



NEAR EAST SOUTH ASIA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

NESA Update

April 2021 – May 2021

NESA Region Trends – LEVANT & AFGHANISTAN

LEVANT:

- **Heightened tension in Jerusalem and the West Bank during Ramadan have exacerbated Israeli-Palestinian relations**, with clashes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood where Palestinian families face eviction in a long-standing legal case. Thousands of Palestinians protested these potential evictions on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem and were met with a heavy response by Israeli police, leaving more than 205 Palestinians injured.
- On May 10, **Hamas sought to capitalize on the unrest as the defender of Jerusalem and fired thousands of long-range rockets indiscriminately at Israeli cities and towns**. Israel launched an 11-day air campaign against Hamas and Islamic Jihad assets, killing several of their commanders and destroying much of their weapons arsenal and tunnel networks. Intercommunal violence inside Israel between Jewish and Arab citizens was the worst in decades and threatened to undermine the social fabric and relative peaceful coexistence between neighbors.
- **Hundreds of protestors in Jordan and Lebanon attempted to penetrate their borders with Israel in support of the Palestinians**. The IDF destroyed a drone destined for the Israeli-Jordanian border. Palestinian armed groups in Lebanon fired rockets toward Israel, with all falling inside Lebanese territory. Hezbollah, for its part, stayed out of the conflict.

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Engagement • Education • Outreach

NESA Region Trends

- On May 20, **Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire, ending the biggest round of fighting since 2014.** Twelve Israelis have been killed and over 200 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. So far, the ceasefire appears to hold, but tensions remain very high. Renewed clashes in Jerusalem and in the West Bank after the ceasefire highlight the fragility of the agreement and threaten to undermine regional stability and security.
- The view from the region is that **Israel is to blame for the fighting and public sympathy for the Palestinians is high.** However, Emirati, Bahraini, Sudanese, and Moroccan leaders have said that the fighting would not jeopardize the Abraham Accords and their newly established relations with Israel. Many in the region have questioned why the United States did not exercise its influence sooner to insist on a ceasefire. Egyptian mediation between Israel and Hamas served as a reminder of the influential regional role Cairo continues to play.

AFGHANISTAN:

- The key trend in Afghanistan is manifested by the beginning of the **U.S. and NATO troops withdrawal from Afghanistan** while international and regional diplomacy continues to invigorate the peace negotiation between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government. With the international military and diplomatic efforts in Afghanistan taking a new turns, the Taliban attacks and violence against the Afghan government targets escalates.

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

NESA Programs & Events

Bay of Bengal Maritime Workshop

The NESA Center hosted a maritime and regional security workshop in a partnership with the **National Maritime Foundation (NMF)** that focused on the changing environmental and strategic challenges in the Bay of Bengal region. The workshop was kicked off by comments from **NESA Director LTG (Ret) Terry Wolff** and **NMF Chairman Admiral Sunil Lanba**. Keynote remarks from **Brigadier General (USAF) David Shoemaker, Deputy Director, Headquarters, USINDOPACOM** and **Mr. Harsh Kumar Jain (AS BIMSTEC, SAARC and Nalanda), Ministry of External Affairs, India** initiated the panels. The workshop welcomed foreign service and military officers from countries of the Bay of Bengal region and those located within or with an interest in the wider Indian Ocean Region. Featured speakers came from a wide array of backgrounds, including military services, academic institutions, government research institutions, and think tanks. The topic of general discussion was “Challenges Emerging out of the COVID Environment.” **NMF Director-General, Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan** and **NESA’s Jeff Payne** served as primary hosts for the event. <https://nesa-center.org/bay-of-bengal-maritime-workshop/>

Bay of Bengal Maritime Workshop

27–29 April 2021



NESA Programs & Events

Roundtable Discussion With Armenian Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Varuzhan Nersesyan

The NESA Center held a roundtable discussion with the **Armenian Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Varuzhan Nersesyan**. H.E. Varuzhan Nersesyan has served as the Ambassador to the United States since November 2018. **NESA Professor Dr. Hassan Abbas** moderated the discussion. The ambassador offered insights into the regional security dynamics and consequences of the recent conflict, including the humanitarian impact. U.S.-Armenian relations also came up in the discussions between the NESA faculty and the ambassador with a focus on the need for peacebuilding and stability in the region. <https://nesa-center.org/roundtable-discussion-with-armenian-ambassador-to-the-united-states-h-e-varuzhan-nersesyan/>

Roundtable Discussion With Armenian Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Varuzhan Nersesyan 6 May 2021



Speakers from top left: Dr. Hassan Abbas (NESA Distinguished Professor of International Relations), H.E. Varuzhan Nersesyan (Armenian Ambassador to the United States), Dr. Roger Kangas (NESA Academic Dean), LTG (Ret) Terry Wolff (NESA Director)

NESA Programs & Events

MENA Regional Waters Workshop

The NESA Center conducted a workshop focused on the maritime security environment in the Red and Arabian Seas. Specifically, the program centered on analyzing illicit networks in the maritime domain. This workshop brought together 34 participants from seven regional states. The event was conducted digitally due to the ongoing pressures of the pandemic environment. A component part of NESA's ongoing investment in **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** focused programming, this event was supported by **United States Central Command (USCENTCOM)** and sought to initiate discussions with regional partners about the increasingly crowded and complicated waters surrounding the Arabian Peninsula. <https://nesa-center.org/mena-regional-waters-a-workshop-on-the-red-sea-arabian-sea-smuggling-conundrum/>

Read the Report [[ENGLISH – PDF](#)][[ARABIC – PDF](#)]

MENA Regional Waters Workshop The Red Sea/Arabian Sea Smuggling Conundrum 18 – 19 May 2021



NESA Programs & Events

Omani Diplomatic Institute Seminar

In late May 2021 the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA) held a virtual seminar with the **Omani Diplomatic Institute** in Muscat. Fourteen Omani diplomats participated in the seminar. NESA experts covered a variety of topics including the Biden Administration policy toward the Middle East, U.S. military engagement in the region, global power competition, Asian powers, technology and national security, and regional security. The broad objective of the seminar was to engage in a strategic dialogue between NESA experts and the Omani diplomats. The two sides hope to hold similar events in Muscat and Washington DC in the near future. <https://nesa-center.org/omani-diplomatic-institute-seminar/>

Omani Diplomatic Institute Seminar 24–26 May 2021



NESA speakers from top left: Dr. Gawdat Bahgat (Professor of National Security Affairs), LTG (Ret) Terry Wolff (Director), David W. Lamm (Deputy Director), Dr. Roger Kangas (Academic Dean), Dr. Hassan Abbas (Distinguished Professor of International Relations), David Des Roches (Associate Professor)

NESA Programs & Events

Migration Workshop

The NESA Center, in partnership with the **George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies (GCMC)** and the **European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)**, conducted a Migration Workshop. The two-day program was comprised of four separate panels with eight speakers from various parts of the region. Thirty-two participants from North Africa, the Levant, Europe, and Brazil participated in the online workshop. Migration has been reaching record highs in North African, Levantine, and EU countries. An estimated 20+ million migrants are in the EU with an estimated additional 7–8 million there illegally. The phenomenon is often portrayed as an “exodus” largely composed of illegal migrants, driven by conflict, poverty, and lack of opportunity. However, what is often overlooked in a predominantly Euro-centric approach is the positive “win-win” situation that results when both sides of the Mediterranean cooperate more constructively, collaboratively, and creatively. <https://nesa-center.org/migration-workshop/>



Migration Workshop

25 – 26 May 2021



NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

Dr. Hassan Abbas



22 April 2021 – Dr. Abbas was a panelist at Quaid-i-Azam University’s Islamabad Seminar discussing the Biden Administration Policy towards Pakistan with a live audience of 35. <https://pakob-server.net/pakistan-crucial-to-us-interests-in-war-against-terror-for-stability-in-afghanistan>

27 April 2021 – Delivered a lecture to AFPak Hands class at NDU’s College of International Security Affairs with 23 participants. Dr. Abbas discussed the Biden Administration’s Middle East policy.

11 May 2021 – Led and worked with DOD’s National Security Innovation Network (NSIN) to supervise a group of students at Carnegie Mellon University learning about cyber security and crime fighting. A detailed report and product was submitted to NESA leaders.

14 May 2021 – Was a speaker at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) for a “Pakistan Familiarization Class for U.S. Diplomats”. Dr. Abbas discussed “Afghanistan: Pakistan’s Policy and the Impact of U.S. Withdrawal on Pakistan” with 21 participants.

Dr. Gawdat Bahgat



2021 – Published a book chapter, “Peace in the Persian Gulf – An Assessment” in a book, “Stepping Away from the Abyss: A Gradual Approach towards a New Security System in the Persian Gulf” published by the European University Institute in Florence. <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/71221>

9 May 2021 – Dr. Bahgat published an essay in The Cairo Review of Global Affairs titled, Solving the Nuclear Stalemate between Iran and the United States. <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/solving-the-nuclear-stalemate-between-iran-and-the-united-states/>

25 May 2021 – Published a paper on the hacker attack on the Colonial Pipeline in RiEnergia. <https://rienergia.staffettaonline.com/articolo/34774/L%E2%80%99attacco+hacker+al+Colonial+Pipeline+%C3%A8+un+monito+all%E2%80%99industria+energetica/Bahgat>

David Des Roches



1 May 2021 – Wrote a short piece for the Al Jazeera Center for Studies on GCC Drone acquisition titled “The Siren Song of the Drone: Understanding the Factors Driving GCC Drone Acquisition.” <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/analyses/siren-song-drone-understanding-factors-driving-gcc-drone-acquisition?fbclid=IwAR3H-8cOgQd8sQyYGfxKh8pwKgTY0kUnrNySn0Ev8iHNBoWF-pJnnN4I5HJwI>

13 May 2021 – Gave a lecture on the Abraham Accords to the leadership group of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), which is one of the 17 U.S. intelligence agencies.

John H. Gill



20 May 2021 – Spoke at an IISS web launch as one of the co-authors of a new report entitled “Deterrence and Stability in South Asia: Perceptions and Realities.” Approximately 70 persons participated virtually to include U.S. and UK government officials as well as think tank members and academics from South Asia.



Ali Ahmad Jalali

28 April 2021 – Was a panelist at a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung virtual conference, “A Road Untraveled: Lessons

NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

Learned and Options for Future Stabilization Efforts in Afghanistan.”



30 April 2021 – Recorded a video update on the Implications of the U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan for the NESA Center. Minister Ali Jalali reviewed an update on the situation in Afghanistan, the status of the delayed peace talks and prospects, and some thoughts on what may lie ahead. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gX-EqzgLi0Ow>

21 May 2021 – Gave an exclusive interview with BBC News. Discussed different aspects of the political and security situation in and around Afghanistan at a time that the peace process faces new obstacles. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VY60TdB6oU>

NESA Alumni Activities & Contributions

10 April – **Uttam Kumar Sinha (India)** published an Op-Ed in the *Hindustan Times*: [“As a tri-polar nation, India has a critical role in the Arctic.”](#)

22 April – **Mustafa Fetouri (Libya)** published an Op-Ed for *Middle East Monitor*: [“Can Libya’s new authority succeed in cutting Haftar’s foreign links?”](#)

28 April – **Mustafa Fetouri (Libya)** published an Op-Ed for *Al-Monitor*, [“Libyan Prime Minister visits Ankara.”](#)

28 April – **Fatima Alasarar (Yemen)** wrote a viewpoint for the *Middle East Institute*: [“Promising signs of engagement on Yemen, but more needs to be done.”](#)

30 April – **Emadeddin Badi (Libya)** published an article for the *Atlantic Council*, [“Déby’s death: A microcosm of the flaws of French foreign policy in Libya.”](#)

30 April – **Asanga Abeyagoonasekera (Sri Lanka)** published an Op-Ed for the *Observer Research Foundation*: [“Before the phoenix nest: Questions surrounding the port city of Colombo.”](#)

04 May – **Shahab Enam Khan (Bangladesh)** authored an article for the NESA website: [“New Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean: Shared Concerns and Opportunities from Bangladesh Perspective.”](#)

04 May – **Dalia Ghanem (Algeria)** published an article for the *Carnegie Middle East Center*: [“Ankara’s Maghreb Moment.”](#)

10 May – **Mohamed Eljarh (Libya)** published an article for *Al-Monitor*, [“Libya’s uncertain path to elections.”](#)

13 May – **Mustafa Fetouri (Libya)** published an article for *Middle East Monitor*: [“How improved Ankara-Cairo ties reflect positively on Tripoli.”](#)

24 May – **Youssef Cherif (Tunisia)** edited and co-wrote a volume for *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*: [“The Modern Arab State: A Decade of Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa.”](#)

24 May – **Emadeddin Badi (Libya)** published an article for *War on the Rocks*: [“To advance its own interests, Turkey should now help stabilize Libya.”](#)

NESA Upcoming Events

NESA Maritime Domain and Technology Transformation | 14–18 June 2021 | Virtual

NESA Air War College Visit | 21 June 2021 | Virtual

NESA/APCSS Western Indian Ocean Region Workshop | 28–30 June 2021 | Virtual

NESA Air Command and Staff College | 13 July 2021 | Virtual

NESA Arab/Israeli Conflict: Israel/Jordan Seminar | 19–21 July 2021 | Virtual

NESA Executive Seminar “Hotter, Drier, and Dangerous: The Security Implications of Climate Change” | 26 July 2021–3 August 2021 | Virtual

NESA Strategic Survey | 26–30 July 2021 | Virtual

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