



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY



The Porter School of Environmental Studies
The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies
The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research
The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies
The University Institute for Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation

Peace parks on Israel's borders: The Syrian case study from theory to reality

January 7, 2010

"Kes HaMishpat" Hall, Faculty of Law, Tel Aviv University

"Environmental Peacemaking in the Middle East" conference series

הכנס יתנהל בעברית ובאנגלית בליווי תרגום סימולטני

The conference will be held in Hebrew and English.

Simultaneous translation services will be provided.

The organizers gratefully acknowledge the support of the following:



Public Affairs Office
US Embassy, Tel Aviv



The Office of the President
Tel Aviv University

Program

9:30 – 10:00 Registration and reception

10:00 – 10:15 Greetings

Chair: **Dr. Arie Neshet**, The Porter School of Environmental Studies, Tel Aviv University (TAU)

- **Prof. Dany Leviatan**, Rector, Tel Aviv University
- **Prof. Eyal Zisser**, Head of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, TAU
- **Prof. Pinhas Alpert**, Head, The Porter School of Environmental Studies, TAU

10:15 – 11:15 Realizing the Peace Parks Theory: International case studies

Chair: **Prof. Pinhas Alpert**, Head, The Porter School of Environmental Studies, TAU

Keynote speaker:

- Peace parks: Conservation and conflict resolution
Prof. Saleem Ali, Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, University of Vermont, USA



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11:15 – 12:15 Session One

Peace Parks on Israeli Borders: Proposals from the past and present

Chair: Prof. Itzhak Schnell, Department of Geography, Faculty of Humanities, TAU

- "Past 'peace park' proposals on Israeli borders - An overview"
Shahar Sadeh, Porter School of Environmental Studies, Tel Aviv University
- "Peace parks on Israeli borders: Lessons from demilitarized zones in the 1950's and the South Sinai in the 1980's"
Prof. Dan Rabinowitz, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, TAU
- "The Jordan River Peace Park: Post-conflict environmental peacebuilding between Israel and Jordan"
Gidon Bromberg, Israeli Director, Friends of the Earth Middle East

12:15 – 13:15 Lunch break

13:15 – 14:15 Session Two

The Golan Heights: History, geography and ecology

Chair: Prof. Ra'anan Rein, Head, The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, TAU

- "The Golan Heights – A critical habitat with global significance"
Dr. Tamar Ron, Ecologist, biodiversity conservation consultant
- "Demography and settlements in the Golan Heights"
Dr. Yigal Kipnis, Truman Institute, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Golan Heights historian)
- "The history of borders in the Golan Heights"
Prof. Gideon Biger, The Department of Geography and Human Environment, Faculty of Humanities, TAU

14:15 – 14:30 Coffee break



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14:30 – 15:30 Session Three

The Golan Heights Park: Environmental peacemaking in action

Chair: Prof. Ephraim Lavie, The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, TAU

- "Israeli-Syrian peace - Track II negotiations and the proposed peace park"
Dr. Alon Liel, Israeli-Syria Peace Society, former Director General, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- "Israel-Syria negotiations – Lessons from the past"
Prof. Eyal Zisser, Head of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, TAU
- "A renewable energy peace park in the Golan as a framework to an Israeli-Syrian agreement"
Yehuda Greenfield-Gilat, SAYA Architecture & Consultancy

Respondent: Valerie Brachya, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies

15:30 – 17:00 Session Four

The Israeli-Syrian negotiations: Do peace parks have a role in conflict resolution?

Chair: Prof. Dan Rabinowitz, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, TAU

Speakers:

- **Uri Sagie**, Major-general (Res.), Former Head of the IDF Intelligence Unit
- **Yehuda Harel**, Head of the Golan Heights Settlements Committee

Discussion

Conference Steering Committee

- Prof. Eyal Zisser, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University (TAU)
- Dr. Arie Neshet, The Porter School for Environmental Studies, TAU
- Prof. Dan Rabinowitz, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, TAU
- Dr. Uzi Rabi, The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Department of Middle Eastern and African History, TAU
- Dr. Ephraim Lavie, The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, TAU
- Shahar Sadeh, The Porter School for Environmental Studies, TAU



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Background

A Transboundary Protected Area (TBPA), as defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), is a protected area that spans across boundaries of multiple countries, where the political borders enclosed within it are abolished. This includes removal of all forms of physical boundaries, allowing free movement of people and animals within the designated area. However, a boundary around the area may be maintained to prevent unauthorized border crossings. Such areas are also known as "Peace Parks."

Peace parks are aimed at encouraging regulated tourism, sustainable development and goodwill between neighboring countries. Thus, an environmental project can become a tool for peace building and cooperation between rival states.

In recent years, scattered examples of peace parks have emerged around the world such as "W area" between Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger; "K-2 area" between India and Pakistan; "Kumgang-Sun Park" between North and South Korea; "Cordillera del Condor" between Peru and Ecuador and many more.

These parks are part of different processes – either a cross-border attempt to reconcile a dispute over natural resources, or an attempt at reconciliation through joint management of a conservation area as part of a greater process of conflict resolution. It is well understood that peace parks alone cannot create peace; causes of political conflicts are much too complex. But they may serve as an important tool in the toolkit of trust building, transboundary cooperation and peaceful relations between rival states. As such, Peace Parks address one way in which peace building can occur through the medium of the natural world.

Rationale

The series "Environmental Peacemaking in the Middle East" will explore the subject of "Environmental Peacemaking" and will attempt to answer the question: To what extent can environmental discourse be integrated into concepts of peace or conflict resolution and de-facto promote them? Specifically, it will deal with the possibility of utilizing the evolving environmental discourse to affect political processes that surround peace negotiations.

Developing a concept that deals with the relationship between environment and political conflict, not only from a post-conflict perspective but also as part of the possible solution, could have a concrete effect on both the environment and the



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way it is perceived. This concept will be the tool in inquiry in the first proposed conference, and will be explored through the notion of peace parks.

The proposed international conference will deal with theoretical and practical aspects of the concept of peace parks. It will examine both international and local case studies, including existing initial ideas for peace parks along Israeli borders, with a focus on the Golan Heights and the Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

Proposals for introducing environmental elements as part of the formal negotiations between the two states, and as dispute-resolution strategies, were raised as early as the 1990's, but did not gain any substantial attention. Many of these proposals addressed the unique nature of the Golan, its inhabitants and the existing water agreements. The current proposals for a "Golan Heights Peace Park" and "Jordan Valley–Golan Heights Environmental Preserve" will be discussed and developed in the conference and will bring these novel ideas to the attention of decision makers, academe and the general public.

Conference goals

- * Study the tool of peace parks, theoretically and academically
- * Present international examples and case studies of peace parks
- * Examine existing initial ideas for implementation along Israel's borders
 - Focus on Syria-Israel negotiations over the Golan Heights and the different proposals that have been raised in the past