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NSD-S HUB NEWSLETTER

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“Development of peaceful and friendly relations.....promoting conditions of stability and well-being” (Art.2 NATO Chart)

Director’s Foreword

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As for everyone worldwide, life in the Hub has presented many new challenges over these past 3 months. Living with the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant crises has certainly tested our resolve. Here at the Hub we are acutely aware that the entire world is involved, one way or another, in adapting to these changes in whatever shape or form they present themselves. Perhaps the one silver lining is that it has enhanced unity, bringing many together to combat this unseen foe, and the Hub expresses its solidarity with all its Partners and friends in the MENA region and beyond who battle bravely on.

Resilience is a key element which we will all have to demonstrate in order to bounce back from these troubling times. The need to maintain our focus on ‘Stability for All’ has never diminished and so we have continued to foster links with organizations willing to work towards this common goal. To this end, we have made maximum use of Virtual Tools such as Webinars, VTCs and online meetings (Skype and Zoom) to ensure a continuation of the mutual support borne out of cultural respect and understanding.

Worthy of particular mention were the several activities including online Workshops, Round-table discussions and Seminars on the impact on stability and security in the MENA region caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Hub was delighted to collaborate with such distinguished organizations as the Dubai Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA), the Orient Research Centre (ORC), the NATO ICI Regional Centre, the Institute of Mediterranean Studies of the National Research Council (CNR-ISMed), the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre (BHUTH), the George Marshall Center (GMC) and the Naples branch of the Comitato Atlantico.

The Hub looks forward to such collaborations in the future, demonstrating the unwavering desire to work together and forge better relationships regardless of the challenging circumstances. Examples are: the Hub will host a high level Webinar on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies in the Middle East and Africa on 8 October, 2020 with the participation of many renowned experts; the proposed Partnership between the Hub and the Aldo Moro University of Bari and other universities from North African and European countries on a Horizon 2020 project relating to various aspects of Radicalisation.

As part of our continued efforts to find innovative “outside the box” approaches to common global challenges, the Hub has further advanced its work on the experimental “Hyperion” project, which analyses real-time and long-term data feeds built up from over 6.8 million sources from social media, news reporting and the internet from as many as 100 different languages making up to 1,000,000 calculations per day to provide activity and stability monitoring and forecasting.

Finally, a kindly reminder that you can keep up to date with Hub activities and recent publications by visiting our website (www.TheSouthernHub.org), which highlights the Hub’s projects and achievements and those of our Partners.



Director's Foreword

HUB Conferences & Seminars

Online Workshop: “Understanding the Global Economic Impacts and Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis”

The Orient Research Centre (ORC) – Dubai (UAE) carried out an online workshop on 21 April to which the Hub was invited as an observer. The format was a live broadcast entitled: “Understanding the Global Economic Impacts and Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis”, streamed on the ORC website.

The five speakers, Mr. Mario VANELLA, who also acted as moderator (ORC, Chief Economist), Mr. Christopher CANTELMINI (International Finance Corporation - IFC.), Dr. Michael PLUMMER (SAIS Europe Director and Eni Professor of International Economics), Dr. Raed SAFADI (Government of Dubai, Executive Director Department of Economic Development) and Mr. Seong HONG (World Bank, Infrastructure Analyst) presented a variety of in-depth analyses of the current global economic situation with particular focus on the COVID-19 effects on the development of trade, energy, infrastructure and government responses. Both the high quality presentations and the ensuing Q&A session proved especially informative considering the global uncertainty arising from the COVID-19 outbreak. The Hub is honored to have been invited and looks forward to further collaborations of this kind.

Virtual Round Table: “Confronting COVID-19 Outbreak and Oil Crisis: Assessing UAE Resilience & Implications”.

On 22 April B.G. Davide RE and other NSD-S Hub representatives graciously accepted the invitation to participate in the online round-table Workshop entitled: “Confronting the COVID-19 outbreak and the Oil crisis: Assessing UAE Resilience & Implications”. The event was promoted by the Dubai Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA).

The three primary speakers were Mr. Mohammed BAHAROON (Director General of Bhuth, Dubai Public Policy Research Centre) who spoke on ‘Governance Assessment and Lessons Learned’; Dr. Abdulkhaleq ABDULLAH (Professor of Political Science from the UAE) whose focus was ‘The Political-Economic Ramifications and Regional Outlook’; and Riad KAHWAJI (Director General of INEGMA) who acted as moderator while also presenting detailed analysis of ‘The Security Ramifications and Regional Assessment’. Many other noted academics and experts from around the world joined the event which was broadcast live on Zoom. Topics such as the assessment of the Dubai model, the role the UAE has had so far and the possible long term implications of the combined effects of the pandemic and oil crises were discussed in great depth. The event was a huge success and the Hub looks forward to further positive, proactive cooperation with all those present.



Institute for Near East and Gulf
Military Analysis

Virtual Round-table: "The Coronavirus and the Mediterranean Crossing: Irregular Migration during a Pandemic."

On 17 June, the NSD-S Hub had the privilege to participate in the George Marshall Center (GMC) Round-table entitled, "The Coronavirus and the Mediterranean Crossing: Irregular Migration during a Pandemic."

The event brought together GMC alumni, scholars and subject matter experts from the US, Europe, and Africa. The subsequent discussions constituted a valuable opportunity to build knowledge on the trends related to migration during this crisis, as well as its mid-long term impact on migration in the Mediterranean. They proved highly informative and evidenced the global uncertainty arising from the COVID-19 outbreak. The Hub was delighted to have participated and sees future dialogues of this kind as a wonderful opportunity.

George
Marshall Center
(GMC)



Online Workshop: Policy Workshop "COVID 19 and the Impacts on Security and the Economy in MENA countries".

On 25 June, 2020 the Hub attended the online Mediterranean Policy Workshop "COVID 19 and the Impacts on Security and the Economy in MENA countries" as main speaker on the topic of security. This initiative was set up by the Institute of Mediterranean Studies of the National Research Council (CNR-ISMed). The Hub, the Naples branch of the Comitato Atlantico and the Limes Club of Naples were delighted to participate as partners in this inaugural meeting of a cycle to provide deep knowledge of the Mediterranean and its socio-economic, historical, cultural and political dynamics. These workshops intend to promote dialogue between policy makers, academia, research and businesses, but above all aim to provide concrete support to policy makers aimed at identifying sustainable solutions to overcome the crisis.



OSCE PA-PAM-UNOCT Parliamentary Web Dialogue: Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism amidst the COVID-10 Pandemic.

On 30 June, 2020, on the occasion of the International Day of Parliamentarism, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) and the PAM co-hosted a Web Dialogue on the role of parliaments in countering terrorism during COVID 19 times, providing a forum for representatives of more than 65 parliaments to exchange views on how to keep counter-terrorism efforts high on the international agenda during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of the event was to strengthen cooperation in response to the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism during the pandemic caused by COVID 19. Participants concurred that it is crucial to assess the impact of the pandemic on violent extremism and carefully monitor terrorism trends throughout the Mediterranean region, the Sahel and the OSCE region spanning 57 countries in North America, Europe and Central Asia.

Speakers included Hon. Gennaro Migliore, Chair of PAM's Special Parliamentary Committee on Counter Terrorism, Hon. Reinhold Lopatka, Chair of the OSCE PA's and Mauro Miedico, Deputy Director and Chief of Special project and innovation branch pf UNOCT.

"COVID-19 has been keeping authorities all over the world highly occupied, shifting their attention towards fighting the pandemic," said CCT Chair Lopatka. He noted that terrorist groups nevertheless remain active and that the crisis has provided a fertile ground for them to boost their online propaganda, call for new attacks, increase recruitment operations, stigmatize minorities, and disseminate false and discriminatory information. "Against this background, it is paramount that we all stand united on this symbolic day marking the International Day of Parliamentarism to counter terrorism and violent extremism throughout our vast regions," he said.



HUB Articles

NSD-S Hub – The Story so Far

During the three years since its inception, the Hub has taken many enormous strides and is now actively achieving its ambition to become an effective virtual Docking Station, where relevant stakeholders can exchange knowledge and views in order for the Hub to support current and future NATO policies and decision making in relation to matters such as security and stability and the promotion of cooperative opportunities in the defined Area of Interest (the Middle East, North Africa, Sahel and Sub-Saharan regions).

The collaborative work being carried out at the Hub is adding considerably to NATO awareness and comprehensive understanding of the regional dynamics through connections and consultation with local experts in order to identify challenges, reveal opportunities and submit actionable recommendations. In accordance with the NATO “360 degree approach”, the Hub has been directly engaging local entities, including Civil Society Organizations, in order to achieve the regional perspective and contribute to enhancing cooperation with selected and potential Partners in support of NATO’s efforts to promote Stability and to optimize NATO cooperative activities.

The Hub's holistic, collaborative and multilateral approach has provided excellent results, such that regional independent views, knowledge and experience are genuinely heard, replacing what might be a well-intended, but perhaps pre-conditioned or misperceived approach, with a more accurate awareness based on careful consideration and inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. Innovative “outside the box” techniques have been used to update Hub techniques, thereby constantly improving internal processes. Many have facilitated more effective dialogue, regardless of unforeseeable obstacles such as the COVID-19 pandemic, including Virtual Tools such as Webinars, VTCs and online Round-table meetings.

The unique role of the Hub, connecting Allies, NATO and Non-NATO Entities, Partners and International, Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations by creating open and constructive dialogues on common challenges, has resulted in increased universal understanding and trust, creating synergies through effective cooperation networks (e.g., with FemWise; The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM); The Union of the Universities of the Mediterranean (UNIMED) etc.).

The Hub has certainly become one of the most visible elements of the NATO implementation of the Framework for the South. It reflects the will of the Alliance to increase NATO's regional knowledge and understanding, enhancing the effectiveness of NATO activities and possible cooperation with selected Partners in the Southern Regions.

Hyperion – An Innovative Tool

The HUB is currently testing, in cooperation with Allied Command Transformation (ACT), an AI (Artificial Intelligence) assisted dashboard called Hyperion. This represents a commercial version of the shelf project, making it easily available, without requiring years of development. Hyperion helps us understand mass data more easily and manage information overload. It calculates global activity and stability readings and, by establishing baseline activities, can pick up on any activity outside the normal and create notifications about the hotspots.

Hyperion can make over 1 million calculations of stability per day, trawling through 0,5 million social media posts, 1 million news articles and 6,8 million different sources to provides a daily stability score out of one hundred for each country: the higher the score, the greater the stability in the country. This saves a tremendous amount of time and resources traditionally needed for analysis. So far it has proven itself to be most useful for Common Operating Pictures, Event Monitoring, Stability Monitoring and Stability Forecasting.



Hyperion is already assisting us to quickly identify emerging threats to stability and pass that information on to the relevant authorities. It has been remarkable: work that would normally take hundreds of man hours manually sifting through news articles and social media posts is now instantaneous. Recently, the HUB has started training other NATO entities in the use of Hyperion. Early successes in training have generated a significant demand for access and additional training is already being planned. With the AI doing most of the legwork, our staff is less encumbered, so it can spend more time evaluating the situations and refining products for the benefit of the decision makers.

Webinar: Emerging and Disruptive Technologies in the Middle East and Africa, 8 October 2020

Emerging and disruptive technologies, such as big data, artificial intelligence and block chain are transforming societies and have an impact on the security environment in Africa and the Middle East. Allied Command Transformation (ACT), under the Open Perspective Exchange Network (Open) framework and the Hub will host a Webinar on these and other related subjects on 8 October, 2020.

This event will involve Regional Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from MENA, NATO and non-NATO organizations. The purpose is to gain shared insight and understanding on the drivers and impact of these transformational technologies from a regional perspective, as well as the risks associated with their potential malignant use. Leading non-NATO regional academics will share their knowledge and the webinar will facilitate interaction among the SME's.

