7 Conclusion

The cooperative processes described in this study would have been unthinkable before the 1990s. While these cases of regional multilateral cooperation produced mixed results, they challenge traditional conceptions about the nature of Arab-Israeli relations and how international relations theories are to explain cooperation in such regions. The Arab-Israeli multilateral peace process demonstrated the ability of regional actors to move toward cooperative postures in part because of the altered strategic environment which emerged in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf War. The multilaterals produced new forums for Arab-Israeli interaction that would have been impossible absent such a process. These interactions led to new understandings of regional problems among Arab and Israeli elites which affected not only bilateral peace treaties but also broader regional relations. Arabs and Israelis began discussing security, economic, water and environmental problems with increasing frequency and in a variety of settings, including sessions which brought Israeli delegations to Arab capitals throughout the region. Numerous cooperative projects and even nascent Arab-Israeli institutions were created. Such cooperation broke taboos and changed conceptions about what was possible in the Arab-Israeli context. Despite serious obstacles which slowed progress in all multilateral working groups, the emergence and development of such novel cooperation marks a major watershed in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Such cooperative efforts might be dismissed if we limit our understanding of cooperation to definitions based on outcomes, or the making of major policy adjustments. Such an understanding of cooperation prevails in the IR literature and has been primarily applied to developed regions and issue areas like economic development. But if evidence of policy adjustment became the standard set to examine regions like the Middle East or issue areas like security politics, we might conclude that cooperation scarcely if ever takes place. What are we to conclude, then, if members of the region themselves think they are engaging in cooperation? How can we explain the gap between what political scientists call cooperation and what many practitioners believe cooperation to be? Might we be missing major empirical developments by limiting our conception of cooperation to policy outcomes? Indeed, the American elites who crafted the multilateral peace process were far more concerned with the importance of establishing a cooperative *process* to normalize Arab-Israeli relations than with the potential to create cooperative *outcomes*, few of which were expected to take place initially. A different view of cooperation can add valuable insights into international behavior that might otherwise be overlooked or not fully understood.

Cooperation in this study is a process of interactions, interactions which may themselves be quite conflictual. But these interactions can also lead to new understandings which may prove as important to explaining regional developments as more tangible outcomes. In order to capture the process of interaction and its effects on regional relations, this book defined cooperation as the process of working together in an effort to achieve common understandings.

Viewed this way, all of the multilateral working groups provided examples of cooperation, although some proved more successful than others in reaching common understandings about the nature and value of the process in which they were engaged. While all working groups struggled to turn politically divisive issues—divisive, at least, in the Middle East context—into "technical" problems more conducive to multilateral solutions, some groups were better able to depoliticize their working agendas and reach common understandings about the value of their interactions. Various factors impeded or facilitated the transformation of politically divisive issues into technically defined problems. Facilitating forces included the ability of the working groups to redefine their problems in mutual-sum rather than zero-sum terms, the development of new vocabulary and shared understandings about the nature of the problem, shifting understandings about acceptable policy op-

tions and negotiating partners, and intensified interaction among regional participants. In addition to the absence of some of these factors, impediments to successful cooperation included the influence of polarizing political processes like the bilateral track, domestic pressure and negative public opinion about the process, perceived threats to key actors' national identity and traditional regional roles, and the perception of an inequitable process. The case studies illustrated a number of these forces at work and may prove suggestive for other regions engaging in similar types of multilateral regional cooperation.

I conclude by reviewing the book's arguments for explaining both the origins and the varied development of the Arab-Israeli multilaterals. I then consider the implications of these explanations for the study of regional cooperation more generally. Finally, I suggest several policy lessons that follow from these theoretical arguments for the task of building Arab-Israeli multilateral cooperation in the coming decades.

Explaining the Arab-Israeli Multilaterals

This book began with two central questions. First, why did such an unprecedented regional cooperation process emerge? And second, what forces can account for the varied levels of success across its working groups? After examining the empirical evidence, these questions became even more puzzling than they first appeared. For instance, given the limited regional interest in, even resistance to, forming an Arab-Israeli multilateral process, why and how did such a process emerge? Once the multilaterals were established, why did some aspects of the process survive despite its failure to serve conventional understandings of instrumental interests (e.g., wealth maximization and efficient cooperation for mutual gains)? And why did other aspects of the process fail when the favorable external conditions leading to its creation were still in place and when the process was beginning to reveal the benefits that could be gained from such cooperation?

The Multilaterals' Origins

The origins of the multilateral peace process were the result of an external power (i.e., the United States) projecting its leadership in the region to create

a process that matched central beliefs among its key policymakers. The origins of the particular working groups likewise illustrated the role of the leadership variant of power and the ideas of those projecting leadership in forming and shaping the nature of this process, and explains the choice of these cooperative forums and their particular structures. While the altered international and regional environment in the aftermath of the Cold War and Gulf conflict produced favorable conditions for greater Arab-Israeli cooperation, these environmental changes were not sufficient in themselves to bring about a new multilateral process.

The Americans did not *have* to expend the energy to create this additional peace process track, which required lengthy diplomacy by Secretary of State Baker and a good degree of arm twisting. And in the end, Secretary Baker was willing to sacrifice the initiative if it meant that Syria would refuse to attend the Madrid conference and the subsequent bilateral negotiations with Israel. This reveals how close the multilateral process came to remaining in the confines of American policy papers rather than a new regional forum for Arab-Israeli cooperation. External shifts in power balances and strategic conditions may have set the stage for some sort of Arab-Israeli cooperation, but it certainly did not dictate the formation of a novel multilateral process.

Moreover, explanations based solely on regional demand and domestic environments cannot satisfactorily explain the origins of Arab-Israeli multilateral cooperation, particularly as these forces often impeded rather than facilitated such cooperation. Many regional actors were uneasy about cooperating with Israel in a large regional forum before the resolution of the bilateral tracks, a concern that provided Syria's rationale for boycotting the talks. Indeed, Arab regimes were sensitive to negative public views about such cooperation before Israel made compromises on the Palestinian track. While a number of Arab parties were interested in a multilateral forum in order to foster better bilateral relations with the United States and other extraregional participants, a strong regional demand for such a process was not apparent. The diffuse regional interests—not to mention the numerous regional forces working against the formation of a multilateral process—were not sufficient to create a regional multilateral forum that included Israel. Rather, to understand the origins of the multilateral working groups, we must turn to actors *outside* the region.

A small group of policy elites within the Bush administration—who were part of a larger community of Middle East experts in Washington, D.C.—

shared similar notions about how to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and greatly influenced American policy in this area, including the formation of the multilateral track of the peace process. Without the ideas and leadership of this group of elites, it is unlikely the multilaterals would have emerged. Because these policymakers believed Israel had to be politically accepted by (normalized in) the broader region for an enduring peace, they preferred to establish cooperative processes with wide regional participation—including the Gulf and North African states—even though smaller, subregional forums might have more efficiently and successfully dealt with the issue areas under discussion.

The normative aspect of American diplomacy cannot be ignored. The American elites who structured the Madrid and Moscow conferences were committed to Israeli normalization in the Middle East and believed it was worth capitalizing on a revived peace process to create a forum that would enhance this goal. These U.S. policymakers focused more on the process itself and its value in facilitating the bilateral tracks than on the substantive results that might emerge from it. In fact, the purpose and prospects for the multilaterals beyond the Moscow organizational session were uncertain and not of great concern to senior U.S. policymakers. The multilateral's origins demonstrate that its founders had little understanding of or interest in what the process could substantively produce across the issue areas ultimately included on its agenda, but very clear ideas about how regional relations needed to be restructured and the role a multilateral process could play in this effort.

The Multilaterals' Development

Although each working group developed its own pace, and while the particular dynamics driving or impeding regional cooperation varied from one group to the next, a common pattern of development emerged across all issue areas. The leadership of the United States and other key extra-regional parties continued to play an important role in facilitating the agendas of the working groups, but it was no longer the most important factor. Moreover, Arabs and most Israelis alike decidedly rejected the vision of a "New Middle East," with Israel integrated into the larger Arab region much as states were integrated in Europe. The continuation and development of Arab-Israeli multilateral cooperation continued *in spite* of this idea and en-

dured significant setbacks in the bilateral peace track because other regional interests were at stake.

The focus of the explanation shifts from external to regional parties as the process develops. The way in which regional parties perceived the process was most critical in shaping the nature and outcomes of the working groups. The groups better able to overcome politically divisive issues and turn their issue areas into "technical" problems, where multilateral cooperation was valued for both substantive (i.e., its ability to address the problems on its agenda) and political (i.e., its ability to enhance the status of regional participants) reasons, proved more successful. The case studies demonstrated that the REDWG, Environment, and Water working groups were more successful at reaching common understandings about the value of a multilateral cooperative process than was the ACRS group. But in all cases, the assumption of interests based on power position or efficiency concerns was not as revealing as understanding how particular states viewed a new multilateral process and how sometimes, as in the case of arms control, the parties developed negative positions toward such cooperation. A brief review of each issue area will demonstrate the value of examining the process of interaction and its impact on the perceptions of the participants in order to understand the varied development of the multilateral working groups.

ACRS, for example, represents a limited failure according to a process conception of cooperation because the ACRS process did not ultimately lead to common understandings of regional security, and in fact even exacerbated regional divisions. ACRS did make unexpected progress in forwarding a regional security agenda. A multilateral negotiating process was established, a working agenda defined, substantive negotiations took place and an initial series of agreements on confidence-building measures (CBMs), confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), and other regional security initiatives were negotiated. Indeed, compared to other regional security processes, such as the European Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) in its early stages, ACRS's progress was noteworthy. But 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, one of the most critical members of ACRS, Egypt, increasingly viewed ACRS in a negative light because it began to threaten Egypt's tra-

ditional leadership role in the region and, in Egypt's view, was leading to initiatives that favored Israel and Egypt's traditional Arab rival, Jordan, at Egypt's expense. Thus, the process itself created political impediments that proved even more difficult to overcome than the strategic obstacles working against Arab-Israeli security cooperation.

In contrast, REDWG and its related cooperative forums proved more successful, and aspects of the process even endured a number of serious setbacks in the bilateral track. This is not to say that activity in this issue area did not face obstacles; indeed, many of the economic cooperative efforts slowed after the 1996 Israeli election, particularly those projects and institutions that depended on public sector support. Yet many aspects of this process continued, albeit in varied fashion, even during the bleakest moments in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Unlike ACRS, REDWG was better able to depoliticize the process so that the participants saw the value of cooperating in a regional, multilateral fashion. Participants reached common understandings about the purpose and utility of economic cooperation, in large part because of changing conceptions about the nature of economic development and the impact of globalization on regional relations. Specifically, regional participants developed common conceptions about the role of Arab-Israeli economic cooperation in attracting foreign investment in a globalized economy. Regional cooperation was favored not because the parties desired an integrated region but rather because they viewed such cooperation as enhancing the prospects for the region's integration into the global economy and for private sector investment. This explains why cooperative efforts and institutions that served globalization goals with outward-oriented agendas (such as initiatives to create a regional tourism association and a regional development bank) proved more resilient to bilateral setbacks than those initiatives which focused almost exclusively on intraregional projects (such as a regional business council). And in contrast to ACRS, key regional participants like Egypt viewed the process as enhancing rather than undermining its regional role and status with the creation of new institutions and cooperative forums that brought international attention and potential investment.

Similarly, the Water and Environment groups were able to develop common understandings about the value of the multilateral process (for both political and substantive reasons), allowing cooperative ventures to continue—albeit more slowly and erratically—in the midst of a slowed and even frozen bilateral peace process. Yet even these more inherently technical

issues—where gains from regional cooperation were most obvious—faced political impediments, forcing the participants to reach understandings about the value of making these problems areas for mutual gain. Consequently, to explain the development of both these working groups, an understanding of regional support for the process is critical. However, this support cannot be assumed based on the functional need of the parties to cooperate on these issues to most efficiently solve these common problems. Rather, regional support for technical cooperation had to be *developed*. At times this support had very little, if anything, to do with the technical knowledge or substantive problem on the agenda. Rather, it was based on concerns about gaining political leverage vis-à-vis regional rivals and enhancing one's regional role. For example, small Gulf states were interested in seeing multilateral cooperation continue not just because it helped solve regional problems that could not be addressed at the bilateral level, but also because it served their political interests in gaining more leverage and attention relative to Saudi Arabia, its larger Gulf neighbor and the dominant force within the GCC. Hosting regional centers and institutions which emerged from the process provided legitimacy and attracted potential funding from international donors. As in the case of security and economic cooperation, these working groups had to make efforts to turn political problems into technical ones and were able to do so because they ultimately perceived these cooperative processes as substantively and politically valuable.

Implications for the Study of Regional Cooperation

What do the arguments laid out in this book suggest about the study of regional cooperation processes more generally? First, the book's focus on the process by which cooperation takes place underscores the need to pay attention to nascent cooperative efforts, including those that do not produce major policy initiatives. Indeed, with the end of the Cold War the study of regional relations has re-emerged as an important area for theoretical and empirical inquiry, in both the economic and security realms.[1] Many regional forums have emerged or developed over the last decade in ways that provide interesting areas of inquiry for international relations scholars. However, this study suggests that the process of interaction which takes place within these forums should not be neglected in favor of examining only the outcomes to which they lead. The cooperative process of regional

forums and institutions should be given as much attention as the results which they seek to produce. Such an approach will also alter the criteria by which we judge the value of such efforts, which otherwise might be dismissed as insignificant.

Second, power explanations focused on the role of global or regional hegemons cannot fully explain the emergence and development of regional cooperation. Power variables may shed light on why such forums emerge, especially when we move beyond deduced structural power explanations to those based on the role of leadership in the projection of power. But the cases of Arab-Israeli multilateral cooperation demonstrate growing regional initiative as these forums developed. Thus, we must move beyond Cold War paradigms focusing on a handful of great powers and shift attention to regional actors to explain both the prospects and limits of regional cooperation.

Third, both the origins and development of Arab-Israeli multilateral cooperation demonstrate the limits of assuming interests based on either the structural position of actors in the regional environment or material economic interests based on maximizing wealth and efficiency. Rather, these cases highlight the advantages of examining actor perceptions, particularly how the actors themselves view the cooperative process. The basis of actor perceptions may, but need not be, materially motivated. Other nonmaterial factors, such as political identity and status concerns, can play as important a role in determining the fate of such efforts. Thus, the value of regional cooperation lies not only in how it solves substantive problems like economic development or water scarcity but also in how it furthers perceived political interests among its participants.

Consequently, this study also suggests that we scrutinize the conventional wisdom in the IR literature that some issues are "easier" areas for cooperation than others. True, the economic, water, and environmental aspects of the Arab-Israeli process did prove more successful than the security aspects. But if we examine the cooperative process itself, we see that the dynamics operating across all groups were fairly similar. All groups were politicized and competitive to a certain extent. But the particularly competitive nature of security issues does not preclude cooperation from taking place, just as successful cooperation is not a foregone conclusion in other issue areas. While we may still find conceptual advantages to making such distinctions among issue areas, it is not clear that empirical evidence would support these distinctions in all cases.

Finally, to understand the forces that both facilitate and impede cooperation, one must look at the nature of the interaction itself. Studies of regional cooperation thus might ask the following types of questions: Are actors changing the way in which they define problems and developing new understandings and common vocabulary? Are they shifting their understandings of acceptable policy options and partners? Has interaction intensified among the participants to allow them to reach such common understandings? On the other hand, does one observe polarizing political forces impeding the cooperation process? Is domestic pressure or negative public opinion infringing on the ability of actors to make progress? Do the actors perceive cooperation as a threat to their regional roles? Do they perceive it as producing inequitable results favoring one party at another's expense? Have perceptions changed about the value of cooperation based on new understandings of the external environment and its "imperatives"? These are the types of questions one can begin to ask when evaluating the level of success among different regional processes, or the extent to which regional actors are able to reach common understandings through the process of working together.

Building Arab-Israeli Multilateral Cooperation: Policy Lessons

Taken together, the forces underlying the origins and development of the Arab-Israeli multilateral process offer instructive lessons about how to build such cooperation in the future. To be sure, the bilateral peace track, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, must be on the road to resolution before ambitious regional cooperation can be realized. However, the study also demonstrates that these bilateral relationships are not the *only* force facilitating or impeding broader regional cooperation. We need to begin thinking about these other forces so that, if and when the bilateral conflicts are resolved, we do not find ourselves surprised that regional cooperation does not instantly flourish. We need to ask what other factors, beyond the requisite progress in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiating track, have played and will most likely continue to play a role in both facilitating and impeding regional multilateral cooperation. What problems can we expect, and what policies can best address these obstacles to Arab-Israeli regional cooperation? I focus on four central lessons for future policy:

Recognize the importance and limits of American leadership.
The analysis demonstrated that while American leadership may be necessary for the formation of new Arab-Israeli multilateral institutions, it is not sufficient to sustain such cooperation if regional parties perceive the process as undermining core interests. That said, by recognizing the limitations of American leadership, leadership can be employed skillfully to enhance cooperative outcomes. Rather than promoting the multilaterals principally as an effort toward the normalization of Israel in the region, American policymakers should adapt their regional agenda to evolving regional conceptions of interests. American policymakers should also promote the multilaterals and their related institutions not as a bilateral peace process tool, but rather as a means for regional parties to satisfy other objectives, such as economic interests, status aspirations, or a desire to strengthen bilateral ties with the United States and other key Western powers. The difficulties faced by the fourth MENA economic summit in Doha in November 1997 illustrated the drawback of the former approach—promoting the multilateral process largely as a tool for the bilateral process.[2] The original intent to use the economic summits as a tool for Israeli economic normalization backfired on efforts to promote regional cooperation, with the summits becoming a convenient medium for Arab states to express displeasure with peace process developments rather than an economic event to increase international interest in the region. The political profile of such events must be lowered in the future and the Israeli aspect of the conference deemphasized to match increasing regional interests in furthering globalization objectives through such forums.

As important as Israeli inclusion within the region is to the creation of a stable Middle East, the evolution of the multilateral economic process away from Israeli integration and toward Middle East integration globally might prove a healthy development. In many ways, forcing Israel's integration into the region through a focus on intraregional schemes can undermine support for the peace process, contrary to intentions. Naturally, American and other extraregional support for Arab-Israeli cooperative projects, particularly in more promising areas like tourism and joint ventures among the Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian triad, should continue. But attention should be paid to sustaining forums where Israel is not the focus nor intraregional cooperation the sole aim. Routinizing, rather than highlighting, Israeli participation in regional forums best enhances Israeli normalization.

In the security realm, proposals either to jump-start ACRS or create other types of regional security frameworks must acknowledge the limits of American power and the need to build a regional consensus on security issues. While American leadership can play an important role in bridging some of the conceptual gaps between the parties by designing creative solutions that might depoliticize the nuclear debate, ultimately the regional parties will decide the fate of future multilateral security frameworks. Consequently, any proposal must be sensitive to the ideational foundations of security cooperation, particularly how regional players perceive such cooperation in terms of preserving their political identity or at least not undermining other core political interests. More attention thus must be paid to the Egyptian role in multilateral security cooperation. Allowing the Egyptians to host new regional security institutions, for instance, may entice more cooperative positions from Cairo, particularly if the nuclear question is addressed more explicitly in the group.

Build consensual regional interests even if they are not directly related to the American peace process agenda. Avoid enhancing one regional player's role at the expense of another. Utilize track two initiatives to facilitate a regional security dialogue in ACRS's absence.
The more that regional parties can reach a consensus on regional problems—even if this consensus has little if anything to do with the peace process itself—the greater the prospects for cooperative relations generally. This has proved to be the case in the development of multilateral economic cooperation, where consensual understandings about the role of globalization and the pressures it creates for a more stable regional environment enhanced the prospects for positive cooperation, albeit with political limits. Political interests in utilizing a multilateral forum to facilitate unrelated agendas of regional parties (such as enhancing one's regional role and status) can also play well into building enduring regional frameworks. The more these types of consensual interests can be fostered by deemphasizing the peace process motivations that led to the creation of the multilaterals, the more likely it is that regional cooperation can withstand the inevitable setbacks at the bilateral level.

Moreover, the framework employed in the study suggests that negative positions toward regional cooperation need not be permanent, even in the contentious security realm. Egyptian positions, for example, may change in ways that could enhance, rather than undermine, regional security cooper-

ation if policy elites believe the process does not threaten Egypt's political identity and possibly enhances it. Israel must make an effort to help sustain Egypt's privileged position within the multilateral framework and clearly express the limited nature of its economic interests in the region. Housing new regional institutions in Cairo, such as a Middle East development bank, will enhance the incentives for Egypt to continue to value rather than fear regional cooperation. While even a durable ACRS process will leave serious regional security threats in the region—particularly from non-ACRS participants like Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Libya as well as from internal threats to many regional regimes—bringing the Egyptians into more cooperative regional security institutions and frameworks is an essential ingredient for regional stability.

And finally, the effort to build common understandings can be strengthened by the continuation of track two dialogues among regional parties. Track two diplomacy brings regional officials and experts together in unofficial settings where more candid discussion of regional security issues can take place. Several track two exercises facilitated the creation and early success of ACRS's work agenda, particularly as it brought many of the same officials involved in the formal process together to discuss similar issues in a much less formal atmosphere. After ACRS's breakdown, many of these efforts continued, and some new ones emerged to fill the vacuum left by the freezing of the official ACRS process.[3] Track two dialogues allow key military officials to continue interacting even at low points in the political process and enhance the prospects for the resumption of a regional security dialogue in the future. Moreover, because some of the track two projects do not receive U.S. government funding, they can include Iranians and nongovernmental Iraqis in an unusual setting where Israelis are also present. The inclusion of these parties in regional security discussions is particularly important for building future understandings about regional security given the significance of these states to both the Arab-Israeli and Gulf security contexts.

Avoid an overarching regional security regime before bilateral disputes have been resolved and multilateral cooperation regularized.
Several ideas for new regional security frameworks and institutions have been discussed with greater intensity since the end of the Gulf War within both the unofficial and official peace process tracks. However, the proposal which received the highest profile was the initiative to establish a Confer-

ence (or Organization) for Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCME/OSCME), of which there are several regional versions.[4] Indeed, such a proposal was even included in the Israel-Jordan peace treaty in Article 4 (Security), Section 1b, which called for the creation of a CSCME.

Lessons learned from the successful aspects of the multilaterals suggest that proposals to establish an OSCE-type structure are too broad at this juncture in Arab-Israeli relations, despite the continued need to build regional processes and institutions that go beyond bilateral relationships. But this need can be addressed differently than as suggested by ambitious schemes like a single Arab-Israeli institution modeled on the CSCE, where the security and economic (and possibly the human rights) "baskets" would be embedded within one overarching structure.

On the one hand, a CSCE-type structure seems appropriate for the Arab-Israeli context. For example, the CSCE's basket structure works well to categorize common regional problems in the Middle East. The bipolar nature of the CSCE between the East and West blocs is similar to the original bipolar nature of Arab-Israeli relations at the outset of the multilateral process. The CSCE process increased contacts between East and West, particularly among its scientific communities. This type of interaction between Arabs and Israelis proved useful in the multilaterals as experts shared knowledge in an effort to solve practical problems of common concern. Moreover, the incremental CBM and CSBM approach in the CSCE has worked well in the Middle East context—particularly before ACRS's breakdown—in building trust and personal relations among former adversaries. Finally, the Arab-Israeli multilaterals adopted the CSCE's consensus rule, easing fears over sovereignty and domination by the more powerful players in the process.

Yet it took fifteen years for the CSCE to move to an institutionalized stage, which was only possible with the decline of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. While time is probably less a factor than the appropriate political climate in the case of the Middle East, a CSCE process in the Arab-Israeli arena is too broad and ambitious at this stage of Arab-Israeli relations. A single overarching structure for Arab-Israeli cooperation risks dangerous linkages among the baskets, where the setbacks of arms control, for instance, could also slow economic development progress—linkages that have been avoided by keeping the multilateral working groups distinct. During difficult periods in the bilateral negotiating tracks, regional cooperation is best promoted by as many interactive processes as possible, in a decen-

tralized and low-profile manner. Institutions (plural) are positive outcomes of working group activities, but an institution (singular) could cause unnecessary polarization and would likely be held captive to setbacks in the political process. After a comprehensive peace in the region has been reached, consideration of proposals like an OSCME would be more appropriate as the need for a coordinating body to direct and consolidate regional norms and cooperation would increase. At present, these ideas are premature and even counterproductive.

Create and facilitate greater decentralization of the multilaterals and related processes.

The empirical cases demonstrated that decentralizing cooperative processes enhanced the prospects that such cooperation would continue. In the economic, water, and environment cases, the smaller subgroups that operationalized the working groups' agendas were far more successful than the large, centralized plenary forum. ACRS could benefit from following a similar pattern of smaller spin-off forums for cooperative activity. Decentralizing cooperation and turning to smaller, minilateral settings is not a guarantee for success, but it can improve the prospects for a more resilient process in the expectation that bilateral relations will continue to generate regional crises that will make regional cooperation difficult.