



**Middle East Studies at the Krulak Center (Marine Corps University)
AY22 MES Lecture Series**

“The Eastern Mediterranean in the Crosshairs: Regional, Political, and Security Issues and Challenges to U.S. Foreign Policy”

The Biden Administration is concerned with continuing and emerging political and security issues and threats in the Eastern Mediterranean region, from Libya in the west to Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Syria, and Israel in the east. Issues of chief concern to the U.S. include the growing military and disruptive presence of Russia, China’s increasing economic footprint, mounting intra-NATO tensions between member states including Turkey, Greece, and France, maritime terrorism carried out by non-state actors and “hidden-hand” tactics by Iran, the ongoing civil wars in Libya and Syria, the continued threats posed by terrorism and insurgent violence, and the potential for competition and armed conflict for control of natural resources (e.g., hydrocarbons). On the positive side, if the vision espoused by the Cairo-based East Mediterranean Gas Forum is realized, natural resources not only could bring economic interdependency among regional actors, but also would offer Europe a more economical source of natural gas without Russian involvement. Considering the myriad of emerging challenges, threats, and opportunities for the U.S. and its allies in the Eastern Mediterranean, what can the U.S. do to address them? A better understanding of the social, political, economic, and security dynamics at play in the region will contribute to more informed decision-making, especially at critical policy junctions, by U.S. government and military personnel.

For AY22, Middle East Studies (MES) at the Krulak Center proposes a series of lectures designed to provide a better understanding of the issues, dynamics, and interests at play in the Eastern Mediterranean, underscoring potential areas of cooperation and opportunity as well as competition and potential conflict among international actors and states as well as the geopolitical challenges the region may pose to policymakers and military planners and service members alike in advancing U.S. national security and economic interests abroad.

The MES Lecture Series for AY22 will explore a number of key topics and issues centered on the Eastern Mediterranean including: (a) overview of the region and the challenges and opportunities it presents to the U.S. in terms of military presence, maneuverability, and overall foreign policy; (b) known and potential natural resources located in the region and the potential for conflict over them; (c) the civil/civilian aspects of economic, maritime, and security issues; (d) intra-NATO competition and conflicts – including over Cyprus and the control of hydrocarbon resources in the Levantine Sea; the U.S. role as mediator; potential Greek-Turkish or French-Turkish conflicts; (e) Russia’s and China’s presence and expanding activities in the Eastern Mediterranean in light of strategic competition; (f) security issues and sources of insecurity emanating from the region (e.g., terrorism, civil wars, refugees); (g) Iran’s longhand in the region in the maritime domain and through proxies in Lebanon and Syria; and (h) challenges posed by the ongoing major political and social unrest in regional countries such as Lebanon and Jordan, both longstanding U.S. allies and recipients of U.S. financial and military/security aid.

As the U.S. continues to seek ways to advance national strategic interests and partnerships in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East and North Africa, it is imperative for American policymakers and military planners and personnel to deepen their understanding of the dynamics and issues at play and the motivations and perceptions of the other actors involved in regional and geopolitical competition taking place in these regions. The MES Lecture Series for AY22 aims to address this need.