4 Regional Security Cooperation

If balance of power, zero-sum politics has an archetype, the Arab-Israeli arena would seem to provide an obvious candidate. For some, even the tremendous changes brought about by the end of the Cold War and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait did not fundamentally alter the regional security environment. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction among authoritarian and often internally unstable regimes and the continued flow of conventional weaponry to the Middle East make for an extremely dangerous environment.[1] Middle East countries surpass all other developing regions, and even some industrial states, in both quantity and quality of their military forces and armament capabilities, with increasingly modern inventories producing considerable potential for major destruction.[2] In conjunction with this overwhelming stockpile of destructive weapons, the region is plagued by political instability. Extremists continue to carry out atrocious acts of terrorism, and democratic leadership and institutions are virtually absent in the majority of Mideast states. How, many ask, can one talk about Arab-Israeli regional security cooperation under such conditions? Others may ask, how can one *not* address the prospects for a cooperative regional security process given the stakes?

The emergence and development of the Arms Control and Regional Security working group (ACRS) suggest that these questions are no longer hypothetical. The initiation of ACRS as an unprecedented cooperative security experiment among Israel and a large number of Arab parties—despite its failings—defies the notion that this region can be understood only ac-

cording to competitive, balance of power paradigms. Certainly, balancing and competitive security relationships continue and in some ways have increased, particularly against "rogue" states like Iran and Iraq, as the threat of terrorism rises. Yet regional states have also begun to contemplate and engage in a complementary strategy of security cooperation, as the ACRS case demonstrates. This chapter will explore the dynamics operating within ACRS that both favored and impeded cooperative security postures in the Arab-Israeli context.

Understanding these dynamics has become more critical as regional elites increasingly recognize the role such arrangements can play in building more stable regional security environments in the absence of Cold War-era superpower domination. Certainly, new cooperative security arrangements will not eliminate the possibility of war, nor will they ensure long-term regional stability on their own. They can, however, serve as an important "pillar" of a more stable regional security architecture.[3]

The ACRS case illustrates the advantages of conceptualizing cooperation as a process because the process itself helps explain both the strengths of ACRS and its shortcomings. ACRS represents a limited failure according to a process conception of cooperation because it ultimately did not lead to common understandings of regional security and even exacerbated regional divisions despite its unexpected early progress. This chapter will illustrate how the cooperative process affected the thinking of its participants in both positive and negative directions. Ultimately, the working group was unable to transform highly charged political issues surrounding the security issue area, particularly Israel's nuclear capabilities, into a technical problem more conducive to a multilateral solution. One cannot understand why this transformation failed to occur without examining how key participants in ACRS viewed the process. In particular, Egypt increasingly viewed ACRS as a threat to its traditional leadership role in the region, leading to initiatives that (in its view) favored Israel and Egypt's traditional Arab rival, Jordan, at its expense. Thus, while the empirical record will reveal impressive progress in moving a regional security agenda forward, the process itself brought to the fore political impediments that proved even more difficult to overcome than the strategic obstacles working against Arab-Israeli security cooperation.

This chapter will demonstrate these points first by surveying ACRS's empirical record. The second section will then analyze and explain ACRS's development by highlighting both the mechanisms favoring successful cooperation, or the ability of the working group to reach common understand-

ings, and the forces working against regional security cooperation which ultimately led to the breakdown of the official ACRS working group in late 1995.

The ACRS Record

ACRS Emerges[4]

Before the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles, signed on September 13, 1993, ACRS's activity was limited to a series of workshops where American, European,[5] Russian, and other extraregional experts shared their own regional experiences with the group.[6] In these first meetings, little regional interaction occurred between Arab parties and Israel, and the United States' attempt to create a working agenda illustrated early on the serious substantive differences between the Israeli and Arab (particularly Egyptian) approaches to arms control and regional security. The empirical record underscores the critical role played by the United States in this early period in an attempt to jump-start a viable regional security dialogue based on Western experiences in arms control.[7] As in other prenegotiation experiences, ACRS's first sessions focused on several major areas that better illustrate the difficulties facing the working group and its reliance on extraregional guidance: problem identification, a search for options, and a commitment to negotiate some substantive arms control (broadly defined) measures.

Problem Identification

The first challenge for the ACRS process was to reach a common understanding among Arabs and Israelis of the problem the group sought to address. Central to this dispute was the question of which part of the ACRS acronym the group would focus on, arms control or regional security. The parties' positions initially divided along the Arab-Israeli fault line, with the Israelis preferring to deal with regional security issues first through a series of incremental confidence-building measures (CBMs) and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs)[8] while the Arab states, particularly Egypt, sought to focus on arms control first (defined as arms reduction measures, including nuclear weapons) as a necessary requisite for larger regional security cooperation. This gap in understanding of the group's central prob-

lem explains why the Israelis referred to the process as the RS&AC working group while the Egyptians referred to it as the arms reduction working group. Extraregional participants, especially the United States, exerted much effort in this early stage of the process to bridge the gap, and to reach a common working agenda acceptable to all parties. While some of the Arab parties assumed more flexible views over time and were willing to engage in confidence-building without Israeli concessions on nuclear weapons or other arms reduction measures (the Gulf states were particularly wary of defining arms control as arms reduction given their own security interests), the Israeli and Egyptian positions remained unchanged and contributed to many of the problems ACRS faced at later stages of the process.

Still, all parties became sensitive in this initial stage to the nature of arms control and CBMs and recognized the potential for these measures to foster regional stability even absent a comprehensive peace, albeit with limitations. During the first two ACRS plenaries following the Moscow organizational session in January 1992, the regional parties did not interact much but rather sat and listened to the various experts brought in to educate the players on regional arms control. A number of "track two" initiatives—academic conferences bringing regional officials and academics together for more open, informal discussions of sensitive issues to facilitate progress on the official negotiating track—contributed to identifying the types of problems and issues ACRS could address. Many such efforts took place before the establishment of ACRS, from mid-1991 until the Moscow conference, and included many of the same regional officials that would later form the official delegations to ACRS. Some track two conferences produced publications of the proceedings,[9] and led to a more informed discussion of how arms control lessons from other regions might apply to the Middle East. For example, one of these conferences led to a book that brought together European experts on arms control with Middle East experts to consider what the East-West arms control experience might teach Arabs and Israelis.[10] The conclusions drawn in this project foreshadowed the substance of the seminars that later followed in ACRS during its first two years.

One of the most critical conclusions of this study was the notion that while the European experience was distinct in many ways from the Arab-Israeli context, lessons could be applied to the Middle East. The main lesson was that CBMs and CSBMs could work and help facilitate Arab-Israeli political relations, as was the case in the CSCE and U.S.-Soviet arms control experience. Both these experiences underscored that incremental ap-

proaches to arms control, focusing first on CBMs and then CSBMs, tended to precede formal arms control measures, such as the banning of certain military activities or actual force reductions. In the European experience, first generation CBMs focused on transparency of military activity to avoid war by accident or miscalculation, while second generation measures, or CSBMs (beginning in 1986) focused on access rather than transparency (e.g., on-site inspections of military facilities became mandatory and stricter terms were developed for notification of military activity).[11] Thus, the second generation CSBMs emphasized verification measures to ensure the CBMs were being implemented, so that the objective became not only the prevention of war but also the reduction in the possibility for surprise attack. Finally, third generation CSBMs (in the late 1980s, coinciding with the end of the Cold War) went beyond limiting military exercises (through notification procedures) to actually banning certain types of activity and placing various types of military equipment (tanks, artillery) in monitored sites to limit their use. Thus, the European experience demonstrated the utility of an incremental approach to arms control, moving toward more difficult measures as confidence builds among adversarial parties. A consensual knowledge developed among arms controllers regarding the most effective arms control sequence, where "this sequence progresses from 'software' (e.g., doctrines, notification of military exercises) to 'hardware' (e.g., force reductions, elimination of weapons systems) through measures that steadily improve communication and transparency."[12] The central message of the study and the subsequent seminars in ACRS was that just as in the European experience, precursor CBMs were possible and desirable for the Middle East, but grand arms control designs should be avoided.[13]

Another definitional problem ACRS faced in this early period was the question of how to define the Middle East. The Israelis in particular were adamant that the region be broadly defined, to include non-Arab states like Iran, Turkey, and even Pakistan and India. The Israelis argued that they could not compromise on their own unconventional capabilities unless all security threats in the region were addressed, including the unconventional capabilities of the so-called rogue states (Iraq, Iran, and Libya). In the end, the group decided to leave the geographical definition of the region flexible, with the potential for non-ACRS parties to join the process at an acceptable time and after substantive arms control agreements had been negotiated. Moreover, the parties agreed that different security issues affected different regional parties, and thus a flexible geographical definition also addressed

this problem. However, all parties recognized that once the more advanced arms control measures were considered (i.e., arms reduction and force limitation measures), the region and its subregions would have to be defined more specifically.[14]

While division in the group between a focus on conventional (the Israeli position) and unconventional (Egypt's position) weapons remained,[15] the early seminar-type plenaries led the ACRS parties to a better understanding of the nature and scope of arms control in their region. Most significantly, the regional parties accepted the broad definition of arms control as not only a means to prevent war but also as a mechanism to build confidence and trust to enhance the political process.[16] Disagreement on the tactics to achieve this trust, though serious, should not obscure the degree of consensual knowledge that emerged as regional parties learned and discussed arms control issues multilaterally for the first time since the onset of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Search for Options: An Arms Control Agenda Emerges

While the United States cosponsor and other non-Middle East parties dominated ACRS in this pre-Oslo period—particularly the first two ACRS plenary sessions in May and September 1992—in an attempt to lead the regional parties toward common definitions of the arms control problem, the cosponsors also encouraged the regional parties to develop their own positions. Even before the third ACRS plenary in May 1993, regional academics and diplomats (including non-ACRS members like Iran) were meeting in various international forums to discuss regional security issues, such as a United Nations conference in Cairo in April 1993 to discuss regional arms limits.[17] As one analyst commented, "The Cairo conference . . . is not likely to change any minds, but it may mark the beginning of a dialogue."[18] In an effort to foster this dialogue, which had been largely absent from the first two ACRS plenaries, the cosponsors requested from all ACRS participants their long-term "vision" of regional security in their concluding statement of the second ACRS plenary in Moscow in September 1992, an exercise that produced several "vision papers" from regional parties. The cosponsors also requested that the regional parties create lists of acceptable CBMs and CSBMs that could form ACRS's working agenda in future meetings. By the third ACRS plenary in May 1993, these papers and policy formulations played an important role in clarifying regional positions in a

search for options that would shape ACRS's work agenda once it was ripe for negotiating specific agreements. This was particularly important given that, except for Egypt with its well-formulated positions on arms control, the other regional parties had not developed and debated serious arms control initiatives within their respective governments. Moreover, the vision statements offered a rare opportunity to understand how various regional parties conceptualized security issues, something that is often difficult to discern because of the generally closed nature of these types of discussions in both Israel and the Arab states.[19] The Israeli vision paper became public when it was published by one of the members of the Israeli delegation to ACRS.[20] This document is particularly significant because it was debated within the Israeli government in late 1992 (on the eve of the Chemical Weapons Convention [CWC] signing conference on January 13, 1993) and approved by the Israeli cabinet, with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin taking a special interest as the Israeli defense minister at the time—the ministry responsible for ACRS.

The essential elements of the Israeli vision paper on regional security and arms control were first revealed in Foreign Minister Shimon Peres's address at the signing ceremony of the CWC in January.[21] In the address, Peres outlined a proposal for the construction of "a mutually verifiable zone, free of surface-to-surface missiles and chemical, biological and nuclear weapons."[22] As Shai Feldman observed, in substance the Peres proposal—which was essentially the Israeli long-term security vision—adopted the April 1990 initiative of Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, except that the Israeli requirement for a WMDFZ was a comprehensive set of regional peace and mutual verification measures.[23] As the vision paper itself stated, "In the spirit of the global pursuit of general and complete disarmament, Israel will endeavor, upon the establishment of relations of peace, that the states of this region should jointly establish a mutually verifiable zone free of ground-to-ground missiles, of chemical weapons, of biological weapons, and of nuclear weapons."[24] The vision paper also underscored Israel's position on the sequencing and substance of the working group's agenda, arguing that "the Middle East RS&AC process can only achieve its practical goals if the process is in step with the peace-making efforts aiming at ridding the region of the conflicts afflicting it."[25] Again, the Israeli position viewed ACRS as a means to build political confidence and establish incremental security measures, not as a means to deal first and foremost with Israel's nuclear capabilities. This explains the paper's focus on "comprehensiveness," both in terms of ACRS's

tasks (not just curtailing arms buildups or proliferation but also building confidence) and in relation to weapon types (conventional and unconventional). As the paper explains, "For progress to be made, the RS&AC process has to be pragmatic. . . . Progress must be incremental, through a step-by-step approach. . . . The first steps in the process should be: Establishing of Confidence Building Measures."[26] Finally, the paper stressed Israel's preference for a regional arms control framework and verification process (as opposed to an international framework), with the region broadly defined ("the arms control accords will include *all* states of the region"). In the concluding general remarks of the document, the Israelis underscored the notion that regional security entails broader political accommodation and cooperation by arguing that economic cooperation between Middle East states would support the ACRS process.

Some of the Arab participants also presented their long-term visions for regional security. While these have not been made public, some distinctions and some commonalities are apparent according to discussions with ACRS participants. Egypt's position on arms control—in contrast to the other Arab states—was clear and public, and served as the strongest contrast to the Israeli vision. The most obvious distinction was the sequencing of the process, with the Egyptians in particular stressing the need to focus on the nuclear question at the early stages, which they argue is in itself a CBM.[27] However, while the Jordanians did not deny that Israel would eventually have to compromise on the nuclear issue and sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), they assumed a position closer to the Israelis in terms of stressing the need for CBMs (including political measures) before more formal arms reduction measures.[28] Indeed, the conceptual agreements worked out in ACRS later shaped the security section of the Israel-Jordan peace treaty, which referred to ACRS's work [see appendix B].[29] While the Jordanian position came closest to the Israelis, resistance from other Arab states to the modeling approach (again Egypt in particular) was apparent in their long-term visions. Some Arab parties were especially sensitive to drawing on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) framework which accepted the territorial status quo, clearly a problematic assumption in the Arab-Israeli context.[30] Still, all parties, Israelis and Arabs alike, were united in their papers by including provisions to rid the region of unconventional weapons. The main area of disagreement among the visions was the timing—the question became when and how to undertake certain arms control provisions.[31]

In addition to the long-term vision papers, the parties also agreed at the May 1993 meeting to a series of CBMs that would start the group's working agenda. To this end, they developed the notion of intersessional activities, or smaller workshops that would meet in between larger plenary sessions and focus on specific CBM areas. The parties agreed that various extra-regional members would "mentor" these intersessional activities: the United States and Russia would direct the declaratory CBMs, long-term objectives discussions, and a verification workshop; Canada headed the maritime CBM workshops; Turkey took responsibility for the exchange of information and prenotification CBMs; and the Netherlands sponsored the communication-related CBMs. The extraregional mentors encouraged high-level participation in these intersessionals, and particularly the involvement of military representatives from respective governments who could facilitate the technical aspects of these agreements and tended to cooperate better with each other than the political representatives.[32]

Aside from launching intersessional activities, the May 1993 plenary served as an important "icebreaker" meeting between Israeli and Arab participants that allowed future activity to continue. At this meeting, the co-sponsors were able to get the regional parties to talk to one another, rather than just sit in a room and listen to lectures from outside experts. According to one participant, before the May meeting even Arab delegation members were not particularly friendly to one another, creating a tense and terse atmosphere. When the head of the Israeli delegation wanted to shake hands with the Arab delegates, one of the Arab representatives sitting next to the Israelis remarked, "Wait in line. . . . They haven't talked to me yet either."[33] After this meeting, relations became less formal and more friendly among all participants, with delegations addressing each other directly in frank discussion. The Gulf states also became more relaxed at this meeting when a Jordanian representative emphasized the political-military nature of arms control as opposed to a strictly technical definition, a definition which concerned Gulf states sensitive to arms race charges in their subregion.[34]

Commitment to Negotiate: The Beginning of Intersessionals

The beginning of intersessional activities in the summer of 1993 (on the eve of the Oslo breakthrough) underscored the growing commitment among the regional parties to engage in arms control negotiations as they perceived common benefits from such a process, both in terms of facilitating the bi-

lateral track of the peace process and in order to address common security problems that required multilateral cooperation. The fact that the Labor government in Israel assumed a more flexible approach to the contentious issue of Palestinian representation in the multilaterals, allowing the Palestinians to join the ACRS process by the third ACRS plenary (May 1993), provided political cover for other Arab participants to engage in more serious and substantive discussions and activities.[35] For example, a verification workshop took place in Cairo in mid-July 1993, marking an important precedent of moving multilateral working group meetings to the region itself, rather than limiting venues to European capitals and Washington.[36] During this intersessional, the participants visited the Sinai in order to observe and learn from the example of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) which was established to monitor the Sinai peninsula as part of the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. At this point, the Egyptians were still quite favorably inclined toward the ACRS process, or what reports from an Egyptian daily termed the "committee on arms limitation," writing of the "importance of Egypt's role in initiating and establishing peace" and observing that "the committee [ACRS] chose Cairo as the venue for the seminar, which is just further evidence that Egypt is the land of peace and security."[37] However, because ACRS, like all the multilateral working groups, was always dependent on the success and pace of the Palestinian peace track, the commitment of regional parties to negotiate substantive arms control and regional security principles and activities would likely not have been able to materialize without the dramatic breakthrough between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on September 13, 1993, known as the Oslo Accord. While precursor CBMs might have been possible in limited areas, the Oslo Accord set the stage for an acceleration of regional activity across all the multilateral working groups. ACRS was no exception. As one Arab participant explained, the Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough constituted the beginning, with all preceding activity merely prenegotiation exercises.[38] The time became ripe for Arabs and Israelis to enter into more extensive negotiations on the details of specific security documents, statements, and even the establishment of regional security institutions. While external leadership by extraregional powers may have been necessary to create ACRS and guide its early work, progress on the political track and growing regional awareness about how to proceed with regional arms control led to greater regional initiative as ACRS developed. As we will see in the next section, this initiative

sometimes led to positive developments in the working group, but it also ultimately led to the demise of the process despite continued American interest in seeing it continue.

ACRS's Development After Oslo

On the day of the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (September 13, 1993), the ACRS participants were meeting in Canada for an intersessional activity on maritime measures. According to one account of this meeting, ACRS delegates watched the signing ceremony together, leading to "a celebration that evening at which position papers gave way to embraces, festivities, and what one participant characterized as a 'magical evening.' "[39] Several separate intersessional activities followed throughout the fall of 1993, when movement to more detailed and focused discussions was apparent. The intersessional topics included not only maritime measures but also workshops on communications, prenotification of military activities, long-term objectives, and declaratory statements and information exchanges [see table 4.1]. ACRS parties were also invited to observe a NATO exercise in Denmark during this time. However, it was with the November 1993 ACRS plenary in Moscow that a more defined negotiating agenda emerged. At this meeting, the participants agreed to divide all activity into two "baskets" (based on the 1975 Helsinki terminology), a *conceptual* and an *operational* basket. The conceptual basket would include all declaratory measures and statements, while the operational basket would address more technical CBMs. These two baskets shaped the remainder of ACRS's negotiating history, with future intersessionals constructed around them. Both demonstrate the rather expansive nature of the working group's agenda as well as the increasing polarization between the Israelis and Egyptians as regional relations multilateralized in ways that allowed for greater Israeli interaction with Arab parties, which threatened the traditional role of Egypt in the regional security equation.

The Conceptual Basket

The Vienna intersessional in October 1993 began to address conceptual issues such as long-term regional security objectives and declaratory measures that would state general principles and norms to guide regional arms

TABLE 4.1 ACRS Working Group Calendar of Meetings, 1992–1995

Meeting	Date, Place
Plenary Session	May 1992, Washington, D.C.
Plenary Session	September 1992, Moscow
Plenary Session	May 1993, Washington, D.C.
Intersessional (air base visit)	June 1993, United Kingdom
Intersessional (verification seminar)	July 1993, Cairo
Intersessional (NATO observation)	September 1993, Denmark
Intersessional (maritime measures)	September 1993, Nova Scotia, Canada
Intersessional (communications workshop)	September 1993, The Hague
Intersessional (prenotification and military information exchange)	October 1993, Antalya, Turkey
Intersessional (long-term objectives and declaratory measures)	October 1993, Vienna
Plenary Session	November 1993, Moscow
Operational Basket (communications)	January 1994, The Hague
Conceptual Basket Workshops	January–February 1994, Cairo
Operational Basket Workshops	March 1994, Antalya, Turkey
Plenary Session	May 1994, Doha
Operational Basket (maritime demonstration)	July 1994, Italy
Operational Basket (naval officers meeting)	August 1994, Canada
Conceptual Basket Workshops	October 1994, Paris
Operational Basket Workshops	November 1994, Dead Sea, Jordan
Plenary Session	December 1994, Tunis
Operational Basket (maritime exercise planning)	January 1995, Tunis
Operational Basket (communications network)	March 1995, Cairo
Operational Basket Workshops	March–April 1995, Antalya, Turkey
Operational Basket (communications network)	May 1995, The Hague

Meeting	Date, Place
Conceptual Basket	May 1995, Helsinki
Operational Basket (naval officers symposium)	July 1995, Ontario, Canada
Conceptual Basket (regional security center)	September 1995, Amman

Source: Bruce Jentleson, *The Middle East Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) Talks: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (San Diego: Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, 1996) and *The Arms Control Reporter* (Cambridge, MA: Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, 1994 and 1996 eds.).

control. A cosponsor paper prepared for the November 3–4 plenary in Moscow summarized the understanding reached at the Vienna workshop, explaining that "the goal of the process of arms control could be the increase in the security of all states of the region accompanied by the lowest possible level of arms possession. . . . The parties should agree on the sequence of the development and use of armaments control measures and on regional security. At the same time it is quite obvious that the process will go on a stage-by-stage basis, proceeding from simpler to more intricate measures."[40] Keeping these broad goals in mind, the cosponsors shaped the working agenda of the conceptual basket, which consisted of two key initiatives that were negotiated over the following two years in the context of the general plenaries and during the conceptual basket intersessional meetings in January–February 1994 (Cairo)[41] and October 1994 (Paris).[42]

The ACRS declaration or statement of principles
The keystone of ACRS's conceptual basket was a document initially drafted at the February Cairo conceptual intersessional, termed a "Declaration of Principles (DoP) and Statements of Intent on Arms Control and Regional Security." This document was largely modeled on the Helsinki Final Act agreement of 1975, in an effort to define and formulate general principles to guide regional relations in the security realm (broadly defined). Just as in the Helsinki case, this would not be a legally binding agreement but rather a normative statement that might at least guide and

constrain regional action on sensitive security matters by creating norms of acceptable behavior. In this sense, this conceptual exercise sought to influence more directly the political realm, in contrast to the operational basket's focus on more limited, technical, military-related CBMs. Over the year between the creation of the DoP in February 1994 to the last ACRS plenary in December 1994, the ACRS delegations passionately debated the content of this document, with many contentious issues left in brackets at the end of the Cairo meeting to indicate areas of continued disagreement among the parties.[43]

The ACRS DoP (see appendix C) begins with a preamble outlining the role of arms control and regional security in the broader peace process context, stressing not only ACRS's security purpose but also recognizing that ACRS "should continue to complement the bilateral negotiations and help improve the climate for resolving the core issues at the heart of the Middle East peace process." The first section of the DoP proved most controversial. This section addressed the "Fundamental Principles Governing Security Relations Among Regional Participants in the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group." Some of the less controversial aspects of this section included principles such as refraining from the use of force and acts of terrorism, or respect and acknowledgment of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence. More contentious provisions, however, addressed questions of Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory and how to define self-determination for Palestinians. The second section, "Guidelines for the Middle East Arms Control and Regional Security Process," essentially confirmed many of the lessons from the pre-Oslo stage, including the need for comprehensiveness in arms control and a step-by-step approach to building regional trust and security. This section also reaffirmed the consensus-based nature of the ACRS process, as is common in most multilateral forums. The final section, "Statements of Intent on Objectives for the Arms Control and Regional Security Process," included objectives previously discussed in the working group: by means of CBMs, preventing conflict by misunderstanding or miscalculation; limiting military spending in the region in favor of a social and economic focus; reducing conventional arms stockpiles and races; and finally, establishing a WMDFZ, "including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their delivery systems." At the end of the Cairo intersessional, the parties agreed to review the controversial sections of the text and resume the negotiation of the DoP at the next ACRS plenary in May 1994 in Doha.

The Doha meeting (attended by 37 countries, including 14 regional delegations) represented a critical point in ACRS and the overall multilateral process, as it was the first meeting of the working group to meet in the Gulf region (the Water group was the first to enter the Gulf, with a plenary session held in Oman in April 1994). These unprecedented Arab-Israeli multilateral meetings were significant not only because of their symbolic effect—bringing large, public Israeli delegations to Gulf states with whom Israel had no formal diplomatic ties—but also because they provided cover for quiet movement toward establishing bilateral relations between Israel and Arab states in the Gulf and North Africa.[44] They also reflected the enhanced role of the regional participants and greater interaction between Israel and the Arab parties as ACRS developed. Interestingly, this meeting also provided an opportunity for the Egyptians to reintegrate themselves into the regional security agenda after years of isolation in the wake of the Camp David Accords.[45] However, the increasingly independent positions of the smaller GCC states were perceived as a threat to Saudi domination of this subregion. Tensions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia were particularly apparent, with the Saudis challenging "the U.S. representative's contention that not all Arab delegates were opposed to confidence-building measures before progress was made in the bilateral tracks of the peace talks."[46] Reportedly, the heads of the American and Saudi delegation had a "heated argument" on this issue.[47] The result was a rather unproductive meeting in substantive terms, and the plenary failed to produce agreement on the ACRS DoP.[48] While disagreement on the disputed sections in the DoP continued to spark debate and division, the greatest stumbling block to agreement on the DoP at Doha was the Saudi position.

Though the Saudis had never been active participants in ACRS or enthusiastic supporters of arms control efforts that included the Israelis, they had not objected to the group's working agenda before Doha, assuming a "cooperatively inactive" approach.[49] However, the venue of the ACRS plenary in Qatar angered the Saudis, who preferred a much quieter and more conservative Gulf role in the process.[50] The DoP was also a concern for the Saudis and other Arab states sensitive to the pace of the working group (in that it should not surpass or overshadow progress on the bilateral front) because it constituted one of the most serious arms control documents in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau suggested, "Agreement on this declaration [the ACRS DoP] would provide a road map to achieving specific arms control and the se-

curity arrangements in a post-peace-process Middle East."[51] In an unusual sign of seriousness, the Saudis sent a senior representative of the regime to the Doha meeting, in contrast to earlier ACRS sessions where lower-level officials from local embassies often represented the Saudis. The Saudi representative repeatedly objected to moving the DoP forward, on the grounds that the multilateral talks and the various CBMs on the ACRS agenda should only materialize after progress on the bilateral negotiating tracks.[52] According to a U.S. participant in the talks, the Doha meeting proved a step back, or at least a pause, in moving the ACRS agenda, and particularly the DoP, forward.[53] The meeting ended with no agreement on the DoP. The Saudis, in an effort to slow the normalization process begun by the other GCC states, made it clear that they would not host future multilateral meetings, ACRS or otherwise, in their country or attend multilateral sessions in Israel.[54] In the end, the final Doha statement stated the parties' commitment to continue working on the DoP until they could agree on a final text.

By the fall of 1994, the Saudis' position began to soften, particularly since the GCC states were no longer hosting regional plenaries. Quiet high-level Saudi contacts with Israelis were reported, leading the Saudis to address the Israelis directly for the first time in the December 1994 Tunis plenary.[55] A Saudi prince addressed Israeli delegation head David Ivry, and Ivry responded in Arabic, breaking the ice between the two.[56] However, while Saudi objections to ACRS and the DoP lessened and the Tunisian hosts optimistically expressed the hope "of moving our region from one of rival blocs to one of cooperation," new and even more serious obstacles emerged, most significant of which was renewed pressure by the Egyptians for Israel to sign the NPT as the international review conference approached in April.[57] The specific proposal to include NPT language in the DoP led to a deadlock in the group, and a failure to approve the document.[58] Indeed, this issue proved most significant in freezing ACRS's work the following year. Despite the failure to approve the DoP, ACRS delegates still believed some modest progress was possible on other items on ACRS's agenda, particularly some of the more technical CBMs in the operational basket. And while the DoP itself was never approved, the negotiation process surrounding it demonstrated increasing willingness of smaller Arab parties to at least implicitly side with Israel against other Arab states in what potentially could have led to a greater depolarization of Arab-Israeli security relations had the process continued.

The regional security center

The proposal to establish a regional security center (RSC), or initially a conflict prevention center (CPC) modeled on the CSCE CPC in Vienna, was first raised in the closing statement of the Doha plenary, when Qatar offered to set up such a center "once peace is achieved."[59] Discussions on establishing a regional conflict prevention or resolution center continued during a conceptual intersessional meeting in Paris in October 1994.[60] By the December Tunis plenary, the parties agreed to establish the center in Amman (with related facilities in Qatar and Tunisia) despite the continued disagreement over the ACRS DoP.[61] However, the purpose of the center remained vague, leaving room for a variety of interpretations of its scope and mandate. The center became a particularly contentious issue between Jordan and Egypt. Jordan (as host of the center) preferred a broad mandate, with the RSC subsuming much of the ACRS working agenda over time as it became the hub for all regional security activity.[62] Egypt, however, wished to limit the RSC mandate to specific conflict prevention activities, and diminish its importance in the overall regional security efforts. Despite Egyptian resistance, the Jordanians chose a location for the RSC and began planning activities for the center, such as a seminar on military doctrine sponsored by the French. Future workshops on verification issues (addressing both unconventional and conventional weapons) were also a possible agenda item for the center, building on work begun on this issue in earlier verification intersessional activities. At a September 1995 intersessional in Amman, all ACRS parties except Egypt agreed to the RSC mandate. Because of the Egyptian objection (again, related to the NPT issue), the RSC could not begin its operations.[63] The U.S. sponsors decided to come out of the meeting with a "clean" document (i.e., no disputed bracketed text) that would only note the Egyptian objection to the overall statement so that once this objection was resolved, the process could move forward without renegotiating the entire text.[64] Should ACRS activities resume, the RSC could be ready for immediate use, having already received funds and equipment for operation from several extraregional sponsors.[65]

The Operational Basket

In contrast to the conceptual basket, the operational basket activities focused on specific, technical CBMs and CSBMs modeled again on the

U.S.-Soviet and European experience. Because the types of activities covered in this basket—communication networks, prenotification and military information exchange agreements, and maritime measures—were less political in nature, this basket carried the greatest potential for moving an arms control agenda forward under conducive political conditions. While some of this type of activity occurred before Oslo, most of the basket's activities took place after September 13, 1993.

The communications network

The communications network proposal, sponsored by the Netherlands, was first discussed in an intersessional seminar in September 1993 in The Hague, with technical discussions among the ACRS parties continuing in January 1994 (also in The Hague). The project was agreed to in principle at the Doha plenary in May 1994, although the parties did not agree to join or turn on the system at the Doha meeting.[66] The purpose of the network was to create an electronic communications system to link foreign ministries in the Middle East in order to enhance crisis management and prevention, as well as to facilitate communication related to ACRS activities. Drawing on lessons of initiatives like the hotline developed between the U.S. and Soviets during the Cold War, the ACRS communication network was similarly designed to avoid misperception of intentions and inadvertent conflict between adversaries, even before a political rapprochement was reached. Like other ACRS activities, joining the network was voluntary. The parties initially agreed to place the system in The Hague (utilizing the existing CSCE network based there), and planned to move it to Cairo on a permanent basis (this location was confirmed at the last ACRS plenary in Tunis). Discussions on setting up the network continued at the November 1994 intersessional at the Dead Sea (in Jordan) in preparation for the December Tunis plenary.[67] At the Tunis plenary, the parties agreed to a start-up date for the communications network, targeting March 1995. At subsequent operational basket intersessionals (in March and April 1995), six ACRS parties agreed to link themselves to the communications system (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Tunisia, Qatar, and the Palestinians). The system was officially inaugurated and became operational in early April 1995, although only Israel and Egypt had joined the system by that time.[68] However, as with the rest of the ACRS agenda, the overall deterioration of this working group in the spring of 1995 prevented further implementation of the network.

Prenotification agreement and exchange of military information
Another set of operational CBM and CSBM activity was sponsored by
Turkey, and included negotiations on a Prenotification of Certain Military
Activities agreement as well as establishing procedures for the exchange of
military information among ACRS participants. In the November 1994
intersessional in Jordan,[69] the prenotification agreement was discussed in
more detail, and the parties agreed to hold a joint regional military exercise
in the future.[70] The Israeli delegation also invited other ACRS parties to visit
Israeli military bases, an invitation agreed to by Arab parties at the Tunis
plenary in December.[71] By the Tunis plenary,[72] the ACRS parties agreed to
a prenotification document calling for advance notification of military ex-
ercises involving more than 4000 troops or 110 tanks,[73] and also agreed to
an exchange of information on less sensitive military information (such as
curriculum vitaes of military officers or technical military manuals). Four-
teen regional ACRS parties agreed to these operational CBMs: Egypt, Israel,
Jordan, the Palestinians, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait,
Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.[74] While these
types of CBMs were impressive, they would likely not have gone further—
even if the ACRS process had continued—until other key parties (the Syr-
ians, Iranians, Iraqis) joined the process. Providing and sharing sensitive
military information is more difficult if participation is limited, since parties
(particularly the Israelis) feel they are divulging information that might be-
come available to non-ACRS parties without a reciprocal agreement with
those states. This lack of reciprocity is more difficult in these types of CBMs
than is the case with either the communications network or maritime mea-
sures where immediate benefits to the participating parties outweigh poten-
tial risks of such involvement.

Maritime confidence-building measures
Of all the operational CBMs, the maritime area is perhaps the most
promising arena for promoting Arab-Israeli security cooperation, as was the
case in the East-West experience. As agreed to at the end of the prenegotia-
tion stage, Canada served as the extraregional mentor for maritime-related
projects. Maritime CBMs are considered "easier" than other technical mili-
tary confidence-building because they present clear benefits to the regional
parties committed to such measures. As Peter Jones, a Canadian diplomat
who worked on ACRS's maritime measures, explains, "Of all spheres of
military rivalry in the Middle East, the maritime sphere is generally

regarded as the least contentious. . . . There are relatively few Middle East disputes of a purely maritime or naval character."[75] That said, Jones and others note that serious maritime incidents have occurred in the region (among regional navies and between regional and extraregional navies as well as with terrorist organizations), providing incentives for regional parties to address this problem in cooperative ways.[76]

These incidents underscored the potential for cooperative projects to prevent such disturbances, which could escalate into more serious conflict. However, in order to move toward the negotiation of concrete measures as quickly as possible, the Canadian mentors proposed that the ACRS parties focus first on the least controversial types of maritime measures: Search and Rescue (SAR) and the Prevention of Incidents at Sea (INCSEA) agreements. Jones explains the benefits of these particular maritime CBMs in moving the regional security agenda forward: "Search and Rescue is first and foremost a humanitarian activity and no state could object to steps designed to enhance the ability of the region to respond to humanitarian tragedies. With respect to INCSEA, no state wants to see an unplanned incident escalate into a tense situation. . . . Both require naval officers to work cooperatively toward the establishment and realization of agreed operational goals."[77] Beginning with the first maritime intersessional meeting in Nova Scotia, Canada, on September 13, 1993 (the day of the Oslo DoP signing), ACRS's negotiations in this operational area centered on establishing these two agreements.

The Nova Scotia intersessional constituted a prenegotiation exercise, with its format largely seminar style in an effort to educate the regional parties on general issues of maritime confidence-building. However, this meeting set the stage for the subsequent detailed discussions within the operational basket on SAR and INCSEA agreements for the ACRS parties. The main lesson from the INCSEA discussions for the regional participants was that early communication of intentions between ships is the best precaution against misunderstanding, and can be arranged by establishing special signals known in advance to all parties who sign the INCSEA agreement.[78] The SAR talks emphasized the need to pool resources to respond to humanitarian disasters and to standardize procedures for these responses among the regional participants. In preparation for the negotiation phase of the maritime measures, regional participants asked Canada to draft an INCSEA agreement text for the Middle East, which would constitute the first multilateral INCSEA agreement in any region.[79] This text served as the working

draft for the agreement negotiated by ACRS parties in the next maritime intersessional in Antalya, Turkey, in March 1994.

At the Antalya meeting, modest progress was made in the SAR area, with the parties envisioning the future ACRS communications network as a mechanism to share information about various states' SAR procedures and to facilitate SAR coordination. Some parties offered to host a regional Rescue Coordination Center at a later stage of the process.[80] The parties also agreed to accept the Canadian INCSEA text as the ACRS draft document. Much disagreement occurred over how operationally constraining the ACRS INCSEA agreement should be in relation to existing bilateral regimes, such as the question of whether certain technology aboard a ship had to be banned outright, or whether it simply could not be used in the proximity of another regional ship.[81] However, as Jones explains, INCSEA agreements do not intend to prevent surveillance activity, they just seek to make these types of activities safer by building on regional parties' mutual interests in avoiding unwanted incidents.[82] Other problems specific to the Middle East context emerged, such as the problem of areas where there is no international water (i.e., the Red Sea) and thus where INCSEA agreements are not applicable but are most needed. However, despite these areas of disagreement at the Antalya meeting, the parties accepted over seventy percent of the draft ACRS INCSEA agreement.[83]

The practical nature of the INCSEA and SAR agreements was reinforced by a naval demonstration for ACRS parties at an intersessional meeting on July 15, 1994, off the coast of Venice, Italy. The demonstration involved a Canadian frigate and a U.S. ammunition ship (as well as an Italian maritime patrol aircraft) simulating a contact at sea under an INCSEA agreement, including a response to a SAR distress call.[84] This demonstration led to consideration of conducting a similar demonstration in the region drawing on regional participation and equipment. In conjunction with this exercise, a second maritime intersessional, the Senior Naval Officer's Symposium, was held that summer from August 29 to September 1 in Halifax, Canada. Attended by ten regional delegations, the ACRS representatives toured Canadian maritime facilities, observed another SAR demonstration, and discussed future maritime CBMs in the ACRS context. The naval officers also clarified some of the details in the ACRS INCSEA text, which paved the way for further negotiations on the agreement in the operational basket meeting the following November in Jordan. At the November meeting, after three days of negotiation on the text, the INCSEA document was agreed to by all

ACRS parties, except for agreement on its title (or the type of agreement it constituted) and final article.[85] Regional parties at the November meeting first considered the SAR text as well.

At the larger ACRS plenary session in Tunis the following month (December 1994), both the INCSEA text and SAR framework were agreed to. Despite the general deterioration of ACRS after the Tunis plenary, particularly during the NPT review conference in April 1995, the maritime intersessionals continued to meet and make progress on both the INCSEA[86] and SAR agreements at sessions in April and July, 1995, in Antalya and Ontario respectively. While the parties agreed to the proposed regional naval demonstration at the Tunis plenary (scheduled to take place off the Tunisian coast), the exercise never occurred because of an Israeli leak publicizing the activity during a fairly sensitive time in the political process.[87]

Despite the promise in this area of confidence-building, the general demise of ACRS over political issues—most notably the NPT dispute between Egypt and Israel in April—precluded further activity even in this rather cooperative basket. Still, a network of naval contacts among regional parties was established along with some technical agreements to enhance regional stability. Indeed, the extensive work conducted within the operational basket and the regional interest and involvement in its activities made ACRS's failings more disturbing.

The Breakdown of ACRS

Any multilateral negotiation, but especially one dealing with sensitive matters of security, is likely to face obstacles to moving a working agenda forward. In the ACRS case, some of these challenges did not just slow ACRS down, but actually brought the process to a halt. As mentioned above, ACRS faced many limitations from the outset, the most significant of which was the sensitivity to developments in the bilateral peace tracks, which led key regional players like Syria and Lebanon to boycott the talks. And, of course, other key parties critical to a regional security dialogue were not invited because of their support for international terrorism and other "rogue-type" activities—Iraq, Iran, and Libya. Another Middle East-specific problem related to the balancing of the ACRS agenda among various subregional interests, particularly the subregional concerns of the Levant as opposed to the Gulf and North African regions.

Other, more generic problems in the process also became apparent, such as the failure to maintain consistent delegations to the talks in order to build an institutional memory and a community of experts on arms control issues, a problem which is common to protracted multilateral negotiating forums.[88] Still, ACRS was able to overcome these limitations and challenges—as did the other multilateral working groups—during its first three years and even achieved some substantive progress. In other words, these obstacles, whether general or specific to the Middle East, were not insurmountable. Yet one problem that was apparent in ACRS from the start became insurmountable by the spring of 1995 and led to the breakdown of the group's activities and freezing of the ACRS process.

The problem was the continued dispute between Egypt and Israel over the nuclear issue,[89] particularly the Egyptian demand that Israel sign the NPT and adhere to IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities as required by the global treaty.[90] While the Egyptian delegation had consistently pressed the Israelis on this issue from the start of the ACRS process, it was not until the last ACRS plenary in December 1994 that this issue prevented the ACRS agenda from moving forward, at that time blocking the approval of the ACRS DoP. The context for the increased conflict and deadlock resulting from the NPT dispute between Egypt and Israel was the upcoming international conference in April 1995 to renew the global nuclear nonproliferation regime indefinitely. The global conference again focused the limelight on this contentious issue, although the conference in itself does not entirely explain the Egyptian decision to link the NPT extension to ACRS's activities. Leaving motivations aside at this point, the breakdown of ACRS is directly linked to the NPT dispute,[91] with the aftermath of the NPT conference leading to several contentious ACRS intersessionals and ultimately to the final ACRS meeting in September 1995. Despite high-level meetings among Israeli officials—including an April 1995 meeting called by Prime Minister Rabin and attended by Foreign Minister Peres and ACRS delegation head David Ivry—and between the Israeli and Egyptian foreign ministers Peres and Moussa following the NPT conference, differences on the arms control and NPT issues were left unresolved, and continued to prevent further progress in ACRS.[92] In fact, the continued dispute between Israel and Egypt on the nuclear issue led to an overall deterioration in bilateral Egyptian-Israeli relations.[93]

With the Egyptians failing to gain Israeli nuclear concessions at the global level or the Israeli signature of the NPT, the nuclear fallout subsequently

descended on ACRS's territory with negative results. According to ACRS participants, the ACRS intersessional meeting in Helsinki in May 1995, following the NPT conference, was particularly tense and dominated by heated, personal exchanges between the Egyptian and Israeli delegations.[94] By this time, most of ACRS's conceptual activities were stalled, although as noted some operational intersessional activities continued. At the last ACRS intersessional meeting on the regional security center (RSC) in Amman in September 1995, all parties agreed to the center's mandate by consensus except Egypt. While other Arab parties were sympathetic to Egypt's position on the NPT, they did not share the desire to stop all ACRS activities until the issue was resolved. However, because ACRS decisions were based on the consensus rule, the objection of one party—particularly one as significant as Egypt—was enough to freeze the entire process. The American sponsors recognized they could not hold an ACRS plenary (which was initially planned for September 1995) that was intended to approve a number of ACRS projects, including the RSC, if the Egyptians continued to object. ACRS ceased to officially operate once this dispute came to the fore. A process offering some promise of novel Arab-Israeli security cooperation, surprising in itself, came to a halt.

Explaining ACRS: The Promise and Limits of a Cooperative Security Process

A Limited Cooperation Success

Despite its setbacks and its ultimate breakdown, ACRS established a cooperative process that in many ways generated common understandings that would not have been possible absent such a process. The ACRS working record demonstrates how a cooperative process can facilitate common understandings by 1) redefining problems in consensual terms; 2) creating a shared vocabulary and knowledge base; 3) making new policy options and negotiating partners acceptable; and 4) increasing interactions among participants. Over time, however, these facilitative mechanisms were overshadowed by the impeding mechanisms identified in chapter 1, particularly the perceived threat ACRS posed to the regional identity of a key participant.

The ACRS process, particularly its early seminar-style sessions, helped shape regional participants' understandings of arms control by offering a

broader definition which included CBMs and CSBMs. Before the ACRS exercise, many regional participants viewed arms control in the more narrow sense of arms reduction and elimination. Thus, without an ACRS process even this fundamental understanding of what arms control means may not have emerged. Related to this redefinition of arms control was the introduction of new vocabulary and shared knowledge among regional participants, largely disseminated by external actors experienced in arms control negotiations. Again, the objective of early ACRS plenaries was to create common understandings of arms control by sharing other regional experiences, such as the CSCE negotiations and the U.S.-Soviet talks. In particular, the conventional wisdom among arms controllers based on these previous experiences focused on an incremental approach to arms control, whereby sequencing the "software" issues (various CBMs) before the "hardware" (verification measures and actual troop and arms reductions) enhances the likelihood of successful negotiations. While Egypt and Israel continued to disagree over the timing of the working group's activities and even the definition of confidence-building (e.g., the Egyptians viewed Israel's willingness to sign the NPT as a CBM while Israel insisted this issue could only be addressed at the end of an arms control process), the regional participants did reach broad agreement on the usefulness of CBMs and the integral role they play in regional arms control talks. Indeed, much of the ACRS working record was based on a variety of CBMs, both at the conceptual and operational level.

New policy options also became acceptable as a result of ACRS, such as the creation of regional security institutions and the beginning of joint security exercises, particularly in the maritime area. Joint military exercises and discussions became legitimate and acceptable to regional participants, although not to the extent that they could withstand public scrutiny, as demonstrated by the cancellation of a joint naval exercise scheduled to take place off the Tunisian coast. Still, the arms control education process within ACRS created documents, like the ACRS DoP, which would have been unthinkable several years before. ACRS produced the foundations for a future regional security agenda if such a dialogue resumes. The working group also produced several nascent arms control agreements and institutions. Army and navy contacts among Israeli and Arab officials produced a prenotification agreement, Search and Rescue (SAR) and Incidents at Sea (INCSEA) arrangements, and a regional security center, among other projects. Despite the tremendous political and substantive obstacles faced by

the working group and despite its eventual breakdown, ACRS demonstrated that regional security cooperation was at least possible in the Arab-Israeli context.

Moreover, new partners and coalitions emerged as a consequence of ACRS. Indeed, one of the objectives of the ACRS process was to depolarize the nature of Arab-Israeli relations by underscoring common security interests and building cooperative projects and institutions around them. In order to do this, however, real multilateral negotiation was necessary, where shifting coalitions with multiple interests (not just an Arab versus an Israeli interest) could emerge. Despite the continued polarized nature of the Egyptian-Israeli conflict over the nuclear issue, the ACRS record demonstrates that genuine multilateral cooperation took place. Arab bloc behavior vis-à-vis Israel was more apparent at the initial stages of the process, but it gradually receded as common security concepts and practical projects benefiting all sides developed. According to an Israeli participant in the talks, one could no longer discern an "Arab view" on security, particularly since subregional threat perceptions varied and were accentuated in the aftermath of the Gulf War.[95] The Jordanians in particular often assumed a middle-ground position between the Israelis and Egyptians, and other players like Qatar perceived cooperation with Israel as a means to curb Saudi influence and voice a more independent position under the GCC umbrella. Even the Palestinians, the most sensitive to keeping the pace of ACRS behind bilateral progress in their negotiations, assumed different security priorities than other Arab parties, particularly on the nuclear threat question which, given their proximity to Israel, was not a central concern to them in a military sense.[96] While ACRS parties debated a variety of arms control and regional security measures, these debates did not always fall along the Arab-Israeli fault line, and thus contributed to one of the Americans' overall peace process purposes of normalizing Israel. As is common in multilateral forums, negotiations are less zero-sum, leaving room for creative coalitions and mediation based on complex interests.

Finally, ACRS allowed interactions among regional participants to intensify as the working group met more frequently in intersessional meetings and regional parties became more active. ACRS facilitated military contacts among Arab and Israeli representatives that were not previously possible (at least publicly) at the regional level. The military-to-military contacts were especially valued because military representatives were believed to focus on common threats rather than divisive political or ideological issues, thus in-

creasing the prospects for successful cooperation. For example, the regional naval officers who participated in ACRS intersessional activities made more rapid progress in moving the working agenda forward by means of concrete proposals in the maritime area. Many of the Arab and Israeli military participants in ACRS developed close personal ties and similar understandings of regional security issues through their contacts at both the official and unofficial (track two) sessions.[97] The military resistance to verification measures in arms control processes, for instance, weakened as a result of increased contacts with military counterparts, allowing some flexibility on mutual inspection measures, a concept with which regional participants were unfamiliar before ACRS.[98]

As continued military contacts developed among ACRS delegations, bureaucratic support for ACRS activities broadened at home, creating or assigning specific departments to oversee ACRS-related activities. For example, before ACRS, the Israelis had very little arms control expertise in their Defense Ministry, but as ACRS developed, a cadre of high-level specialists responsible for the working group legitimized arms control activity, particularly since the Israeli delegation was headed by the esteemed director general of the Ministry, David Ivry.[99] The U.S. government also promoted training among regional experts in arms control and multilateral negotiation, such as a two week arms control training seminar in January 1996 for Israeli officials from a wide range of government ministries.[100] The United States intended to plan further seminars of this type for other regional delegations, including the Syrians, in order to institutionalize arms control expertise across bureaucracies in the Middle East.[101] Indeed, a variety of track two forums continued after the official ACRS process broke down, suggesting the value of intensifying interactions among regional elites in order to create a stronger and more permanent constituency for regional arms control.

Why ACRS Failed: Impediments Within the Cooperative Process

Why, despite progress in moving a multilateral regional security process forward and an increasingly favorable political environment in the wake of the Oslo Accord, did ACRS break down by the fall of 1995? To be sure, ACRS's record reveals a reliance on outside powers in establishing this process and serious gaps between Arab parties and Israel on security perceptions and negotiation positions. Yet ACRS's development after Oslo suggests that

despite the difficulties facing the process from the outset (including the continued absence of key regional players like Syria, Iran, and Iraq), ACRS overcame some of these obstacles and established a negotiating agenda for security cooperation. In fact, the group accomplished more than its originators had anticipated and raised questions about the traditional view that regional security cooperation was impossible in the Arab-Israeli arena. Given ACRS's progress up to 1995, why did it ultimately collapse?

The first section of the chapter set the stage for this puzzle by documenting the extensive work agenda developed by the ACRS participants. As they adopted more consensual views about the purpose and nature of regional arms control, some limited progress was possible on both conceptual and operational levels and accelerated after the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles in September 1993. However, the empirical review also signals the intensification of division between Israel and Egypt on the nuclear issue as the Egyptians assumed an increasingly negative view of the working group and its goals, leading to a final breakdown stage in ACRS's short history. This breakdown occurred *before* the general freeze in the bilateral peace process after the 1996 Israeli elections, which suggests that outside political forces were not the central impediment. The process itself helps explain the ACRS breakdown—more specifically, the way that actors viewed the cooperative process as it developed, together with their inability to transform the political aspects of the arms control problem into less politically charged technical problems. Because the Egyptians developed a negative view of security cooperation as they perceived a challenge from ACRS to Egypt's regional identity (i.e., its regional role), their support for the process diminished. Regional identity concerns proved the major impediment to ACRS's success and ultimately stalemated the working group and led to its breakdown.

As illustrated by ACRS's problems, a state's support for security cooperation cannot always be assumed from either the external "objective" strategic environment or from internal forces constraining national security policy. Whatever it might have gained in strict security terms, Egypt feared losing status in several respects.[102] First, Egypt's championing of the nuclear issue provided it with a bona fide claim to Arab leadership. Second, Egypt drew heavily on the nuclear issue in global fora for status as a leader of the "nonaligned nations." Third, a genuinely robust ACRS and development of a regional multilateral security regime would contribute to the broader normalization of Arab-Israeli relations, and this would make less relevant Egypt's

position as the key Arab interlocutor with Israel and the United States. Fourth, normalization also heightened Egyptian concerns about Israel as a rival for status and influence in the region.

While the regional environment remained constant in objective terms, the Egyptian perception of ACRS changed as the process developed in ways contrary to its self-identity in the evolving regional environment. In order to explain ACRS's development and eventual demise, one must understand the forces shaping Egyptian perceptions and behavior.

Identity is always a relational concept, and regional political identity stems from the way policy elites perceive their nation's role in relation to others in the region and globally. For my purpose here, I am not examining the cultural or historical conditions that formed the Egyptian political identity,[103] but rather I seek to discern the main characteristics of this identity—or national self-concept—in order to determine how this force influenced Egyptian support for the ACRS process. Egyptian foreign policy elites perceive their nation as a regional leader and an important player in the international community, a perception that has spanned different leaderships and ideological orientations. As one account of Egyptian foreign policy explains, "One factor on which a high degree of consensus has been maintained throughout the leaderships of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak has been the Egyptian elite's perception of their country's leading role in the Arab world."[104] Another Mideast scholar observes a similar pattern: "This jolt to the mental geography and sense of self must be seen against the background of a deeply held Egyptian belief in Egypt's centrality to the region around it. Nasser had given the Egyptian claims a radical thrust, but the material with which he worked predated him—Egypt's belief in its supremacy and its urge to pursue its destiny in places such as the Sudan, Syria, and the Arabian peninsula."[105] This quest for regional leadership and prestige is widely noted in scholarship on Egyptian foreign policy. As another observer of Egypt writes, "In the case of Egypt, it is certain that the almost fanatical emphasis on the prestige of Egypt as a value of Egyptian policy-making related directly to the obsession of Egypt's decision-makers with 'dignity.' "[106]

While Egyptian elites certainly must take into account domestic pressures and unrest in the formation of their policies (particularly the Islamic fundamentalist threat to the government), they are generally an outward looking group proud of their perceived status as a great nation both historically and today, a perception which also provides domestic legitimacy. Egyptian elites are not only looking outward at the objective security environment but also

inward at their subjective view of their role in regional developments. The nuclear debate is in part an expression of the Egyptian political identity and worldview shared by important elites responsible for national security policy. Indeed, Egypt's position on Israel's nuclear capabilities follows a pattern of Egyptian security policy, where concerns for regional and international status have contributed to its positions on other important issues, such as the Suez crisis and its intervention in Yemen.[107]

Since 1973, the Egyptians have been among the leaders in raising the nuclear issue in the international community, introducing annual resolutions at the United Nations urging the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East based on the NPT and IAEA inspections (the Egyptians signed the NPT in 1981).[108] After the Gulf War, Egypt renewed efforts to establish a nuclear-free Middle East and continued lobbying all parties in the region to sign the NPT, leading to the spring 1995 standoff.[109] The heavy push on the nuclear issue in ACRS thus was not totally new, although to a greater extent than ever before there was a trade-off in terms of an achievable regional security agenda. However, also to a greater extent than before Egypt's status interests as served by this issue were being threatened by another Arab state, Jordan, delineating and seeking to legitimize an alternative Arab position. Particularly disturbing to Egypt was Jordan's perceived enthusiasm for moving the ACRS agenda forward with the terms on the nuclear issue as laid out in the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty sufficing, well short of the Egyptian position. The multilateral nature of ACRS allowed Jordan to exert more influence vis-à-vis Egypt than was possible in bilateral relations with its larger Arab neighbor. In fact, Jordanian-Israeli military cooperation grew faster than anticipated, as Jordan took the lead in implementing the proposed ACRS regional security center (which would be established in Amman). This became an additional impetus for Egypt to link virtually all of the ACRS agenda to the nuclear issue, as the very multilateral nature of the ACRS process was providing other Arab states a venue and vehicle for voicing independent positions; i.e., for genuinely multilateralizing the process in a manner that threatened the position and status of Egypt as bloc leader and primary interlocutor.

Egypt's identity as a pivotal regional and international power led to status concerns resulting from a process that was perceived to threaten Egypt's position. Identity and status concerns arising from an ACRS process offer a more compelling explanation for the Egyptian focus on Israel's nuclear capabilities than the traditional security perspective emphasizing military bal-

ances of power.[110] Traditional security conditions actually favored the pro-
gress that ACRS made in its first three years (e.g., the profound shift in the
global and regional systemic structure of strategic alliances), and these con-
ditions did not significantly change.[111] Moreover, on the specific issue of the
nuclear threat, the political and identity-harming effects of this issue appear
to be as great as or greater than the actual military threat posed by the Israeli
capability, despite some genuine fears of Israel (in the military and economic
realms) prevalent in the Arab world.[112] Arab elites understand Israel's deter-
rent purpose, with many acknowledging that, between the reality of nuclear
fallout and the international political condemnation that offensive use would
engender, Israel's nuclear capability does not pose a realistic strategic threat
to Arab states, in contrast to Israel's formidable conventional capabilities. As
a senior Egyptian official conceded, "Israel has nuclear weapons but will not
use them unless she finds herself being strangled."[113] A top foreign policy
adviser to President Mubarak, Osama El-Baz, asserted, "It would be an act
of total lunacy for any Israeli regime to venture and launch an [nuclear]
attack, or threaten an Arab country that is living in peace with Israel."[114]
While some of Egypt's fears are well taken, particularly its concern over
nuclear accidents, these concerns do not point to an immediate nuclear
threat to Egypt in the military sense.

The problem is less the nuclear threat than the political threat Israel poses
to Egypt's perception of itself in the region, and Egypt's subsequent use of
the nuclear issue to assert its regional status. In responding to questions
concerning regional security activity that included Israel, Egyptian Foreign
Minister 'Amr Moussa spoke not of a military threat, but of a political chal-
lenge to Arab identity, noting that "preserving this [Arab] identity is one of
the main factors for consolidating stability in the region while living in peace
with Israel."[115] After Oslo, Israel's increasing acceptance in the Arab world
diminished Egypt's central role as the bridge between Israel and Arab parties.
As one Middle East analyst observed, Egypt was bypassed as Israel dealt
directly with Yasir Arafat and "signed a treaty with Jordan without either
country consulting Egypt (which drove the Egyptians crazy). . . . Israel has
been forging economic ties with the likes of Oman, Bahrain, Morocco and
Tunisia without anyone dialing Cairo. . . . So Egypt struck back. It initiated
an Arab crusade to pressure Israel to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation
Treaty, which meant Israel either had to reveal its bombs in the basement
or risk alienation from its new neighbors."[116] Fouad Ajami similarly observed
in the months following the NPT dispute, a "disquiet over the country's

place in the region" and "a belief that the United States is somehow engaged with Israel in an attempt to diminish and hem in the power and influence of Egypt."[117] Consequently, Ajami attributes Egypt's NPT campaign to "Egypt's panic about its place in the region, the need to demonstrate some distance from American power, and the desire to reassert Egypt's primacy in Arab politics."[118] After interviews in the Gulf concerning the NPT dispute, an Israeli journalist observed, "the dispute between Egypt and Israel over the question of Israel's joining the NPT is seen in the smaller Gulf states more as a sign of Egypt's concern over losing regional influence and as a struggle for prestige."[119]

Moreover, key Egyptian elites—in their private and public statements when discussing regional security issues—reveal their concern over identity questions. Before a visit to the United States by President Mubarak in late February 1997, an Egyptian official explained the Egyptian role in Mideast peacemaking:

> We take account of the importance of the U.S. as a superpower, and it has to take account of the importance of Egypt as a regional power which has a role which it will never abandon. . . . Egypt has to exercise its regional role, which . . . no one has the power to negate. . . . Egypt is determined to achieve internal stability and economic progress while continuing to act politically in the region and affirm and develop Egypt's historic and future role in an area stretching from the Horn of Africa to the northern Mediterranean via the Middle East.[120]

Another key Mubarak adviser asserted: "Egypt is not and will never be a small or vassal state, nor can it be subjected to pressure. . . . As the biggest country in the Middle East, Egypt wields major influence and leads in a number of areas, and that ought to be acknowledged. . . . [Egypt] does not seek hegemony or control [of the region] but stability, peace and equitable security for all."[121] Because regional processes like ACRS were perceived by Egyptian elites as threatening this predominant role in regional affairs, and even enhancing the role of Egypt's traditional rivals like Jordan and Israel, it is not surprising that they assessed regional security cooperation as of limited and even negative value.

Such a national self-concept leads to policy positions that may appear to contradict assumptions of narrow concerns based on "objective" security

interests in maintaining stability. As William Quandt observes, Egyptian foreign policy searches for a role

> that goes beyond merely reflecting or protecting its own interests as defined in narrow terms. Egyptians, by and large, see for their country a significant role in the Middle East, in the Arab world, in the Islamic world, in Africa, and in the Third World. They were proud of the fact that their country, along with India, Yugoslavia, Indonesia, and China, was instrumental in forging the nonaligned movement. They take pride in the fact that Egypt counts for something in world affairs. They are reluctant to see Egypt reduced to the stature of just another over-populated, impoverished Third-World country. They fear that if they have no larger role in the region, they will not be accorded the respect and the assistance to which they feel entitled.[122]

The Egyptian interest in preserving its status and affirming its identity as the key regional power broker was less well served by continued progress in Arab-Israeli multilateral regional security cooperation than by sharpening and raising the salience of conflict on the nuclear issue, even if—indeed, to a degree precisely because—it meant the breakdown of ACRS.

Summary

In the conflictual context of the Middle East, the establishment and development of ACRS marked considerable progress in creating an unprecedented regional security process and even moved in the direction of creating common understandings among regional participants about the nature and purpose of regional arms control. Had we limited our understanding of co-operation to one based on outcomes, the ACRS process and its impact on regional security thinking might have been ignored or dismissed as unimportant. This chapter, however, has demonstrated that the ACRS process facilitated cooperation by redefining security problems, creating a shared security vocabulary and knowledge base among regional elites, making new policy options and partners acceptable, and increasing interactions among Arab and Israeli military officials.

While ACRS faced serious limitations in its ability to move Arab-Israeli relations into more cooperative security patterns, its creation and short work-

ing record underscored that Middle East adversaries could participate in a regional security cooperation process. This empirical reality broke some major cognitive barriers and taboos in what the parties believed could ultimately be achieved in this region, even if the process remained arduous and fragile. Needless to say, ACRS faced an uphill battle from the outset, but its development highlighted both the new possibilities for creating more cooperative security relations as well as the continuing and unanticipated impediments to such cooperation, including those that were unrelated to traditional security concerns.

ACRS ultimately failed, even when cooperation is viewed more broadly, because the working group proved unable to turn the political issues surrounding the arms control area—particularly the politicized issue of Israel's nuclear capabilities—into technical problems more conducive to successful multilateral cooperation. In this case, the process developed in ways that proved threatening to the regional role and identity of one of its most important participants, Egypt. This impediment led to the politicization of the working group and the inability to make progress in the more consensual areas on its agenda. Despite surprising progress within ACRS's short lifetime and despite continuing track two efforts to forge common understandings of arms control among regional elites, political obstacles—particularly the nuclear issue—are likely to remain and make further progress in regional arms control and security cooperation difficult.