

November 2018 Monthly Report

NESA Region Trends

Key participant conversations throughout the NESA Center's November programs focused on the global implications of U.S. domestic politics, and on major destabilizing actors in the NESA region, from extra-regional players like China to longstanding threats like Hamas.

- **Foreign policy and the U.S. midterm elections:** The significance of U.S. domestic politics is felt globally; participants conveyed uncertainties about potential changes in U.S. foreign policy brought about by the then-upcoming U.S. midterm elections.
- Participants sought insight relating to how—assuming a shift of political party power after the midterms—the U.S. Congress could check executive power and how key U.S. policies towards major NESA region states like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Israel, and Egypt could change dramatically after the midterms.
- Participants expressed keen interest in how to navigate the complex U.S. government interagency system to more effectively advance ties and leverage the U.S. relationship to influence positive change in their home countries.
- **Iran and China's ambitions in the NESA region:** GCC states expressed a firmly-held conviction that the U.S.-led West is ignorant or willfully blind to what they described as the true malign nature of Iran, and welcome U.S. President Trump's increased hawkishness towards the Iranian state.
- Although China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is regarded in Gulf States with skepticism and is not viewed as a purely positive humanitarian effort, the potential "balancing" effect a more engaged China could have on U.S. presence and U.S. demands in the region is welcomed.
- **Hamas signals increased pragmatism:** Hamas is behaving like a more pragmatic, predictable political actor than in the past. Perceived shifts in Hamas' agenda are welcomed as positive, opening new avenues for political leverage and reconciliation talks.
- Lack of optimism about a reduction of violence in and from the Gaza Strip persists; even if Hamas exhibits a greater inclination towards compromise, a myriad of other organizations are ready and able to fill the ideological vacuum that may open up.



Washington Embassy Orientation Seminar

29 October – 2 November

The NESACenter's 2018 iteration of its annual Washington Embassy Orientation Seminar took place at the Army and Navy Club October 29 to November 2, 2018, bringing together over 44 diplomatic officials from NESACenter region embassies in Washington. The Embassy Orientation, led by Professor and COL (Ret.) Daniel Curfiss, is the annual NESACenter course that provides newly assigned diplomatic corps from the wider NESACenter region the opportunity to familiarize themselves with each other as well as the D.C. community. The NESACenter offers these select foreign embassy staff a background in U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, the American political landscape, the policy making process, the roles of think-tanks and the media, lobbyists, the intelligence community, Congress, and the responsibilities of the executive branch.

Guest lecturers included P.J. Crowley, former Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs; Kimberly Dozier, Global Affairs Analyst; George Perkovich, Vice-President for Studies and Director for the Nonproliferation Program at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Lawrence LaRocco, former Congressman, Ambassador Marc Grossman, Vice Chairman at the Cohen Group; Ambassador Elizabeth Jones, former foreign service officer; and BG Michael Meese, Chief Operations Officer at American Armed Forces Mutual Aid Association, made presentations to participants on the inner-workings of the D.C. policy world. Dr. Paul Pillar, Ambassador Elizabeth Jones and Dr. Michael Bell discussed national security and economy policymaking from their expertise and experiences in intelligence community, State Department and White House.

Over the course of the four day seminar, Professor Daniel Curfiss spoke on the structure and history of the United States government, U.S. national security decision making, and intelligence coordination and tradecraft. In particular, the U.S. Constitution and the principle of separation of powers were heavily discussed in how they influence the workings of American democracy.



TheNESACenter



TheNESACenter



nesa-center.org

Washington Day Seminar Luncheon

1 November

In conjunction with its annual Washington Embassy Orientation Seminar, the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA) hosted a quarterly Washington Seminar at the Army and Navy Club 1 November. The Washington Seminar luncheon series is designed to provide senior diplomatic officials 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 moderated the conversation with The Honorable Dennis Hertel (D-MI, 1981-1993) and The Honorable James Moran (D-VA, 1991-2015) as they analyzed potential outcomes of the U.S. midterm elections on November 6. Much of the conversation focused on how election results may impact Congress, the future trajectories of the Democratic and Republican parties, and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and South Asia.



Approximately 60 participants from 28 countries participated in the not-for-attribution discussion.

Above, l-r: NESA Professor Brianne Todd, l the Honorable James Moran, and the Honorable Dennis Hertel

Discussion participants pose for a photo, including speakers Moran and Hertel (center) and NESA U.S. Army War College Fellow LTC Karen Radka



TheNESACenter



TheNESACenter



nesa-center.org

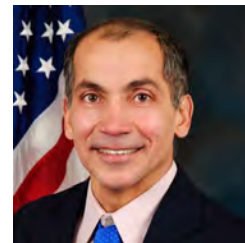
Tel Aviv University Roundtable & Amman Security Colloquium

4—7 November

On 4 November, NESAC Professors Richard Russell, Jennifer Jefferis & Gawdat Bahgat conducted a daylong roundtable discussion with the faculty at Moshe Dayan Center of Tel Aviv University in Israel. The discussion focused on key regional disputes and bilateral relations. Professors Russell and Bahgat gave a talk to an estimated 50 graduate students and community members.

On 5 November, Professors Russell, Jefferis, and Bahgat held a day-long roundtable discussion with researchers and analysts at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Topics of discussion focused on Iran's ambitions in the Middle East, the Syrian Civil War, Saudi Arabia, and Russian entanglement in Middle East affairs. NESAC faculty also spoke at a meeting with Israeli alumni.

On 7-8 November Professors Russell and Bahgat participated in the annual weapons of mass destruction conference in Amman, Jordan. The conference is sponsored by the Arab Security Institute and is considered one of the major security meetings in the Middle East. Senior officials and scholars from Arab countries and Iran attended the meeting to discuss incremental practical steps and confidence-building measures offering the best hope for progress toward the creation of a WMD-free Middle East.



Dr. Gawdat Bahgat



Dr. Jennifer Jefferis



Prof. Richard Russell



TheNESACenter



TheNESACenter



nesa-center.org

faculty & alumni publications

Professor David Des Roches. “It Didn’t JASTA Be This Way”. *The Arab Gulf States and the West: Perception and Realities - Opportunities and Perils*. Ed. Khatib, Dania Koleilat, and Marwa M. Maziad. Routledge, 2018.

Select alumni publications:

Dr. Eman Ragab, “Returning Foreign Terrorists: What Type of Security Challenges Are They Posing?” *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2018*.

Dr. Arslan Chikhaoui, “Building trust and confidence for an emerging integrated North Africa”. Presented at the Mediterranean Week of Economic Leaders (MedaWeek)’s Forum for Economic Development in North Africa (NABDF), 21 November, 2018.

nesa in the news

Select media:

Professor David Des Roches. *Africa News Tonight*. Voice of America. 8 November, 2018. Podcast.

Professor David Des Roches. “Does Europe need its own army?” *Inside Story*. Al Jazeera. 12 November, 2018. Television.



TheNESACenter



TheNESACenter



nesa-center.org

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



contact us

Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies

Abraham Lincoln Hall, Fort Lesley J. McNair

300 5th Ave SW

Washington, DC 20319-5066

Phone: (202) 685-4131 Fax: (202) 685-4999

Media Requests:

Media and Communications Office

Phone: (202) 685-9467 NESA-communications@ndu.edu



[/TheNESACenter](https://www.facebook.com/TheNESACenter)



[TheNESACenter](https://twitter.com/TheNESACenter)



nesa-center.org
