



August 2019 Monthly Report

## NESA Region Trends

Participant discussions throughout the NESA Center's August programming ranged from national, regional, and international efforts to counter terrorism, to the future of technology in warfare and its use by violent extremist organizations, to analysis and debate over U.S.-Iran policy and the implications of both U.S. and Iranian leaders continuing down what participants fear could be an escalatory ladder.

- **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 increasingly exploiting social media, artificial intelligence (AI), and cyber (including cryptocurrencies) on a far larger level. Participants had particular concern about terrorist groups' use of social media in recruiting, training, and communicating with followers, supporters, and donors, given social media platforms' ubiquity, speed, and cost effectiveness.
- Participants fear cyber warfare and malicious use of AI by terrorist groups is unavoidable; therefore continuous technological advancement is the only way to truly stay 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.
- **The U.S. lacks a consistent Iran policy, some participants say:** On the Trump Administration's Iran policy, many participants expressed seeing little coherence between means and ends. Some participants from NESA states with economic ties to the Islamic Republic critiqued U.S. Iran policy as dovetailing perfectly with Israeli interests and with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hawkish political agenda, and characterized the "maximum pressure" campaign as putting them in a difficult position. European Union (EU) participants continue to lament the precarious state of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and raised the point that should the present situation escalate into military action, its consequences would affect Europe, politically and economically.
- Generally, participants from key Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have applauded the Administration's "maximum pressure" campaign and urge the U.S. to continue using all instruments of national power — economic, diplomatic, and military deterrence — to counter Tehran's malign activities.



## NESA-AFRICOM Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization Workshop

5—9 August

**T**he NESA Center, in partnership with U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), conducted a “Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization Workshop” 5-9 August 2019 in Casablanca, Morocco. The event was designed to provide a venue for senior security professionals to discuss a broad range of transnational security issues under Chatham House Rule of non-attribution.

Social media continues to grow as a preferred tool of extremist groups to message and recruit, but is too often ignored by public sector actors as an effective and necessary tool for governments as well. Countering violent extremism (CVE) is a complex, multi-dimensional challenge, demanding comprehensive “whole of government” and “whole of society” approaches. For more impactful CVE strategies, governments must better understand how to effectively leverage existing technology and social media—as well as traditional sources of information like TV and print—as effective tools in their strategic communications messaging. The group examined the broader evolving global trends that will shape the world in decades ahead and discussed how these factors will affect stability, crises, and security in North Africa. Factors such as demographic changes, mobilization of populations, emerging technologies (such as Artificial Intelligence [AI], cryptocurrency, cognitive and social media warfare, and drones) were examined. Also provided was a Youth Perspective on the “pull and push” factors attracting at-risk populations (like youth, internally displaced personnel, refugees, criminal networks, and disenfranchised border areas). The need to work in coordination to share and build on best practices was highlighted as the participants addressed root problems and existing initiatives, taken nationally and regionally, to combat critical security crises. Finishing the workshop was a lecture from NESA Director LTG (Ret.) Terry Wolff investigating case studies of Daesh, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, along with personal perspectives on the evolution of Daesh in the region, the group’s use of social media, and the challenge of prosecuting or rehabilitating returning fighters. There were also numerous opportunities for informal sidebar discussions to further inform and validate AFRICOM and USG future strategy.

In addition to the “Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization Workshop”, NESA also conducted a special full-day Youth Session, “Millennial Muslims and Generation Z’ers – Where Do We Go?” led by Mr. Nathaniel Rosenblatt, Fellow International Security program at the New America Foundation.



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## NESA-ARCENT CASA Land Forces Symposium 2019

25—28 August

From 26-28 August, Mr. Jeff Payne of the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies helped lead ARCENT's 2019 Central and South Asia Symposium. Taking place at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, the event brought together ARCENT's leadership, key U.S. state national guard components, and army representatives from Central and South Asia states. Regional states that took part include Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Topics discussed at the symposium included a review of U.S. policy towards the region, discussions on border security, the status of exercise Steppe Eagle, and discussions on ISIS's footprint in the Central and South Asia Region, among others. LTG (ret) Terry Wolff, NESA Director, spoke to the participants regarding the regional impact of violent extremism and ISIS in particular.

NESA Academic Affairs Manager Jeffrey Payne, far right, moderates a panel on U.S. policy towards Central and South Asia featuring Mr. Clark Adams, Central Asia Director at the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Mr. Jonathan Henick, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Asia.



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## Saudi Curriculum Development Workshop Series

22—26 July

29 July—2 August

26—30 August

In July and August at National Defense University, the NESACenter conducted three curriculum development workshops for senior program faculty of the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces Command and Staff College. Each workshop focused on one course for one week: Theater Strategy, 22-26 July; Defense Management, 29 July—2 August; and Theory of War, 26-30 August.

These workshops were part of a series of six which began in March and will conclude in September, 2019. While some sessions introduced new material, the majority of the Saudi workshop participants enjoyed the added benefit of being returning NESACenter alumni, which allowed workshop lectures and case studies to employ and evaluate concepts introduced in previous sessions. The NESACenter team, led by Professors Daniel Baltrusaitis and Richard Wiersema, leveraged this experience and longstanding relationship to advance the transformation of the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces Command and Staff College into the Saudi Arabian National Defense University. The workshops included standard curriculum development topics such as “Drafting Course Evaluations”, “Teaching Methods”, and “Drafting Lesson Objectives,” as well as topics intended to develop expertise in the subject matter for each course.

NESACenter’s continuing engagements with the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces Command and Staff College function as enablers for the College’s capacity to develop and maintain a war college curriculum. These workshops also strengthen the ability of senior Saudi officers to understand U.S. military approaches to strategic thinking and problem solving, and better prepares them to collaborate in joint, interagency and multinational environments.



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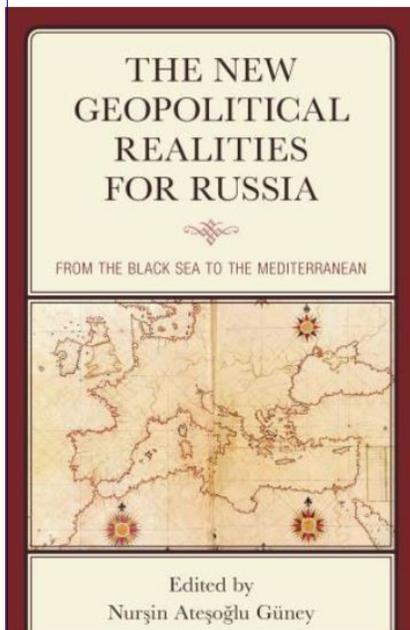
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# Spotlight on More August Events

**Forthcoming faculty publication:** NESA Prof. Gawdat Bahgat contributed a chapter on a resurgent Russia's view of oil, politics, and power in the forthcoming *The New Geopolitical Realities For Russia* (Lexington Books).



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## NESA FACULTY WELCOMES:



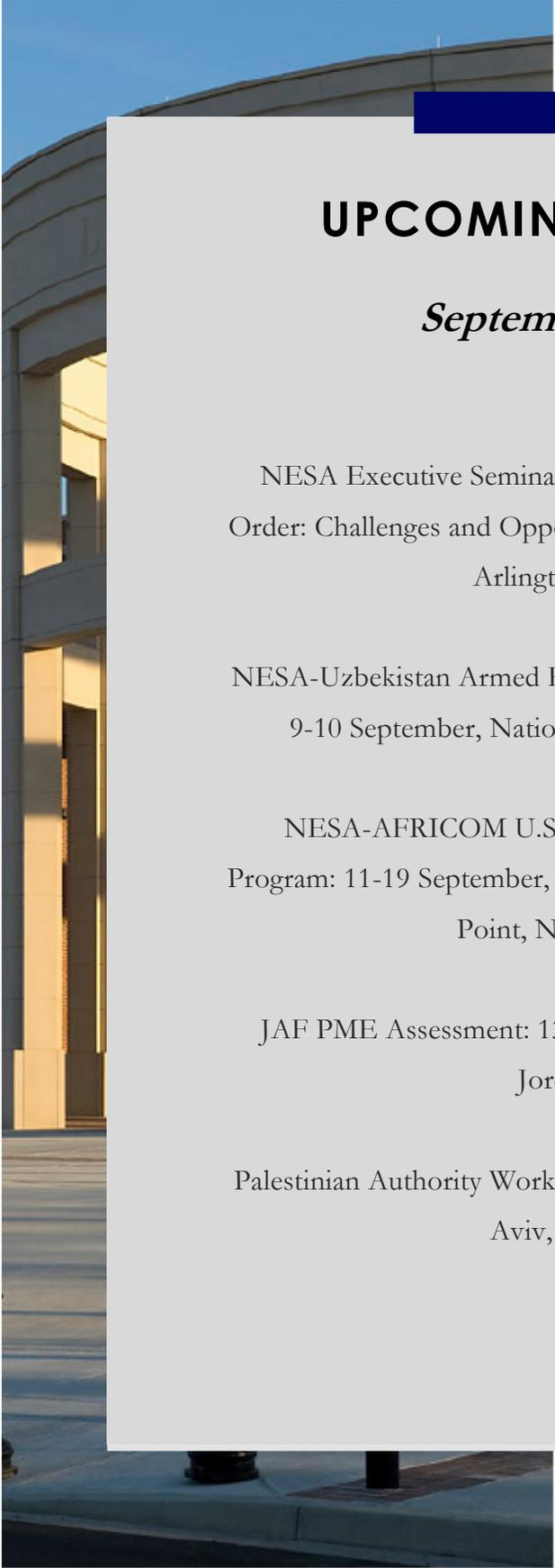
**Dr. Hassan Abbas** was named a NESA Professor in August. He joins the ranks of NESA faculty following a long career in academia, including previously serving as department chair at NDU's College of International Security Affairs and as Distinguished Quaid-i-Azam Professor at Columbia University. His research agenda will focus on politics, security, religion in South Asia, and U.S. foreign policy towards the NESA region, among other subjects. Dr. Abbas is a former Pakistani government official who served in the administrations of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Pervez Musharraf, and regularly appears as a subject matter expert on leading media outlets including CNN, ABC, BBC, C-SPAN, and Al Jazeera



**Dr. Michael Bell** was named a NESA Professor in August, joining the NESA team after recently serving as Senior Director for Gulf Affairs in the National Security Council, and then as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Senior Director for Middle East Affairs in the National Security Council. Prior to Dr. Bell's work with the Administration, he was chancellor of NDU's College of International Security Affairs at the National Defense University. He is a retired Army Colonel, served in the Middle East, Europe and on the Pentagon's Joint Staff during his Army career. His awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Bronze Star, the combat action badge, and the Joint Staff identification badge.



**COL Joshe Raetz** integrated into NESA as an Army Fellow in August. COL Raetz served in tactical units executing or commanding operations throughout the Mid East, North and East Africa, and Asia. Most recently he commanded two battalions in the United States Army Special Operations Command including the 1-1st Special Forces Battalion based in Okinawa, Japan. In each location he worked with Partners to identify and thwart threats and build critical capacity of Security Forces to stabilize areas. He holds a BA from Norwich University and a Master of Military Science from the United States Marine Corps University.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

*September 2019*

NESA Executive Seminar 03-19 “The New World Order: Challenges and Opportunities”: 8-20 September, Arlington, VA

NESA-Uzbekistan Armed Forces Academy Workshop: 9-10 September, National Defense University

NESA-AFRICOM U.S.-North Africa Colonels Program: 11-19 September, Washington, D.C. and West Point, New York

JAF PME Assessment: 13-19 September, Amman, Jordan

Palestinian Authority Workshop: 22-24 September, Tel Aviv, Israel

additional information and images at:  
[www.nesa-center.org](http://www.nesa-center.org)



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