

THE NEAR EAST  
INSTITUTE | ANNUAL  
REVIEW 2025



**Analysis,  
Dialogue, and  
Policy  
Engagement  
in a Changing  
Region**

**2025**

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This annual review highlights the Near East Institute's engagement with the key political, strategic, and humanitarian developments that shaped 2025, and outlines how the Institute contributed to analysis, dialogue, and policy-relevant debate on Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East. The past year unfolded against a backdrop of profound uncertainty, marked by fragile ceasefires, renewed diplomatic efforts, shifting regional alignments, and growing pressures on existing political and security frameworks. These developments underscored not only the volatility of the region, but also the continuing need for careful, independent, and informed analysis.

Throughout 2025, the Near East Institute sought to respond to this environment by providing a platform for rigorous research, open dialogue, and constructive engagement across academic, policy, and practitioner communities. Through publications, public events, and convening initiatives, the Institute worked to shed light on complex regional dynamics, to foster informed discussion among diverse stakeholders, and to contribute thoughtfully to ongoing policy conversations. In doing so, we remained committed to our core mission: to deepen understanding of the region's challenges while encouraging dialogue grounded in expertise, inclusivity, and respect for differing perspectives.

This review offers a snapshot of that work over the past year—of the issues we engaged with, the partnerships we strengthened, and the conversations we helped to facilitate. We are grateful to our collaborators, contributors, and supporters whose engagement continues to enrich the Institute's work and extend its reach.

As we look ahead to the new year, we remain committed to sustaining and expanding these efforts in a regional and international context that is likely to remain demanding. With sincere thanks for your continued interest and support, we wish you and your loved ones a healthy, peaceful, and fulfilling New Year.

Assoc. Prof. Mustafa ÇIRAKLI  
Director,  
Near East Institute

# A YEAR OF CONFLICT, CEASEFIRES, AND UNCERTAINTY

Throughout the past year, the Near East Institute has remained committed to analysing the profound political and strategic shifts shaping the Middle East, Cyprus, and the wider Eastern Mediterranean.

This past year has been shaped by a series of significant and often unsettling developments that have altered the trajectory of ongoing conflicts rather than resolving them. In Gaza, while a fragile ceasefire has provided **limited relief from large-scale hostilities**, humanitarian suffering remains acute. The scale of destruction, ongoing displacement, and severe constraints on humanitarian access mean that aid efforts, though essential, remain wholly insufficient to meet the needs on the ground. In Ukraine, renewed diplomatic initiatives have emerged, yet the prospects for peace remain distant as the country continues to bear the burden of **ongoing external aggression**. Developments in Syria have once again highlighted the volatility of regional political orders, while shifts in global leadership — most notably the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency — have reinforced a sense that the international system is entering a more transactional and unpredictable phase.



# CYPRUS: POLITICAL CHANGE AND RENEWED DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT

In 2025, Cyprus witnessed a series of important political and institutional developments. Most notably, Turkish Cypriots elected Tufan Erhürman as the new President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Erhürman's election marked a shift in political tone and reopened discussions about the future direction of the Cyprus issue. Diplomatic engagement gained momentum following the elections, with **renewed contacts** taking shape toward the end of the year. In December, the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders met with the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, María Ángela Holguín, as part of **efforts to assess the scope for re-engagement**. Holguín is scheduled to return to the island in January to pursue these consultations further. These efforts, however, are unfolding in a challenging context, as the Greek Cypriot side is set to assume the rotating presidency of the European Union — an institutional development that may complicate the diplomatic environment and **risk slowing momentum** at a sensitive stage.



# THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: STABILITY, COMPETITION, AND MILITARISATION

In the Eastern Mediterranean, the past year was characterised by a more complex and, at times, contradictory set of dynamics.

On the one hand, Turkish Cypriots and Türkiye continued to call for dialogue and expressed interest in strengthening engagement with the European Union. Relations between Ankara and Athens remained stable, and **strategic dialogue on migration management and security cooperation** continued. However, a number of developments raised concern. Energy arrangements involving Cyprus and Lebanon moved forward despite Turkish objections, adding to existing disputes over maritime jurisdiction. More troublingly, defence cooperation among Israel, Greece, and Cyprus expanded in both scope and intensity, accompanied by a noticeable shift toward **greater militarisation on the island**. Taken together, these dynamics underscore both the risks of further entrenchment and the continuing, if fragile, scope for creative diplomacy — particularly in relation to Cyprus — provided there is sustained **political will and a genuine commitment to dialogue** by all parties.



# GLOBAL POLICY AND SECURITY DIALOGUE

Throughout 2025, the Institute maintained a demanding and dynamic agenda, combining close monitoring of regional developments with sustained attention to wider global trends.

In pursuit of its mission, the Global Security Seminar Series served as a platform for in-depth analysis of the evolving forces shaping global and regional security landscapes. The series this year addressed a broad spectrum of themes, including shifts in transatlantic defence cooperation, the role of identity politics in the Arctic, challenges of post-conflict governance and state reconstruction in Libya, the resilience of critical energy infrastructure amid the war in Ukraine, and the rise and decline of de facto states, examined through the case of Nagorno-Karabakh. These discussions were enriched by contributions from a diverse group of leading scholars and practitioners, among them **Prof David J. Galbreath** (Centre for the Study of Violence, University of Bath), **Dr Ingrid A. Medby** (Newcastle University), **Mr Mohamed Eljarh** (Co-founder, Libya Outlook), **Ms Oksana Ishchuk** (Executive Director, Center for Global Studies “Strategy XXI”), and **Assoc Prof Tomas Hoch** (University of Ostrava).

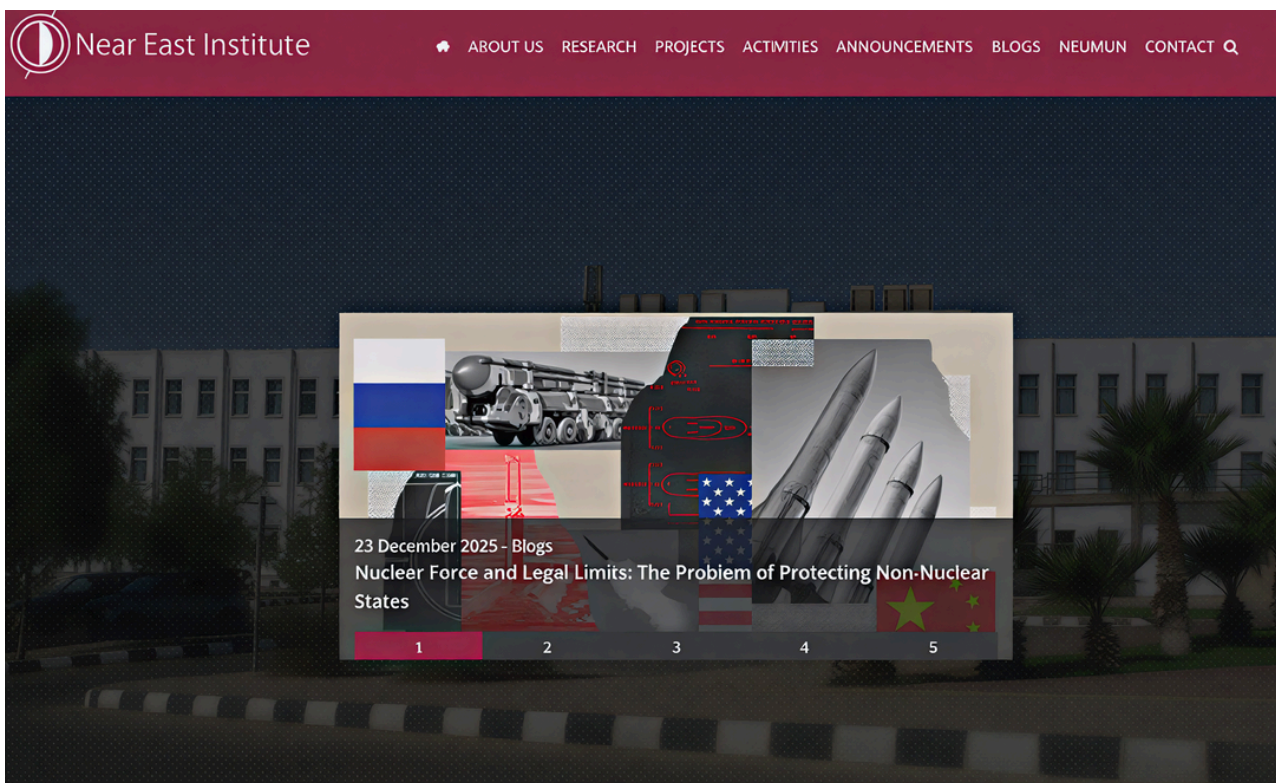


# RESEARCH OUTPUT AND POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2025, the Institute continued to strengthen its research output with a clear focus on timely, policy-relevant analysis.

Alongside longer research reports and journal articles, the Institute placed **strong emphasis on blogs and short analytical pieces** to respond swiftly to regional and international developments and make academic insight accessible beyond academia. Blog publications addressed key issues including Cyprus, the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean geopolitics, and conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, and Syria, and were widely shared with policymakers, diplomats, media, and civil society.

In 2025, the Institute also launched **Emerging Perspectives, a new platform showcasing analysis by current and former Near East University students**, reflecting its commitment to mentorship and providing editorial support to early-career researchers engaging in policy debates.



# ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

The Institute also introduced several strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening research culture, academic engagement, and experiential learning.

Most notably **the Postgraduate Research Seminar Series**, was launched to provide a structured platform for emerging scholars to present, refine, and critically discuss their work. **Ms Maike Schlebusch** (University of Bonn) presented her research, “Water Realities on a Divided Island”, offering an in-depth examination of the political, social, and environmental dimensions of the Turkey–Northern Cyprus water pipeline. Additionally, the Institute organised the **Near East University Model United Nations (NEUMUN) Conference** — the first Model United Nations conference held in North Cyprus — marking a significant milestone in practice-based learning and student engagement, while fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and problem-oriented thinking on contemporary global challenges.



# PARTNERSHIPS AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT

In terms of partnerships, the Institute continued to work closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including universities, civil society organisations, policy professionals, international bodies, and government representatives.

Over the past year, the Institute convened **several high-level roundtables** bringing together academics, policymakers, NGO representatives, international organisations, and government actors, most recently to examine the **unfolding crises in the Middle East and their implications for the Eastern Mediterranean**. These discussions also catalysed new conversations with local and international partners to deepen collaboration in research, policy engagement, and public outreach, further consolidating the Institute's role as a trusted **platform for informed exchange and policy-relevant analysis** across academic and policy communities.



# LOOKING AHEAD: PRIORITIES FOR 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, the Near East Institute will continue to build on its analytical, convening, and policy-engagement strengths to shed light on the political and strategic developments shaping Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the wider region.

In a context marked by persistent uncertainty, the Institute's priority will be to deepen rigorous, policy-relevant research, sustain inclusive and informed dialogue, and provide a trusted platform for engagement among academic, diplomatic, and policy communities. Through these efforts, the Institute aims to contribute constructively to **understanding regional dynamics, supporting evidence-based policymaking, and fostering meaningful exchange** at both the local and international levels.





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