The Great War in the Middle East
1911-1923

20-21 April 2016

Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

This major international conference, organised jointly by the War Studies Department of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and the Changing Character of War Programme at the University of Oxford, will re-examine the origins, conduct and consequences of the First World War in the Middle East. The voluminous historiography of the conflict remains, however, focused on the European experience of 1914-18. This conference brings together historians of the Middle East and the First World War to discuss this formative event and to relate the Great War to the broader period of conflict that affected the Ottoman Empire from 1911 to 1923.

The conference will provide a forum for scholars from around the world to examine the complexities of the Middle East’s Great War, and to discuss new avenues for research and debate. This was a region in which the great imperial powers of the early twentieth century struggled for control, and the resulting conflict unleashed powerful nationalist, imperial, religious, and ethnic dynamics that continue to both fascinate historians and to shape the region to this day. The conference will address these inter-related factors, and their role in the breaking and making of empires and nation-states in the Middle East. In doing so, the breadth of papers and discussions will integrate military, social, cultural, and political histories together to provide a broader history of the Middle East and the First World War.

The fee for attending the conference is £200; accommodation and dinners can also be booked as optional extras. If you wish to attend please email Dr James Kitchen for a copy of the conference information pack, booking form and the security form: james.kitchen101@mod.uk

Conference Programme

Wednesday 20 April 2016

09.30 – 10.30  Registration

10.30 – 10.40  Welcome and Opening Remarks
              RMAS Commandant and Director of Studies

10.40 – 12.30  Panel 1: Global Strategy and the Middle East
              Chair: Matthew Hughes (Brunel)
James Renton (Edge Hill) – The British Idea of the Middle East and its Consequences
Hervé François (Historial de la Grande Guerre) – France
Christopher Read (Warwick) – Russia
Peter Lieb (ZMSBw, Potsdam) – German Policy towards the Middle East in 1918

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30 – 15.30 Panel 2: Beliefs and War
Chair: John Darwin (Oxford)

Adrian Gregory (Oxford) – Western ‘Crusading’ in the Middle East
Roberto Mazza (Limerick) – Alone, with the Enemy or With God? The Christian Churches of Palestine during the War
Yucel Yanikdag (University of Richmond) – Ottoman Jihad
John Slight (Cambridge) – Jihad Beyond the Ottoman Empire

15.30 – 16.00 Break

16.00 – 18.00 Panel 3: Military Operations and Adaptation
Chair: James Kitchen (RMAS)

Kaushik Roy (Jadavpur) – Learning and Fighting: The Indian Army in Mesopotamia and Syria, 1914-1918
Aimée Fox-Godden (Birmingham) – ‘From Experience Gained in France’: Disseminating and Adapting Western Front Lessons in the Middle Eastern Theatres, 1914-1918
Metin Gurcan (Bilkent) – Gallipoli

19.00 Formal Conference Dinner
Old College Dining Room
(Optional – must be booked separately)

Thursday 21 April 2016

09.30 – 11.00 Panel 4: Imperial Home Fronts and ‘Total War’
Chair: Roberto Mazza (Limerick)

Leila Fawaz (Tufts) – Civilians and Soldiers in the Levant 1914-1918
Mario Ruiz (Hofstra) – Martial Law, Rural Labourers, and the Egyptian Home Front, 1914-1918
Oliver Bast (Manchester) – ‘The Rape of Persia’? – World War I in Neutral Iran as a Humanitarian Disaster

11.00 – 11.30 Break

11.30 – 13.00 Panel 5: Tactics and Combat in the Middle East
Chair: Robert Johnson (Oxford)

David Murphy (Maynooth) – The Arab Revolt, 1916-18: Sideshow or Major Campaign?
Nikolas Gardner (RMC Canada) – Tactics and Morale in Indian Expeditionary Force ‘D’, 1915-1916

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 15.30 Panel 6: Building and Challenging Post-War Empires
Chair: Peter Lieb (ZMSBw, Potsdam)

James Kitchen (RMAS) – Egypt 1919: The British Army and Counter-Revolutionary Operations
Robert Fletcher (Warwick) – Imperial Frontiers
Michael Provence (UCSD) – Ottoman Military Culture and Anti-colonial Insurgency in Greater Syria

15.30 – 16.00 Break

16.00 – 17.30 Panel 7: Representations of the First World War in the Middle East
Chair: Adrian Gregory (Oxford)

Justin Fantauzzo (Memorial University, St John’s) – Amongst Gyppos, Jews, Arabs, and Abdul: Imperial Soldiers and the Levant in Inter-war Fiction
Nadia Atia (QMUL) – Murder in Mesopotamia: Agatha Christie’s Life and Work in the Middle East
Jenny Macleod (Hull) – Memory/Representation of Gallipoli
Gizem Tongo (Oxford) – Ottoman Art of the First World War

19.00 Buffet Dinner
Victory College Dining Room
(Optional – must be booked separately)