



Australian
National
University



Centre for Arab & Islamic Studies Annual Report

Nov 2023 – Nov 2024

Cutting-edge Scholarship
Global Impact
Broad Engagement

Acknowledgement of Indigenous Land and Country

The Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australia National University is located on the lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples who the Centre acknowledges are the land's first inhabitants and who are both its traditional and future custodians.

Centre staff and students offer their respect to the elders - past, present and future – of all first nation's people of the land now known as Australia and acknowledge the enduring connection of the indigenous people to their land.

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Director's Message

For centuries the Middle East has endured as a region of global significance that has profoundly shaped world dynamics. Its significance has been brought into sharp focus with the current conflict centred on Israel and Palestine, but which has extended into Lebanon, Iran and Yemen.



The magnitude of the situation within the region is so great that existing world systems are being brought into question and we are almost certainly witnessing a pivotal moment in history that will shape the future for centuries to come. During this challenging and distressing period of violence and humanitarian crisis, it is imperative that we, as a collective community here in Australia and across the globe, better understand how the Middle East has and continues to be shaped by colonialism, authoritarianism, religion, culture and above all else, the strength and vibrancy of the people of the region.

I am proud of the Centre's achievements in advancing a more considered and nuanced understanding of the Middle East as well as that of Central Asia and North Africa. The commitment of **our nine academic staff** to producing cutting-edge **world-class scholarship** is evidenced through the incredible output of work, in terms of academic published articles, but also government briefings, media interviews and community outreach in addition to the convening of international workshops and networks.

Over 50 academic articles and monographs with highly respected academic presses were published by **the small team of nine academics** based at the Centre. This was in addition to the **nearly 600 media articles** that resulted from interviews staff conducted with various domestic and international outlets. Combined, the Centre's considered and thoughtful viewpoints on a range of issues - from the current violence in Palestine to China's position with the region - has **reached over 37 million** people. Similarly impressive achievements were made in teaching with the Centre teaching **approximately 1,000 students** annually with faculty staff receiving very **positive student feedback**.

These achievements in terms of output and impact shine a worthy light on the incredible expertise housed within the Centre. The following pages are a mere sample of **the huge success attained by the Centre in 2023 and 2024** and are illustrative of the innovative planning already underway to further the Centre's domestic and global reach and achieve our underlying principled aim of contributing to a more peaceful and understanding world.

Professor Karima Laachir

Our Expertise

During its' nearly 30-year history, ANU's **Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies** has established itself not only as the largest Centre of its kind in Australia but as a globally regarded Centre for language-oriented area studies focusing on the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and their associated diasporas.



National Excellence

CAIS is the **leading Centre nationally** for the teaching of Arabic at a tertiary level and through the Centre, ANU is the only university in Australia to offer Persian and Turkish languages. The Centre is **the only academic unit nationally** focusing on the study of both the Middle East and Central Asia – with no other Australian university offering the specific study of Central Asia.

Interdisciplinary Teaching Focus

The Centre's **inter-disciplinary teaching and research team** have established enduring relationships and associations with leading counterpart centres across the Middle East, Central Asia, the Asia-Pacific, North America and Europe. The Centre also regularly collaborates with other schools and centres including the ANU School of History, the Crawford School of Public Policy and the College of Health and Medicine.

Teaching Success

The Centre has an **impressive record of graduating higher-degree research** students with over 60 graduating PhD students since 2000. The Centre also has **a high enrolment rate per faculty staff members** and annually teaches **more than 100 students per staff member**. In 2024, the Centre's small team of nine faculty members taught over 900 students.

Our Research & Impact in Numbers



48 articles published by CAIS faculty staff and HDR students



4 monographs with reputed academic publishers



250 + media interviews



600 + syndicated media articles globally



a national media reach of 37 million readers



25 public events/ lectures



3 workshops convened & 1 multi-day conference



33 conference & panel presentations (Staff & HDR)



10 PhD students completed & confirmed in 2023/24
+ 20 currently enrolled



20 Masters students enrolled in 2024
(inc. 3 Advanced Masters enrolments)



3 Honours students completed in 2024



6 visiting fellows
- who collaborated with faculty staff to publish additional articles



904 enrolled students in 2024 (after Census date)



100+ students taught per faculty staff member

The Middle East and Central Asia Futurescapes Academic Network - the launch of a new global network

While discussions of future-facing technologies typically centre on developments in California's Silicon Valley or China's Zhongguancun, the Middle East and Central Asia are increasingly becoming the "ground-zero" of the future site in terms of both advanced technological development and adoption.



Dr. Mohammed Alsudairi launching the new network, MECAFAN.

The need to better understand how this future-facing technology is transforming and re-imagining the Middle East prompted CAIS scholar, Dr Mohammed Alsudairi to establish a new network specifically focused on the Futurescapes of the region. Launched by the Centre in September 2024 and entitled the 'Middle East and Central Asia Futurescapes Academic Network' (MECAFAN), this innovative new initiative is set to redefine our global understanding of the rapidly transforming Middle East and Central Asia.

Already it has brought together leading global scholars to build partnerships with like-minded institutions and publish cutting-edge research in acclaimed journals that pushes for a conception of the Middle East beyond exhausted cliches. The network's expansive research agenda is probing the logic underlying state-led developmental and aesthetic projects in the techno-scientific and digital spheres, such as the futuristic mega-cities of NEOM in Saudi Arabia and Arkadag in Turkmenistan. It is also considering the political-economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and geo-political factors enabling and constraining these projects and their parameters of possibility.

"MECAFAN will significantly expand our collaborations between CAIS and many partners both within and outside of ANU," says Dr Mohammed Alsudairi.

Over 100 leading scholars from a diverse range of disciplines including Engineering, Computer Science, Cybernetic attended the network's launch, and subsequent inaugural workshop. The international gathering of academics included scholars from Qatar University, Kuwait University, University of Waseda, Sharjah University and Hamad bin Khalifa University who joined ANU colleagues from the College of Asia and the Pacific (CAP) and the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS).

In recognition of the innovative nature of this new network, the prestigious Cambridge University Annual Gulf Research Meeting has selected MECAFAN as its annual workshop with a theme of 'GCC Futurescapes: Past and Present.' The workshop, to be held in July 2025, aims to generate new insights that allow for the creative rethinking of basic assumptions about GCC states and societies, as well as their potential pathways, by primarily centering local perspectives and visions about the future. A second MECAFAN International Conference, scheduled for November 2025, will be hosted by CAIS in collaboration with Prof Matthew Gray from Waseda University, Japan, entitled "The Political Economy of Cultural Production in the Gulf."

Symposium on Islamic Finance in Australia

Some of the world’s leading figures in Islamic finance joined over 100 attendees for a landmark event hosted by the Centre. The Symposium on Islamic Finance in Australia - the largest event of its kind to be held nationally to-date - brought together leading scholars, practitioners, and policymakers in the burgeoning field of Islamic finance.



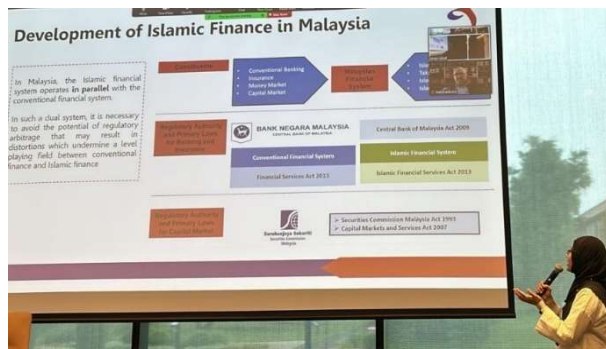
Guest speakers included Professor Ishaq Bhatti, La Trobe, Dr Asad Ansari, Amanah Finance, Dr Imran Lum, NAB, Ms Maya Marissa Malek, Amanie Advisors and Mr Kevin Magee, Former Ambassador, Saudi Arabia.

The one-day symposium - held in November 2023 on the ANU Acton campus – brought together leading Australian and international experts from Malaysia, Pakistan, Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, the UK, Turkey and Dubai. Distinguished guest speakers included Director General of the Cambridge Institute of Islamic Finance Dr Humayon Dar, CEO of Islamic Bank Australia Dean Gillispie, as well as Chief Executive Officer of Amanie Advisors (Malaysia), Suhaida binti Mahpot.

Within Australia, superannuation and mortgage finance within the Islamic finance sector is estimated at a total value of over A\$250 billion. The sector is also a very youthful market and by next year, there will be an estimated one million Muslim Australians looking to invest their finance in Sharia-compliant services. The symposium discussed the challenges and opportunities surrounding the taxation and legal framework of Islamic finance products, which have been identified as a considerable obstacle towards the effective adoption of Islamic finance in Australia

“One metric indicating the success of the Symposium was that it attracted substantial support and funding from both academic and industry sectors,” commented Dr Anas Iqtait who initiated and organised the milestone event.

“The event was also successful in that it uniquely convened all Australian-based Islamic financial institutions alongside internationally renowned scholars in the field to examine emerging issues confronting Islamic finance research and effectively bridge theoretical scholarship and practical application,” added Dr Iqtait.



Ms Suhaida binti Mahpot, CEO, Amanie Advisors (Malaysia) presented at the symposium

The symposium was conceived following high-level industry and policy discussions held during the ANU's first Workshop on the Study of Islamic and Middle Eastern Economies in December 2022. It is now planned for another symposium to be held in 2025.

Re-Imagining Central Asian Migration: Past, Present and Future - an international two-day workshop hosted by CAIS

In an event that was the first of its kind in the Asia-Pacific, the Centre hosted a two-day international workshop centred on the topical subject of migration.



Guest speakers included Dr. Manu P. Sobti from the University of Queensland

The flag-ship event, held at CAIS in September 2024, brought together leading scholars in their field from Australia, Central Asia, Japan and Sweden for an intense discussion and debate. Assistant Professor Dr Kirill Nourzhanov convened the innovative event together with Professor Timur Dadabaev from the University of Tsukuba in Japan.

“The workshop fostered a better understanding of the patterns, motivations and modalities of migration from the Central Asian region to different destinations regionally and globally, including Australia as well as considering future policy options,” Dr Nourzhanov commented.

Given the rapid population growth experienced across Central Asia, many youth from the region seek economic opportunities abroad. Resultantly, over 10% of the region’s population – 7.8 million people – are categorised as international migrants and while traditionally many have migrated to Russia or Kazakhstan, increasingly the Asia-Pacific – including China, South Korea, Japan and Australia are seen as viable destinations.

Workshop participants included scholars from the University of Lund in Sweden and the University of Tokyo who joined scholars from across Australia, including from the Flinders University and the University of Canberra. “The event produced ground-breaking research that will be published in an edited volume by the end of 2025 and showcased ANU’s global leadership in Central Asian studies,” Associate Professor Nourzhanov concluded.



Co-convenor of the event, Professor Timur Dadabaev from the University of Tsukuba, Japan

The event was sponsored by the Centre in association with the Central Eurasian Research Unit (University of Tsukuba, Japan); Special Program for Central Eurasia (University of Tsukuba, Japan); the Nippon Foundation Central Asia-Japan Human Resource Development Project (NipCA Project, Japan); MARS: Non-Western Migration Regimes in a Global Perspective (University of Lund, Sweden) and Global Asian Studies Program, IASA, University of Tokyo.

A Prestigious Opportunity – National Library Fellowship Uncovering the life writing of Turkish Migrants

CAIS scholar, Dr Burcu Cevik-Compiegne was one of just nine academics nationally to secure a much sought-after National Library of Australia fellowship in 2024. The opportunity saw Dr Cevik-Compiegne, who is the convenor of ANU's Turkish Studies program, undertake a 12-week residency through the national institution, where she had supported access to the extensive national collections including unique sources. This privileged access enabled Dr Cevik-Compiegne to uncover little-known Turkish-language sources in the National Library's collections that revealed different forms of life writing produced in Australia following the Labour Migration Scheme between Turkey and Australia in 1967.



This innovative research into the Turkish migrant community provides key insights into outward and inward-looking reflections and aspirations of communities that shaped contemporary Australia and that were shaped by Australian politics and everyday multiculturalism.

As Dr Cevik-Compiegne noted, “For Turkish migrants, writing was an impulse to process and record lived experience for many people, but beyond this function at an individual level, writing was a community-building strategy that connected Turkish-speaking people within Australia and across the borders. While people were writing about their struggles, they were also building their strengths.”

The fellowship culminated in an international workshop hosted by CAIS in September 2024 and which was attended by over 60 academics from Australian universities within the Group of Eight and featured a keynote address was Dr Yiorgos Anagnostou from Ohio State University (USA). Dr Cevik-Compiegne also presented a very well-received public lecture at the National Library of Australia in



October 2024 where she discussed her fellowship research, entitled ‘*Turkish-Australian transnational life writing*’.

Dr Burcu Cevik-Compiegne (R) delivering her keynote at the National Library, with Dr Guy Hansen, Director of Exhibitions at the National Library and Ms Sharyn O'Brien, National Library Fellowship Program Manager (L)

Above image credits:
Kaynak : the Australian Turkish source : independent Turkish newspaper, 15 February 1984, page 1, nla.cat-vn1031341
Kimligimiz için dusunce, August 1989, page 1, nla.cat-vn2206702

The Doha Forum 2023/ 24 – an esteemed honour for CAIS



In recognition of Centre's high global standing as an institution of educational excellence, Centre Director Professor Karima Laachir will return to the Doha Forum in 2024 after her successful attendance in 2023. Bringing together leaders in policy and academia to discuss the critical challenges facing our world, the Doha Forum is a prestigious global platform centred on dialogue and networking.

Attendance at the forum is via invitation-only and the forum boasts an exclusive attendee list with the event personally opened by the Qatari Emir, HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Last year, the forum was also attended by Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tim Watt MP with Australian political leaders once again expected to attend in 2024.

Professor Laachir was the only Australian-based academic invited in 2023, and the prestigious honour provided an opportunity for ANU to further strengthen global collaborations and policy networks. Dr Jessie Mortiz, also from ANU CAIS attended in 2022 as the only invited Australian scholar.

"We are honoured to be regularly invited to take part in the Doha Forum, which provides a global platform for knowledge exchange, networking and dialogue bringing together leaders in research, policy and government tackling critical challenges facing the Middle East and the world." commented Professor Laachir.

"With this invitation, ANU is recognised as leading in Middle East and Central Asia Studies in Australia and internationally,"

Under the banner 'Diplomacy, Dialogue, Diversity', the Doha Forum promotes the interchange of ideas and discourse towards policy making and action-oriented recommendations. Last year, the forum focused on the theme the 'Future of International Cooperation' with attendees discussing policy options that build a shared future through innovation in global governance. Given the event was held late in 2023, the forum had a strong focus on regional security in light of the conflict in Palestine as well as the future role of the global bodies such as the UN in international politics.

This year the forum continues the theme of innovation with a focus on the development and adoption of technological solutions to global issues. Entitled 'The Innovation Imperative' the 2024 forum will advance the need for a shift towards more open, collaborative, and cross-sectoral models of innovation. Professor Laachir will contribute to various workshops and panels during the two-day event held in Qatar and as in 2023, it is anticipated she will conduct multiple interviews with the many media in attendance.

Decarbonising Energy and Agriculture in GCC and Australia

In June 2023, CAIS scholars, Dr Anas Iqtait and Dr Jessie Moritz secured a \$40k grant from the Australian Government to run an innovative national workshop focused on decarbonising energy – the first of its kind in Australia.

The grant will enable the Centre to host a summit identifying how Australia and the Arab Gulf states can work together to decarbonise their energy and agriculture sectors. The Arab Gulf states – commonly referred to as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) includes the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and, much like Australia, are heavily reliant on fossil fuels. The two regions share challenges and opportunities as they pursue a decarbonised energy future.



The GCC-Australia Summit on Decarbonising Energy and Agriculture, scheduled for March 2025, will bring together leading academics and industry experts in low-carbon hydrogen and agricultural technologies. The initiative will be the first of its kind in Australia and provides an excellent opportunity for Australia to strengthen its trade connections with the GCC states – who represent nearly 30% of all known oil reserves and are among the top 25 countries responsible for the highest CO₂ per capita emissions.

“Increasing economic cooperation between Australia and the Arab Gulf states presents a real opportunity nationally to diversify our global trade and investment partners,” says Dr Jessie Moritz.

“The Arab Gulf states all have ambitious renewable energy goals and Australian can play a strategic role in enabling these targets to be met,” Dr Iqtait continued “This first of its kind national summit will help Australia seize this opportunity.”

Beyond energy, there are also new trade market opportunities for Australian agricultural exports in the Middle East as the region scrambles to diversify its food import destinations after the Russian invasion of Ukraine halted grain exports from both countries and disrupted global supply chains.

The summit is scheduled to be held against the backdrop of outstanding economic agreements with the region, including the GCC-Australia Free Trade Agreement and United Arab Emirates-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The grant, which was awarded by the Council for Australian Arab Relations, has a total project cost of over \$64k and following the summit, a policy report will be made open to public and policy makers.

Translating Health Messages into Books for Children

In response to the devastating 2019/20 bushfires, researchers from the Centre teamed up with the School of Medicine and Psychology and NCEPH to create two enchanting books. Under the direction of Centre Director, Professor Karima Laachir, the collaboration produced two books to help address an important identified a gap in resources that focused specifically on bushfire smoke safety for children.

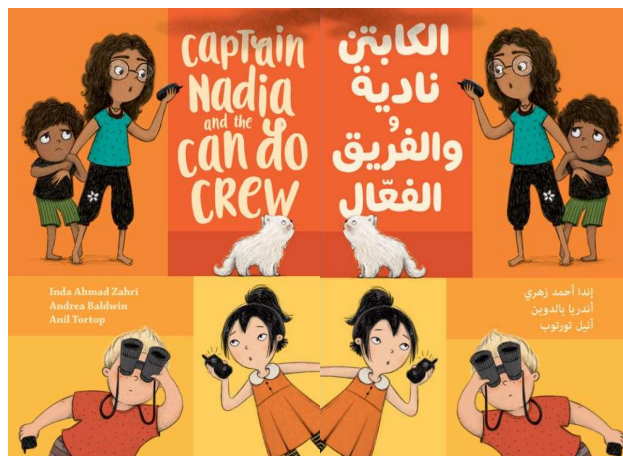


The children’s picture books, which are a result of a cross-college collaboration between the College of Arts & Social Sciences (CASS) and the College of Health & Medicine (CHM), guide young readers through the challenges and solutions related to bushfire smoke.

The first creative work, entitled ‘*Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke,*’ was authored by Liz Drummond and Jemima Shafei-Ongu, and illustrated by Magie Khameneh. It follows the story of Shirin and Amir who are searching for treasure but surprised to smell smoke in the air. But is it bushfire smoke, or is it dragon smoke? The second book, which is an early reader entitled ‘*Captain Nadia and the Can Do Crew,*’ is authored by Inda Ahmad Zahri and Andrea Baldwin, and illustrated by Anil Tortop. This unique double-sided, bilingual book offers versions for Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and English readers, in celebrating Australia’s diverse multicultural community.

In addition to the creation of these two children’s books, CAIS scholars are working with the University of Canberra on a sperate but related project translating health messages about asthma for indigenous and Australian/Arab communities.

“We are proud, that in addition to the publication of two peer reviewed papers on the topic, we collaborated with talented authors and illustrators from diverse cultural



backgrounds to create two enchanting multilingual books that guide young readers through the challenges and solutions related to bushfire smoke.

This is an exemplar cross-disciplinary collaborative project with high community impact and outreach,” commented Professor Laachir.

Global Success at the International Arabic Debating Championships

CAIS Arabic students shone at the 7th International Universities Debating Championships (IUADC). The team of three students from CAIS were the only Australian team to complete in the prestigious international event, which is the biggest of its kind globally.



ANU Arabic debating team with the Australian Ambassador to Qatar HE Mr Shane Flanagan.

The CAIS team placed fourth in the non-native category and 40th overall, which is an incredible achievement given the high standard of competition. The three CAIS students - Callum Hogden (Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Engineering), Ruba Nazzal (Bachelor of Engineering (Honours)), and Clare Taylor (Diploma of Languages) - trained weekly for almost a year in the lead up to the competition – effort that certainly paid off as this is the best result ANU has achieved since our inaugural visit in 2013.



CAIS Arabic Program Convenor, Leila Kouatly (R) and students Ruba Nazzal, Clare Taylor and Callum Hogden (L)

More than 600 students from 96 universities around the globe arrived in Doha, Qatar in late May for the five-day competition. Participants had to demonstrate their proficiency with Arabic in a range of topics including the gig economy and the rights of refugees, The students were accompanied by Leila Kouatly, Lecturer in

Arabic Language Pedagogy and Convenor of the Arabic Language Program. Leila said she was overwhelmed with pride at the announcement the team had made it to the semi-finals. She noted the students' critical thinking skills are a reflection of the world-class education they experience at ANU, and this likely gave them the edge over other teams that had better language skills.

Ms Kouatly also accompanied Arabic students from CAIS on an in-country learning program to Oman in December 2023 where they studied at the Dhad Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers.

Applied Arabic students with Dr Khalifa Al-Kindi and Mr Ahmad Almahrooqi following a lecture on the Aflaj water system at the University of Nizwa



Public Engagement

The Centre is a vibrant hub of thought and discourse as evidenced by its extensive offering of public lectures and events. Over the course of 2023 and 2024, the centre hosted 25 events featuring many high profile internationally renowned guest speakers.



Dr Alaa Tartir delivering his talk on “Resisting Domination in Palestine: International Aid, Security, and State/Peace Building as Sites of Settler Colonial Control” on 15 August 2024.

The reputation of the Centre as an institution of education excellence helped secure many of these speakers, such as the UN Special Rapporteur of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Francesca Albanese who is a highly respected human rights lawyer, researcher and author. Her discussion in November 2023 drew on her extensive experience as a human rights expert for the United Nations, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees. Attendees were privileged to be able to access such a globally experienced individual at this pertinent time given the current situation in Israel and Palestine.

Attendees were also privileged to hear from the indomitable Dr. Laleh Khalili, who is author of *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula* (CUP 2021). Dr Khalili’s thought-provoking public lecture in 2024 offered a nuanced understanding of the context and significance of the current crisis in the region by delves into the politics of shipping and war in the Arabian Peninsula.

At the start of 2024, the Centre initiated a Reimagining Palestine Public Lecture Series, in response to the on-going conflict in Israel and Palestine with a view to informing the national and global understanding of Palestinian history, sovereignty and culture at this critical time. The series covered a range of topics from environmental land justice, the politics of international aid and popular activism.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, the Centre continued to host the Majlis at ANU; a cross-disciplinary roundtable focused on historical and contemporary issues across North Africa, the Middle East and. The term ‘Majlis’ refers to the Arabic and Persian word for a regular gathering of like-minded individuals. The Majlis is free and open to all, and this year featured an impressive line-up of speakers covering a diversity of topics from political fragmentation in Yemen to Turkmen national identity through



Author, Dr Samah Sabawi gave the International Women’s Day Lecture: Palestine is a Feminist Issue

women’s attires, women’s participation on boards within the UAE and socio-cultural policies as performance legitimization in the Arab States of the Gulf.

Building on the success of this year’s schedule of events, a new year of thought-provoking public lectures is currently being planned for 2025.

Media Milestones

One of the core objectives underpinning the Centre's establishment over 30 years ago was to address an identified knowledge gap relating to informed, accurate and considered information about the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia within the Australian media. Despite the region being of profound global significance, it is generally under-reported with crucial contextual factors shaping world events often over-looked. The Centre has a long-standing history of engaging with the Australian media and the Centre is nationally regarded as a reliable and truthful source of information.



Dr Alam Saleh speaking with BBC News – one of nearly 600 media interviews conducted by CAIS faculty in 2024

This year, with events in the Middle East making daily headlines, staff at the centre continued to fulfill this core objective and undertook over 250 interviews with national media, including SBS, ABC, The Sydney Morning Herald and the Australian Financial Review. These interviews resulted in 593 syndicated articles with a national reach of 37 million.

In addition to this already truly impressive impact and in recognition of the global expertise housed within the Centre, academic staff also conducted a plethora of interviews with international media including high-profile outlets such as the BBC World, CNA, CNBC, ABC News (America), Aljazeera International, Time Magazine, The Washington Post, Sky News, France 24, and the Voice of America.

While most interviews were conducted in English, all academic staff at the Centre are multi-lingual and dozens of interviews were undertaken in Persian, Arabic and Turkish for BBC Persian, BBC Arabic, Aljazeera (Arabic) and TRT World (Turkey). While all academic staff conducted interviews during 2023 and 2024, the prolific media skills of Dr Alam Saleh and Dr Anas Iqtait deserve special mention for advancing a more considered global understanding of their areas of specialisation; namely Iran and Palestine respectively.

The Centre is also proud to partner with the Near East Policy Forum (NEPF), a new online policy platform that uniquely offers open-access peer-reviewed analysis of the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. The NEPF site – www.nepf.org.au – is home to a suite of informative analytical articles on a range of topics from Central Asian migration, Houthi attacks on shipping vessels in the Red Sea, the Taliban's power base, political fragmentation in Yemen and Artificial Intelligence adoption in the Arab States of the Gulf.

Government Engagement – a trusted source of policy advice

Throughout 2023 and 2024, the Centre continued to fulfill one of its major objectives of being a transparent, non-partisan and reliable source of policy advice for the Australian Government. The Centre's academic staff provided multiple briefings to various divisions of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).



Additionally, Prof Laachir designed, convened and co-delivered with CAIS staff a bespoke one-day course in collaboration with the National Security College at ANU for DFAT staff that provided participants with the opportunity to gain pivotal new knowledge of the Middle East.

Centre faculty staff have a long history of providing regular briefings to Australian diplomats about to commence posts in the Middle East as well as to parliamentarians travelling to the region on fact-finding missions. In recent years, staff have routinely offered analysis and expertise to various government departments on the current violence in the Middle East and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

These briefings, offered by the academic staff at the Centre, are of critical importance given the Middle East continues to be a region of global importance. The staff's capacity and skill in delivering these briefings speaks to their expertise with all academic staff at the Centre multi-lingual. All academic staff also hold crucial in-country and in-region experience. This thorough understanding of the changing dynamics of the Middle East enhances the quality of the knowledge that the staff can share with the Australian Government and in turn, this contributes to better domestic and international policy outcomes for Australia.

The scholarly reputation of the Centre also sees the academic staff regularly invited to provide briefings to other governments across the globe, including key allies to Australia. Of note in 2023, was the invitation by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to Dr Anas Iqtait to contribute to an expert submission with fellow academics Dr. Gunning, Dr. Barconi and Dr. Kear entitled the "Future of Palestinian Political Field." Dr Alam Saleh was similarly sought out as an invited special guest speaker by Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs to provide an executive briefing entitled "Iran's Perspectives and Objectives on International Developments in August 2024. Dr Andrew Hammond also provided a briefing to Dr Chen Shi, third secretary of Embassy of People's Republic of China in Australia, on the current Middle East conflict in August 2024.

PhD Success

Our Centre has a long-standing reputation for High Degree Research success with the highest on-time completion rate for PhD students within CASS. A total of 10 HDR students completed and had their PhDs confirmed in 2023/24.

Recent graduates include the now Dr Dana Rice, who has been awarded a suite of fellowships and grants from prestigious Europe-based institutions, including GIGA Institute for Asian Studies (Hamburg, Germany), University of Helsinki (Finland), and the Weizenbaum Institute (Berlin, Germany). Dr Rice, whose PhD focused on the Belt and Road Initiative from a Eurasian perspective, is now employed as an executive at research consulting firm, Instats, where she completed an internship in 2024. Dana's success speaks to the expert learning experience offered at the Centre with CAIS graduates highly sought after for their knowledge of the Middle East and Central Asia, but also their strong capacity for critical analysis. Two CAIS HDR students Mohammad Shakourian and Amirul Mohd Othman won the prestigious two-week Summer School on research methodology at Syracuse University, New York in July 2024.



Some of the 20 HDR students currently undertaking research at CAIS. A total of 10 HDR students completed their PhDs in 2023/24

In addition to our recent PhD graduates, there are currently 19 HDR students in various stages of the completing their cutting-edge research on a range of topics, including Iran's pivot to China, EU and Central Asian states engagement, Russian policy in the Middle East, Contemporary Chinese Muslims, Geopolitical economy of sport in the Gulf Cooperation Council region and Political Islam in Sudan.

The Centre strongly encourages HDR students to publish and present their work and the last two years has been great HDR success. Niloufar Baghernia, a PhD candidate focused on Iran and China, exemplifies this encouragement and in 2023 and 2024 she published four articles and presented her novel research at six conferences, including at the 2024 Annual Conference of the British Society for Middle Eastern Society at Lancaster University and the 10th Oceanic Conference on International Studies 2023 hosted by the University of Melbourne.



Dr Alam Saleh with his Ph.D. students at BRISMES: Ms Niloufar Baghernia, Mr Amirul Mohd Othman and Mr Mohammad Shakourian

In addition to the HDR program, CAIS has a vibrant Masters and Honours program with 20 Masters students enrolled in 2024, including three Advanced Masters enrolments. This is in addition to the three Honours students who completed their thesis in 2024.

Visiting Fellows

During 2023 and 2024, the Centre welcomed seven leading scholars from across the world to foster stronger collaborations with staff and students, including:

- **Professor Timur Dadabaev - Tsukuba University, Japan**
Professor Dadabaev is a renowned specialist of Central Asia politics specialist and has published extensively across a wide range of leading academic journals, including the Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies. He has also authored multiple books on decolonizing Central Asia as well as Eurasia's relations with global powers such as China and Japan.
- **Professor Matthew Gray - Waseda University, Japan**
Professor Gray is considered a global expert on the Arabian Peninsula and the political economy of the Gulf. He is also the author of multiple books examining Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Gulf regional politics.
- **Professor Ishaq Bhatti - La Trobe University**
Founding director of La Trobe's Islamic Banking & Finance Programme
Professor Bhatti is a leading Islamic Finance expert and has authored more than 130 articles and eight books in addition to contributing to encyclopedias, He is also on the editorial board for the European Journal of Finance.
- **Associate Professor Hakeem Kasem - Deakin University**
Considered an expert on Arabic linguistics and language, Dr Kasem served as the Director of Deak University's Arabic Language and Culture Studies Department, from 1989 to 2022, where he pioneered an award-winning world first-class comprehensive Arabic Online program.
- **Dr Khulud Alhamazani - Honorary at the University of Melbourne University**
Dr Alhamazani is a leading scholar in the field of gender and border security. She has published extensively on the gendered dimensions of border crossings using interdisciplinary approaches and qualitative methodologies.
- **Dr Farid Saenong- Indonesian International Islamic University**
Dr Saenong is a leading Islamic studies scholar undertaking cutting-edge research on the global politics of moderate Islam in Indonesia, Egypt and Morocco. He has published numerous articles in leading journals specialising in religion and has also contributed several chapters in edited books.
- **Dr Murat Yurtbilir - Istanbul University**
Dr Yurtbilir is a renowned expert on Turkish politics and international relations. He has studied extensively Turkish political movements, domestic and foreign policy, Middle Eastern Studies, international relations, and nationalism theories.
- **Dr Rim Al Kadi**
Dr Al Kadi is an expert in environmental sustainability in the Middle East and is working with Dr Jessie Moritz from CAIS on decarbonisation in the region.

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Appendix A: List of all Publications (Faculty & HDR)

Monographs (Faculty)

Anas Iqtait, 2023. *Funding and the Quest for Sovereignty in Palestine*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Andrew Hammond, *Late Ottoman Origins of Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2024) - paperback, Nov/Dec 2024.

Mohammed Alsudairi and Dr. Andrea Ghiselli, *Narratives of Sino-Middle Eastern Futures*, (in press) Cambridge Elements series, Cambridge University Press 2025.

Burcu Çevik-Compiègne, *Turkey and India in the Shadow of the Great War: An Imperial War*. (in press) Brill Series: History of Warfare, Volume: 149. Brill Publishing 2025.

Academic Articles, Chapters and Edited Special Issues (Faculty)

Prof Karima Laachir

Laachir K. “Reading Together the Aesthetics and Politics of Decolonization: A View from Morocco”, 15 Jun 2024, In: *Comparative Critical Studies*. 21, p. 27-42.

Laachir, K and Yarbakhsh, E. “‘Reading Together’ Postcolonial Multilingual Literature in the Maghreb” Special Guest Edited volume with *Comparative Critical Studies*, Edinburgh University Press, 2024.

Laachir K. “Morocco's Popular Culture Powerhouse: Darija and the chaabi music of Nas El Ghiwane”; in *Oral Literary Worlds : Location, Transmission and Circulation*. Open Book 2024.

Laachir, K and Yarbakhsh: “Introduction: 'Reading Together ' Postcolonial Multilingual Literature in the Maghreb”, 15 Jun 2024, In: *Comparative Critical Studies*. 21.

With Walsh E. et Al “How researchers can translate health evidence into books for children”, 9 May 2024, In: *Health Promotion International*. 39, 3.

Laachir, K. “Mobilising the History of Protest and Dissent Post-2011 Moroccan

novels”, Writing the global riot: literature in a time of crisis. J. B. . H. G. . J. M. (ed.). 1 ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press , Vol. 1. p. 187-203. 2023.

Laachir, K and Fernadez Ramos, I. “The Maghribi multilingual novel” Routledge Handbook on the Modern Maghrib. Joffe, G. (ed.). Taylor and Francis, p. 286-302, 2023.

Associate Professor Kirill Nourzhanov

Kirill Nourzhanov. “A year of surprising stability arrives in Central Asia”, *East Asia Forum*, 19 February 2024 <https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/02/19/a-year-of-surprising-stability-arrives-in-central-asia/>

Kirill Nourzhanov. “Central Asia and the Conflict In Ukraine: Russia-Friendly Neutrality”, *Near East Policy Forum*, 9 March 2024 <https://nepf.org.au/index.php/central-asia-and-the-conflict-in-ukraine-russia-friendly-neutrality/>

Kirill Nourzhanov. “Islamic terror’s renewed threat to Putin’s strongman image”, *Info360*, 24 April 2024 <https://360info.org/islamic-terrors-renewed-threat-to-putins-strongman-image/>

Dr Alam Saleh

Saleh, A. Jafari, A. ‘The Far Right, Banal Nationalism, and the Reproduction of Islamophobia through the Consumer Activist Campaign of Boycott Halal’. *The Sociological Review*. pp. 1-33, 2024. doi: 10.1177/00380261241291676.

Saleh, A. Salehi, H. ‘The Politics of Human Rights in Iran: Between Islamism and Pragmatism’. *International Studies Journal*. 83 (4). 2024 doi: 10.22034/ISJ.2024.446750.2157.

Saleh, A. Salehi, H. Kardooni, N. ‘Analysis of the Relationship Between Societal Security and Identity Crises, Based on the Relative Deprivation Theory’. (In Persian), *Sociological Review 2024*.

Saleh, A. Yazdanshenas, Z. (2024). ‘The Strait of Hormuz and Iran’s Active Deterrence Strategy’. In Ranjan, A. Shuja, A. (eds.) *Circumventing the Middle East Chokepoints: Infrastructure, Strategy and Geopolitics*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1142/13885>

Saleh, A. Yazdanshenas, Z. Iran's nuclear messaging campaign. *Middle East Institute*. October 2024.

Saleh, A. Yazdanshenas, Z. Iran’s new nuclear policy between deterrence and pragmatism. *Middle East Institute*. May 2024.

Saleh, A. Yazdanshenas, Z. 2024. ‘Iran’s Look East Policy and the ‘Asianization’ of the Persian Gulf Region’. In Adam Hanieh. (eds.) *Mapping Connections: China and*

Contemporary Development in the Middle East, The American University in Cairo Press

Dr Anas Iqtait

Iqtait, A., 2024. The state of the financial system in the West Bank and Gaza. (2024). *Strategic Comments*, 30(7), x–xiii.

Iqtait, A. 2024. “Continuity and Change in Western Aid Conditionality in the Middle East”. *Third World Quarterly* – (in press Special Issue 2024).

Iqtait, A., 2024. “Blockchain Technology in MENA: Impacts on Authoritarianism and Civil Activism,” in *Authoritarianism and Digital Technologies*, eds. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Ihsan Yilmaz. Edinburgh University Press – (in press 2024).

Iqtait, A., 2024. “The Palestinian Authority: The Fiscal Contract and Structural Constraints”. In *Resisting Domination in Palestine: Mechanisms and Techniques of Control, Coloniality and Settler Colonialism*. I.B. Tauris.

Dunning, T. and Iqtait, A., 2023. “Arming Palestine: Resistance, Evolution, and Institutionalisation”. In *The Arms Race in the Middle East: Contemporary Security Dynamics* (pp. 171-193). Springer International Publishing.

Iqtait, A., 2023. *Disruptive Technology in MENA: Sociopolitical Impacts*. Working Paper available at SSRN 4475898.

Iqtait, A., 2023. *Fiscal Contracts under Settler Colonialism: An Exploration of the Palestinian Authority*. Working Paper available at SSRN 4475885.

Dr Mohammed Alsudairi

Mohammed Alsudairi, Steven Jiawei Hai, Kameal Alahmad, "How Saudi Arabia Bent China to Its Technoscientific Ambitions", Carnegie Endowment, 1 August 2023, How Saudi Arabia Bent China to Its Technoscientific Ambitions - Carnegie China | Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Mohammed Alsudairi, “Forging an Anti-Bandung: Saudi Arabia and East Asia’s Cold War”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 43:3 (2023), pp. 412–426.

Mohammed Alsudairi and Ulrich Brandenburg, “Yellow Peril with a Dash of Green: Triangular Fantasies on an Islamized China at the turn of the Twentieth Century” (forthcoming *Modern Asian Studies* special issue submission).

Mai Alfarhan and Mohammed Alsudairi, “The Past, Present, and Future of Gulf Sovereign Wealth Fund Investments in China”, *Middle East Policy* (2024), pp. 1–22.

Dr Andrew Hammond

“Political ideology and the shaping of Arab cinema,” in *Routledge Handbook on Arab Cinema*, ed. Noha Mellor (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2024)

“The Problem of the Quranic *al-ṣamad*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 143/3 (2023).

Dr Kinda Alsamara

Alsamara, K., Kakaje, A., Soqia, J., Ghareeb, A., Watson, L., Hadakie, R., Jawich, K., Al-Homsi, A. & Forbes, D. (2024). Exploring Women’s Religious Coping Strategies and Psychological Impact After the 2023 Earthquake in Syria. *Journal of Religion and Health*.

Higher Degree Research Students

Amirul Othman

Expectations for the Upcoming Six-State Elections in Malaysia. 2023. Australian Institute of International Affairs (Australian Outlook).

Post-Analysis of the Malaysian State Election 2023: The Need for National Reconciliation. 2023. Australian Institute of International Affairs (Australian Outlook).

Diplomatic Deadlock: OIC and Arab League’s Stalemate on Israel-Palestine. 2023. Australian Institute of International Affairs (Australian Outlook).

The World is Waiting: When Will Iran Strike Back? 2024. Australian Institute of International Affairs (Australian Outlook).

The Assassination of Haniyeh and the Fragility of Iranian Security. 2024. The Near East Policy Forum (NEPF).

Missiles Over the Middle East: Iran’s New Era of Warfare. 2024. The Social Science Research Network (SSRN) eLibrary.

Amirul Othman, *National Interest(s) in World Politics*, published by the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science, and edited by Dr. Dragan Đukanović, Dr. Saša Mišić, and Dr. Nikola Jović. The ISBN for the publication is 978-86-6425-129-7, with a print run of 100 copies. The book was printed with the financial support of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (Grant No. 7752625).

Dana Rice

Rice, D. (2023): An Overview of China’s Belt and Road Initiative and its Development Since 2013. In: *Security and Democracy in Eurasia*, Eds. Mihr, A., Weifen, B. (Cham: Springer), 255-266.

Gulshat Rozyyeva

Who will benefit more from the construction of the gas pipeline line D – Turkmenistan or China? Kursiv. <https://kz.kursiv.media/2023-06-09/print989-grlz-d/> (In Russian). 2023.

Reform of the Humanitarian Intervention Concept. Necessity for change. *Central Asian Business Journal (CABJ)*, 22(2), 2–11. <https://www.kimep.kz/bang-college-of->

business/en/central-asia-business-journal/#panely1. 2023.

Why Turkmenistan's sovereign debt is decreasing. Kursiv.
<https://kz.kursiv.media/2023-08-04/print996-tttr-turkmenistan/> (In Russian). 2023.
Should I stay or should I go? Return migration or naturalization: Case study of Turkmen students in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Bulletin of Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University, 4, pp. 34-46. <https://doi.org/10.52512/2306-5079-2023-96-4-34-46>. 2023.

Turkmenistan's Political Future Amid Growing Australian Ties. Near East Policy Form, September 11, <https://nepf.org.au/index.php/turkmenistans-political-future-amid-growing-australian-ties/>. 2024.

Central Asian Migration Patterns and Their Implications for Australia. Near East Policy Form, September 11, <https://nepf.org.au/index.php/central-asian-migration-patterns-and-their-implications-for-australia/>. 2024.

Niloufar Baghernia

Baghernia, Niloufar. (March 2024). China's Marginal Involvement in the 2023 Iran-Saudi Arabia Reconciliation, Asian Affairs.

Baghernia, Niloufar. (2024). Iranian-Saudi Rivalry Since 1979: In the Words of Kings and Clerics, by Talal Mohammad, Asian Affairs.

Baghernia, Niloufar. (2023). China's Rise in the Global South The Middle East, Africa, and Beijing's Alternative World Order, by Dawn C. Murphy, British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies.

Baghernia, Niloufar (2023). 'Understanding the Protests in Iran: Similar Demands with New Features.' Australian Institute of International Affairs.

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Appendix B: List of all events hosted by CAIS November 2023 – November 2024

15 November 2023

Exclusive Event for CAIS Staff and Students

A Discussion with Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur Occupied Palestinian Territory

17 November 2023

MAJLIS @ANU Discussion Group

Women on Boards in the UAE

30 November 2023

International Conference hosted by CAIS

Symposium on Islamic Finance in Australia - Convened by CAIS faculty staff, Dr Anas Iqtaït

07 March 2024

CAIS Virtual Panel Discussion

The South Africa ICJ Genocide Case Against Israel: Unpacking the Legal Implications and Future Compliance

08 March 2024

International Women Day Lecture

Palestine is a Feminist Issue

21 March 2024

MAJLIS @ANU Discussion Group

Socio-cultural Policies as Performance Legitimation: The Case of the Gulf States

04 April 2024

CAIS Virtual Public Lecture Series

Sinews of War and Trade, Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula

11 April 2024

CAIS Virtual Public Lecture Series

Reimagining Palestine

26 April 2024

MAJLIS @ANU Discussion Group

Virtual Excursions into Turkmen National Identity Through Women's Attires

09 May 2024

CAIS Public Lecture Series

Healthcare Translation for a Diglossic Community: The Case of Arabic Speakers in Australia

16 May 2024

Reimagining Palestine Public Lecture Series

Environmental and Land Justice in Palestine

13 June 2024

CAIS Virtual Public Lecture Series

A Comparative Perspective to Iran's Security Assistance

20 June 2024

Author Talk

A Conversation on Wind's "Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom" (Verso 2024)

25 June 2024

CAIS Public Lecture Series

Coexistence, Sectarianism, Nation: Iraq & Wales in Ruqaya Izzidien's "The Watermelon Boys"

08 August 2024

Rosemarie Said Zahlan Gulf-Palestine Mini Lecture Series

Popular Activism and the Israel Boycott in Kuwait, 1953-1967

29 August 2024

CAIS Virtual Public Lecture Series

Erdogan's Islamism

03 September 2024

Rosemarie Said Zahlan Gulf-Palestine Mini Lecture Series

Palestine in the Gulf: Intertwined Pasts and Possible Futures

04 – 06 September 2024

International Workshop and Network Launch hosted by CAIS

The Middle East and Central Asia Futurescapes Academic Network (MECAFAN) convened by Dr Mohammed Alsudairi

05 September 2024

CAIS Public Lecture Series

The Eastern International: Arabs, Central Asians, and Jews in the Soviet Union's Anticolonial Empire

12 September 2024

CAIS Public Lecture Series

Being A Transnational Muslim in Australia in An Era of Hyper-Security

13 September 2024

Children's Book Launch

"Shirin and Amir and the Dragon Smoke" (2024) and "Nadia and the Can Do Crew" (2024)

19-20 September 2024

International Workshop hosted by CAIS

Reimagining Central Asian Migration: Past, Present and Future convened by Associate Professor Kirill Nourzhanov

26 September 2024

Rosemarie Said Zahlan Asia-Palestine Mini Lecture Series

China and the Question of Palestine

27 September 2024

MAJLIS @ANU Discussion Group

Mosques, Madrassas, Mausoleums, Mountains, Manti – and fat tailed sheep: Travels and conversations in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

25 October 2024

Webinar Event co-presented with the ANU Capitalism Studies Network with support of the ANU School of History

Before Islamic Finance: Muslim Banking in South Asia and the World, 1880-1975

31 October 2024

Public Lecture at the National Library of Australia

Turkish-Australian transnational life writing with Dr Burcu Cevik-Compiegne from CAIS

Contact Information

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