Blue Shield 30! The Past, Present, and Future of Cultural Property Protection

24 – 25 October 2026

UNIC Athens
29th Street No. 17, Elliniko 167 77

SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

Free admission. Registration required.
For venue and practical/logistical enquiries:
Maria Anna Iosifidou | T: 2114447221 | E: iosifidou.ma@unic.ac.cy

For programme and registration enquiries:
Emma Cunliffe | E: emma.cunliffe@blueshield-international.org

ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Peter G. Stone	*UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace (CPP), Newcastle University, Blue Shield International (BSI)*
Emma Cunliffe	*Senior Research Associate, UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace, Newcastle University, Blue Shield International (BSI)*
Anna Bottinelli	*President and Board Member, Monuments Men and Women Foundation (MMWF)*
Elena Korka	*Chair of the Hellenic National Committee of the Blue Shield (HNCBS)*
Irini Stamatoudi	*Professor, Director Of School Of Law UNIC Athens*

PROGRAMME

08:45 - 18:30

DAY 1
SATURDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2026

08:45 – 09:15	**REGISTRATION**
09:15 – 09:45	**WELCOME SPEECHES** Irini Stamatoudi, *Professor, Director Of School Of Law UNIC Athens* Elena Korka, *Chair of the Hellenic National Committee of the Blue Shield (HNCBS)* Cordula Droege, *Director of International Law, Movement and Partnerships, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (by recorded video)* Krista Pikkat, *Director, Culture and Emergencies Entity, Culture Sector, UNESCO (by recorded video)* Antonis Avgerinos, *President, Hellenic Red Cross* Nikos Papaefstathiou, *Secretary General, Hellenic Republic Civil Protection* Peter G. Stone, *UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace (CPP), Newcastle University, Blue Shield International (BSI)*
09:45 – 13:00	**SESSION A – THE PAST** **Chair:** Irini Stamatoudi, *Professor, Director Of School Of Law UNIC Athens*
09:45 – 10:15	**A brief history of Cultural Property Protection and its importance** Peter G. Stone, *UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace (CPP), Newcastle University, Blue Shield International (BSI)*
10:15 – 10:45	**Keynote: The Monuments Men and Women of World War II: A Legacy of Recovery and Restitution** Dorothee Schneider, *Senior Researcher, Monuments Men and Women Foundation (MMWF)*
10:45 – 11:10	**TEA & COFFEE BREAK**
11:10 – 11:40	**Greek Cultural Property Protection in the Second World War, illicit excavations, and resulting restitution issues** Elena Korka, *Chair of the Hellenic National Committee of the Blue Shield (HNCBS)*
11:40 – 12:10	**Cultural Heritage Destruction and the Future of the Crime of Genocide** Dilşad Firuze Kaplan, *Ibn Haldun University, Friends of Cultural Heritage (FOCUH-KUMID)*
12:10 – 13:00	**Panel discussion** **Including a short recorded intervention by** Robert M. Edsel, *Founder and Chairman, Monuments Men and Women Foundation (MMWF)*
13:00 – 14:00	**LUNCH**
14:00 – 15:00	**SESSION B1 – THE PRESENT, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE** **Chair:** Callum Peebles, *Director, Blue Shield International (BSI)*
14:00 – 14:30	**Making cultural property protection work: a military commander's perspective** Stephen Mac Eoin, *Lieutenant Colonel, School Commandant, Cadet School, Irish Defence Forces*
14:30 – 15:00	**Talking to soldiers: Effective Cultural Property Protection training in the Irish military context** Gretchen Allen, Patrizia La Piscopia, Aoife Hurley, & Joanne Gaffrey, *Irish National Committee of the Blue Shield*
15:00 – 15:30	**TEA & COFFEE BREAK**
15:30 – 17:30	**SESSION B2 – THE PRESENT, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE** **Chair:** Callum Peebles, *Director, Blue Shield International (BSI)*
15:30 – 15:55	**The International Legal Context Of Cultural Property Protection** Irini Stamatoudi, *Professor, Director, School Of Law, UNIC Athens*
15:55 – 16:20	**The Blue Shield International Working Group on Countering Trafficking of Cultural Objects as a result of Armed Conflict: The Importance of Countering Trafficking of Cultural Objects as a part of Protecting Cultural Heritage** Patty Gerstenblith, *US National Committee of the Blue Shield, Chair, Blue Shield Countering Trafficking Working Group*
16:20 – 16:45	**Protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict: Looking back, moving forward** Margherita D'Ascanio, *Senior Legal Advisor, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*
16:45 – 17:10	**Return of Displaced Cultural Property after Armed Conflict: Is Cultural Property Protection Complete without Restitution?** Maria Anna Iosifidou, *Legal Scholar and Archaeologist, Administrative and Research Officer, School of Law, University of Nicosia (UNIC Athens)*
17:10 – 17:30	**Panel discussion – what messages for the future?**

17:45 – 18:15	Report Launch: “The Blue Shield Emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention”
18:15 – 18:30	Wine reception to follow at Flocafé

09:30 – 17:30

DAY 2
SUNDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2026

09:30 – 10:00	**REGISTRATION**
10:00 – 12:45	**SESSION B3 – THE PRESENT, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**
	Chair: Peter G. Stone, *UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace (CPP), Newcastle University, Blue Shield International (BSI)*
10:00 – 10:30	The 1954 Hague Convention and the African Challenge: The Role of National Committees Hamady Gaye, *Chair, Senegal National Committee of the Blue Shield, Blue Shield Board Member*
10:30 – 11:00	Protecting the Cultural Property of the UAE – A future with Blue Shield Abdulla Majed Al Ali, *Director-General, National Library and Archives, United Arab Emirates (UAE)*
11:00 – 11:30	**TEA & COFFEE BREAK**
11:30 – 12:00	**ANCHISE: Understanding, Preventing, Acting, Repairing. Lessons from a European Interdisciplinary Project against the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property** Véronique Chankowski, *Director, French School at Athens*
12:00 – 12:45	Keynote: The Blue Shield Into The Future Callum Peebles, *Director, Blue Shield International (BSI)*
12:45 – 13:45	**LUNCH**
13:45 – 15:00	**SESSION C1 – THE FUTURE**
	Chair: Dimitris Emmanouloudis, *UNESCO Chair on Conservation and Ecotourism of Riparian and Deltaic Ecosystems, Democritus University of Thrace*
13:45 – 14:30	Keynote: Psychological Defence and the nature of war in the future Magnus Hjort, *Director General, Swedish Psychological Defence Agency*
14:30 – 15:00	Building Resilience: Empowering Civil Society to Protect Cultural Heritage amid Conflict and Climate Challenges: The Work of the Arab Network of Civil Society Organizations (ANSCH) Isber Sabrine, *Senior Researcher, Milá y Fontanals Institution for Research in Humanities, Spanish National Research Council, President, Heritage for Peace*
15:00 – 15:30	**TEA & COFFEE BREAK**
15:30 – 16:45	**SESSION C2 – THE FUTURE**
	Chair: Dimitris Emmanouloudis, *UNESCO Chair On Conservation And Ecotourism Of Riparian And Deltaic Ecosystems, Democritus University Of Thrace*
15:30 – 15:55	The Conflicts Not Yet Imagined: Space, Underwater, and Antarctic Heritage as New Frontiers of Protection Elena Perez-Alvaro, *Chair, Blue Shield International Underwater Conflict Heritage Working Group*
15:55 – 16:20	The Intersection of Climate Change, Cultural Heritage, and Conflict Antonia Zervaki, *Assistant Professor, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens*
16:20 – 16:45	**The changing nature of 21st century armed conflict & implications for Cultural Property Protection** Zygmunt Sabik, *Deputy Director, International Centre for Training and Research on Cultural Heritage in Danger, Wrocław, Poland*
16:45 – 17:30	**FINAL SUMMARY DISCUSSION**
	The Future of Cultural Property Protection and the Blue Shield Chair: Blue Shield President

SPEAKERS & ABSTRACTS

DAY 1
SATURDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2026

SESSION A – THE PAST

A brief history of CPP and its importance

Peter G. Stone, *UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace (CPP), Newcastle University, Blue Shield International (BSI)*

Peter is, until 23 October 2026, President of the Blue Shield, the independent, impartial, neutral, & not-for-profit international NGO dedicated to the protection of heritage in the event of armed conflict or disaster. He is also the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection (CPP) & Peace at Newcastle University, UK, the only such designation in the world. Since 2003, he has focussed on working with the heritage, humanitarian, and uniformed sectors on the protection of heritage in times of conflict, stressing the importance of heritage as a contributor to peace. He argues that tangible and intangible heritage provide a sense of place, belonging, and identity supporting individual and communal dignity and wellbeing. Such heritage reflects our differences but, of far greater importance, it celebrates and emphasises our similarities. Before joining Newcastle University, Peter worked for English Heritage, as a field archaeologist, and history teacher. Peter worked in honorary roles for the World Archaeological Congress for 24 years and was its Honorary CEO 1998-2008. He worked with colleagues in China 2007-2014 on the better management of the historic environment and heritage sites in China.

ABSTRACT

This presentation provides a very quick introduction to the history of cultural property protection (CPP), starting in the sixth century BCE in China with the writings of the military theorist Sun Tsu and then gallops through the next millennia noting a common thread with authors suggesting that damaging or destroying the cultural heritage of your enemy was bad military practice as it often provided the first reason for the next conflict and it did the victors no credit.

Focussing on the Twentieth century, in 1915, during the First World War the establishment of an impartial organisation, the Croix d’Or, was proposed to protect cultural property; no organisation was created. In the 1930s and ’40s the mastermind behind what was to become the 1948 Genocide Convention, Raphael Lemkin, argued that there were two forms of genocide: Barbarism, genocide against a people, and Vandalism, genocide against their cultural property. Unfortunately, Vandalism was dropped from the Convention at the last minute for political reasons. Following the Second World War, the Director General of UNESCO opened the meeting of experts to draft what was to become the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, by reminding them that they were also gathered to create what he called “The Red Cross for Cultural Property”. Again, no organisation appeared.

It was not until 1996 that such an organisation was established as the Blue Shield.

Keynote: The Monuments Men and Women of World War II: A Legacy of Recovery and Restitution

Dorothee Schneider, *Senior Researcher, Monuments Men and Women Foundation (MMWF)*

Dorothee Schneider is a University of Bonn law graduate with an art history degree from Christie's London in conjunction with the Royal Society of Arts in London. Since February 2008, she has worked with Robert M. Edsel, founder and chairman of the Monuments Men and Women Foundation, as Senior European Researcher for both Edsel and the Foundation. She was responsible for all German speaking research for Mr. Edsel’s New York Times bestselling books "The Monuments Men", “Saving Italy” and “Remember Us”. In addition, she researched the background of paintings and historical documents, which the foundation restituted to their original owners, most notably two paintings to the collection of the Landgraves of Hesse, descendants of Queen Victoria, which went missing in May 1945.

Prior to working for the MMWF, Ms. Schneider was employed by Christie's Auction House in London, Hamburg and Dubai from April 2001 until June 2007. Her positions included provenance research for the Group Management department in London on restitution related matters, in addition to work in the London Specialist Departments of Russian Art, Silver, Old Master Drawings, Prints and Wine and in the Christie’s representative office in Hamburg, Germany.

ABSTRACT

During World War II, Nazi Germany carried out the most systematic campaign of cultural theft in history, looting museums, religious institutions, libraries, and private collections across Europe. Under General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s leadership, the Allied forces made the protection of cultural heritage a military priority. As the war moved across Europe, that mission evolved from protecting monuments and sites against destruction to recovering and returning looted cultural property.

The work of the Monuments Men and Women represented a historic departure from the traditional practices of victorious armies: rather than claiming recovered cultural treasures as spoils of war, the Allies undertook the unprecedented task of identifying and returning millions of objects to the countries from which they had been taken.

Drawing upon wartime records and restitution cases, this presentation explores the principles Eisenhower established and the achievements of the Monuments Men and Women. It also considers their enduring legacy of cultural preservation, international cooperation, provenance research, and restitution—a legacy that continues to guide the recovery of cultural property displaced during the Nazi era.

Greek Cultural Protection Policies in the Second World War, illicit excavations, and resulting restitution issues

Elena Korka, *Chair of the Hellenic National Committee of the Blue Shield (HNCBS)*

Elena Korka is an archaeologist, Honorary Director General of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage of the Greek Ministry of Culture and a PhD of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (on the subject of her doctoral dissertation: "The Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures within the Framework of the New International Practice of Returning Cultural Goods"). Is fluent in four languages (English, French, German and Italian). Has taken part in many excavations and currently is the director-excavator of ancient Tenea in Chiliomodi, Corinth. She has served in various positions of high responsibility in the Ministry of Culture, and has represented the Ministry in many international meetings abroad, mainly UNESCO (General assemblies, World Heritage Committee, Intergovernmental Committee for promoting the return of Cultural Property to its countries of origin or its Restitution in case of illicit appropriation, Intergovernmental Committee for the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of Cultural Property in the event of armed conflict, Intergovernmental Committee for the protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions), the Council of Europe, ICOMOS, ICCROM, EAC, EHHF and others. Is also member of ICOM. She has also been elected in several of these governmental and non-governmental organisations. She has attended many seminars on archeological issues and cultural heritage issues, has participated with presentations in many conferences on the issue of the return of the Parthenon Marbles, Illicit trafficking, World Heritage Sites, risks and the protection of cultural heritage, foreign archaeological schools, cultural routes, excavations and heritage management, intangible cultural heritage, museums, digitization and many others. Has also written many articles and books on the above topics. She has also taken part in many excavations, organized many archeological exhibitions and scientific conferences. She has been honored by the International Committees for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles for her actions and has been awarded with the Kyveli prize. Is honorary member of the German Archaeological Institute at Athens and has founded and currently is president of the Hellenic Committee of the Blue Shield. She has been president of the board of the P. and A. Kanellopoulos Museum and has been affiliated to several Universities.

ABSTRACT

During the Second World War unfortunately the theft of cultural objects, by the occupying forces of Nazi Germany, from museums and archaeological sites in Greece, associated illicit excavations, and the general destruction and plunder of cultural property, was the worst that had ever hit Greek territory. The international legal texts, which existed at the time, such as the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions, were totally disrespected.

At the time, the Greek archaeological service took as many measures as possible for the protection of cultural treasures. However, the illicit digs produced many objects that were trafficked out of Greece and their whereabouts still remain unknown.

The history of Greece trying to claim the known cultural property stolen during the war began immediately after the end of the war. The Allies, however, could not locate or identify many of these artifacts and neither could the Federal Republic of Germany thereafter.

Nonetheless, the Greek State has managed to repatriate thousands of artifacts, finally traced after enormous efforts. This all teaches us a lot, even today about the necessity of thorough culture property protection in times of peace, and the need for master plans and measures that must be in place in case of armed conflict, for the mitigation of cultural destruction.

Cultural Heritage Destruction and the Future of the Crime of Genocide

Dilşad Firuze Kaplan, *Ibn Haldun University, Friends of Cultural Heritage (FOCUH-KUMID)*

Dilşad Firuze Kaplan was born in United Kingdom. After having lived in various cities across Turkey, Dilşad Firuze Kaplan settled in Istanbul and now is a research assistant in the Department of General Public Law at the Faculty of Law in Ibn Haldun University. She completed her undergraduate degree at the Turkish-German University and Kaplan is pursuing her master's studies at the same institution with a focus on human rights law. Her research primarily centres on the protection of cultural heritage and environmental law issues. She is fluent in Turkish, English, and German.

ABSTRACT

Under the prevailing interpretation of the Genocide Convention and the Rome Statute, the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage during armed conflict does not itself constitute genocide. As the International Court of Justice held in Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia, such destruction may instead serve as evidence of the special intent (dolus specialis) to destroy a protected group. Drawing on Bosnia, Iraq, Mali, Ukraine, and Palestine, this article argues that this evidentiary role becomes legally relevant only after a community's heritage has already been destroyed, thereby foreclosing both prevention and reparation.

The article considers two reforms: treating heritage destruction as an act of genocide under the existing framework or codifying cultural genocide as a separate offence. It supports the first. Incorporation into the existing crime would bring heritage destruction within the peremptory and universally binding prohibition of genocide and would revive Raphael Lemkin's original conception, in which cultural destruction was central. A separate offence remains a longer-term objective.

The principal objection is that states may invoke sovereignty and consent to reject such reform, weakening its practical effect. Yet the possibility of non-compliance does not deprive a norm of value, particularly where its purpose is to shape future state conduct and strengthen accountability. A rule that cannot halt a violation today still establishes the standard against which future conduct will be judged — and conditions the possibility of later acceptance.

SESSION B1 – THE PRESENT, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Making Cultural Property Protection Work: A Military Commander's Perspective

Stephen Mac Eoin, *Lieutenant Colonel, School Commandant, Cadet School, Irish Defence Forces*

Commissioning as an Infantry officer in 2001, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Mac Eoin has served in operational, training and administrative appointments across the Irish Army. In 2023/24, he deployed as battalion commander of the 600-strong Irish-Polish battalion in UNIFIL, Lebanon. He has also served overseas as a peacekeeper with NATO, EU and UN forces in Kosovo; Chad; Lebanon (2012) and the Congo and served for one year as exchange instructor at the French St Cyr Military Academy.

A NATO-accredited fluent French speaker, Lt Col Mac Eoin holds a double First in French and History from NUI, Galway and MAs from UCD and Maynooth Universities. He is a graduate with distinction of the 3rd Joint Command and Staff course (2021). As a qualified archivist and former Director of the Military Archives, he has a strong interest in cultural heritage protection. He was a member of the Irish Government's Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations, a member of the Irish National Archives Advisory Council and currently sits on the Irish Blue Shield Committee.

Lt Col Mac Eoin recently served for a short period as School Commandant of the United Nations Training School Ireland (UNTSI), before taking up his current appointment as Commandant of the Cadet School, the national institution for the training of all officer cadets.

ABSTRACT

In this paper, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Mac Eoin considers the practicalities of cultural property protection in the context of peace-support operations in the contemporary operating environment. Drawing on his extensive experience as both qualified archivist and peacekeeper in a variety of UN-mandated EU, NATO and UN deployments over more than twenty years - including a tour as commander of the Irish-Polish battalion with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) during the recent Israel-Hizballah conflict - the author describes the training, composition and structures of a typical peace-support force and points to where cultural property protection might usefully fit in. The paper argues that while cultural property protection is enshrined in international law and may feature in military pre-deployment training, cultural practitioners need to be realistic about their expectations once conflicts are in fact underway. Most often, commanders are constrained both by their operational orders and by conflicting priorities such as force protection: these priorities are in turn a product of the political mandate governing the deployment, ultimately reflecting an often-dysfunctional international system. The paper suggests practical ways in which cultural property protection objectives can be woven into the fabric of peace-support operations and beyond. Finally, the paper suggests the framing of cultural property protection for military commanders not as a stand-alone concern, but as an integral part of a what both the UN and NATO understand as the broader 'human security approach' to the planning and conduct of operations, which could be a useful approach to advancing the work of the Blue Shield.

Talking to soldiers: Effective Cultural Property Protection training in the Irish military context

Gretchen Allen, *Chair, Irish National Committee of the Blue Shield, Senior Book and Paper Conservator, National Archives of Ireland*

Gretchen Allen is Chair of the Irish National Committee of the Blue Shield and Senior Book and Paper Conservator at the National Archives of Ireland. She also instructs on Blue Shield Ireland's CPP pre-deployment courses for UN Peacekeeping missions served by the Irish Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána. She has previously held conservation roles with Maynooth University and Cambridge University Library. Throughout her career she has been responsible for interventive conservation treatments, preventive collection care work on environmental monitoring and pest management, disaster management, and collections salvage.

Gretchen undertook her BA in Art Conservation at Scripps College, graduating in 2014. Following that, she completed her MA in Book Conservation at Camberwell College of Arts (University of Arts, London) in 2016. Her supplemental training includes a Postgraduate Certification (PGCert) in Antiquities Trafficking and Art Crime obtained through the University of Glasgow in 2019. Her academic work focuses on the role of the conservator in mitigating the damage done by the criminal elements of the art market.

Patrizia La Piscopia, *Senior Archaeologist, National Monuments Service, Irish National Committee of the Blue Shield*

Patrizia La Piscopia is a senior archaeologist working for the National Monuments Service (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage), in the World Heritage Unit. She occasionally lectures at the UCD post-graduate programme in World Heritage Management and Conservation. She also collaborates with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) to design and implement targeted capacity building trainings to be delivered in Ireland. She has been a member of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) since 2011 and in 2019 she has joined Blue Shield Ireland as committee member. Patrizia has many years of experience as a researcher, lecturer and field archaeologist, and before joining the Department, she has worked in both commercial and research excavations in Europe and further afield.

Aoife Hurley, *Director of Operations, National Museum of Ireland*

Aoife Hurley is the Director of Operations with National Museum of Ireland. Engaging over one million visitors annually with a national collection of international significance, the Museum is Ireland's largest national cultural institution. It consists of four museums situated in Counties Dublin and Mayo housing Archaeology, Natural History, Decorative Arts and History and Folklife collections.

As part of the senior leadership team Aoife has responsibility for Estates, HR, Corporate Affairs, Marketing and Comms, ICT and Commercial Development. The role covers all of the Museum's public sites as well as the reserve collection stores. The scope of the role is wide ranging taking in visitor services, corporate compliance and collections infrastructure and security.

With a background in architecture, Aoife has been involved in numerous arts and cultural projects across Ireland and has a passion for cultural heritage. During her previous role as Senior Conservation Architect at the Office of Public Works, Aoife led a range of capital and strategic projects on buildings of national and international significance from the Four Courts to Kilkenny Castle. The Museums' Strategic Plan includes major capital projects at the Natural History and Archaeology buildings and Aoife is also leading on the delivery of these projects.

Joanne Gaffrey, *Assistant Keeper, Irish Antiquities Division, Archaeology Museum, National Museum of Ireland*

Joanne Gaffrey is an Assistant Keeper with the Irish Antiquities Division at the Archaeology Museum, National Museum of Ireland and is the curator for the Iron Age collections. As part of her leadership, Joanne has responsibility for strategic programmes and policy implementation within the Irish Antiquities Division as well as implementing the statutory functions of the National Museum under the National Monuments Acts and the National Cultural Institutions Act.

Joanne is committed to protecting and preserving Ireland's cultural heritage through effective collaboration, resilience planning, and sustainable stewardship practices. She is particularly interested in fostering partnerships that support the safeguarding of cultural assets and ensuring that heritage remains accessible and protected for future generations.

As a graduate of Archaeology from University College Dublin (UCD), Joanne Gaffrey has over 25 years of experience in both commercial archaeology and research, having worked for many years in the field and UCD. Her background combines practical field expertise with heritage management, informing her current work in the protection and management of Ireland's archaeological heritage.

ABSTRACT

Cultural Property Protection (CPP) is an integral part of the human security framework that underpins the contemporary approach to warfare, but it is historically under-discussed and under-supported in military spaces. There has also historically been a communication gap between cultural heritage experts and military and first responder personnel about why cultural heritage should be considered and protected alongside human safety in a high-stakes conflict scenario. Blue Shield International has made great strides in bridging this gap, but it is important that this work is conducted regularly at a national level to create and reinforce an international network of CPP practice. To this end, the Irish National Committee of the Blue Shield has been conducting training with active military personnel and first responders to help them connect with the topic, understand its importance to mission success, and practically implement CPP strategies in their Peacekeeping work. In parallel, the Irish National Advisory Committee has facilitated connections between armed forces and key national cultural institutions, promoting training opportunities.

This paper will examine a variety of training formats to describe how classroom, static roleplay, and practical components of CPP training conducted with military and first responder personnel have informed the development of effective strategies for cultural heritage professionals to connect and communicate effectively with the uniform sector.

SESSION B2 – THE PRESENT, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The International Legal Context Of CPP

Irini Stamatoudi, *Professor, Director, School of Law, UNIC Athens*

Irini Stamatoudi is a professor of law and the director of the School of Law at UNIC Athens. She is also a lawyer at the Supreme Court in Athens, Greece, and vice president of Blue Shield Greece. She specializes in intellectual property and cultural heritage law. From 2007 to 2018, she served as Director of the Hellenic Copyright Organization. She has taught in academic programs across multiple countries and has published numerous books and articles, some of which are internationally regarded as reference works. She has served on law-drafting committees in both copyright and cultural heritage law. She has successfully handled high-profile return cases, including the Paul Getty Museum Case and the Leon Levy Shelby White Case. From 1999 to 2018, she was part of the negotiating team for the Parthenon Marbles at various stages. She has also served on the Greek Ministry of Culture Advisory Committees for the Parthenon Marbles.

ABSTRACT

International law has progressively developed a framework to protect cultural property from destruction, looting, and illicit trafficking that accompany armed conflict and political instability. This framework reflects a fundamental recognition: damage to cultural heritage is not merely the loss of objects or buildings. It can also harm the identity, memory, and dignity of the communities to which that heritage belongs. Yet legal rules have not ensured effective protection. The destruction and looting of cultural sites in Ukraine, Gaza, Cyprus, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and Mali reveal persistent weaknesses in implementation, accountability, and international cooperation. They also show that cultural heritage may be deliberately targeted, used to finance armed groups, or left exposed despite foreseeable risks. The looting of Baghdad's National Museum in 2003 remains a stark example of the consequences of failing to heed warnings. This paper examines how international law has responded to these challenges, ranging from the protection of cultural property during armed conflict to measures addressing illicit trade and individual criminal responsibility. It argues that the central challenge today is the gap between legal commitments and action on the ground. Effective protection requires more than prohibitions: it demands preparation, monitoring, cooperation, and accountability. Cultural destruction must be treated as a foreseeable risk, and its prevention as a responsibility shared by states and the international community.

The Blue Shield International Working Group On Countering Trafficking Of Cultural Objects As A Result Of Armed Conflict: The Importance Of Countering Trafficking Of Cultural Objects As A Part Of Protecting Cultural Heritage

Patty Gerstenblith, *US National Committee of the Blue Shield, Chair, Blue Shield Countering Trafficking Working Group*

Patty Gerstenblith, PhD, JD, is Distinguished Research Professor Emerita of Law at DePaul University. Since 2020, she has served as President of the Board of Directors of the US Committee of the Blue Shield and Chair of the Blue Shield International Working Group on Countering Trafficking of Cultural Objects. President Clinton and President Obama appointed her as a Member and then Chair of the President's Cultural Property Advisory Committee in the Department of State.

Her book, Cultural Objects and Reparative Justice, was published by Oxford University Press in 2023, and the fifth edition of her casebook, Art, Cultural Heritage and the Law, was published in 2025. Her most recent article, "The 1970 UNESCO Convention: Past, Present and Future", was published in 2026 in Elgar Research Handbook on Art, Culture and Heritage Law (Sophie Vigneron, Janet Ulph, and Antoinette Maget Dominicé eds). Her works in-progress include "The Intersection of Public and Private International Law in the Acquisition and Loan Policies of US Museums for Archaeological Artifacts," for a volume titled, The trafficking of cultural property at the nexus between public and private law, and "Evolving Implementation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention", to be published in International Law for Future Generations: Essays on Cultural Heritage in honour of Francesco Francioni.

Gerstenblith received her A.B. degree in Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology from Bryn Mawr College, Ph.D. in Art History and Anthropology from Harvard University, and J.D. from Northwestern University. Before joining the DePaul faculty, she clerked for the Honorable Richard D. Cudahy of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

ABSTRACT

The Blue Shield International Working Group on Countering Trafficking of Cultural Objects was founded in 2020 as an outgrowth of a series of training programs held in Beirut and sponsored by the Biladi Organization. The Working Group is small but includes members from the UK, US, Ireland, Norway, the Hellenic Republic, and Lebanon. This presentation will outline some of the Working Group's accomplishments, including educational programs that we have sponsored, some with the International Association of Prosecutors, a Guidance for Subject Matter Experts who work with law enforcement, and the work of individual members of the Working Group who have liaised with and provided technical support to national law enforcement agencies. The presentation will also set out the international legal framework that provides the basis for countering trafficking, including the 1954 Hague Convention and its two protocols, the 1970 UNESCO Convention and the 1998 Rome Statute under which the International Criminal Court operates. The presentation will conclude with an acknowledgement of some of the challenges that we face in attempting to coordinate this important work, as an element in the protection of cultural heritage.

Protection Of Cultural Property In The Event Of Armed Conflict: Looking Back, Moving Forward

Margherita D'Ascanio, *Senior Legal Advisor, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

As a Senior Legal Advisor at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Margherita D'Ascanio works in the Advisory Services Unit of the Legal Division in the field of implementation of International humanitarian law (IHL). She has been working for the ICRC for approximately 10 years as an operational and regional legal advisor in various contexts, including in Northeast and Southeast Asia, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic as well as in Central and Eastern Europe. In 2022, she has worked for a brief period for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as an IHL expert and as a legal and policy advisor for the Italian Army. Between 2016 and 2017, she was a teaching assistant at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. Before 2014, she worked for several NGOs and law firms, as well as at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. She holds a LL.M from the Geneva Academy and has graduated at the Faculty of Law at the University of Milan, Italy.

ABSTRACT

This presentation will provide an overview of how International Humanitarian Law (often referred to as the Law of Armed Conflict) protects cultural property in armed conflict along with the role the ICRC has played to strengthen respect for these international rules. While taking into account the extremely difficult contemporary context, and in light of the challenges we face, the presentation will share some of the further measures that should be taken.

The Return Of Displaced Cultural Property After Armed Conflict: Is Cultural Property Protection Complete Without Restitution?

Maria Anna Iosifidou, *Legal Scholar and Archaeologist, Administrative and Research Officer, School of Law, University of Nicosia (UNIC Athens)*

Maria Anna Iosifidou is a legal scholar and archaeologist specializing in cultural heritage law, EU law and the return of cultural property. She holds a PhD in Law from the University of Nicosia, where her doctoral research examined the role of EU law in facilitating the return of antiquities to their countries of origin. She works as an Administrative and Research Officer at the School of Law of UNIC Athens. Her experience includes legal work as a trainee lawyer with the Legal Council of the State at the Ministry of Culture, as well as museum education at the Ephorate of Antiquities of Athens and archaeological fieldwork.

ABSTRACT

Cultural property becomes particularly vulnerable during armed conflict, not only to destruction and damage but also to displacement, looting, and illicit trafficking. Cultural property may be displaced during armed conflict either as a protective measure or through looting and illicit trafficking. The 1954 Hague Convention establishes obligations for the protection of cultural property during armed conflict, while the obligation to return cultural property removed from occupied territory is addressed in its First Protocol. This distinction raises an important question: can cultural property be considered protected when it has survived the conflict but remains displaced from its original or culturally significant context?

This paper examines the return of cultural property displaced during armed conflict as a neglected dimension. It focuses on the practical and legal difficulties. In particular, it examines: when can it be determined that an armed conflict has ended; who should assess whether conditions are sufficiently safe for the return of cultural property; and how should return be addressed when the state of origin remains wholly or partially under occupation? These questions expose a significant weakness in the existing framework. The paper therefore argues that restitution should be treated as an anticipated stage of CPP requiring planning, documentation, institutional coordination, and clear decision-making mechanisms from the moment cultural property is displaced.

DAY 2
SUNDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2026

SESSION B3 – THE PRESENT, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The 1954 Hague Convention and the African Challenge: The Role of National Committees

Hamady Gaye, *Chair, Senegal National Committee of the Blue Shield, Blue Shield Board Member*

Hamady Gaye is a curator at the Central Library of Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal, one of the largest in Africa. He is responsible for the preservation and conservation of the library's highly significant, unique, and rare heritage collections that bear witness to Africa's colonial and academic past. He is a Blue Shield Board elected member.

In Africa, he contributes to the development of the Blue Shield movement. In this capacity, he has contributed to the establishment of national committees in Mali, Niger, Ivory Coast, etc. Moreover, with his African colleagues, thanks to the cooperation of the German Blue Shield, they produced the brochure "Protecting Heritage in crisis: Blue Shield in Africa" in December 2021.

He is a member of several scientific and cultural networks: CIVIS Alliance, Memory of the World, UNESCO Global policy forum, ...

He is the author of several scientific publications in the field of cultural heritage protection, including: "The West African cultural heritage in the effect of political-ideological issues: a heritage on borrowed time? Lessons from the past", International Conference Cultural Property Protection in the 21st Century: Meeting Requirements across the Forces 11 to 13 November 2024 National Defence Academy Vienna, Austria.

ABSTRACT

The 1954 Hague Convention (54HC) is an international treaty with a global vocation that works to protect cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict. The emblem of the Convention is a Blue Shield.

Despite suggestions to create an organisation to protect cultural property in 1915 and the suggestion in 1952 by the Director General of UNESCO to establish "the Red Cross for Cultural Property" it was not until 1996 that an organisation was established by the international NGOs for archives, libraries, monuments and sites, and museums. This new organisation took its name from the emblem of the Convention – The Blue Shield and uses as its logo the Blue Shield within a blue circle.

The Blue Shield currently has 35 national committees around the world. Under the 1999 Second Protocol to the Convention, it is an official expert advisor to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Currently, Africa is the scene of geopolitical tensions and asymmetric conflicts frequently involving non-state actors who royally ignore international treaties such as the 54HC calibrated for conventional wars between sovereign states. The cultural heritage of Africa is a syncretism of Negro-African, Arab-Muslim and Western civilizations. Cultural heritage has become a war issue, an ideological weapon. In dynamics of doctrinaire deconstruction or decolonization of thought, cultural property becomes strategic targets for erasing the heritage of local communities or postcolonial cultural heritage. It is in this context of cognitive instrumentalization, dogmatic frictions, and security instability that the national committees of the Blue Shield in Africa are evolving while facing structural and institutional difficulties, and most obsolete legal frameworks. Given these challenges, it is worth highlighting the logistical, financial, and coordination obstacles marked by a lack of transversal synergy between the different cultural actors and difficulties in intervening at sites where cultural heritage is affected.

Protecting The Cultural Property Of The UAE – A Future With Blue Shield

Abdulla Majed Al Ali, *Director-General, National Library and Archives, United Arab Emirates (UAE)*

His Excellency Dr Abdulla Majed Al Ali has served as Director-General of the National Library and Archives since August 2022, after holding the position of Acting Director-General from November 2021, and Executive Director of the same institution from December 2020 to November 2021. Before joining the National Library and Archives, His Excellency was the Executive Director of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre since its inception in 2019. He also served as the Executive Director of the Libraries Sector at the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi from 2016 to 2019, following his roles as Director of Libraries Department (2012–2016) and Director of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award (2006–2012). In May 2025, he was elected as President of the Arab Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives.

ABSTRACT

This address highlights the UAE's deep cultural heritage, its commitment to safeguarding documentary and tangible heritage, and its strategic alignment with Blue Shield International. It outlines national investments, resilience measures, and aspirations to establish a UAE Blue Shield Committee, contributing to global cultural property protection across past, present, and future contexts.

ANCHISE: Understanding, Preventing, Acting, Repairing. Lessons from a European Interdisciplinary Project against the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property

Véronique Chankowski, *Director, French School at Athens*

Véronique Chankowski has been the director of the École Française d'Athènes (EFA) since September 1, 2019. She studied classical philology, ancient history and archaeology in Paris (Sorbonne and Ecole Normale Supérieure) and holds a PhD and Habilitation. She was a scientific member of the École Française d'Athènes (1996-2000) and a junior member of the Institut Universitaire de France. From 2006 to 2009 she served as Director of Studies at the École Française d'Athènes. Since 2012, she has been a Professor of Aegean History and Ancient Economy at Lumière-Lyon 2 University. From 2013 to 2018, she was also the director of the HiSoMA laboratory (History and Sources of the Ancient Worlds, UMR 5189, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée).

Her research focuses on ancient economies and Delos. She has published twelve books and more than fifty articles, and was responsible for several international research projects in archaeology and the history of the ancient Mediterranean world. As Director of EFA, she has made the fight against the looting and illicit trafficking of antiquities a strategic priority, placing the School's scientific expertise at the service of European research projects such as ANCHISE, which she coordinated, and fostering cooperation between scholars, heritage institutions and law enforcement authorities.

ABSTRACT

Illicit trafficking of cultural property is too often approached as a purely technical or policing problem. ANCHISE (Applying New solutions for Cultural Heritage protection by Innovative, Scientific, social and economic Engagement), a Horizon Europe project coordinated by the French School at Athens from 2023 to 2026, started from a different premise: looting and trafficking are social phenomena that must be understood before they can be prevented. Bringing together fifteen partners from seven European countries, including universities, research centres, technology companies, museum professionals and police trainers, the project combined social sciences, law and digital technologies around four needs: understand, prevent, act and repair.

This presentation reviews the project's main results. On the research side, ANCHISE examined the actors, practices and markets involved in trafficking, including the legal and financial mechanisms through which illicit objects enter the licit market, and translated these findings into policy recommendations. On the technological side, it developed a toolkit with its end users, covering site monitoring through photogrammetry and geospatial analysis, object identification and traceability, and reasoning tools to support investigations, tested in museums, on archaeological sites and in border control settings. Throughout, these tools were designed to support professional expertise rather than replace it.

The presentation will conclude with lessons for cultural property protection more broadly: the need for lasting cooperation between heritage professionals, researchers and law enforcement, the value of regional networks such as those developed in South-Eastern Europe, and the challenge of keeping research outputs available to practitioners once projects end.

Keynote: The Blue Shield into the future

Callum Peebles, *Director, Blue Shield International (BSI)*

Callum Peebles joined Blue Shield International as Director in November 2025, bringing twenty years of operational leadership in conflict-affected and post-crisis environments.

Prior to joining the Blue Shield, he spent fifteen years with British charity The HALO Trust, directing humanitarian mine action and explosive hazard clearance across Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe - including extensive postings in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Ukraine. He has overseen frontline responses to major natural disasters, from the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka to earthquakes in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and has directed large-scale ammunition disposal projects and national land surveys. He has spoken internationally on conflict, humanitarian response, and security at forums including the United Nations in New York, the British House of Lords, and the Japanese Parliament.

Having worked extensively in areas where armed conflict and disaster threaten history and community identity, Callum seeks to use this experience to support international efforts to protect cultural heritage. Callum holds an Executive MBA from the University of Exeter, an MA from the University of Edinburgh, and is a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute.

He has designed and delivered global training programmes, over-hauled complex IT systems, led governance reform and risk mitigation planning at the global level, and was responsible for 7,000 national staff operating across the Middle East and South-East Asia.

ABSTRACT

This presentation will consider the future for Blue Shield International (BSI). Though the Blue Shield was established in 1996, it was not until 2017 that, with support from the UNESCO Chair in CPP & Peace at Newcastle University (UK), that it was able to build greater credibility and reputation. The UNESCO Chair team acted as think tank, secretariat, and incubator for our organisation. Through this relationship, over the last decade BSI has grown from being solely a part of the heritage sector aspiring to protect the heritage in times of crises, to becoming the facilitator of better heritage protection by combining the efforts of the heritage, humanitarian, and uniformed sectors.

As part of the global network of the Blue Shield, BSI has been increasingly successful in obtaining significant project level funding – a sad reflection on the state of the world, but a strong indication of our increasing credibility. Such a positive increase, coupled with the loss of the support of the UNESCO Chair on 31 December 2027, led to a full governance, management, and processes review. which seeks to establish a robust framework to help us to grow over the next decade.

The world is changing rapidly. Belligerents in armed conflict increasingly ignore the international rules-based framework developed since the Second World War. CPP may be sliding down the hierarchy of importance set by nations, at a time when changes in how war is waged make it even more important to keep it at the forefront of everyone's minds. What does this mean for the Blue Shield, its national committees, BSI, and cultural heritage protection globally?

SESSION C1 – THE FUTURE

Keynote: Psychological Defence and the nature of war in the future

Magnus Hjort, *Director General, Swedish Psychological Defence Agency*

Dr Magnus Hjort was in April 2021 appointed by the Swedish Government to lead the establishing of the Swedish Psychological Defence Agency and was from January 1 2022 Deputy Director General and head of the agency's Capability Building Department. In October 2022 he was appointed Acting Director General and as of September 2023 Director General.

His previous positions include Senior Analyst at the Swedish Defence University, Deputy Chief of Staff at the Swedish Council for Higher Education, Deputy Director General at the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, Head of Strategic Analysis Unit at the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and Head of Research and Strategic Analysis at the Swedish Emergency Management Agency.

He has a Ph.D. from Stockholm University in History with a research focus on the Cold War and Security and Military History. Among his published works is the doctoral thesis from 2004 "Nationens livsfråga". Propaganda och upplysning i försvarets tjänst 1944–1963. (The Essential Issue of the Nation. Propaganda and Information in the Service of Swedish Defence 1944-1963).

Dr Hjort is a member of The Swedish Royal Academy of War Sciences.

ABSTRACT

Psychological Defence is Sweden's concept for safeguarding the open and democratic society, the free formation of opinion and thus Sweden's freedom and independence.

Attacking culture and history is part of modern hybrid warfare. The attacks are being used to undermine our democracies and the attacks on cultural heritage could in many cases be seen as systematic and an essential part of modern warfare.

History is being used by authoritarian states to motivate aggression and war, to erase culture and languages, to weaken our defenses, to rewrite past events to suit their agenda.

AI and the evolvement of large language models has become a game changer that makes it so much easier to quickly produce disinformation, fake videos and sound recordings that is hard or almost impossible to distinguish from genuine content. AI has also become an enabler for criminals and state actors to develop malign code to severely hurt our digital infrastructure, thus making it part of modern cyber warfare.

What future wars will bring is difficult to be certain about. Present wars has shown that the technical side of things develops extremely fast, making innovation an absolute integral part of all defence efforts. However, attacking history, culture heritage and legacy will most certainly continue to be targets and that is something that we will have to take into account when safeguarding our democracies and designing our defence efforts.

Building Resilience: Empowering Civil Society to Protect Cultural Heritage amid Conflict and Climate Challenges: The Work of the Arab Network of Civil Society Organizations (ANSCH)

Isber Sabrine, *Senior Researcher, Milá y Fontanals Institution for Research in Humanities, Spanish National Research Council, President, Heritage for Peace*

Isber Sabrine is a Syrian Spanish archaeologist and Senior Researcher at the Milá and Fontanals Institute for Humanities Research (IMF-CSIC), as well as the President of Heritage for Peace. He is a cultural heritage expert with extensive experience in heritage preservation, particularly in conflict zones. He holds a PhD in Heritage Management and has worked on numerous projects dedicated to safeguarding cultural heritage in Syria and the broader Middle East and North Africa.

As the founder and president of Heritage for Peace, an international non-governmental organization, he has led efforts to protect endangered cultural sites, foster local and international collaboration, and support the post-conflict recovery of heritage. His work emphasizes community-based approaches to cultural preservation and highlights the role of heritage in rebuilding and reconciliation processes.

Isber has collaborated with international organizations and contributed to various heritage-related research and policy initiatives. He has also participated in numerous publications and events that address the intersection of heritage preservation, conflict, and peacebuilding.

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, armed conflicts and political instability across the Arab world have posed unprecedented threats to cultural heritage through destruction, looting, displacement, and neglect. Countries including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Lebanon, and Palestine have experienced extensive damage to archaeological sites, museums, historic urban centres, and intangible cultural heritage, undermining cultural identity and the social resilience of affected communities.

In response to these challenges, Heritage for Peace established the Arab Network of Civil Society Organizations for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (ANSCH) in 2020 to strengthen regional cooperation and build the capacities of civil society organizations working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Since its creation, ANSCH has grown into a regional platform bringing together local organizations, heritage professionals, and international partners. Its third regional conference, held in May 2025, convened 41 civil society organizations, 10 international experts, and six partner institutions to exchange experiences, identify priorities, and develop collaborative strategies for safeguarding cultural heritage.

This paper presents the results of a regional needs assessment conducted among ANSCH member organizations. The survey examined organizational profiles, leadership, staffing, and operational challenges, providing a comprehensive overview of institutional capacities and priority needs. The findings reveal that 81% of participating organizations have been directly affected by conflict and face significant constraints related to funding, technical equipment, training, mobility, and institutional sustainability. Participants also identified capacity building in digital documentation, emergency preparedness, legal protection, project management, and community engagement—particularly involving women and youth—as key priorities.

Building on these findings, the paper also presents the Building Resilience: Empowering Civil Society to Protect Heritage Amid Conflict and Climate Challenges initiative, implemented through ANSCH by Heritage for Peace with support from the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund. The programme combines regional training with a small grants scheme supporting locally led heritage protection projects across seven conflict-affected countries, demonstrating how evidence-based capacity assessments can be translated into practical interventions that strengthen local resilience.

By combining survey data with lessons learned from ANSCH's regional activities and selected case studies from Syria (Manbij, Raqqa, Palmyra, and Idlib) and Yemen (Taiz), this paper demonstrates how civil society networks can strengthen heritage protection in conflict settings. It argues that empowering local organizations through regional cooperation, targeted capacity building, and sustainable partnerships offers an effective model for protecting cultural heritage and supporting post-conflict recovery across the MENA region.

SESSION C2 – THE FUTURE

The Conflicts Not Yet Imagined: Space, Underwater and Antarctic Heritage as New Frontiers of Protection

Elena Perez-Alvaro, *Chair, Blue Shield International Underwater Conflict Heritage Working Group*

Dr Elena Perez-Alvaro is an underwater cultural heritage specialist whose work focuses on sites shaped by conflict and militarisation, particularly across island and coastal environments. She is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow and leads Women, Heritage and Navigation in the Pacific, an Ocean Decade action examining women's maritime knowledge, cultural practices and relationships with the ocean across Pacific Island communities. Her research brings together heritage, international law, ocean governance and geopolitics. Alongside her Pacific work, she is developing projects on the material legacies of conflict in island seascapes and on strategic heritage in the deep ocean, Antarctica and outer space, including the Moon.

She is the author of Underwater Cultural Heritage: Ethical Concepts and Practical Challenges (Routledge, 2019) and The Hidden Hand of Underwater Cultural Heritage: Submerged Intelligence for Global Omens (Brill, 2025). Her research has been published in international journals and edited collections, and she regularly speaks at academic and professional conferences worldwide.

Elena is Chair of Blue Shield International's Underwater Conflict Heritage Working Group. She is an Expert Member of the ICOMOS International Committee on the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

ABSTRACT

Cultural Property Protection has always depended on imagination as much as response. It protects what institutions are able to recognise as vulnerable before damage becomes irreversible. Yet some of the most significant heritage of future conflict lies in places that remain difficult to place within conventional CPP: above the Earth, beneath the sea and at the planetary edge. This paper brings together three environments rarely considered side by side: outer space, underwater environments and Antarctica. Lunar landing sites, scientific instruments, human traces and discarded objects on the Moon; military wrecks, submerged battlefields, submarine cables, seabed infrastructure and toxic legacies; Antarctic expedition sites, research stations, scientific equipment and landscapes of exploration all unsettle inherited assumptions about cultural property. They are not simply remote. They are strategic, fragile and increasingly exposed to competition over access, data, resources, memory and presence. They also share a political problem. These are spaces where sovereignty is limited, suspended, contested or mediated through international regimes. Protection cannot rely only on national ownership, territorial control or familiar models of state responsibility. As strategic competition expands into the seabed, polar regions and outer space, cultural property protection must also account for places where vulnerability may appear before war is formally declared or even recognised. The paper argues for a more anticipatory CPP, able to identify emerging cultural risks before they become familiar categories of damage. The next frontier of protection is not only where conflict has been, but where we have not yet learned to see it coming.

Protecting the Past in an Uncertain Future: The Intersection of Climate Change, Cultural Heritage and Conflict

Antonia Zervaki, *Assistant Professor, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens*

Antonia Zervaki is an Assistant Professor of International Relations at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. A graduate of the Athens School of Philosophy, she holds an MA in European Studies (University of Exeter, UK / Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Rennes, France) and an MA in European Organization and Diplomacy (Athens School of Law, Economics and Political Science - NKUA). She received her PhD (2006) in international relations/organisation (title: Political Culture and the conduct of Greek foreign policy within the framework of international organizations) (Athens School of Law, Economics and Political Science).

Antonia was an EUSSRIF research fellow at the European University Institute (2000), a researcher at the Hellenic Centre for European Studies (2006) and has served as Special Advisor at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Employment (2005-2009). She was member of the working group of the Ministry of Culture on the revision of the legislative framework for safeguarding intangible heritage (2022-23).

Antonia is the author of two monographs: The concept of cultural and natural heritage of mankind: UNESCO's contribution, 2010 (in Greek) and: Resetting the political culture agenda: from polis to international organization, Springer, 2014. She has authored numerous articles, and chapters on different topics including culture and peace operations and maritime governance.

ABSTRACT

This presentation examines the compounding, multi-layered crises at the intersection of armed conflict, climate change vulnerability and cultural heritage loss. Moving beyond traditional, isolated assessments of geopolitical or environmental risk, it explores how these forces interact as a mutually interacting feedback loop that fundamentally undermines what could be understood as cultural security.

The changing nature of 21st century armed conflict & implications for Cultural Property Protection

LTC (ret.) Zygmunt Sabik, *Deputy Director, International Centre for Training and Research on Cultural Heritage in Danger, Wrocław, Poland*

Zygmunt Sabik is Deputy Director of the International Centre for Training and Research on Cultural Heritage in Danger. He is a graduate of the Land Forces Academy and the National Defense University and the University of Science and Technology, he completed postgraduate studies "Banking and Finance" at the University of Economics and "Heritage Academy" at the International Cultural Center in Krakow. He served in peacekeeping missions in Iraq 2004, Afghanistan 2014, participated in "Active Harvest" exercises in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2003. He served and gained experience in international structures at HQ LANDCOM in Izmir from 2019 to 2022. He started working at the Center in November 2022 as a senior specialist and currently holds the position of Deputy Director.

ABSTRACT

The changing nature of armed conflicts is the result of many factors, from technological developments to the way operations are conducted and the creation of new laws. The impact of armed conflicts on the state of preservation of heritage is one of the main destructive anthropological factors, which can only be minimized.

In my presentation, after a short information about the International Center for Training and Research on Cultural Heritage in Danger, in line with the organizer's expectations and due to the nature of the institution I represent, I would like to demonstrate a more military point of view, therefore I will focus on the identified changes at the strategic and operational level, changes in the domains of conducting operations: land, air, space and cyber, as well as changes regarding military equipment.

The conflict in Ukraine illustrates how historical narratives served as a propaganda justification for operations, leading to cultural heritage becoming one of the targets of operations (the weaponization of heritage). In my presentation, I will demonstrate the means by which cultural property is destroyed and outline preventive measures. I will summarize the entire presentation with brief conclusions and encourage you to watch the short documentary "Erase the Nation" on YouTube.

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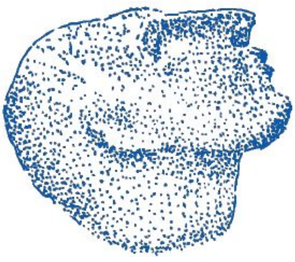

The conference logo is 'The Stargazer', a human head looking up at the stars. This captures the idea of the conference looking at the past, present, and future. The stars are a reflection of what happened many millennia ago; the head is looking up today in the present, just as we are discussing CPP in the present; it looks, as humans have for millennia, to search for the future.

The two dimensional images in the logo was drawn by Marcus Byron and remains his copyright; his drawing was based on an original clay head, sculpted by the artist Genevieve Stone, in Elena's garden near Corinth last year.

Blue Shield
theblueshield.org

Conference
theblueshield.org/registration-blue-shield-general-assembly-2026/#

29th Street No. 17, Elliniko 167 77
Athens, Greece

+30 211 444 7221

iosifidou.ma@unic.ac.cy

unic.ac.cy

@unicathens