



## **ARAB-ISRAELI RESEARCH COOPERATION, 1995-1999: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY\***

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*This study is based on a survey of 195 research cooperation projects conducted jointly by Israeli scholars with Arab counterparts from the Palestinian Authority and Jordan, reflecting a large number of disciplines. Difficulties in developing such research cooperation involve the widespread resistance in the Arab world to "normalization" with Israel, including a perception that such cooperation should generally take place after the political process has resolved the major elements of the conflict. Nevertheless, the study concludes that such professional and scientific cooperation appears to break down barriers between academics, and can be a significant tool in peace-building.*

A lesser-known chapter of the Arab-Israeli peace process has been the role of cooperation between universities and research institutions in Israel and the Arab world, principally in the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, and Jordan. While public and governmental attention, both in and outside the region, has generally focused on the ups and downs of the official peace process, cooperation on a non-governmental level has quietly continued apace. In fact, this non-governmental cooperation can be considered a proof of the peace process' success. Thousands of Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians and others have worked together and enjoyed considerable professional and social contact, while producing a number of research papers, in many cases during a sustained period of years. Perhaps most important, particularly in the central arena of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, the cooperation has been carried on in a spirit of equality and mutual respect.

In the context of the Arab-Israel conflict, such contact should not be minimized. The fact is that Israelis and Palestinians, despite, or rather because of, their confrontations of the last 50 years,

often do not know each other at all, collectively or individually. This is often true of Palestinians who have dealt with Israeli military and civilian officials, and who may live ten minutes away from Israeli towns, but have rarely met with Israelis under conditions that could genuinely be characterized as including equality and mutual respect. It is even more true of Jordanians and Egyptians, many of whom have never met an Israeli and might strenuously avoid doing so. In fact, it has been a truism of the Israel-Arab conflict that the further one travels from Israel, the harder it is to make peace (with the exception of some peripheral countries such as Morocco, Oman, Qatar, and, recently, Mauritania.)

Some of the best-informed cultural commentators on the conflict, such as Jordanian journalist Rami Khouri, stress how important the respect of Israelis is to Arabs, describing it as an essential, and missing, pillar of any future Arab-Israeli peace or normalization. "Does Israel really want to be part of the Middle East?" is a question frequently asked of visitors in Arab countries. Given the general Israeli penchant to look and travel west rather than east for business, technology, culture,

recognition, and virtually all other matters, this is an apposite question. Israel's westward orientation significantly inhibits the opportunities for Israelis and Arabs to meet under equal conditions. In addition, because of widespread opposition to normalization, comparatively few Arabs visit Israel. Even if they do, they rarely, unless they are highly placed, have much opportunity for interaction with Israelis.

Thus, joint research creates a valuable opportunity for contact in a non-political setting embodying mutual respect and joint goals.

### **SUBHEAD TK: A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

(Please see the Inventory itself and the graphs in the appendix for more complete information. A copy of the inventory may be obtained from the author at [mprocsam@mscc.huji.ac.il](mailto:mprocsam@mscc.huji.ac.il))

#### **PARTNER COUNTRIES (1)**

Palestinian Authority: 133 projects (62 percent)  
Egypt: 39 (18 %)  
Jordan: 26 (12 %)  
Morocco: 11 (5 %)  
Tunisia: 6 (3 %)  
Other: 2 (1 %)

N.B. This list does not indicate which projects were bilateral and which were multilateral. For this information, consult the Inventory list.

The vast bulk of the projects included the Palestinian Authority. The main reasons for this are (comparative) ease of access, convenience in making connections, and the lesser opprobrium in the Palestinian Authority regarding work with Israelis. However, these factors are all relative or partial. Some universities, such as An Najjar and Bir Zeit, refuse to work with Israel in any sort of official way. Others, such as Al Quds and Bethlehem, are often willing to do so, and do not always require a third party.

The few projects with Morocco, Tunisia, and Lebanon involved cooperation on larger projects. There was no official, or even semi-official, contact that could be discerned, especially with Lebanon.

#### **FIELDS OF RESEARCH**

Social Science: 49 projects (25 percent)  
Medicine: 35 (18 %)  
Agriculture: 35 (18 %)  
Water: 30 (15 %)  
Environment: 11 (6 %)  
Education: 14 (7 %)  
Marine: 10 (5 %)  
Physics/Technology: 6 (3%)  
Veterinary: 5 (3%)  
**Total: 195 projects**

The list above indicates a fairly wide distribution of research areas, which could be broken down even further by specific discipline, especially in the social sciences. However, a closer examination indicates that the funding and nature of the projects varies considerably, especially between the social science and education projects and all the rest.

The vast majority of projects in these two fields were sponsored by three institutions: the Truman Institute of Hebrew University, the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), and the Charles R. Bronfman Foundation (also known as the CRB Foundation or Keren Karev)(2) through the Economic Cooperation Foundation. Most of the Bronfman projects were funded through the government of Belgium. Many of social science and education projects, with a few significant exceptions, were appreciably smaller (in financial terms) than the scientific projects. There are several reasons why, such as the obvious fact that less equipment is generally necessary for social science and education research. In addition, it would appear that large and wealthy institutions are often somewhat wary of supporting Israeli-Arab social science projects. Arab

scholars, and even more so their institutions, are equally hesitant. Such projects can have implications that are sometimes upsetting to sponsoring or governmental institutions, and it is easier to avoid them.

Glancing at the statistics, it is clear that the "applied" subjects of Medicine (18 percent), Agriculture (18 percent), Water (15 percent), Environment (six percent), Marine Science (five percent), and Veterinary Science (three percent)—collectively 66 percent—dominated the fields of study. They all represent areas in which there is considerable need for development, especially in the Arab countries. Moreover, they are largely non-political. Water is an exception, because it is a major area of dispute between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. There have been a number of joint projects, though Palestinians claim that Israel is not forthcoming in sharing necessary data.

Another factor bearing on the strength of agriculture, veterinary, and water projects is the fact that the Egypt's minister of agriculture (and deputy prime minister), Yousef Wally, is known to be the only person in the top reaches of the Egyptian government who is strongly in favor of cooperation with Israel. He has, apparently almost single-handedly, encouraged such cooperation in his ministry and made sure that it moved forward, despite reported opposition from many of his subordinates.

Social science (25 percent) projects and education (6 percent) together constitute less than one-third of the research. Obviously, such projects are much more politically charged. It is often appreciably more difficult to recruit Arabs participants for them than for scientific projects.

### PROJECT FUNDERS (3)

#### European

European Community: 36 projects  
Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG): 21

German Ministry for Science (BMBF): four  
Netherlands Israeli Development Research Program: 10  
Belgium (through Charles R. Bronfman Foundation): 15  
Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE-Finland): 5  
Norway (Primarily Fafo): 3  
Other European Embassies (Britain, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland): 8  
Other private European: 4  
Total European: 106

#### United States and Canada

USAID-MERC (Middle East Regional Cooperation Program): 31 projects  
Other AID funded projects (including REPTec): 8  
U.S. Institute of Peace: 4  
U.S. Private foundations: 2  
Canadian Dialogue and Development Fund: 3  
Total United States and Canada: 48

#### Israel

Israeli government offices: 10  
Foreign "Friends" of Israeli Institutions: 9  
Truman Funds (mostly of U.S. origin): 21  
Yad HaNadiv (Rothschild Foundation): 3  
Total Israeli and "Friends": 43

#### International

(Unesco-Granada II): 5  
World Health Organization: 2  
Total International: 7

In terms of numbers of projects funded, Europe has funded far more than the U.S, with the European Community ranking as the largest single funder. However, the EC's project are invariably multilateral, frequently including more than a dozen institutions from as many countries. (4) They are thus much less explicitly focused than MERC, for example, on Mideast peace. Since the figures provided above only include cooperative research, they do not touch the large number of NGO-sponsored "People

to People" projects, which the EU, many individual European countries, and the United States support. Other countries, notably Japan, have supported development projects, but apparently their priorities have not included joint research.

#### DIRECT VS. "MEDIATED" PROJECTS

Until the 1990s, all Arab-Israel research projects (which at that time meant, in practice, Egyptian-Israeli) included a third party, usually a U.S. institution. Since the Oslo agreements, it has been much easier for Arabs and Israelis to work directly. MERC encourages such projects, while the European approach stresses the inclusion of European universities or other institutions. The number of projects in each category were almost equal. In fact, larger projects usually benefit from a third party participant who has some control over funding, and can exert pressure on the parties to meet deadlines and complete reporting requirements, and, often more importantly, solve disputes when they arise.

#### FACTORS ENCOURAGING RESEARCH COOPERATION

The nature of academic exchange makes such encounters more likely and possibly, more fruitful. Herewith, a number of reasons why:

##### A. The Need for Such Joint Work

Academic experts are often most qualified to solve various scientific and technical problems.

##### B. Joint Language (invariably English)

English has generally been the language of Middle East peacemaking for obvious reasons, first connected with colonial penetration of the region, and later with the status of English as the world's *lingua franca*. Virtually all Israeli academics are comfortable in it, as are many Arabs, especially from Jordan and Egypt, which were formerly in the British

sphere of influence. Even when Israelis can speak Arabic or Palestinians can speak Hebrew, English is considered more neutral and therefore preferred. Because so much scholarly publication and interaction throughout the world is in English, academics are more likely than members of most other learned professions, with the possible exception of medical doctors, to be comfortable in the language.

##### C. Shared Knowledge of the Subject Matter and a Familiarity with Scholarly Discourse

This is true to some degree of any profession, of course, but the subject matter of academic discourse is often less restricted by national borders. As many participants have studied and received degrees abroad, they have also acquired the norms of such discourse.

##### D. The Subject Matter is Oriented Toward Bilateral or Multilateral Treatment

Usually, the object of the research, both in the social sciences and in the physical sciences, is one that will benefit both societies, though different national perspectives must be taken into account. Often, either there is a shared problem to be solved, where comparisons may fruitfully increase understanding, or where technology transfer may appropriately be undertaken.

##### E. Availability of Funding

Part of the normal course of academic life is participation in scholarly conferences, for which comparatively large funding is available. Thus, it is often, though not always, easier to find funding for joint research that involves conferences than for other sorts of meetings. There is a general recognition of the importance that academics attach to meeting colleagues in their own fields. (As noted, this study does not include projects only involving conferences.)

#### F. An Academic Culture That Theoretically, if not Always in Practice, Tries to Separate Academic and Political Exchange

While this is not always the case (e.g., it is rare, though not unknown, for Israelis and Syrians to have contact at international conferences), contacts between Jordanian and Palestinian academics were taking place for years in international conferences before their governments were speaking. For instance, during the years 1986 to 1993, when contact with PLO members was forbidden to Israeli citizens, Israel made an exception for academic conferences, which often served as a cover for a significant PLO-Israeli contacts that eventually made possible the back-channel that led to the Oslo agreements.

#### G. Academics are Often Influential in Their Societies

Academics are frequently articulate and effective communicators, and in some societies, have a disproportionate weight in shaping public opinion. Thus, the effects of meeting the "other" can often spread far beyond a meeting's participants. Even when they themselves are not public figures, some may have important connections in society and government.

None of the above should suggest that scholarly encounters are some sort of panacea that can create peace by themselves. However, the above factors suggest that these encounters are often more feasible and effective than others.

#### DIFFICULTIES IN RESEARCH COOPERATION

The primary difficulties faced in Arab-Israeli joint research have been funding, recruiting participants, and balancing asymmetries of power and resources. The first two are, of course, common to any academic project, though there are particular aspects of interest here. Neither funding nor participation can be taken for granted.

As noted above, it is not possible to accurately estimate the total amount of money that has been available for joint academic encounters, but it is most probably in the range of \$15-30 million per year, based on the size of grants in the sample examined. The cash fuels the activity. Since academic salaries are based on the assumption that research expenses are generally covered by outside funds, academics rely on grants to work together.

Obviously, the joint research benefits from the world attention given to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Few such conflicts zones receive the personal attention of the President of the United States and other world leaders on a regular basis. While relatively little of the aid received either by Israel or the Palestinian Authority goes to joint research, the amount that does can be presumed to be appreciably larger than in other areas of the world. Also, the fact that Israelis and, to an increasing degree, Palestinians, are knowledgeable of and comparatively skilled in Western fundraising techniques is quite important. Israel also places significant emphasis on support of R&D for its high tech sector. For example, Israel is now a full member of the European Union's Fifth Framework program, which supports multilateral joint research, primarily in a scientific and technical context. It joined the program, of course, with the expectation that research funds, some of which may well be for joint research, would repay the initial outlay.

An earlier example of specially targeted funding is the U.S. government's MERC project, established soon after the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, in order to encourage normalization of scientific contacts between the two countries.

This special attention raises an irony, perhaps not appreciated by Palestinians and Arabs in general; namely, that their struggle with Israel probably would not receive nearly so much attention, as well as funding, if they were facing a less

visible and well-known adversary. Likewise, were their adversary not possessed of world class universities and concomitant fundraising experience, they would likely not be able to engage in joint research to the extent that they have.

The second difficulty is in finding participants. This varies considerably from country to country. In Israel, there is no difficulty finding participants. Surveys as well as virtually universal perceptions, suggest that most Israeli academics are generally in favor of the peace process (though there is believed to be more skepticism about it among natural scientists). There is no social opprobrium incurred by working with Arab academics (though in the 1980s and certainly in the 1970's there might well have been some). Israeli academics are often gratified to work on joint research projects, even when they may, in effect, be using time that could be used in more significant academic endeavors. Many see this as their contribution to the peace process.

In Egypt, the situation is virtually reversed. The academic community is one of the leaders in the anti-normalization campaign. In the social sciences, there are very few prominent scholars who regularly visit Israel and work with Israelis, one of whom, Professor Said eddin Ibrahim of the Ibn Khaldun Center, was arrested by the Egyptian Government on June 30, 2000. As of this writing, the reasons can only be surmised, but may have had less to do with his work with Israeli researchers than it did with some work he did for European countries regarding treatment of Egyptian Copts, as well as the upcoming Egyptian elections. Until the arrest, more of the atmosphere of intimidation was perceived as coming from academic and intellectual society than from the government. The extent of the chilling effect of the arrest on those academics who have worked with Israel can now only be surmised. However, even before this development, finding partners in the social sciences among Egyptians is almost impossible. In

agriculture, though, the situation is very different, because of the very strong support by Minister of Agriculture Yousef Wally. These include a large number of training projects, as well as research.

The population of the Palestinian Authority includes, of course, many more individuals, including scholars, who know and have worked with Israelis. Nevertheless, as in Egypt and Jordan, many, if not most, academics define themselves as anti-normalization. However, far more Palestinian academics avail themselves of the opportunities to do joint research than do Egyptians or Jordanians, whether for economic, professional, or idealistic reasons.

In Jordan, individual academics can decide to work with Israel, but it is not unusual for those without high-level protection to worry about retribution from university department chairs or deans. This is partially because Jordanian academics, unlike virtually all of their colleagues in other professions, are not organized in a professional association or syndicate. Professional associations, which developed significant para-political influence during the 1957-1989 period when political parties were banned, are leading the Jordanian fight against normalization with Israel. These associations wield considerable clout, as membership is a prerequisite for practicing that profession. In September 1999, this issue gained worldwide attention when the journalists' association sought to expel three reporters who had participated in a program in Israel. The reporters were eventually let off after apologizing, but the strong feelings in Jordan against "normalization" with Israel were laid bare. (In Egypt, where academics do belong to a professional association, it is much less common to find individual academics breaking ranks to work with Israelis.) Some of the Jordanian projects in the sciences are carried out through institutions, but these are usually approved at a governmental level. It should be noted

that in Jordan the king is, at least formally, in favor of contacts with Israel, but the leaders of institutions often do not actually follow that policy.

While in theory, the King of Jordan could, of course, try harder to prevent the intimidation of individual academics by university presidents or department chairs, this would contravene the unwritten social compact in Jordan, according to which the government will not press "normalization" except in the security spheres (military, diplomacy, and intelligence).

In the Palestinian Authority, however, the situation is more chaotic. The decree of the Rector's Conference banning formal University to University contacts (discussed below) is not always followed. Individual Palestinian scholars have far more opportunity to visit, work with, and interact in general with Israeli counterparts. Israelis are a rarity in Egypt and Jordan. This is hardly true in the Palestinian Authority.

More subtle and difficult to remedy are the asymmetries between Israel and the Arab world, both in power and tangible factors. Even those Arab scholars who cooperate with Israelis echo some of the complaints of the anti-normalization majority. The issues they raise include both larger ideological issues as well as the practical issues that can be of great importance in daily life. While most Arab researchers respect their Israeli partners, and believe that they are trying hard to obtain passes and other bureaucratic necessities for research, they would like to see Israeli institutions doing more on a variety of issues. Palestinians especially are fully aware of the importance of the major research institutions in Israeli life, and the prestige of their presidents and other public figures. They want to see these institutions, through their presidents and leading professors, prod the government more strongly to limit or abolish the often seemingly arbitrary restrictions on Palestinian travel into Israel. There is little evidence that the

institutions have made such issues a priority.

#### THE NATURE OF RESEARCH COOPERATION

In certain respects, the research cooperation examined in this study demonstrates both normalization and what could be called "pre-normalization". In other words, a sufficient critical mass of Arabs and Israelis are collaborating on serious scientific work. But there is always a degree of self-consciousness about the entire enterprise, particularly in the social sciences (though, it should be noted, that some scientists on both sides emphasize that Arab-Israeli scientific cooperation is conducted just as it would be with any other colleague). Additionally, most Palestinians (and certainly the vast majority of Jordanians and Egyptians) specifically reject the idea of "normal" working relationships with Israelis until the political situation is stabilized, charging that normality is impossible under current political conditions. Israelis and Arabs, especially Palestinians, are acutely attuned to the disparities in their respective conditions and facilities. This is most evident in the matter of travel. Any Israeli can drive into Palestinian areas (known as Area A or Area B, under the Oslo designation), with no checks and no difficulties. Palestinians, on the other hand, must obtain permits to enter Israel, and it is particularly difficult to obtain a permit to be allowed to drive in. Even when permits have been granted, and they have been much easier to obtain since about 1998, Palestinians generally must return to Palestinian areas by 10PM each night, or sometimes earlier. This travel difficulty is always at the forefront of complaints about Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. Palestinians insist that much greater freedom of movement must be granted before research cooperation can be normalized, and they would like to see Israeli academic institutions take a strong position on lobbying the government.

Israelis, though they may deplore and criticize the policy, generally see it as a political/security issue and thus in a different category from research cooperation. Few have gotten involved in lobbying beyond obtaining permits with regard to their own partners, though at least one Israeli committee of academics is working on the issue.

However, the aspect of equality, noted briefly above, is a major force for the "normalizing" aspects of the cooperation. Israelis who are new to research cooperation are quickly reminded by their Israeli colleagues and their Arab partners, as well as by donors, that equal treatment, in every possible field, is a requirement of successful projects. Equality is manifested as well in the financial arrangements, meeting places, number of staff, and work to be done.

It should be noted that in fields of strategic interest, notably water and any research requiring high-resolution satellite imagery, there is a perennial dispute regarding Palestinian access to Israeli technical data. Some projects have been delayed for a year or more waiting for data that Palestinians claim was promised. There appears to be a large "gray area" between classified and unclassified information, to which Israeli scholars can get access and Palestinians cannot.

#### THE BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT RESEARCH

Several works have examined the course of Palestinian and Egyptian scientific cooperation with Israel. (5) Even while Arab states enforced a complete ban on any sort of cooperation with Israel, it was difficult to prevent contact at scientific conferences at which both Arabs and Israelis were present. However, as a direct result of the Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement at in 1980, the U.S. Congress, under the prodding of Congressman Henry Waxman of California, inserted an "earmarked" provision into the Foreign Aid Act, which

created the Middle East Regional Cooperation Program (MERC). The project has since enjoyed an annual budget of \$5-7 million, with which it has generally concentrated on a few larger scientific projects each year mainly in agriculture, tropical medicine, environmental issues and marine science. In recent years, somewhat smaller projects, in the range of \$300,000 to 1 million, have also been funded.(6) Until the Oslo agreements, MERC was limited to Israeli and Egyptian partners, but since has expanded to include Palestinians and Jordanians, though without a corresponding increase in budget. (7)

The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has maintained contacts with Palestinian academics since the 1970s. Ironically, the Palestinian intifada, which began in 1987, directly spurred deeper and more formal contacts. During the intifada, Palestinian universities were closed and the delivery of periodicals and research materials was virtually nonexistent. Palestinian academics began to appear in greater numbers at the Truman Institute library to use its resources. The initial refusal by Palestinian academics to talk with Israeli professors eventually softened, and shared cups of coffee soon led to joint research projects, many quite substantial, and to Truman's approximately 35 ongoing and recent joint projects during the 199-2000 academic year.

Although it did not itself constitute research cooperation, it should be noted that the contacts that led directly to the Oslo negotiations were themselves the product of meetings between academics. As is well known, Dr. Ron Pundak and Dr. Yair Hirschfeld, (co-founders of the Economic Cooperation Foundation, which has sponsored many joint projects) created the initial contacts with Palestinian academics whom they had previously met at academic conferences through the good offices of Norway. However, it is unusual

that “second-track” negotiations have led so directly to diplomatic negotiations and thence to a formal agreement. Often they help to begin the preparation for a climate of understanding, which then leads to diplomatic contacts. This had in fact taken place in this conflict, partially as a result of numerous informal meetings among academics during the 1970's and 1980's. Second-track diplomacy often does its most important work *after* formal agreements are reached, as shown in this study since, while peace between governments is an essential step, it is clearly insufficient. Academic contacts, along with those of non-governmental and other grassroots organizations, provide informal but essential means of contact that help build confidence in and acceptance of a general peace at different points in the process.

In the heady period following the Oslo Agreement of 1993 and the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty of 1994, extensive ideas for joint research were formulated. For example, in 1995 a Joint Expert Group (Jordanian-Israeli-American) was set up and met four times in 1995 to devise a number of joint research projects. The experts came up with dozens of suggestions for projects with a total cost of \$39,006,000. Their report was published in April, 1996. (8) Unfortunately, this was right after the spate of bus bombings in Israel and during the Grapes of Wrath operation in Lebanon which, with other events of that spring, effectively limited, though by no means destroyed, some of the more exuberant plans for joint research, at least at that point.

#### MOTIVATION FOR JOINT RESEARCH

Answers as to why academics have engaged in joint research with recent enemies are not usually definitive. Generally, Israelis will say that they want to help the peace process, while Palestinians want an opportunity to upgrade their skills and work with higher quality equipment. There is no question

that the long-sought opportunity to solve real inter- and intra-societal problems is an important motivation, though, clearly, the availability of research funds to encourage Arab-Israel peace is also a significant incentive.

In Israel, most university research is channeled through the individual universities' Authority for Research and Development, which generally is intended to ensure proper financial accountability and reporting, and does not involve any enquiry into the nature of the research or the partners involved. As of the late 1990s, university began to highlight such research, believing that such information would impress donors. For example, the Hebrew University has produced two editions (1996 and 1999) of a glossy brochure describing the work of the university's researchers with Arab scholars.(9)

Israelis who have been engaged, sometimes for years, in contacts with Palestinian or other Arab researchers, often seem surprised when asked for the reasons behind their collaboration. Most have mentioned some commitment to the peace process. Others, especially scientists working on health problems of Israeli Arabs, were appreciative of the opportunities to work with populations bearing similarities to them. Most emphasized that there was no pecuniary motivation, as they could have obtained funds for other projects, some scientifically more exciting. However, in some cases the opposite was true. At various times, considerable funding has been available for Arab-Israel projects. This is generally the exception, though, rather than the rule.

There has been neither official nor social pressure, positive or negative, on Israeli academics with regard to working with Arabs, at least during the period which this study covered. Even at Bar-Ilan University, established by the religious Zionist movement and usually considered the most conservative of Israeli

universities, a number of research projects, as well as reciprocal visits with Palestinian academics, training programs, and the like have been undertaken. It also seems clear that left wing or dovish politics have by no means been a *sine qua non* for participation. Though this study did not examine political attitudes, it did not appear that most of the academics involved (with the exception of some of those in the social sciences) were politically active on the left.

It should be noted that, unlike the situation in Israel and the West, most Arab scholars see working with Israelis as a profoundly political choice impacting the collective polity. There is a widespread near-consensus in the Arab world, explicitly shared by most academics, to the effect that, given the repeated failure of the military option, the Arab world's most potent weapon against Israel is the withholding of recognition and legitimacy. Working with Israelis is perceived as granting that legitimacy. The general assumption is that once Israelis feel that they have received this legitimacy, in the academic sphere as in others, there will be no reason for further Israeli concessions in any area. For example, although Palestinians usually accept that their Israeli colleagues, as individuals, have tried hard to obtain permits and ease logistical difficulties, they believe (with some justification) that the Israeli academic establishment has never tried to use its considerable influence to reduce Palestinians' difficulties.

This view is diametrically opposite to the Israeli assumption that the institutions would change their policy if more Palestinians choose to work with Israelis. Israelis involved in working with Arabs generally believe that more cooperation would increase incentives for Israeli academics to work to change Israeli policies. A dynamic has long existed whereby Israelis are usually pushing for more joint work, while Arab partners are

often less eager. This, of course, reinforces the existing perceptions.

Thus, while an objective analysis might conclude that Palestinians, and Arabs in general, have much more to gain from cooperation than do Israelis, Arabs perceive Israel as craving their recognition. Withholding it is seen by them as a potent weapon. Few Israelis, even those most active in the peace camp, concur. Thus, there is a wide gap between Israeli and Arab perceptions. Israelis see peace as flowing from normalization, in academia as in other fields, while Arabs see normalization as an eventual result of peace and a rectification of Arab grievances.

#### PALESTINIAN ISSUES

Partly thanks to proximity, interchange at all levels between Israelis and Palestinians has gone back farther and deeper than contacts with citizens of other Arab states. While some exchanges continued through or even began during the intifada, as noted above, they accelerated dramatically after the Oslo agreements.

As of the year 2000, almost any Israeli researcher in any field can find a Palestinian counterpart if he or she so wishes. In their discussion of why they cooperate, Palestinians emphasize the instrumental nature of such joint research. Working with Israeli or foreign universities in the context of joint projects provides opportunities to learn techniques and research methodologies otherwise unavailable. Therefore, research proposals often contain explicit items involving technology transfer and purchase of research equipment for Palestinian institutions, which is intended as an incentive for Arab participation. This is less true in the social sciences, where equipment is usually of lesser importance in the research. In these disciplines, building peace is often a significant motivating factor, along with developing new ideas and policies that the

researchers hope will be adopted by policymakers.

It is important to note that, as of this writing and dating back to the intifada, a decree of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education (now known as the Rectors Conference), composed of the rectors of all seven Palestinian universities, still stipulates that Palestinian universities may not work directly with Israeli universities. Had this been a blanket and absolute prohibition, much of the work catalogued in this report could not have taken place. However, the ban applies only to formal and direct university-to-university contact. Thus, for example, Bir Zeit University cannot conclude a contract for joint research with the Hebrew University. However, individual professors may do so. In addition, research and other contacts are permitted so long as there is a third party involved, usually either a foreign institution, such as a European or American research or governmental body, or a Palestinian research consortium. One of the best known of the latter is the Palestine Consultancy Group (PCG). Its president is Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, who is also president of al-Quds University in Jerusalem. Wearing his PCG hat, Dr. Nusseibeh is free to (and frequently does) engage in joint research with Israelis. Wearing his al-Quds hat, such cooperation is formally forbidden.

It should be noted that there is currently a strong movement to change the Palestinian policy prohibiting direct university-to-university contacts, reportedly supported by three of the seven members of the Rector's Conference. It is reasonable to suppose that if and when a comprehensive Israeli/Palestinian agreement is reached, the policy may well be revised, in coordination with the Palestinian Authority (perhaps at that point transmuted into the Government of Palestine).

## EGYPT

While Egypt was the first Arab country to engage in large-scale research cooperation with Israel, and its participation has been considerable, joint projects have overwhelmingly taken place in the agricultural sector alone. To the credit of Dr. Yousef Wally, who has almost single-handedly insisted on the continuation of such projects, more than a thousand Egyptians have been trained each year in Israeli agricultural techniques.

A major study by the U.S. Agency for International Development of the MERC program in 1997, while generally quite laudatory of the program, admitted:

MERC projects in other sectors—marine, health, and environment—have generally not been perceived as matters of prime national interest. They have not, therefore, evoked strong support from the government, influential leaders, powerful ministers and their clientele. Despite their practical relevance in developing these sectors, such projects have experienced political resistance and suffered many implementation problems that were not easy to overcome. (10)

In general, Egyptian academics and intellectuals have led the opposition to the peace process, as well as to cultural and academic projects. In the social sciences, a small Egyptian “peace movement” was established in 1998 that included a few academics. However, only a few scholars dare to visit Israel and conduct joint research with Israelis. The arrest of Dr. Sa'ad eddin Ibrahim, discussed above, will certainly impact this situation. However, at this point, this arrest does not seem to indicate any change of government policy towards Israel or the peace process but, rather, seems more related to domestic Egyptian politics. While the reasons for the negative attitudes of Egyptians in general towards Israel are beyond the scope of this paper, many Egyptians in and

out of government keenly feel an immense sense of humiliation based on Israel's success in the economic and military spheres, and in acceptance by the West. Such a feeling is much more powerful in Egypt than, for example, in Jordan, a much smaller and newer country, lacking a 4000-year-old tradition of regional dominance. Thus, in contrast to Jordan, it seems unlikely that academic cooperation between Egyptians and Israelis will flower in the foreseeable future, even if a framework or comprehensive agreement is signed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

#### JORDAN

The major pro-normalization constituency in Jordan has been, ever since the 1994 peace treaty, the government (though varying with the individual prime ministers), and especially the Royal Court. Thus, to many Israelis it stands to reason, since the monarchy more or less controls the country, Jordanians should feel free to work with Israel on various levels. This reasoning belies the much more complex reality of Jordanian attitudes towards Israel. The policy is such that the government recognizes the strong feelings most Jordanians have on this issue and will thus not force anyone to "normalize." As a result, individual and mid-level academics (such as deans and department chairs) have thus been able to some degree to determine whether they wished to participate in joint research, if the opportunity presented itself, but individuals can be blocked by their direct supervisors. On the top level, educational and scientific institutions have been under the patronage of former Crown Prince Hassan, a strong proponent of peace and they have, if warily, sometimes engaged in cooperation. Since the accession of King Abdullah in February 1999, Prince Hassan's influence has waned dramatically, and it is not completely clear yet in what direction these institutions may be heading, though no change of policy can yet be clearly discerned.

The effect of this situation has been to, in effect, allow cooperation at the higher and low levels, but not at the mid-level. In other words, Israeli university presidents have visited Jordan on occasion, and some joint proposals between Israeli and Jordanian universities have been submitted. (11) In addition, large, government-sponsored projects have also been conducted. However, universities or departments will generally not undertake joint projects, especially if they require formal sponsorship. Instead, individual scholars will sometimes agree to participate, as has been the case of the Truman Institute projects in the social sciences. It is understood that, as in the case of almost everything in Jordan, the appropriate authorities are aware of the cooperation and allowing it to proceed.

It is likely that Jordanians are waiting for a major breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Some Jordanians, as well as outside observers, believe that if and when such a breakthrough occurs, Jordanian opposition, except for the hard core among the Islamists, will likely dissipate, though not necessarily immediately and by no means completely. Thus, the academics who are currently involved in joint research may have a head start on their colleagues in this respect. Such a breakthrough might also attract enough popular support to allow the government to limit the control of the Professional Associations, though this is a major issue in Jordanian politics. It is noteworthy that King Abdullah has made a marked effort to develop good relations with the Associations, in contrast to his father, King Hussein, who was often at loggerheads with them.

Thus, while at first glance, the situation and attitudes in Jordan and Egypt may seem similar, there is actually a wide difference, which may become more apparent in the near future. Egypt has had formal peace with Israel for a generation. Its secular and religious intellectuals are in the forefront of opposition to

normalization, and deviation from this attitude seems almost unimaginable for most intellectuals. The government warily keeps its relations with Israel, but no one could describe them as close.

In Jordan, by contrast, military and intelligence relations are extremely close (described by many as an alliance) since the Hashemite regime is the one Arab power that genuinely wants, and even needs, a strong Israel in the region. In Jordan, largely for historical reasons, intellectuals and academics are in any case much less prominent than in Egyptian society. This is partly explained by the fact that Egypt has been the cultural leader of the Middle East for millennia, while the first Jordanian university was only founded in 1962. In addition, as noted above, academics and intellectuals are by no means the leaders of the anti-normalization forces.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Dr. Edy Kaufman remarks that, "Coauthorship—writing together rather than side by side—is perhaps the highest stage of joint intellectual discourse and requires a particular type of commitment." (12) He wrote in 1993, during a period when joint research was far less prevalent than it is now, and in the context of projects involving the peace process itself, but his comment is equally valid now and for any subject matter. Joint research requires a sustained intellectual commitment and a degree of trust in the other party. In the Middle East, this necessarily has a political dimension that is usually absent elsewhere.

Funding organizations seek to maximize the "peace output" of their financial contributions to peace. It is, of course, usually impossible to measure how a particular project advances the peace process. The Truman Institute and other organizations are now including evaluation components in their projects, which involve measuring attitudes "before" and "after" the project, though further

investigation would have to measure whether the change "sticks", not to mention considering how changes in the attitudes of some individuals affects the larger society over time.

While a quantitative measurement of the collective effects of such projects is at least as difficult, this study has attempted to show that they have created a great deal of contact that simply would not have taken place. Of course, to know each other is by no means to love, or even like the other side. However, judging by the interviews and comments made by participants on both sides, working together seems to have created a degree of respect, trust and appreciation that could not have emerged in the absence of personal and professional contact. The demonization both sides have engaged in over the years necessarily diminishes in the face of such contact and knowledge. This is a slow process and takes years to diffuse through the society. This process does not in itself make peace, of course, but it can help to create the atmosphere in which peace is more attainable.

With regard to the projects themselves, perhaps the factor that seemed to make the greatest difference in the success or failure of a project was the presence of a strong and active third party coordinator, with some degree of control over the funding spigot. This was by no means a necessity, but in larger scientific projects, such a coordinator seemed to encourage both a spirit of cooperation and a higher standard of performance. Part of this is due to the obvious fact that projects of any sort benefit from good management skills. However, in the delicate atmosphere of Arab-Israeli cooperation, a respected third party can defuse problems before they arise and help to convey sensitivities that the other side may not have known existed.

Funding issues always have the potential of creating problems, but especially so in this context. Projects that are well funded and in which the financial

issues were settled before work began created far less friction than ones in which conditions were otherwise.

At the risk of over-generalization, it seemed that if projects were well organized and administered, their success or failure had little relationship to the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The main exception to this statement involves the logistical difficulties that are a major part of allowing Palestinians access to Israeli-controlled territory, or to Israel itself.

What would be interesting and significant would be a study examining cooperation among non-governmental organizations (NGO), which would seem to be a much broader field of enquiry, as foreign organizations are usually more interested in funding grassroots activism rather than research. It would appear that there are hundreds of such projects begin each year. Such a study would indicate the areas in which Israelis and Arabs interact, and in which they do not. Obviously, such areas as training projects, business cooperation, and joint work between government agencies are fertile fields for research.

An example of such a study, rigorously limited in subject matter, is a three-year investigation of joint Israeli-Palestinian health care projects for the period 1994-98, published in May, 2000 and conducted by the Brookdale Institute of the Joint Distribution Committee and al-Quds University. (13) It found 148 examples of such cooperation, 23% of which involved research. Another recent resource is a listing of NGOs and discussion of their function in Israeli-Palestinian peace prepared by PRIME (Peace Research in the Middle East). (14) It also includes analyses of the role of NGOs in the Palestinian Authority.

Finally, a certain paradox should be pointed out. Kaufman's comment cited above referred to a certain commitment required for joint research. While many scholars are undoubtedly dedicated to

peace, such a commitment is not a necessity for such projects to work, though it can certainly benefit the project. A strong dedication to the joint research itself is much more important. The progress toward peace is often a byproduct of such research.

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#### METHODOLOGY

The research presented in this article was undertaken in order to fill a void in knowledge about joint research between Arabs and Israelis. Since the joint research projects studies were conducted at the behest of individual institutions or, not

infrequently, simply by individual researchers, there is no central source for information about them. The research and development authorities of some Israeli universities occasionally had information about projects at their institutions, but it was usually quite scant. Therefore, information regarding the projects was performed generally obtained from the researchers themselves, as well as from funders, from some of the institutes involved in the research, or simply by word of mouth.

A questionnaire was devised that was administered orally to researchers in a sample of about 20 percent of the projects. Questions involved the origin of the project, funding, nature of the interaction, attitudes of the participants, and the willingness of the participants to work.

The study succeeded in amassing information on 195 Israeli-Arab cooperative research projects in the 1995-1999 period. The information is summarized in the companion inventory. It is also based on the author's four years of work in this area, at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he has had the opportunity to work on a large number of joint Israeli-Arab research projects in the social sciences, several of which he also coordinated.

The inventory only covers research projects, defined as work by scholars connected to an academic or research institution, over time, in preparation of a paper, even if the paper was not published. Training programs, seminars, workshops, or conferences not connected to a joint research project were not included. All projects located that were ongoing during the years 1995 to 1999 were included. However, given the highly decentralized nature of the research and the wide variety of fields, it cannot be stated with assurance that every project meeting these criteria has been included in the inventory.

This study was intended to provide verification of the existence the joint

projects, and a basic description of them. It provided a snapshot of the research cooperation that took place during this period, the individuals involved, and the countries that have supported it, as well as the nature and motives of those who have engaged in it.

A note about confidentiality is in order. Many Arab researchers, while quite willing to talk about the research, prefer not to have their names publicized, because of justifiable fears of professional or other reaction. Thus, we are not publishing names or institutions involved. Interested researchers who would like further information are invited to contact the author.

#### NOTES

1) In order to avoid terminological/political problems, all Palestinian projects are denoted by a "PA" for "Palestinian Authority", including projects in Jerusalem. No political pre-judgment of the final status agreements is implied by this usage.)

2) This organization is now known as the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies.

3) It has not been possible to obtain funding sources for all projects. Also, in some cases one project was funded by more than one source.

4) For a compilation of European Commission funded projects, with project descriptions but lacking financial information, see *European Commission, Directorate-General XII, Euro-Mediterranean S&T [Scientific and Technical] Cooperation, 1997*. A more informal description of what it is like to work on an EC project is provided by Gillian Lewando-Hundt, "Rhetoric and Reality in European Cooperation with Third Countries: A Case Study" *Social Policy & Administration*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 268-381.

5) See Dany Shoham "The Influence of Palestinian-Israeli Academic Encounters

on the Peace Process,” Alexander Keynan and Dany Shoham, “Scientific Cooperation Agriculture and Medical Research as a Means for Normalizing Relations between Egypt and Israel,” both in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 806, Dec. 30, 1998.

6) For a history and analysis of the MERC projects, see *Review of Middle East Regional Cooperation Program* (Project No. 398-0158.25, 1991) and Krishna Kumar and Irving Rosenthal, *Scientific Cooperation and Peace Building: A Case Study of USAID's Middle East Regional Cooperation Program* (1997).

7) See Robert B. Abel, *The Influence of Technical Cooperation on Reducing Tensions in the Middle East*, (Oxford University Press of America, 1997) for a case study based on the author's personal experience with a project funded by MERC.

8) Jordanian-Israeli-American Trilateral Cooperation in the Physical Sciences, the Social Sciences, and Applied Technology, Joint Expert Group Final Report, Washington D.C. April 1996.

9) The Authority for Research and Development of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, *Paths to Peace: Research Cooperation Across Borders in the Middle East*, 1999.

10) Kumar and Rosenthal, p.28

11) Discussion with Dr David O'Brien of MERC, Washington, D.C., Dec. 1999.

12) Dr. Edy Kaufman, “Israeli-Palestinian Coauthoring: A New Development Toward Peace?” *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, 22:32-44 (Summer, 1993).

13) Israeli-Palestinian Cooperation in the Health Field, 1994-1998. JDC-Brookdale Institute, JDC-Israel and Al Quds University (2000).

14) Sami Adwan and Dan Bar-On, *The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Peace-Building Between Palestinians and Israelis* (A PRIME Publication, Hauser Press, January 2000).