored the theme, "Water Security in Greater Central Asia." The seminar began with discussions about water security and the impact of climate change on national security by Charles Iceland from the World Resources Institute and Caitlin Werrell from the Center for Climate and Security, and more than half of the participants stated that they believe water is a security issue.

To analyze broader regional water issues, Fatemeh Aman from the Atlantic Council presented remarks about Iran's water crisis, and Michael Kugelman from the Woodrow Wilson Center spoke about water tensions between India and Pakistan over the Indus River basin. These case studies were compared to the situation in Central Asia, with in-depth presentations on the Aral Sea and Syr Darya and Amu Darya River basins by Mariya Pak from the World Bank and Sher Jan Ahmadzai from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Participants also examined legal issues related to water. During a presentation on water conflict and crime, Vanda Felbab-Brown of the Brookings Institution

explored the concept of "water theft" and the differences among international, national, regional, and local regulations governing water usage. Participants continued debating the concept of water as a human right or a commodity during a session on water treaties and water markets with Luke Wilson from George Washington University.

Outside of the classroom, participants heard from NESACenter alumnus and Tajikistan's Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Farhod Salim, on Tajikistan's experience with regional water projects. Participants concluded the week by discussing U.S. initiatives to combat water insecurity and climate change in Central and South Asia with Mary Melnyk from USAID.

Participants generally agreed that continued U.S. action in Central Asian is vital. The U.S. has significant scientific expertise—several knowledge gaps that the United States could help address were identified during the week-long seminar. The seminar ended on a positive note as participants highlighted successful regional programs, such as the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan, proposed new frameworks for future exploration, and reiterated their commitment to continuing to cooperate on regional water issues.



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Enhancing U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations

From June 6-10, NESAC Academic Dean Dr. Roger Kangas, Professors Brianne Todd and John Wood, and National War College Professor Dr. Mariya Omelicheva visited Tashkent, Uzbekistan. During their visit, the NESAC/NDU delegation engaged with a variety of Uzbek academic and expert practitioners. On June 7, the NESAC/NDU delegation participated in roundtable discussions with faculty and students at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy and the Ministry of Defense's Armed Forces Academy and hosted a dinner for NESAC alumni. On June 10, the NESAC Center co-hosted a half-day conference on U.S.-Uzbek relations and related regional issues with the independent Uzbek think tank Ma'no. U.S. Ambassador Daniel Rosenblum provided opening remarks at the conference and noted that such cooperation between U.S. and Uzbek academic institutions was unprecedented. The NESAC faculty also visited the Analytical Center for International Relations Studies and Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies for additional discussions with Uzbek academics and expert practitioners, including several NESAC alumni. Regional security issues, such as the war in Afghanistan, the threat from ISIS, and U.S.-Iranian relations, were themes of particular interest throughout the visit.



Supporting the U.S. Army community

NESAC Director LTG (Ret.) Wolff receives a historic 15 star flag at a celebration of the 244th "birthday" of the U.S. Army hosted by Association of the United States Army (AUSA) June 14. LTG (Ret.) Wolff was the featured speaker at the AUSA luncheon celebration.

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Professor David Des Roches, far right, at the NCUSAR's June 28 briefing

ENGAGING CENTCOM ON IRAN

NESA Professor Dr. Gawdat Bahgat was the featured speaker for the SMA CENTCOM speaker session “Iran’s Military Strategy” on 18 June. Dr. Bahgat’s briefing, fielded at least 105 dial-ins, focused on Iran’s asymmetric warfare doctrine, with particular emphasis on Tehran's naval forces, the growing tension in the Persian Gulf, ballistic missiles, drones, and cyber capabilities.

NESA in the News, On the Hill, & More

Select media:

June 13 NESA Professor Gawdat Bahgat published an op-ed for the *National Interest*, “[The Iran Pressure Plan Will Fail](#)”

June 14 Professor David Des Roches provided [comments](#) to the *Associated Press* on Iran’s attack on oil tankers (AP article later reprinted in *Washington Post*).

June 21 Professor David Des Roches was a featured [panelist](#) at the Gulf International Forum, speaking on the Gulf States’ influence in the ongoing Sudan crisis

June 28 Professor David Des Roches [briefed](#) on the Iran threat, in a public panel hosted by National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations (NCUSAR) at Capitol Hill

June 29 Professor David Des Roches conducted an [interview](#) with Al Jazeera Arabic on U.S. Iran tensions in the wake of the G-20 summit



NESA's 2019 Army War College Fellow Lt. COL Karen Radka concluded her fellowship June 20, and will be headed to USAFRICOM headquarters in Germany.



Professor Dr. Gawdat Bahgat



UPCOMING EVENTS

July 2019

Ministry of Saudi Arabian National Guard Workshop:
3 July, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Air War College Seminar: 3 July, Washington, D.C

NESA-CENTCOM Gulf Levant Workshop III
“Countering Trans-Border Narcotics Trafficking”:
8-12 July 2019

NESA-AFRICOM “Transoceanic Border Security and
Illicit Commons” Workshop: 20-24 July, Tunis, Tunisia

NESA-CENTCOM Strategic Survey Seminar, 29 July -
2 August, Washington, D.C.

additional information and images at:
www.nesa-center.org



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