



NEAR EAST SOUTH ASIA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

NESA Update

July 2024

REGIONAL TRENDS – MENA

Arab-Israel Normalization: The Israel-Hamas war has paused but not ended Arab-Israel normalization efforts. The Abraham Accords in September 2020 established diplomatic relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Israel established relations with Morocco and Sudan, although normalization with Khartoum has paused due to domestic unrest. Despite the ongoing war with Hamas, no Abraham Accords signatory has severed diplomatic relations with Israel, and these agreements will persevere. Saudi Arabia has reiterated a desire for normalization with Israel but has insisted that Israel provide “a clear and credible pathway to a Palestinian state.” Other Arab and Muslim-majority countries seek to capitalize on the Abraham Accords and normalization, but will only proceed after the war ends and Israel offers a roadmap for Palestinian self-determination.

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Engagement • Education • Outreach

NESA Programs & Events

Roundtable Discussion with the Indian Institute of Public Administration

On 6 February 2024, five NESA Center faculty members held a seminar discussion at NESA Center offices in Washington, D.C., with two faculty members and twelve students from the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) regarding current and emergent policy issues in South Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral. Adjunct Professor John (Jack) Gill opened the seminar and led the discussion. [Continue Reading.](#)



Washington Seminar

On 14 February 2024, the NESA Center held a Washington Seminar Discussion at the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D.C. Dr. Michael Sharnoff moderated a conversation between Hanin Ghaddar and David Makovsky, both policy scholars at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. The afternoon ended with a question-and-answer session with 32 participants from 23 countries. The question-and-answer revolved around the Israel-Hamas war, the regional implications, and U.S. policy toward the region. [Continue reading.](#)



DSCU Security Cooperation Organization NESA Center Orientation and Regional Briefing

On February 27, 2024, the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies welcomed 18 students from the Defense Security Cooperation University's (DSCU) seven-week Security Cooperation Organization (SCO) Operations Course. Academic Dean Roger Kangas, supported by Assistant Professor Jeffrey Payne, Dr. Michael Sharnoff, Professor Richard Wiersema, and Associate Dean Charles Marks, briefed the SCO personnel at Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, D.C., who's assignments are in the Middle East, Europe, and the Pacific regions. [Continue reading.](#)



NESA Programs & Events

2023 NESA CENTER IMPACT REPORT

In March 2024, the NESA Center for Strategic Studies published an Impact Report, which showcased the NESA Center alumni network, academic programming, and engagements spanning from fiscal year 2023 to the first quarter of fiscal year 2024. It particularly highlights the following areas of focus: Transnational and Asymmetric Threats, Territorial and Maritime Security, Defense Sector Governance – *including Professional Military Education and Global Power Competition*. [Continue reading.](#)



Meeting with CCCPA and Egyptian Embassy

On 1 March 2024, a Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies team met with Ambassador Ahmed Abdel-Latif, Director General of the Cairo Center for Conflict Prevention and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA) and Executive Director of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, at the invitation of the Egyptian Embassy in Washington, D.C. Acting Director COL David Lamm, USA (Ret.), Academic Dean Dr. Roger Kangas, along with Prof. Richard Wiersema represented the NESA Center. AMB Abdel-Latif described the mission and functions of both the Cairo Center and the Aswan Forum, invited NESA Center participation in their programs, and requested assistance in obtaining enrollment in NESA programs for some of his regional experts. Among his suggested areas of collaboration were: countering violent extremism; climate change; women, peace, and security; conflict prevention; and conflict resolution.

Saudi Armed Forces Command and Staff College Defense Resource Management Course

From 5–6 March 2024, a Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies team, led by Program Manager Matthew Holbert, delivered a two-day course on Defense Resource Management (DRM) to a War Course at the Saudi Armed Forces Command and Staff College (SAFCSC) in Saudi Arabia. [Continue reading.](#)



NESA Programs & Events

The Changing Security Dynamics in the Middle East Program

From 5–6 March 2024, The Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies hosted a two-day program in Washington, D.C., to explore the history and significance of recent strategic changes in the Middle East, global and regional security dynamics, developments in-region and the economic outlook, changes in the nature of warfare, maritime security, political stability, and economic prosperity.



Third Annual Strategic Dialogue with the Armenian National Defense Research University

From 18–21 March 2024, the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies convened a seminar-based dialogue on national strategic issues led by NESA Center faculty members Academic Dean Dr. Roger Kangas, Dr. Gawdat Bahgat, Professor Richard Wiersema, and Associate Dean Charles Marks. This engagement brought together 41 participants from the Armenian National Defense Research University (NDRU), comprising both faculty and students, alongside a group of students pursuing internships with the Ministry of Defense. [Continue reading.](#)



Roundtable Discussion at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Armenia

On 20 March 2024, Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies faculty members Academic Dean Dr. Roger Kangas, Dr. Gawdat Bahgat, Professor Richard Wiersema, and Associate Dean Charles Marks participated in a roundtable discussion at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Yerevan, Armenia. The international roundtable titled “Perspectives on the Middle East in Transition: Dynamics of Change” featured a four-person panel, where two presentations were delivered by representatives from the NESA Center, and an additional two presentations were provided by members of the Institute of Oriental Studies. [Continue reading.](#)



NESA Programs & Events

Middle East Security 2025 Workshop

From 25–26 March 2024, experts from the Qatar Armed Forces Strategic Studies Centre (QAFSSC) and the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies convened in Istanbul, Türkiye, for a series of comprehensive discussions. The discussions centered on defense, security, and the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, with a particular emphasis on the roles of regional powers, the ongoing conflict in Gaza, and prospective regional challenges and perspectives. [Continue reading.](#)



Israel Indo-Pacific Roundtable Virtual Workshop

From 27–28 March 2024, the NESA Center for Strategic Studies held an inaugural Israel Indo-Pacific Roundtable Virtual Workshop on Zoom. The workshop provided a venue for participants from Israel and across the Indo-Pacific region to discuss shared interests, identify new areas for co-operation, and strengthen their partnerships. The workshop included more than 40 scholars and practitioners from Israel and the Indo-Pacific region. [Continue reading.](#)



NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

Dr. Hassan Abbas

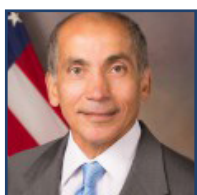


12 February 2024 – Spoke on a panel during the [2024 American Foreign Policy Council \(AFPC\) "Airlie Dialogue"](#) in Washington, D.C. Professor Abbas spoke on the topic "The Taliban Emirate and Its Impact on Asia."

13 February 2024 – Interviewed for The Cipher Brief for the article ["Pakistan's Election Stunner – and the Dangers Ahead."](#) Dr. Abbas "explained why Khan has captured the hearts of so many Pakistanis, and warned of dangers on multiple fronts in the days and months ahead."

22 February 2024 – Coauthored an article with Zahra Hassan published in the UnPopulist on Islam and liberalism titled ["Contrary to Western Understanding, Islam Is a Liberal Faith."](#)

Dr. Gawdat Bahgat



4–5 March 2024 – Co-chaired a workshop with Professor David Des Roches during the Gulf Studies Symposium by the Gulf International Forum at Georgetown University. [The Defense and Security workshop](#) was on "Broadening Gulf Security:

New Perspectives and Persistent Challenges.



25 March 2024 – Contributed a chapter for the newly released "The Security Side of Gulf Visions. Adapting Defense to the Connectivity Age" report. The report was published by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies

(ISPI). Dr. Bahgat's chapter titled, ["Positive Neutralism: Security Politics of Vision 2040 in Oman,"](#) starts on page 47.

David Des Roches



29 February 2024 – Was interviewed on [VOA Africa News Tonight](#) to discuss the Russian expansion in Africa and the morphing of Wagner Group into the African Legion. Professor Des Roches' remarks start at 13:22.

9 March 2024 – Discussed ["Russian Goals in Africa Using Disinformation"](#) on Voice of America's Africa News Tonight radio show.

18 March 2024 – Gave a presentation on the Dynamics of Middle East Conflict at the British Omani Society in London.

19 March 2024 – Gave a presentation on U.S. Power in the Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.



31 March 2024 – Had a paper highlighted in issue 196 of SA's Ara'a Magazine, which spotlights Gulf initiatives for regional security. Prof. Des Roches' paper is titled ["Three Restrictions that Prevent America From Using Effective Military Options to Defend the Gulf and Red Sea"](#) (Arabic). Dr. Gawdat Bahgat also included a paper in the same magazine that explored the ["Biden Administration and the Middle East Crisis"](#) (Arabic).

NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

Ali Ahmad Jalali



16 February 2024 – Interviewed by VOA weekly 30-minute program for discussion on a Congressional hearing on Afghanistan.

5 March 2024 – Was interviewed by the Stanford University, Hoover Center to contribute to its Oral History project on Afghanistan called [“Hoover Afghanistan Research and Relief Team \(HART\).”](#)

10 March 2024 – Interviewed by VOA for comments on the [Congressional warning](#) to the administration not to engage the Taliban. Also interviewed on 16 February by VOA Weekly to discuss the Congressional hearing on Afghanistan.

March 2024 – There is an upsurge of Daesh (IS-K) Terrorist attacks in the region. In recent months, terror attacks by Daesh (Islamic State Khorasan) have grown bolder and stretched beyond Afghanistan’s borders. The group killed at least 43 people in an assault on a political rally in northern Pakistan and the took lives of at least 84 people in two suicide bombings in Iran in January. Last month, the IS-K was behind the attack in Moscow, which killed at least 143 people. The situation has sent alarms across the region and beyond. Some U.S. observers warn of the possible reach of IS-K terrors beyond the region to Europe and North America. Although ISIS Khorasan has been active for nine years, it has been the most dangerous branch of ISIS with a wider reach and a reputation for extreme brutality and violence. Prof. Jalali was interviewed by several domestic and international media for comments on the nature and extension of the threat and ways to counter it. Some of Prof. Jalali’s interviews are listed below:

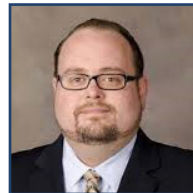
- **10 March:** Interviewed by [Afghanistan International TV](#) on reasons behind the rise of Daesh in Afghanistan and the region.
- **19 March:** Interviewed by [VOA Pashto on reasserting Daesh operations in Iran.](#)
- **23 March:** Interview with VOA Pashto on regional security caused by IS-K attacks.
- **24 March:** [VOA interview on Daesh global reach.](#)
- **27 March:** Was a guest on the RFERL TV program on the [collaboration of Central Asian extremists with the IS-K.](#)

The interview also focused on the Tajiks extremists accused of launching the terrorist attacks in Moscow.



- **28 March:** Was a guest of a DW (Deutch Welle) special program focusing on Daesh terrorist attacks in Moscow.

Jeffrey Payne



16 February 2024 – Had a discussion with Windward on Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) tools and analysis for Developing Partners and Security Cooperation Efforts.

28–29 February 2024 – Was a panelist during Session 2, “Underwater Domain Awareness: Security and Economic Dimensions.” The Pathfinder Foundation hosted the event titled the [“Indian Ocean Security Conference - Phase III.”](#) There were approximately 40 in-person participants and 15 virtual. This is a Sri Lanka-based event co-sponsored by the United States Embassy in Colombo.



NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

20 March 2024 – Spoke as guest speaker for the InterRegional for Strategic Analysis (ISA) roundtable on Relevance for the Indo-Pacific for MENA Regional States. ISA is a UAE-based research and academic institution. There were approximately 15 virtual participants.

Dr. Michael Sharnoff



21 February 2024 – Published the paper, [“Visualizing Palestine in Arab Postage Stamps: 1948-1967”](#) in the Middle Eastern Studies journal. The article argues that Arab stamp fluctuations of Palestine’s borders from 1948 to 1967 occurred because the territories became social constructs by the Arab governments.

21 March 2024 – Delivered a presentation on Jordan’s West Bank challenge at the Lesley J. McNair Colloquium at National Defense University (NDU). Presented to a group of more than 20 NDU faculty and students on the topic of Jordan’s relationship with the West Bank and implications for regional stability. The talk was held in the CASL Situation Room at NDU.

Richard Wiersema



27 March 2024 – Both Associate Dean Charles Marks and Associate Dean Richard Wiersema met with Group Captain Salim Mohammed Al. Kharusi and his Deputy LTC Saud Hamad Al-Kasbi at the Omani Academy of Defence and Strategic Studies-Strategic Defence Studies Center. Two courses were explored: a two-week Strategic Analysis course and a one-week Cybersecurity course of instruction for senior members of the Omani interagency.

Alumni Publications & News

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10 February – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** wrote an article for the The Diplomat: [“Afghanistan’s Climate Crisis: Addressing Drivers of Conflict.”](#)

13 February – **Eman Ragab (Egypt)** published an article for Al Ahram: [“Terrorism and transnational crime.”](#)

19 February – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** published an article for the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs: [“Afghanistan’s Truncated Capacity to Respond to Natural Disasters: Isn’t it Time for the International Community to Step In?”](#)

24 February – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** published an Op-Ed for The Diplomat: [“A Reality Check on Afghanistan’s Isolation Under the Taliban.”](#)

29 February – **Charani Patabendige (Sri Lanka)** published an Op-Ed for The Morning: [“New Face of Warfare: how law is changing the battlefield.”](#)

29 February – **Thusitha Bulathgama (Sri Lanka)** wrote an Op-Ed for The Morning: [“Understanding environmental crimes.”](#)

04 March – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** wrote a chapter on Afghanistan and India in the Observer Research Foundation’s publication: [“Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Enduring Challenges, Evolving Responses.”](#)

07 March – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** published an analysis for the Middle East Institute: [“Women’s rights under the Taliban: The socio-economic consequences of political exclusion.”](#)

09 March – **Asanga Abeyagoonasekera (Sri Lanka)** wrote an analysis for NIAS Global Politics: [“Sri Lanka: The rise of ultra-nationalism and elections.”](#)

09 March – **Uttam Kumar Sinha (India)** co-authored an article for The Third Pole: [“Shahpurkandi Dam: India-Pakistan experts advocate cooperation for water security.”](#)

13 March – **Antonia Dimou (Greece)** published an Op-Ed for Modern Diplomacy: [“Greece Spearheads a Dynamic Energy Transition.”](#)

14 March – **Shafqat Munir (Bangladesh)** published an Op-Ed for The Daily Star: [“Ship hijacking reveals Bangladesh’s maritime vulnerabilities.”](#)

22 March – **Thokozani Chazema (Malawi)** wrote an article for the NESAs Alumni Blog: [“Military Professionalism at a Crossroads: A Review of Ginsburgh’s Thoughts.”](#)

23 March – **Asanga Abeyagoonasekera (Sri Lanka)** published an analysis for Global Strat View: [“Sweden Joins NATO: Walk Towards Instability and Nuclear Paradox.”](#)

28 March – **Shanthie D’Souza (India)** published an Op-Ed for The Diplomat: [“After Attack in Russia, Focus Turns to ISKP in Afghanistan and Central Asia.”](#)

28 March – **Raghvendra Kumar (India)** published an article for Global Affairs Review: [“Comparative Security of the Maritime Flow of Petroleum-Based Energy.”](#)

Calendar

Upcoming NESACenter Events

- **Nepal NDU Design Committee Dialogue** | 8–12 April 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Chatham House: Iran Dialogue** | 12 April 2024 | London
- **Lebanese Fouad Shehab Command and Staff College Seminar** | 15–19 April 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Tunisian National Defense Institute National Security Seminar** | 16–24 April 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Saudi Arabia National Guard Command and Staff College Program** | 18–24 April 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **SSN Alumni Program: Environmental Security** | 22–24 April 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Saudi Armed Forces Command and Staff College War Course** | 23–24 April 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Indo-Pacific Minilateral Series: Maritime Security, the Indo-Pacific, & Advancing Maritime Domain Awareness Workshop** | 23–25 April 2024 | Jakarta, Indonesia
- **Qatar Defense Academy** | 28 April–6 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **UAE War Course Engagement** | 29 April–3 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Senior Executive Seminar 02-24 (CT-2)** | 29 April–3 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **NESA/AFRICOM Transnational Threats Know No Borders Workshop** | 6–9 May 2024 | Casablanca, Morocco
- **Pakistan National Defence University Seminar** | 11–15 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Silk Road/Washington Seminar** | 13–17 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **May ACSS/AFRICOM Lunch** | 15 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **International Students Army Staff College Staff Ride** | 15 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **SCO NESACenter Orientation & Regional Briefing** | 17 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **SANG G7** | 20 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Countering Human Trafficking** | 20–24 May 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Executive Seminar 01-24** | 3–7 June 2024 | Rabat, Morocco
- **Air War College International Officer Seminar** | 6 June 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **SCO NESACenter Orientation & Regional Briefing** | 11 June 2024 | Washington, D.C.
- **Indian Ocean Island Forum: Transparency Indo-Pacific Waters** | 24–26 June 2024 | Bangkok, Thailand
- **NESA/AFRICOM “The Impact of the Changing Nature of Security on the Region”** | 24–27 June 2024 | Casablanca, Morocco

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