

INTRODUCTION

The three players at the heart of the transformation process the Middle East is undergoing are Palestine, Jordan and Israel, yet despite the importance of internationally applauded agreements reached between them during 1993 and 1994, the real process of achieving durable peace among the people has only just begun. There are many obstacles that could prevent the peace process from reaching the conclusions broadly aspired to: moreover, misunderstandings and mistrust generated by decades of conflict still exist in the general outlook of each of the societies involved.

Against this background, three institutes - one Palestinian (PASSIA), one Jordanian (Center for Strategic Studies) and one Israeli (Moshe Dayan Center) - consulted together and decided that a significant contribution can be made to resolving differences and promoting understanding by pooling their resources and their expertise through a program of dialogue, presentation of position papers, and workshops.

The three institutes found that the comprehensive amount of knowledge accumulated on each of the entities independently regarding their separate identities and existence, their histories and their relationship to others in the region, too often remained the exclusive preserve of each individual country. The workshops were designed to address particular subjects and to develop a forum for open, multilateral dialogue that promotes an analytical approach to the relevant issues.

The Partner Institutions

THE PALESTINIAN ACADEMIC SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (PASSIA), JERUSALEM

PASSIA was established in 1987 as an independent non-profit making Palestinian institution, unaffiliated with any government, political party or organization, which undertakes studies and research on the Palestine Question in its national, Arab and international contexts. PASSIA has accumulated considerable experience in academic research, publishing and hosting seminars on issues of specific importance to the Palestinians and related international concerns. It has produced numerous publications, whilst always ensuring that research undertaken under its auspices be specialized, scientific and objective.

PASSIA also pioneered a series of seminars focusing on *Strategic Studies, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, the European Union, and the Question of Jerusalem*. Working connections and academic scholarly exchange have been established with institutions, and scholars in Europe and North America. Thus, PASSIA has access to an extensive pool of Palestinian academic expertise as well as links with Israeli and international institutions. It has a proven record of dialogue, symposia and workshops - international, inter-regional and intra-Palestinian - which have always been open, self-critical and conducted in a spirit of harmony and cooperation.

THE MOSHE DAYAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN AND AFRICAN STUDIES AT TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY, TEL AVIV

The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies is a research center devoted to the study of modern history and contemporary affairs in the Middle East. It was first established as the Shiloah Institute in 1959 under the auspices of the Israel Oriental Society. In 1965, it was incorporated into Tel Aviv University, while 1983 saw the establishment of the present center, which combined the Shiloah Institute and various documentation units dealing with the Middle East. The center is funded by the University of Tel Aviv and by its own endowment.

The Moshe Dayan Center seeks to impart a better understanding of the Middle East - past and present - to academic and general audiences in Israel and abroad. Some of its conferences have dealt with *Shi'ism and Politics, Iranian Foreign Policy, Central Asia, the Middle East,*

Minorities in the Middle East, the Intifada, and Demography and Politics in the Region. Since 1976, the center has produced the *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, an annual account of political, socioeconomic change in the Middle East. The center also contains an outstanding documentation center, which includes the most comprehensive collection of post-1950 Arabic press in the world. The center is the largest of its kind in Israel with some 25 research associates and a large number of support staff.

**CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN, AMMAN**

The Center for Strategic Studies was established in 1984, and its first director was Dr. Kamal Abu Jabr. The objectives of the center have always been to conduct research studies in the fields of politics, economics, social science, and military issues.

The center succeeded, together with the Al-Ahram Strategic Studies Center, in holding the first Arab conference on strategy and following this success, held two more. Three years ago, the center turned its attention to redefining the concept of strategy in line with new regional and global developments. It paid special attention to Jordanian related issues and strongly promoted the necessity of more far-sighted and long-term planning. The general direction of its research then became more focused on issues such as political change, the economy, democracy, demography, and the environment, and it was the first institute of its kind to conduct and publish a variety of wide-ranging polls. The center established a unit for Israeli studies in order to study Israeli society and its development from an objective scientific approach.

**ROYAL UNITED SERVICES INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENSE STUDIES (RUSI), LONDON**

As part of the project, a conference was to be held in London. In order for the conference to succeed, the fourth partner involved in this project was the coordinator and facilitator of all activities in London on 1-2 July 1996. RUSI already had connections with PASSIA and the Dayan Center through previous programs and it is currently developing contact with the Center for Strategic Studies in Amman.

RUSI is a long-established, independent professional body based in London with a worldwide membership of individuals and organizations, dedicated to the study, analysis and debate of issues affecting defense and international security. One of the oldest institutions of its kind in the world, RUSI has been at the forefront of contemporary political-military thought through debates, public and private seminars, conferences, lectures and a wide range of publications.

INTER-UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM FOR ARAB STUDIES (ICAS), AT MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL

The Inter-University Consortium for Arab Studies (ICAS), established in 1989, is a collaborative undertaking of McGill University and the University of Montreal together with other associated Canadian research institutions. It seeks to promote and facilitate research on issues concerning the Middle East and the Arab World as a whole.

In order to achieve this, ICAS has pursued four mandates dealing with the following:

- the encouragement of academic and research cooperation;
- providing research resources to students and scholars;
- conducting specific research projects on the contemporary Middle East;
- supporting training and research of an emerging generation of Canadian scholars.

Encouraged by the Canadian Embassy in Tel Aviv as well as by the substance of the project, the Department of Political Science of the McGill University approached PASSIA in 1994, proposing to be the fifth partner involved in the project.

The Project

The intention of the project was to draw on the expertise of each of the three regional institutions and to allow specialists to meet on an equal footing in order to discuss specific issues of mutual interest.

The emphasis was on domestic developments in the three societies, an understanding of the countries and the people among whom peace is intended to prevail is a prerequisite for any conflict to be truly resolved, and gaining an objective awareness of the outlook in societies next door is part of the process. Each of the eight workshops was to involve nine scholars, three from each institution, chosen according to their expertise on each of the designated topics. One scholar from each team would then present a paper, followed by a discussion with the remaining participants.

The publication presented here comprises the proceedings of the eight workshops held throughout 1995 and 1996 (for a list of topics and participants see *Appendix*). Where available, the full research paper as submitted by the author is presented; in other cases, only the minutes taken during the various sessions were available and subsequently edited and put in article form.

