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WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

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Waging Peace

War in Lebanon and War on Terror

THE COUNCIL ON American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) hosted an Aug. 16 panel discussion at the Longworth House Office Building entitled "War in Lebanon and the War on Terror" to discuss the recent war in Lebanon and its implications in the larger U.S. war on terror. Panelists were Anatol Lieven, senior research fellow at New America Foundation and co-author of the upcoming book *Ethical Realism: A Vision for America's Role in the World*, and Bassam Haddad, assistant professor of political science at St. Joseph's University, visiting adjunct professor at Georgetown University and editor of the *Journal of Arab Studies*.



Bassam Haddad, assistant professor of political science at St. Joseph's University, discusses the war on terror (Staff photo B. Hajj).

Lieven, a British citizen, first addressed the recent alleged terror plot in England as it relates to the West's war on terror. The British media and government, he noted, have focused on the need for England's Muslim community to play a more active role in combating terrorism. While Lieven agreed that without Muslim support the war on terror cannot be won, he was critical of his government's methods. "It is essential that Western governments work with organizations like CAIR," he stated, "in an effort to reach out to the intelligent, moderate and patriotic of the Muslim communities."

Regarding the war in Lebanon, Lieven pointed out that "Hezbollah did not carry out the events which sparked the conflict in a vacuum." As long as the Arab-Israeli conflict continues, there will be clashes, he warned, adding that while "Israel has the right to strike back in these clashes... [Israel's] massive bombardment of infrastructure and of civilian targets" is not warranted and "lacks all rationality."

Professor Haddad began by sketching the political scene in Lebanon, noting that even while the Lebanese typically are a secular people, political affiliation is strongly tied to sectarian grouping. Support for Hezbollah reached 86 percent in this recent conflict, however, demonstrating that Hezbollah's resistance function superseded any sectarian divide.

Haddad discussed the growing regional opposition to the U.S. due to the perceived American green light for Israeli aggression. While Iran supported Hezbollah, the U.S. provided far deadlier weapons to Israel. This war demonstrated that there is no alternative to ground war, Haddad said, and so an attack on Iran "will have to be rethought."

The Lebanon war also made clear the true intentions of the larger U.S. "war on terror," Haddad continued. U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has sought to "establish loyal and compliant regimes, not democratic regimes," he stated, and "what [America] wants to accomplish in the region has nothing to do with what the people of the region want. They want real democracy, not governments that comply with every will of the U.S." The "war on terror," Haddad argued, would more appropriately be called the "war on the enemies of the U.S. government."

The war in Lebanon—which supposedly was fought to weaken Hezbollah, strengthen democracy in Lebanon, and send warning signals to Iran and Syria—"has failed on all these fronts," Haddad stated. Instead, it has weakened the U.S. position and sown "the seeds of a different Middle East." These new seeds do not favor narrow U.S. interests or "radical Islam," he maintained, "but instead reflect the dire need of Arabs for freedom from oppression."

Haddad predicted that this war on terror will fail as long as "it is not based on fighting terrorism, as long as the U.S. does not distinguish between terrorism and legitimate resistance; and as long as the U.S. continues to support state-sponsored terrorism, like Israeli terrorism."

In conclusion, Haddad asked, "For whom are we trying to create a 'new Middle East'? If it is for the people of the region, then we should listen to what the majority of the people of the Middle East

are saying.”

—*Bana Hajj*
