

The Cost of War Conference Programme

17-19 June 2009

War in the Middle East: From Ground Level

This session emphasized contemporary accounts from persons inside the tumult gripping the Middle East. Here the community remembered, and spoke on behalf of, millions of dead, displaced, and grieving persons whose losses are the legacy of these wars.

Conference Keynote Address: The Long Lasting Damage to World Peace.

Juan Cole, PhD. University of Michigan, USA

Fluent in Arabic and Farsi, with long experience in residence in the Middle East, Professor Cole is a well-known scholar of Middle Eastern history, religion, and politics. His web log Informed Comment, www.juancole.com, is appreciated as a major influence in changing American public opinion about the war in Iraq. His recent book *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East* depicts that failed Western invasion of the Arab world with unstated but unmistakable parallels to the US/UK invasion of Iraq. His newest book, *Engaging the Muslim World*, was published in April 2009 to wide critical acclaim.

Keynote Address in the Arts: The Full Costs of War: Images, Visions, Words, and Representations.

***Jean Said Makdisi. Lebanese Republic.**

Born in Jerusalem, sister of the late Edward Said, and long time university lecturer in Beirut, Jean Makdisi is acclaimed worldwide for intensely beautiful literary work. In describing the continuing human distress in the Middle East, she combines personal experience of life in cities under sustained air and artillery bombardment with deep professional skill. Her *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir* has been widely praised as a timeless portrayal of the horror that civilians in war zones experience, and her *Teta, Mother, and Me: Three Generations of Arab Women* has been equally widely celebrated as a winsome portrait of life and culture across the generations of Middle East conflict.

Plenary Lecture: What Has Happened to Our Children?

Anicée El-Amine Merhi, Docteur en Psychologie, Psychanalyste. Lebanese Republic.

A practicing clinician in the Lebanon, Dr. El-Amine Merhi was closely engaged with families in the south of Lebanon during the 2006 conflict with Israel, including the invasion and bombardment of southern Lebanon. She described, as only a sensitive clinician and participant observer can, the acute and chronic mental health impact on families, including unique harms inflicted on children and adolescents. The latter she also set in the context of what she terms the inter-social cleavage that develops in subsequent months and years. Dr. El-Amine Merhi will deliver her entire address in Arabic, with real-time translation into English from the podium.

Plenary Lecture: Cost to Iraq's Heritage, and the World's Heritage.

Lamia Al-Gailani Werr, Ph.D. University College, London.

A native of Iraq and a distinguished field archaeologist there, Dr. Al-Gailani Werr has become a leading advocate of the community's stake in culturally significant archaeological and cultural relics from the past four millennia of civilization in Iraq. She explained the impact of their destruction, not only to present day Iraqi culture but to worldwide Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and cultural history generally. She is the author of major books and papers over three decades, and a pivotal contributor to the 2006 *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* edited by Joanne Bajjalay.

Commentary: Professor Ron Geaves, Ph.D. Liverpool Hope University.

Professor Geaves is renowned as one of the UK's most distinguished interpreters of historic and developing trends in Muslim life. He commented from his wide experience in the Middle East, South Asia, and the UK, on harms inflicted on Muslim communities worldwide, by the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

International Law and Accountability: Can the Centre Hold?

Panel: Björn Müller-Wille; Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Lt. Colonel Laura Klein; United States Army Judge Advocate General Corps.

Dr Müller-Wille is a well published expert on intelligence and on duties of soldiers under the Geneva Conventions; Lieutenant Colonel Klein from the US Army JAG, is on assignment with the British Military Operational Law Branch; she addressed the training responsibilities as they apply to the law of military occupation. This panel reviewed the status of international law today, contending it is still relevant in reducing the prevalence of war crimes and human rights abuses.

Panel: Ross McGarry & Neil Ferguson, Liverpool Hope University, and Stuart Griffith, journalist and photographer of British war veterans.

The panel focused on individual soldiers. Mr. McGarry is completing the first Ph.D. thesis from the Desmond Tutu Centre, of which Neil Ferguson Academic Director. Mr. McGarry was a British soldier in Kuwait; he now has a major series of case studies on recently returned British veterans, including their views on military law and command. Stuart Griffith commented from his familiar photographic series on British veterans. The impact on combatants was further addressed as Dr. Ferguson compared McGarry's findings to his own field research on both sides of the conflict in Northern Ireland. That set the transition for the last panel on civil wars.

Panel: Elizabeth Harris, PhD. Liverpool Hope University.

Mikako Nishimuko, Institute of Education, University of London.

This panel turned to severe but little noticed costs of civil wars, focusing on the general destruction in Sri Lanka (Harris) and the public education setback in Sierra Leone (Nishimuko). Dr. Harris was a resident of Sri Lanka, did her postgraduate work there, and returns frequently. Ms. Nishimuko is soon to present her extensive field research in Sierra Leone as her Ph.D. thesis. Both have developed detailed and rich perspectives on the wide ranging harms inflicted in these civil wars.

Author's Poetry Reading: *The Gossamer Wall*

**Reading by Micheal O'Siadhail,
Poet, Ireland.**

One of Ireland's leading poets, Micheal O'Siadhail will delivered extended readings from his famous *The Gossamer Wall: Poems in Witness to the Holocaust* and from selected other poems. As Patsy McGarry of The Irish Times put it: "The book is an exceptional achievement, evidence of the poet's wounded fascination before such human evil and testifying to a painstaking labour of something akin to outraged love for all those who suffered."

Memory and Anticipation

From World War I to present, this session detailed literary memories of past wars, anticipations of future wars, and feelings of incapacity to deal with present wars.

Plenary Lecture: No Man's Landscape: Literary Representations of Western Front. William Blazek, PhD, and *Terry Phillips, PhD. Hope University.

Literary representations of landscapes from World War 1 evoke emotions that range from terror to unexpected calm. From long work on this literature, Dr.s Blazek and Phillips showed that war's devastations seem to create irrepressible drives to impose order that simplifies, but can also distort, memory of that war's harms and horrors.

Plenary Lecture: The Great Day To Come, and its Inexpressible Violence: Tradition, "modern warfare" and violence in French military anticipation on the eve of WWI and WWII. Olivier Cosson, Ph.D. Université Catholique de l'Ouest. Angers, France.

Dr. Cosson, a specialist in the cultural history of French wars, reviewed the mental anticipations of World Wars I and II, the de-colonization wars of that century, and the lead-up to Iraq, to find a distinctive attitude toward memory of prior harsh costs.

Plenary Lecture: A European Nation: Post-War Visions for the Future among German Völkisch Writers after 1945. Guy Tourlamain, PhD. Hope University.

Dr. Tourlamain is a scholar of the relation of German history and literature. He finds that the *völkisch* writers in West Germany retained strong feelings of German nationalism throughout the 20th century: while they rejected Nazi war crimes after the defeats of 1945, they continue a strong Euro-German racially exclusive identity.

Plenary Lecture: The Poetics of the Iraqi War: Between Discursive Conflicts and Diasporic Discourse. Otared Haidar, Ph.D. Oxford University.

A Syrian native and specialist in Arabic literature, Dr. Haidar finds Iraqi writers since the early 1990's to be "falling in a complete silence, or shattered between feelings of guilt and confusion . . . complaining of the inadequacy of language to speak about the shocking experience of the mass death and the prolonged war." Viewing Iraqi writers historically as leaders of Arab literature, she now fears an adverse long term impact on cultural and political institutions in the Arab world. Her *The Prose Poem and the Journal Shi'r* is recognized as a major force for affirming and appreciating Arab literature, inside and outside the Arab community.

The drama *Narrating Gaza*, was written and performed for conference attendees by Claire Breslin, Nicole Clark, Anna Karran, Jessica Neale, and Claire Sanderson— graduating students of Liverpool Hope University.

Reaping the Whirlwind: War's Explosive Mathematics

This session widened the focus to include diverse costs and the "vicious circle" ways in which they can combine to yield outcomes far worse than the sum of the separate costs. Models describing such outcomes resemble those for destructive events like cyclones or landslides; current calculations of £4 Trillion to £6 Trillion of costs to US and UK taxpayers from current wars may therefore be severe underestimates. A chaos mathematical theory was considered as a possible way of describing severe and "explosive" events that sometimes emerge in the aftermath of war.

Overview Plenary Lecture: Children of War

David Hakak, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist, well-known modern Hebrew educator, and veteran of service in the Israeli Army during the 2006 conflict in Lebanon, reported on the particular ways in which he encountered children on both sides of that conflict—noting that the familiar attribution of post-traumatic stress disorder is a pale descriptor of the intense, and chronic, fear he saw in the faces and heard in the voices of all the affected children. He added to a general consensus that children—and the lives they will live in post-war environments—are by any measure the most serious and longest lasting of the costs of war.

Plenary Lecture: Genetic damage to the children of soldiers and civilians. George Gericke, MD. Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa.

Professor Gericke is a paediatrician and geneticist with long clinical and research experience. To that he adds his meticulous review of a century of genetic evidence on the surprising ways in which the genetic legacy to future generations can be altered by the environment of war—addressing also risks, difficult to sort out, faced by offspring of the survivors of wars and of traumas such as the Holocaust.

Plenary Lecture: Shifting the Burden of the Clean-up in War Zones. Brian Rappert, PhD, University of Exeter, and Richard Moyes, Landmine Action.

Costs include casualties from unexploded munitions, degraded infrastructure and land, and long-term impairment of productivity. Dr. Rappert is well known as an analyst of international arms treaties; Mr. Moyes, as a forceful advocate for recognition of the costs of conflict to civilian populations.

Plenary Lecture: Complex Interactions of Religion, Human Rights, and War. *Olusegun Simeon Ilesanmi, PhD, JD. Wake Forest University, USA.

Dr. Ilesanmi not only explained how stresses in one of the above areas exacerbate distress in the others, he also argues forcefully that failure to intervene militarily in Somalia and Sudan will bring far greater costs than any intervention would bring. He is a native of Nigeria with many publications in human rights, war crimes, international law, and the inter-relation of religion and politics in Africa. He is a fellow of the Yale University/Pew Project on Christian-Muslim Relations.

Plenary Lecture, commentary, and concluding remarks on the overall session:

Persecution and Murder of Christians, Jews, Other Religious Minorities, and Academics in Iraq. Samir Rihani, Ph.D. Research Fellow, University of Liverpool; Visiting Research Fellow, Lancaster University.

A native of Iraq, Dr. Rihani has served as a civil engineer and economic development specialist there and in a number of leadership positions in Liverpool. With careful attention to the empirical evidence, Dr. Rihani has documented a prolonged pattern of intimidation, expulsion, and violence—not only against religious minorities but also against professionals in many disciplines regardless of their religious or political identities. Dr. Rihani will also comment throughout the Friday morning session from the perspective of his *Complex Systems Theory and Development Practice*—a mathematically modern and readily understandable account of how complex factors interact to produce unexpected outcomes in society.

Workshops

Workshop on Community Care for Those Suffering Violence and Trauma. Basil Pillay, PhD. Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine, Durban, South Africa.

Aggrieved persons and groups do the work of recovery, but other individuals and groups provide powerful assistance in addressing needs, facilitating recovery, and re-establishing community. Once a consultant to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, Professor Pillay now heads his institution's Department of Behavioural Medicine—a large and highly effective centre for addressing violence, victimization, and trauma in individuals and groups.

In recounting his experience with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Professor Pillay will describe the astonishing impact of victim testimony on the public generally, and—remarkably—on the press in attendance, who themselves in large numbers straightaway sought major assistance from Professor Pillay and his team to assist them in dealing with their personal reactions to what they saw and heard. This reminded workshop attendees: it is not only those suffering the trauma, but those witnessing it, who need sensitive support from leaders in the community.

Many popular methods don't help; Professor Pillay presented those proven effective. He has a long record of community service in churches and schools in South Africa, and his workshop especially addresses the roles of religious, educational, and civic leaders, and those who volunteer their service to aggrieved individuals and groups.

Workshop on Advocacy Through the Internet: Juan Cole (see above).

Professor Cole is a university professor and scholar, who while continuing his formal academic research and publication has also become an influential contributor to public dialogue on the internet. There, factual reporting and evidence-based advocacy have forever changed the face of journalism and pamphleteering as we have known them over previous centuries.

Arguably, this is the first time in history that a single individual, at very little cost, can produce a document that is instantly readable by many millions of individuals across the world. Here more than ever the computer screen—if not the pen—is far mightier than the sword.

Attendees gained the skills and lessons of Professor Cole's experience: what works, what doesn't work, and what endures—when individuals speaking only for themselves address worldwide web audiences.

Workshop on Writing about War and Peace: *Jean Makdisi (see above), Victor Merriman, Head of Drama and Theatre Studies, and *Terry Phillips, Dean of Arts and Humanities, the latter two at Liverpool Hope University.

Jean Makdisi (see Wednesday's keynote in the Arts), is a writer whose gifts have not only enabled her to produce beautiful literature, but have enabled her to provide them to students of all ages. Victor Merriman is equally gifted in bringing words to life in theatrical contexts, and he convincingly exemplifies the evidence that public theatre can be a major influence for social and political change. Terry Phillips is a scholar of the literature of the First World War, who also understands how such literature expresses, confirms, and even changes the self-identification of those who write and read it. A skilful writer and interpreter of public events, she has at Hope University also been a strong force for lifting writing skills of students and others.

Together, these individuals were able to assist students and Faculty in learning skills of writing about human experiences of war and peace.

*In the programme, denotes members of the Centre's International Advisory Board