

3. Technology for Peace by Yoram Koren

“A project Koren calls ‘technology cooperation for peace’ would bring together engineers from warring nations to work together toward a technological but humanitarian goal, such as improving irrigation.

“They would become friends,” Koren says. “It would be peace from the bottom up.” The educator has seen such unlikely friendships take root in his own lab. Koren has been trying to move these ideas forward for years now. Perhaps their time is yet to come.”

—Nicole Casal Moore, UM Record, March 19, 2012

The ERC–RMS has had students from 36 countries; from India and Pakistan; Lebanon and Israel; Muslims, Christians and Hindus; all working together in teams that focused on solving technical problems. By working together they learned to respect one another and to see that the person on the other side of the conflict would also like to live in peace and prosperity.

The ERC working environment is an encouraging model: when participants from diverse backgrounds work together on joint projects, political and cultural boundaries are bridged.

The concept: Individuals from countries in conflict work together on common technology projects, thereby creating cooperation. The ultimate objective is to achieve peace and resolve conflicts.



The ERC–RMS supported students from 36 countries

PEOPLE WHO HAVE GOOD JOBS WANT TO LIVE IN PEACE

Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, former president of Poland (1995-2005), visited the ERC in 2006 to learn about modern manufacturing (“in terms a politician can understand”) and found himself also learning about peace. Our students, Aftab Khan (Muslim from Pakistan) and Nireesh Agarwal (Hindu from India), worked as a coherent team. “How come?” he asked. The answer: “We discuss only technical issues, and we became friends.”

Imagine all the people living life in peace...

You may say I'm a dreamer

But I'm not the only one.

—John Lennon
The Beatles



Koren made two attempts to propose an action plan:

- 1 In 2002, Liz Cheney (the daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney) was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. One of her objectives was to promote peace initiatives. At that time Dr. E. Shakour was a professor at Mar Elias Educational Institutions, Ibillin, Israel, and had connections to universities in Jordan and Bethlehem. Koren and Shakour proposed to Cheney's Department establishing mixed teams composed of Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian students to work on joint agricultural projects. Their project was declined.
- 2 At a presentation to NSF in 2004, Koren proposed the establishment of a new type of NSF Center, to be known as Cooperative Education & Research Centers for Science & Technology Embracing Peace (STEP). Koren held a serious discussion with Arden L. Bement, NSF Director, and NSF Assistant Directors for Engineering, Education, Social Sciences, and other relevant areas. Their conclusion was that the NSF should add this concept as a component to existing NSF Centers. Koren saw it as a kiss of death for his proposal.

Was this a case of bad timing? Perhaps the time for this initiative is yet to come.

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