

Impact case study (REF3b)

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| <p>Institution: King's College London</p> |
| <p>Unit of Assessment: 33</p> |
| <p>Title of case study: UK foreign policy making towards Lebanon & Syria: A Conversation with Diplomacy</p> |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Between 2009 and 2013, Professor Michael Kerr's research impacted Foreign and Commonwealth Office thinking and policy on how to address the deeply divided societies of Lebanon and Syria. Kerr's research addresses specifically the ways to apply lessons of the Northern Ireland conflict and subsequent peace process to Lebanon and Syria. This research was disseminated via the 'Conversation with Diplomacy' project, led by Kerr, undertaken between Unit staff in the Middle East & Mediterranean Studies Programme (MEMS) and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO). This collaborative project consisted of knowledge transfer and high impact engagement with FCO Ambassadors, the Middle East diplomatic community in London, and members of the international policy making communities.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research underpinning the impact indicated above was undertaken by Kerr, a Category A member of staff since 2008 and currently Professor of Conflict Studies, Director of MEMS and Director of the Centre for the Study of Divided Societies (a TRS Research Centre) [http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/divsoc/index.aspx]. Using the Northern Ireland peace process as a model, Kerr conducted research that examined power-sharing in Northern Ireland, Lebanon and Syria, three divided societies whose divisions all have deep religious roots. Its starting point was the British government's efforts to apply power-sharing to regulate Northern Ireland's Troubles in 1972-76 and the success of that same policy after 1998.</p> <p>This research showed in novel ways and new historical detail how the successful practice of adopting, supporting and implementing power-sharing in Northern Ireland could be applied to regulate political violence in both Lebanon and Syria. As such it offered fresh historical lessons and insights for policy makers thinking about implementing consociational democratic institutions through power-sharing agreements in order to regulate political and religiously motivated violence in deeply divided societies. Specifically, through new historical findings and hitherto unexplored analyses, this research highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in fresh contextual detail the limitations of Western intervention in divided societies experiencing negative exogenous pressures from regional states seeking to advance their geo-strategic interests through that society • how the existence of a culture of power-sharing in a divided society greatly enhances the long term chances of democratization and stability whereas the absence of such democratic traditions suggests that bringing about such a transition may take decades • how the British government's experience in Northern Ireland (both its success since 1998 and its failure between 1972-76) offers important lessons for policy makers considering how best to negotiate, implement and consolidate power-sharing agreements in the Middle East. <p>This underpinning research was disseminated via the Conversations with Diplomacy project, which facilitated the transfer of knowledge to FCO diplomats, policy officers and research staff, and had a direct impact on how the FCO engages with academia and utilises academic research to inform its policy making process on key international issues.</p> |
| <p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>1) <i>The Destructors: The Story of Northern Ireland's Lost Peace Process</i> (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011)</p> <p>This peer-reviewed study, based almost totally on primary archival sources, changed and modified existing understandings of peacemaking in Northern Ireland. Professor Adrian Guelke, Queen's University, Belfast, described this book as 'Forensic...Path-breaking scholarship'. Lord Bew of Donegore, Professor of Politics at Queen's University, Belfast described it as 'Ground-breaking research...Throws more light on the subject than anything published before...Changes and modifies the existing understanding...A Powerful story, beautifully written...A book of enduring significance.' Dr Bill Kissane of the LSE was of the opinion that this work 'establishes Michael Kerr as a historical scholar of note in contemporary British and Irish Studies'.</p> <p>2) <i>Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution</i> (edited with Are Knudsen) (London, Hurst & Co Publishers, 2012) and U.S edition (New York, Oxford University Press, 2013)</p> |

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This peer-reviewed volume, edited by Kerr and including an introduction and a chapter ('Before the Revolution'), was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through The Christian Michelsen Institute in Bergen (£90,000). It examines the challenges facing modern Lebanon from the perspective of community power-sharing, corporate consociationalism, civil military relations and image-making. In doing so it brings together key comparative approaches that examine Lebanon as a window to the Levant. Roger Owen, A. J. Meyer Professor of Middle East History (Harvard), described this volume as 'Indispensable even for those who think they know the country well'. Professor Clive Jones (Durham) described it as 'a timely volume...essential for anyone wishing to understand the complex eddies of contemporary Lebanon... As a work that explains the intricacies of Lebanese politics post-Hariri with clarity and precision, this cannot be surpassed.' Dr Katerina Dalacoura (LSE) was of the opinion that 'This is academia at its best, balancing empirical detail with conceptual sophistication and bringing together various disciplinary perspectives.'

3) 'A Positive Aspect to the Tragedy of Lebanon: The Convergence of US, Syrian and Israeli Interests at the Outset of Lebanon's Civil War', *Israel Affairs*, 15 (4), 2009, pp 355-371

Drawing on recently opened archival resources, this peer-reviewed research underscored the key role of external parties in peacemaking, and stability in power-sharing situations.

4) 'A culture of power sharing' in *Consociational Theory: McGarry and O'Leary and the Northern Ireland Conflict*, (London: Routledge, 2009), pp 206-220

This peer-reviewed chapter, in a volume dedicated to analysing the success and failure of power-sharing in Northern Ireland, illustrates how the idea of using power-sharing to regulate Northern Ireland's Troubles was developed by UK officials who had worked in Lebanon prior to its civil war. They believed that its power-sharing mechanisms between Christians and Muslims might work between Northern Ireland's Protestants and Catholics.

5) 'Negative external intervention and peace in Lebanon. A question of power?' in 'Reconciliation, reform and resilience: Positive peace for Lebanon', *Accord*, 24, July 2012, pp 60-63

The search for peace and stability in Lebanon has consistently been hampered by a lack of positive external support for the implementation of a power-sharing system. This peer-reviewed article argues that a 'unity of purpose' among those intervening in Lebanon's political process, with a clear intent to support its power-sharing arrangements and encourage lasting peaceful coexistence among its different communities as an interest in and of itself (as was the case throughout Northern Ireland's recent peace process), is key to helping this deeply divided society break free of the same cycle of violence that led it to civil war in 1975.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The 'Conversation with Diplomacy' project, the vehicle for disseminating Kerr's research to the FCO, is both distinctive and innovative. It was launched in 2010 as a specifically targeted response to the well publicised call by then British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, for the FCO to engage with academics in 'public diplomacy' in order to broaden and deepen the scope of public discourse on foreign policy-making, to challenge 'conventional wisdom' and 'shape a debate and build consensus' in the framing of UK foreign policy (David Miliband - FCO Leadership Conference, 4 March 2008). From its launch the Conversation with Diplomacy project was established as a collaborative project designed to have a direct impact on both policy approaches to peacemaking in divided societies and the approach of UK foreign policy makers to engaging with academia.

Impact A - Engaging in high level knowledge transfer and impact through the 'Conversation with Diplomacy' project

The project is defined by the extent of its knowledge transfer and impact across various sectors of the FCO from serving ambassadors to policy planners to the Middle East diplomatic community stationed in London, members of the media, and the business and policy making communities. The impact, reach and significance of Professor Kerr's research is evident from the collaboration, dialogue and policy engagement that has occurred through the public and private engagements which took place at King's College London between November 2009 and March 2013. Kerr also ran a series of research and policy focused private briefings and workshops with the FCO, eight in total, bringing together up to twenty policy and research officers from different FCO clusters (not just Middle East & North Africa), staff and PhD students from MEMS/CSDS & TRS.

The nature and the extent of the impact of the research was its dissemination through these workshops in which King's academics presented current research relevant to the UK foreign policy-making processes on ethnic conflict and third party intervention in Lebanon and Syria, the EU and

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the Middle East, and engaging with Islamists in Lebanon and Syria.

A private MEMS-FCO foreign policy conference in May 2012 on the 'Transitional Justice Dilemma for Syria' – led by the British Envoy to the Syrian Opposition, Ambassador Guy, at King's – brought together Syrian opposition leaders, senior FCO officials, academics and NGO leaders from around the world. The objective of the conference was to inform UK foreign policy makers of the long-term challenges they face in bringing about a peaceful democratic transition in Syria and preventing conflict spilling into Lebanon, and to increase awareness of the issues and challenges for transitional justice processes in Syria. These policy discussions fed directly into the UK foreign policy making process. Ambassador Frances Guy (5.1.3) commented on the event: 'The collaboration was extremely successful and we received an enormous amount of positive feedback from both from the FCO and those attending. As events in the region transpired, the innovation provided for a timely and much needed intellectual connection between government and academia over the Arab Spring and what can be learnt from previous successful conflict regulation processes spearheaded by Western governments. With the world's attention focused on conflicts in the Middle East, bringing together leading experts and foreign policy practitioners on the region at this time proved to be a high impact development for all concerned.'

Speaking in her role as former British Ambassador to Lebanon (5.1.3), Guy also commented that 'By helping to draw parallels between Northern Ireland and Lebanon it is fair to say that Michael Kerr had an influence on British foreign policy as it was carried out both in theory from a London perspective but also practically on the ground in Lebanon where the British government was able to demonstrate clearly that we had relevant ideas to be discussed'. Her successor as ambassador in Beirut, Ambassador Tom Fletcher (5.1.1), described Kerr's research on the lessons of Northern Ireland for Lebanon as 'of great value to me and my team' and as having 'provided the cornerstone for our advocacy work on this issue here [in Beirut]'. Fletcher added that Kerr's 'work will remain important as we and the Lebanese continue our discussions about what power sharing models will work in the next phase. I very much hope that we can continue our close collaboration.' On several occasions he has also used his blog, part of the FCO's influential online Global Conversations web presence to draw attention to the importance of Kerr's research. Notably, this included blog postings inspired by engagements with Kerr (5.2.1).

Impact B - Providing the FCO with a public and private forum to advance Miliband's objectives

The 'Conversation with Diplomacy' project has had a significant impact on the way in which the FCO engages with and thinks about engaging with academics and utilising their research in its policy making process. In doing so it has brought together the worlds of diplomacy, business and academia to address the policy dilemmas currently facing western governments in the Middle East.

- The project was launched in November 2010 when a delegation from the FCO's Middle East and North Africa Department, which included its then Director and its then Head of Research, held a policy debate with over 200 King's students, staff and guests. See (5.2.2)
- This was followed up in the same month by MEMS hosting a public debate with His Excellency Fouad Siniora (former Prime Minister of Lebanon). An audience of over 250 attended, including members of the international media, think tanks and research institutes and the diplomatic community in London including the current Lebanese ambassador. For media and other reports and coverage on the impact of this event see (5.2.3).
- In 2011, the FCO on three separate occasions sent UK Ambassadors to King's – Richard Makepeace (Jerusalem), John Jenkins (Baghdad) and Frances Guy (Beirut) – to speak at 'Conversation with Diplomacy' events about their four year postings, before holding Q & A sessions with audiences of approximately 200.
- As part of the same project, Professor Kerr nominated Senator George Mitchell, former US Special Envoy to Northern Ireland and US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, for an honorary doctorate from King's, awarded in October 2011 (see 5.2.4).
- In January 2012, as part of an 'Ambassador in Residence' scheme at King's, Ambassador Frances Guy (Lebanon) joined MEMS as Senior Visiting Research fellow for three years. While in MEMS she focussed her research and teaching on UK foreign policy towards Syria following the uprising against the Assad regime and gave a public lecture on the Syrian Opposition: 'Does it matter if they are not united?' (see 5.2.5).
- In March 2013, Sir Nigel Sheinwald (HM Ambassador to the USA, 2007-12) spoke on

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'Obama's Second Term and the Middle East'; and HM Ambassador to Kuwait, Frank Baker, on his four year posting.

- In the formative stages of the project, the FCO sent the UK Ambassador to Jordan, James Watt, and the Foreign Secretary's Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles to address MEMS staff and students at King's.

Via these high level exchanges, the Conversation with Diplomacy project, underpinned and motivated by Kerr's research, has acted as a spearhead for advancing the FCO's objectives of engaging in more concerted ways with academia, thereby acting also as a clear catalyst for change and innovation in the way the FCO is pursuing its 'Diplomatic Excellence' agenda. But beyond this, Kerr's research has also contributed significantly to the change in consciousness at the FCO envisaged by Miliband's objectives, and in so doing has also effected a more informed understanding of the dynamics of power-sharing and consensus-building together with a deepened awareness of crucial regional factors. Angus McKee, The FCO's Head of the Middle East and North Africa Research Group, from 2008 to 2011, and present Head of the Syria Programme in Beirut (Damascus Embassy is closed) (5.1.2) confirms the importance and reach of these impacts: 'I worked with Professor Michael Kerr on several occasions. His expertise on Lebanon, and his particular focus on the pros and cons of power-sharing, was often consulted – for example, when briefing officials and the newly-appointed Ambassador to Beirut. His interventions underlined the need for consensus-building between leaders and communities...The "Conversation with Diplomacy" project in collaboration with the FCO [and the] KCL..."teach-ins" for FCO staff on thematic issues related to the Middle East region...contributed to the FCO's "Diplomatic Excellence" agenda by deepening policy officers' regional knowledge, in line with the Secretary of State's vision of an FCO based on knowledge of history and expertise. Prof. Kerr's collaboration with the FCO...has contributed to the FCO's deepened knowledge of Middle East regional issues, and made for better-informed decisions and policy.'

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1. Main corroborating statements (uploaded)

1. British Ambassador to Lebanon (2011-)
2. Head of the FCO's Middle East and North Africa Research Group (2008-11), and Head of the FCO Syria Programme in Beirut (2012-)
3. Ambassador to Lebanon (2006-11) and Foreign Secretary's Special Envoy to the Syrian Opposition Groups (2011-12)

(Also contactable: UN Under Secretary General in the Middle East (2008-10))

5.2. Web links and other internet sources

1. On the lessons of Northern Ireland for Lebanon see Fletcher's blog 'The courage to Co-exist' <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/tomfletcher/2013/03/18/the-courage-to-coexist/> and 'Reconciliation and Co-existence-five ideas for Lebanon from Northern Ireland' <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/tomfletcher/2012/03/16/reconciliation-and-coexistence-five-ideas-for-lebanon-from-northern-ireland/>
2. On the birth of the Conversations Project see: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/newsevents/news/newsrecords/2010/Nov/NewFCO-Kingscollaboration.aspx> and <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/divsoc/index.aspx>
3. For media and other reports and coverage on the impact of the event with the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, see Siniora's own website: <http://www.fuadsiniora.com/page/1865> and Lebanese newspaper the Daily Star, 'Siniora defends Hizbullah against London Critics'; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/Dec/01/Siniora-defends-Hizbullah-against-London-critics.ashx#axzz2dwbYCb7Q>; see also: Ya Libnan 'Siniora-Dialogue is the only solution to disagreements' <http://www.yalibnan.com/2010/11/30/siniora-dialogue-is-the-only-solution-to-disagreements/>
5. On Mitchell's contribution to the Conversations Project see: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/newsevents/events/eventsrecords/2011/October/Kings-Honorary-Degree-for-Senator-George-Mitchell.aspx>; see also <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FixNwT7uqk>
6. On Frances Guy's Visiting Senior Research Fellowship, see: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/mems/people/staff/associates/visit/guy/index.aspx>