



NEAR EAST SOUTH ASIA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

NESA Update

December 2022 – February 2023

NESA Region Trends – MARITIME SECURITY

- **NESA regional states are becoming more invested in countering maritime-based international criminality.** Whether illegal fishing operations, smuggling, or trafficking, the region is ready to act. Yet, there remain divides as to methodology—is the aim elimination of criminal enterprises or mitigation? Is a multi-domain approach (land/air/sea) or a political-oriented approach (diplomacy/policymaking) best?
- **Regional states are recognizing the importance of maritime domain awareness.** More regional institutions are discussing information sharing, technological advancement, and cooperative methodologies to gain more information regarding the state of regional waters. The next steps are the implementation of policy ideas generated by regional conversations.
- **Gray zone threats remain an ever-present challenge in the NESA region,** with particular intensity in the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Persian Gulf. Gray zone methods continue to threaten interstate commerce, regional security architecture and hassle maritime operations of legitimate regional actors. These problems, often associated with Iran, are encouraging regional adaptation. Regional policymakers are turning eyes towards regional waters more frequently, new experiments are being pursued to assist in countering gray zone threats (*such as NAVCENT's Task Force 59*), and progression in information sharing among regional states looks to intensify.
- **Regional interest in the security of the Red Sea is rising among regional states.** Given the logistical disruptions experienced during COVID-19, the Ever Given blockage of the Suez, and consistent smuggling in the Red Sea, regional states

IN THIS REPORT

- 1–2 NESA Region Trends
- 3–6 Programs & Events
- 7–9 Engagement
- 10 Alumni Contributions
- 11 Calendar

Engagement • Education • Outreach

NESA Region Trends

are intensifying conversations about how to better secure those waters. Combined Maritime Forces out of Bahrain have stood up a new Task Force focused on the Red Sea and regional institutions are moving forward on ways to enhance coordinated maritime law enforcement.

- **While local states recognize emerging and non-traditional threats, countries in the region continue to configure their navies and coast guards for conventional threats.** They look to developments such as Task Force 59 as something they may build on if the U.S. meets it with success, but meanwhile, continue to invest in traditional navies for conventional conflict. The most recent example is the Qatar purchase of Fincantieri cruisers, which are in missile defense mode and do not have wet docks to launch small boats. The awareness is increasing, but the force structure and the spending remain—unchanged.

NESA Programs & Events

International Military Officers' Forum

From 23–27 January 2023, the NESA Center hosted foreign military officers assigned to U.S. Central Command in Tampa and embassy officials in Washington D.C. for an International Military Officers' Forum (IMOF) titled “The Biden Administration and Global Security.” NESA Center experts, including Professor Dr. Richard Russell and Deputy Director COL (Ret.) David Lamm, as well as several external experts were invited to discuss a wide variety of issues with considerable attention to security challenges.

The forum was directed by Dr. Richard Russell of the NESA Center with the goal of creating a balance of thought between both academic theory in international relations and a more pragmatic view on policy from career practitioners. NESA Center Deputy Director COL (Ret.) David Lamm, as well as practitioners from various organizations, gave their analyses and professional opinions on the state of international security in the NESA region, emerging and persisting threats to regional stability, and the Biden Administration’s strategy and policies to confront these issues. The IMOF provided USCENTCOM partners an opportunity to engage with the emerging challenges forming in the NESA region through robust dialogues with experts and practitioners from various backgrounds and with other representatives from CENTCOM. <https://nesa-center.org/international-military-officers-forum-2023/>

International Military Officers' Forum “The Biden Administration & Global Security” 23–27 January 2023



Course Director Dr. Richard Russell on the left and Deputy Director COL (Ret.) David Lamm on the right speaking to the group during the commencement.

NESA Programs & Events

Washington Seminar Discussion with Peter Bergen

On Thursday, 26 January 2023, the NESA Center hosted a Washington Seminar Discussion at the Army-Navy Club in downtown Washington, D.C. The seminar presented a conversation between NESA Center Distinguished Professor of International Relations Dr. Hassan Abbas and CNN's National Security Analyst Peter Bergen covering security challenges in the NESA region, specifically in Afghanistan, after the resurgence of the Taliban in 2021.

The remarks by the speaker included a discussion on different "waves" of terrorism over the past 100 years that have impacted international security, as well as an in-depth analysis of the U.S. intervention, military actions, and withdrawal from Afghanistan. The ripple effect this had on other actors, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in particular, was put under the microscope to better understand the successes and shortcomings of U.S. intervention. The afternoon ended with a question-and-answer session with 44 attendees from 31 countries fielding questions of relevance for their own countries and international security. <https://nesa-center.org/washington-seminar-discussion-january-2023/>

Washington Seminar Discussion with Peter Bergen

26 January 2023



Peter Bergen (left) and Dr. Hassan Abbas (right) during the Washington Seminar Discussion on 26 January 2023.

NESA Programs & Events

Executive Seminar: Maritime Security in the NESA Region & Beyond

From 30 January to 10 February 2023, the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies conducted an Executive Seminar (ES) focused on the maritime domain and the challenges/threats that exist there. The seminar's proceedings included conversations on autonomous/unmanned systems, the maritime challenges associated with climate change and environmental degradation, transnational criminality, power projection and competition within the maritime domain, and maritime domain awareness. [Read the report](#) for a more comprehensive list of topics discussed.

Admiral Paparo, Commander of the United States Pacific Fleet, provided opening remarks for the seminar with the farewell address provided by Admiral (ret.) Foggo, former Commander of the United States Naval Forces Europe-Africa. Participants hailed from twenty-four countries and represented navies, coast guards, defense ministries, and diplomatic corps, among others. NESA Center Assistant Professor Jeffrey Payne led the seminar with facilitation provided by Professor David Des Roches and Professor Gawdat Bahgat. The event was conducted digitally to assist in casting the widest possible net for participation. <https://nesa-center.org/executive-seminar-maritime-security-in-the-nesa-region-beyond/>



Speakers during the first week of the CTSES. [Read the full list of speakers and view more images.](#)

NESA Programs & Events

Inaugural RJNDC and Eisenhower School Student-Faculty Exchange

On 8 February 2023, the NESA Center facilitated the first-ever combined seminar between students and faculty from the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy and the Royal Jordanian National Defense College (RJNDC) on the topic of Global Supply Chain Dynamics as They Apply to Food and Water Security.

NESA Center Professor Richard Wiersema, Associate Dean Charles Marks, and Outreach Coordinator Christopher Muller hosted the combined seminar. The RJNDC students logged in virtually from Amman and Eisenhower School students convened in a classroom at National Defense University's Lincoln Hall linked via teleconference. The combined seminar initiative resulted from RJNDC leadership's desire to see U.S. professional military education methods in action, specifically the Socratic teaching method in a seminar-style classroom format, following Brigadier Azzam al Rawahneh's visit to National Defense University and NESA in October 2022. It also supports Eisenhower School Commandant Brigadier General Joy Curriera's intent to expand and deepen her school's international engagement. The NESA Center's PME team will return to RJNDC in May 2023 to conduct follow-on faculty development classes that will build on observations from this unique and constructive event.

<https://nesa-center.org/inaugural-rjndc-eisenhower-school-student-faculty-exchange/>

Inaugural Royal Jordanian National Defense College and Eisenhower School Student-Faculty Exchange

8 February 2023



Students and faculty from the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy at Lincoln Hall in National Defense University.

NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

Dr. Hassan Abbas



27 December 2022 – Interviewed on The World (a public radio program) on the Taliban's recent measures impacting women. <https://theworld.org/media/2022-12-27/taliban-bans-women-ngos>

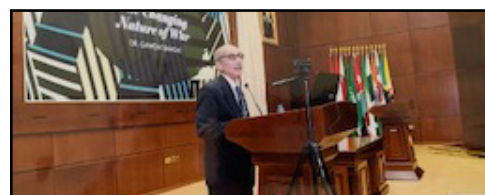
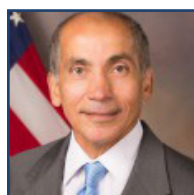
23 February 2023 – Speaker at an Alumni event for Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Washington, D.C., with about 70 participants.



24 February 2023 – Spoke at an event organized by the South Asia Peace Council in Washington, D.C. The event focused on the "Resurgence of Terrorism in Pakistan" with about 40 attendees. South Asian media outlets covered the event.



Dr. Gawdat Bahgat



8 December 2022 – Spoke on the nature of warfare at the Omani National Defense College. About 50 senior Omani military officers attended.

12 January 2023 – Professor Bahgat and Associate Professor David Des Roches provided predictions for the Gulf in 2023 for the Gulf International Forum publication "The Gulf in 2023 Expert Outlook." The Forum's group of experts share their forecasts for 2023, highlighting the geopolitical, economic, and domestic developments that are most likely to shape the state of the region in the coming year. <https://gulffif.org/the-gulf-in-2023-our-fellows-forecasts>



February 2023 – Published an article in Araa Magazine's February 2023 issue. The article focused on the U.S. perspective on the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) partnership. In Arabic: https://araa.sa/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6431

24 February 2023 – Published the article, "Security in the Gulf: The View from Oman," in Middle East Policy. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12678>

26 February 2023 – Published the article, "U.S.-Iran Relations: Challenges and Opportunities," in The Muslim World. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/muwo.12459>

NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

David Des Roches



2 February 2023 – Participated in a TRT World News flagship discussion program, 'Roundtable,' discussing the Russian/Ukraine war at one year. <https://youtu.be/ieubSw-Eeh0>



February 2023 – Was interviewed regarding the China spy balloon on multiple outlets. A few are highlighted below. Interviewed on WION (World Is One—An Indian World News Network) on 3 February titled "Pentagon confirms high-altitude spy balloon flying over U.S." <https://youtu.be/7y0XUxtHKw4> Des Roches was interviewed by WION on the following day titled "China condemns U.S. decision to shoot down sky balloon" <https://youtu.be/VB8NcMYhrqM> On 11 February Professor Des Roches was quoted in Al Jazeera on-line. [Link in Arabic](#)



13 February 2023 – Met with the United States Air Forces Central (USAFCENT) commander and a few other experts to discuss military developments in the region, including missile and drone proliferation. The event was organized by The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP).

Ali Ahmad Jalali



13 December 2022 – In the wake of the terrorist attack on a Kabul hotel frequented by Chinese nationals, Beijing expressed concerns about the security of their citizens in Afghanistan and called on all Chinese nationals to leave Afghanistan.

Afghanistan International TV interviewed Distinguished Professor Jalali for comments on how the situation will impact Chinese-Taliban relations.

2–3 February 2023 – The Taliban imposed the most sweeping restrictions on women's rights since retaking power in 2021. In a series of new repressive actions, the Taliban Supreme leader recently banned women from working in domestic and foreign non-government organizations which are involved in distributing international emergency aid to ease the humanitarian crisis in the country. The move is impeding the delivery of life-saving assistance, disrupting the world's largest aid operation—even as half the population suffers from acute hunger. Reacting to the Taliban's repressive actions, the United States imposed new sanctions on a number of current and former Taliban leaders and their families who are involved in the repressive policies. Jalali was interviewed in a special 30-minute Voice of America (VOA) TV program on how the restrictions will affect the people of Afghanistan. On 2 February 2023, Ambassador Jalali was also interviewed on the same topic by the Radio Liberty Radio Free Europe (RFERL).

14 February 2023 – Was interviewed by VOA Deewa TV program broadcasting to Pashtun audiences in Pakistan on how much influence the Taliban government in Afghanistan has over the Pakistani Taliban (TPP) and whether Kabul is willing, has the capacity to influence the TPP, and to respond to Islamabad demands. TTP intensifies terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The extremists who are said to have sanctuaries in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan have recently increased terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, including a massive massacre in Peshawar. Seeking the Taliban's assistance to reign in the TPP, Pakistan's Defense Minister and ISI Chief visited Kabul last week to meet with Taliban officials following the closure of the Torkham border crossing.

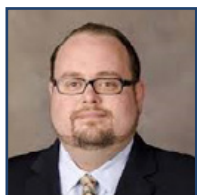
NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

Dr. Roger Kangas



18 January 2023 – Academic Dean Dr. Roger Kangas and Professor Gawdat Bahgat met with the Turkish foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu when he visited Washington, D.C. About 35 representatives from Washington-based think tanks also attended.

Jeffrey Payne



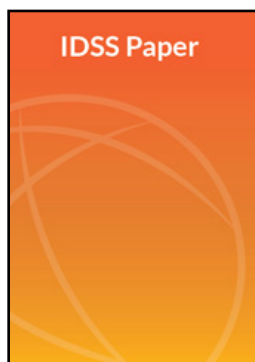
18 January 2023 – Discussed efforts for greater technology cooperation in the Indo-Pacific with the White House Office of Science and Technology; two from OSTP took part in conversation that covered forthcoming NESA programming.

31 January 2023 – Presented on China’s engagement methodology throughout the IOR and the CENTCOM AOR for a course at the United States Air Force Special Operations School. 19 students took part in the digital conversation.

1 February 2023 – Discussed the Royal Australian Navy’s maritime thinking pertaining to the Indo-Pacific and interest developing in regards to AUKUS, Anti-submarine warfare, and maritime domain awareness with Dr. Justin Burke, affiliate of the Sea Power Centre in Canberra, Australia.

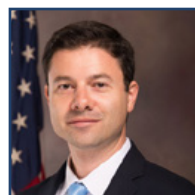
14 February 2023 – Published commentary for Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) of the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) on “Technology Providers and Maritime Security Roles in Southeast Asia.” <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/idss/ip23014-technology-providers-and-maritime-security-roles-in-southeast-asia>

16 February 2023 – Took part in a SIGNAL (an Israel-based think tank focused on China) digital roundtable focusing on commercial



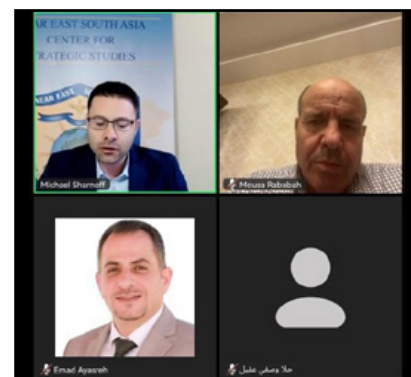
technology development, interstate tensions involving technological development, and major power technology policy. Approximately 35 took part in the roundtable that featured presentations by Japanese, American, and EU experts.

Dr. Michael Sharnoff



16 January 2023 – Presented a lecture to over 100 students and faculty at Yarmouk University on the topic of Russian foreign policy in the Middle East.

31 January 2023 – Interviewed by Ahmed Adly in the Emirati newspaper, Q-Post. Interviewed about the sharp increase in violence between Israel and the Palestinians, the significance of Secretary of State Blinken’s trip to the Middle East, and how to ease tensions. Dr. Sharnoff, spoke about the recent tensions in Jerusalem and the West Bank. He described the situation as very serious and addressed the need for U.S. leadership to help de-escalate the conflict. <https://twitter.com/qpostsnow2/status/1620457587065094144>



NESA Alumni Activities & Contributions

08 December 2022 – **Asanga Abeyagoonasekera (Sri Lanka)** published an article for the Observer Research Foundation: [“China’s changing geoeconomic in an unstable Sri Lanka.”](#)

27 December 2022– **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** published an article for the Hindustan Times: [“Taliban resistance a setback for Pakistan.”](#)

29 December 2022 – **Mustafa Fetouri (Libya)** wrote an Op-Ed for the Middle East Monitor: [“The long overdue China-Arab summit highlights Beijing’s increasing assertiveness.”](#)

10 January 2023 – **Uttam Kumar Sinha (India)** co-authored an Op-Ed: [“Understanding China–Russia Cooperation in the Arctic.”](#)

19 January 2023 – **Mustafa Fetouri (Libya)** wrote an Op-Ed for the Middle East Monitor: [“Dbeibeh has few options left after a Libyan court suspended his hydrocarbon deal with Ankara.”](#)

19 January 2023 – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** published an Op-Ed for the Hindustan Times: [“Pressure the Taliban to protect women’s rights.”](#)

20 January 2023 – **Nasser bin Nasser (Jordan)** wrote an Op-Ed for Jordan News: [“Banking on Russia in southern Syria?”](#)

23 January 2023 – **Charani Patabendige (Sri Lanka)** wrote an Op-Ed for Modern Diplomacy: [“Food Insecurity: The Current Crisis.”](#)

31 January 2023 – **Charani Patabendige (Sri Lanka)** wrote an Op-Ed for Modern Diplomacy: [“Cyberwar, Netwar: The Untouchable and Unpredictable.”](#)

06 February 2023 – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** published an Op-Ed for the The National Interest: [“China’s Challenges in Afghanistan Are Just Beginning.”](#)

10 February 2023 – **Uttam Kumar Sinha (India)** published an Op-Ed for Open: [“Pakistan Must Course-Correct.”](#)

22 February 2023 – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** published an Op-Ed for the The Diplomat: [“Moscow Multilateral Security Dialogue: Regional Consensus Elusive on Afghanistan.”](#)

Visit the NESA Center Alumni Interactive Map:
<https://nesa-center.org/alumni-map/>

Calendar

Upcoming NESACenter Events:

- **German Higher Officer's Seminar** | 1 March 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Ukraine-Russia War Roundtable** | 3 March 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Tunisian National Defense Institute National Security Seminar** | 6–15 March 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **National Defense College of the United Emirates Seminar** | 8–9 March 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **CENTCOM/USF/NESA GPC Conference** | 9 March 2023 | Tampa, FL
- **Strategic Studies Network Bahrain Workshop** | 14–16 March 2023 | Manama, Bahrain
- **Qatar J7 Visit** | 15 March 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Caucasus PME Engagement** | 27–31 March 2023 | Armenia
- **West Point Model Arab League Visit** | 30 March 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Lebanese Armed Forces Program** | 10–14 April 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Gulf Security Seminar** | 25–26 April 2023 | London, UK
- **Chatham House Iran Series** | TBD | London, UK

Visit www.NESA-Center.org for additional information.

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