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Institut**



The Byblos Middle East Autumn School

« Peace and Conflict Research: The State of the Art »

Narrative Report

November 22nd – December 2nd 2002
Byblos, Lebanon

The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies organized, in cooperation with the UNESCO International Center for the Human Sciences in Byblos and ABI, the German institute for comparative social research connected to the University of Freiburg, the first session of the “Byblos Middle East Autumn School on “Peace and Conflict Research: The State of the Art”. The workshop was prepared by documentation and background research. It took place from 23 November till 2 December 2002. It was sponsored by the German agency for technical co-operation: GTZ. The venue of the session is highly symbolic: Jbeil (Byblos) the place where the invention of the alphabet provided the hitherto most important tool of intellectual work. It rivals with Damascus and Jericho for the fame of the oldest, permanently inhabited human settlement. It has proved to be, during the wars in Lebanon 1975 to 1990, one of the few places that managed to escape the horrors of civil strife and to uphold inter-communal conviviality.

The Middle Eastern region has suffered in the past and continues to suffer from various violent conflicts. Intellectuals hailing from this region have made important contributions to the analysis of these conflicts, and many of them have presented proposals and blueprints for dealing with them. Most authors from the region have been writing from the former perspective. Yet, sometimes efforts to look from the latter one and attempts to look from a distance at one's own problems can contribute to sober analysis. One way to provide some analytical distance may be the pursuit of theoretical approaches, another one the study of cases other than one's own.

The Byblos Middle East Autumn School explored the present international state of the art in conflict and peace research and discussed experiences of conflict regulation and conflict prevention in other parts of the world, with special emphasis on the OSCE area.

The participants were intellectuals and analysts from Afghanistan, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iran. The various sessions discussed the following topics and were presented by eminent specialists from Europe, Asia and Lebanon who provided inputs of their respective fields to the sessions.

The presentation of the first day, “The Origins of Contemporary Wars”, covered the types of wars the determining factors of wars as well as their length and intensity; it also explored the outcomes, casualties and damages of wars (Dr. Christopher Daase, Lecturer in International Relations, University of Kent at Canterbury & Brussels School of International Relations)

H.E. Dr. Ghassan Salamé, Minister of Culture of the Lebanese Republic, presented the keynote address. Two work groups followed it. The pattern of the next six days was the same consisting of a presentation and two work groups.

The second day's presentation on "The Theories of Peace" covered the meaning and causes of peace as well as the relations between peace and justice, peace and democracy, peace and civilisation, and finally peace and culture (Dr. Harald Müller, Director of the Institute for Peace Research (HSFK) in Frankfurt)

The third day's presentation was on "The Ethics of Peace" and covered conflicts and wars in the perspective of social ethics, the trans-cultural foundations of a philosophy of peace and the reapolitik reconsidered (Dr. Hans-Gerd Angel, University of Münster)

The fourth day's presentation was on "The Ethnic Conflict: The Dominant Form of Contemporary War and Unrest" and it covered the origins and functions of politicised ethnicity, the strategies of ethnic communities in competition for power, the indicators for the imminence of violent conflict, the forms of conflict and its modes of regulation, assimilation and nation building in plural states, the consociations and power sharing and the de-politicising ethnicity in open democracies (Dr. Theodor Hanf, Director of CISH, Byblos, Lebanon)

The fourth day's presentation was on "The Conflict Prevention through Development Policy" and it covered the economic disparities and stagnation as conflict causes as well as the prospects for preventative action (Dr. Heribert Weiland, Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, Freiburg)

The fifth day's presentation was on "Conflict Prevention: Lessons from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)" and it covered early warning and diplomacy, as well as the dispatching of observers and the electoral observation (Retired Ambassador Dr. Herbert Grubmayr, Vienna)

The sixth day's presentation was on "Conflict Mediation: An Assessment of South Caucasian Experiences Mediating" and it covered the international and internal conflicts stretching to the preconditions for successful mediation as well as the mediation kairos and using civilian observers, the peacekeeping forces and the limits of mediation (Dr. Dietrich Sperling, Former M.P., Head of various mediation missions)

On the eighth and ninth days, the participants were divided into two work groups to take part in various simulation exercises using the case studies of Macedonia and Namibia (Moderator for Macedonia: Dr. Karin Kneissl, Lecturer at Vienna Diplomatic Academy and University of Vienna; moderator for Namibia: Prof. Dr. Heribert Weiland, University of Freiburg). The first simulation exercises were on "Conflict genesis and transition to violence", the second simulation exercises were on "Preventative Interventions" and the third simulation exercises were on "Mediating in open conflicts"

The last and tenth day's presentation was on "Non-Governmental Agencies in Crisis Prevention & Mediation: The case of German political foundations in South Africa's transition" (Dr. Kyra Naudascher-Jankowski, Former representative of Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation in South Africa and Dr. Theodor Hanf, CISH, Byblos).