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TOWARDS A REGIONAL SECURITY REGIME FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

Issues and Options

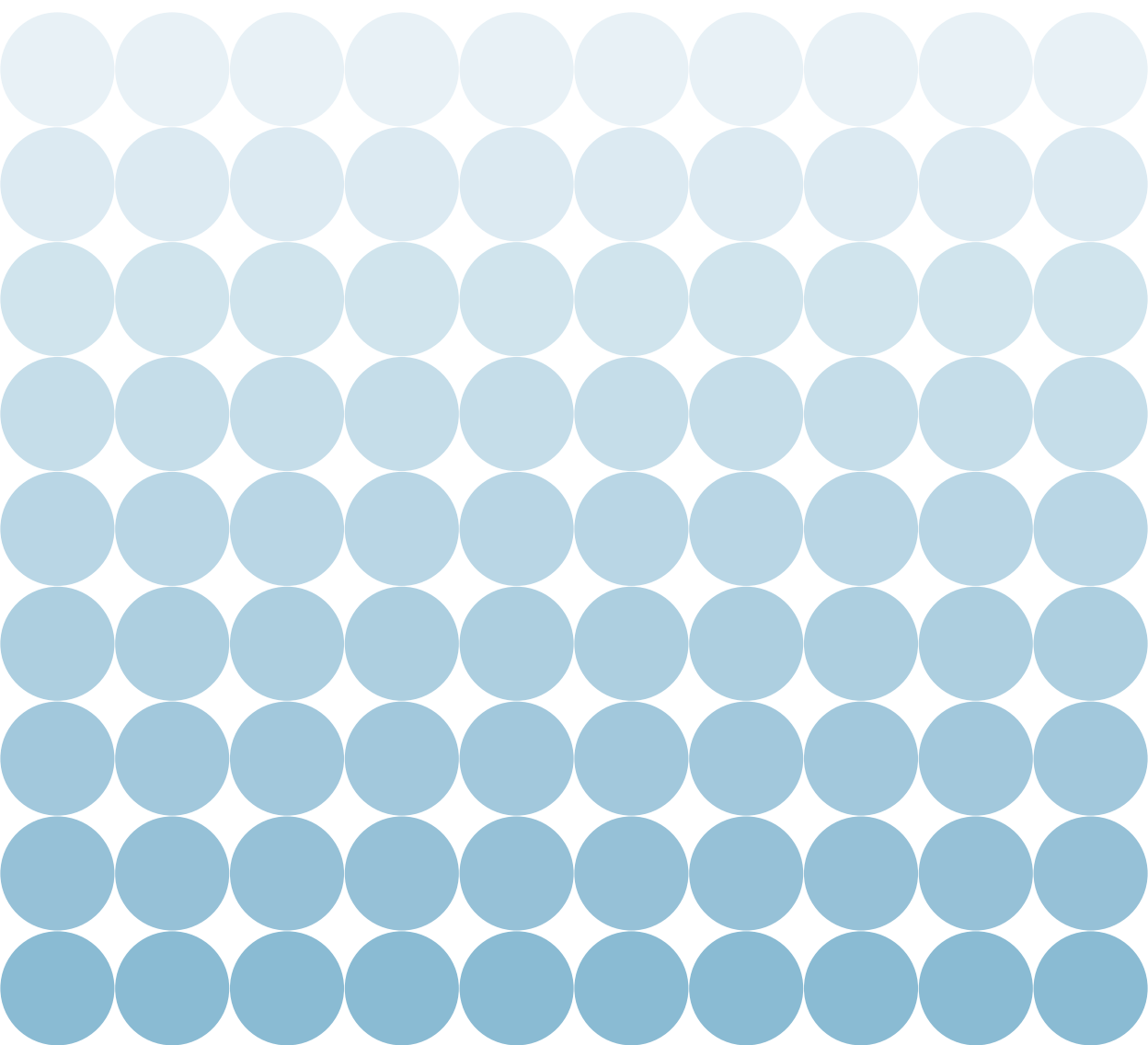**REPORT OF THE SIPRI MIDDLE EAST EXPERT GROUP WITH A NEW AFTERWORD BY PETER JONES**

Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East

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**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

October 2011

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Preface

The past year has witnessed momentous events in the Middle East. The popular uprisings that started in North Africa and have spread across the Middle East offer hope that a more transparent, democratically accountable form of governance will take hold in the region, although the transitions will be difficult and the outcomes uncertain. Furthermore, in May 2010, the parties to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty decided on key steps towards realizing the long-standing vision of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The Israeli-Palestinian question has taken some potentially transformative turns, with Egypt and Turkey less certain allies of Israel and a new political dynamic in the Palestinian territories. Meanwhile, Iran's nuclear programme continues to alarm many states both inside and outside the Middle East, and the situation in Iraq remains fragile.

There has never been a better time to renew the quest for an inclusive regional dialogue on security issues in the Middle East. As a member of the European Union Non-proliferation Consortium, SIPRI is directly involved in efforts to promote confidence-building in the Middle East and to support progress towards the realization of the WMD-free zone. In the context of this work, SIPRI has been fortunate to once more enlist the help of Dr Peter Jones, an expert on Middle Eastern security issues who has been active in both official and non-official regional dialogue processes over the past two decades. We have the pleasure of republishing Dr Jones's excellent report of the SIPRI Middle East Expert Group—which he chaired as head of the SIPRI Middle East Security and Arms Control Project in the 1990s—with an insightful new afterword bringing the lessons of those experiences up to date.

On behalf of SIPRI, I would like to thank once again all those who took part in the work of the Expert Group. Dr Jones and his research assistants, Gunilla Flodén and Anders Jägerskog, also deserve special thanks. I would also like to offer my appreciation to the editors of the original report—Jetta Gilligan Borg and Connie Wall—and to the editor for the new edition, Caspar Trimmer.

Thanks are also due to the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, who funded the work of the SIPRI Middle East Expert Group.

Dr Bates Gill
Director, SIPRI
October 2011

Foreword to the new edition

Of all the world's regions, only the Middle East lacks an inclusive region-wide system for dialogue and cooperation on security issues. The lack of such a system has profound implications for the region. It makes it much more difficult for Middle Eastern states to explore ways to manage their relations and differences. There is nowhere to develop cooperative mechanisms to deal with issues such as economic cooperation, social pressures and environmental change. The implications of this are especially critical as the region enters a time of great change.

From 1996 to 1998, SIPRI convened a group of experts to explore what such a regional system might look like. They examined the experiences of other regions and discussed what such a system might be expected to do in the Middle East; how the Middle East might be defined; how a region-wide system would interact with subregional initiatives; and the implications of starting such a system for both hard security questions, such as arms control, and also for soft security issues, such as development and environmental cooperation.

Inevitably, the group's work was a product of its time. The official multilateral groups of the Middle East peace process that was launched in Madrid in 1991 had only recently faltered. Many in the SIPRI Expert Group started with a sense that the multilateral groups had provided a model for future cooperation. In particular, the work of the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group (ACRS) was still fresh in people's minds, and many of those who participated in the SIPRI project had been delegates to ACRS, the author included.

As the work progressed, however, most in the SIPRI group came to the view that other models of regional dialogue and cooperation should also be considered, although all recognized that whatever model was chosen would have to come from the Middle East and be designed specifically to deal with its unique challenges. They also saw that a broader definition of security was needed, and so discussed the relationship to regional security concerns of social, economic, political and environmental questions.

The SIPRI Expert Group's discussions and conclusions were summarized in a 1998 report, *Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East: Issues and Options*, which is reprinted here. The report has been hailed as a milestone in thinking about regional security issues in the Middle East, and a model of how so-called Track Two projects on this subject should be run.

Since 1998 the security dynamic in the Middle East has been profoundly affected by wars and terrorism. Efforts by some countries in the region to acquire capabilities relating to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have continued. Of all the recent changes in the region, however, none has been more dramatic than the series of uprisings in Middle Eastern and North African countries that started in late 2010. Even so, little has been done by the region's governments to further explore, let alone realize, the idea of greater regional cooperation as a means of working through these issues.

The putative reason why little has been done to realize the idea of a region-wide, inclusive security dialogue is the lack of progress towards Israeli–Palestinian peace. Many Middle Eastern states argue that no such dialogue can be held until the Israeli–Palestinian issue is resolved. It is regrettable that this question has held up consideration of other issues which bear greatly on regional stability but are not directly related to it. Perhaps it is true that no inclusive regional dialogue and cooperation system can come into being until the Israeli–Palestinian issue is resolved, but in the meantime, preliminary steps to create dialogue mechanisms are both possible and necessary as the region faces unprecedented challenges in the years to come.

One other event that is significant for discussions of regional security took place in 2010 at the Review Conference of the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty. The NPT parties finally agreed, after many years of acrimonious discussion on the issue, to launch a process towards developing a WMD-free zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East. Significant procedural steps were agreed, but have yet to be carried out. Moreover, many substantive issues remain in dispute. One of the key divisions—just as it was in ACRS discussions—is over the sequence of steps required to establish a WMDFZ. Some advocate that the states of the region commit early on to the establishment of a WMDFZ by a certain date and then accede to all of the relevant international non-proliferation treaties and agreements. Others see it as a long process, which will require building confidence and transforming relations between states of the region as a prelude to their agreeing to forgo their WMD options. There is no easy solution, and this divergence threatens to derail the process launched in 2010, just as it derailed ACRS.

In this context, the republication of *Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East* is timely. The SIPRI Expert Group's findings remain valid and useful and the report is one of only a handful of in-depth examinations of the issues surrounding the establishment of a Middle East regional dialogue and cooperation system. This new edition includes a new afterword, which looks back at the only official, multilateral regional dialogue on security that has ever taken place in the region—the ACRS process—and asks whether its lessons and ideas remain relevant today and into the future. The afterword also examines the Track Two and academic forums that have since considered these issues.

It is my hope that this publication will not only acquaint a new generation of readers with the work of the SIPRI Expert Group but also contribute in some way to ongoing efforts to stabilize the Middle East and rein in its proliferation demons.

Dr Peter Jones
University of Ottawa
Leader of the SIPRI Middle East Security and Arms Control Project, 1995–1999
October 2011

Summary of the 1998 report

The SIPRI Middle East Expert Group met four times over an 18-month period to consider how a regional security regime might be developed. The principal points of this report are:

- Further progress in the Middle East peace process would create a suitable political climate for consideration of a regional security regime.
- The states of the region should begin to explore the ideas inherent in the creation of a security regime as soon as possible to further the peace process and address the many security concerns of the region.
- Cooperative security is the only possible basis for a security regime in the Middle East.
- A set of guiding principles for conduct in the region should be created.
- Attempts to create a Middle East security regime must stress the evolutionary process of developing such a regime. The regime should be flexible, pragmatic and emphasize voluntary participation.
- The Middle East was defined as the states of the Arab League, Iran and Israel. The importance of 'proximate' states was also stressed.
- States outside the Middle East will play an important role, particularly the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.
- A regional security regime will initially be characterized by informal political arrangements rather than legal, binding commitments. However, institutions, such as a Regional Security Centre, could be created as needed.
- Not all the states of the region are likely to take part in the initial efforts to establish a security regime. The process should start with the willing states and leave a seat at the table for others to join when they are ready. Latecomers will have to accept decisions that have already been made.
- Confidence- and security-building measures are necessary to build such a regime. Among those which should be considered are: openness and transparency measures to reduce the likelihood of surprise attack and lessen the demand for weapons; communication networks and links to provide exchange of information; declarations of peaceful intent to reduce tension; measures to provide for cooperation between military authorities in non-combat areas; and the creation of a Regional Security Centre.
- A weapons of mass destruction-free zone should be created to abolish all weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological) in the Middle East. Such a zone should be a central objective of a regional security regime, and discussion of its establishment and design should commence as soon as possible.
- The zone would include, at least, the states of the Arab League, Iran and Israel. The cooperation of 'proximate' states would be vital, and their role would need to be defined. The permanent members of the Security Council would be called upon to provide security guarantees.

- A weapons of mass destruction-free zone must include special verification provisions for intrusive and reciprocal regional inspections, including challenge inspections. Many group members also believed that the states of the region will have to adhere to international regimes as regards the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- As regards conventional arms control, a regional security regime can create an environment in which states can exercise restraint. Extra-regional suppliers of weapons must accept this and also demonstrate restraint in their sales of weapons to the region.
- In contrast to a weapons of mass destruction-free zone, which must exist region-wide, conventional arms might best be dealt with subregionally, within the context of a broad overall approach.
- Initially, there should be discussion of threat perceptions, doctrines and the reasons for the acquisition of conventional weapons.
- A regional security regime must seek to eliminate ballistic and anti-ballistic missiles from the region, although this will be a long-term goal.
- In the immediate future, the control of ballistic missiles will probably take the form of unilateral restraint. Ultimately, binding restraints will be necessary. Measures which would be particularly useful in the meantime include: pre-notification of launches, range limitations and the capping of missile stocks.
- Although official dialogue on many of the issues addressed in this report may not be possible for some time, informal and academic discussions can proceed, and the governments of the region should support them.

Abbreviations

ACRS	Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSBM	Confidence- and security-building measure
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangements
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission on Iraq
WMD	Weapon(s) of mass destruction
WMDFZ	Weapons of mass destruction-free zone

Explanatory note

SIPRI inaugurated a Middle East Security and Arms Control Project in October 1995. As the first major initiative of the project, the Middle East Expert Group was formed in 1996 to consider how a regional and comprehensive security regime might be developed in the Middle East. The Expert Group held four meetings between February 1997 and October 1998: in Alexandria, Egypt (February 1997) in association with the Swedish Alexandria Institute; Sigtuna, Sweden (May 1997); Amman, Jordan (November 1997) in association with the Department for Security Studies; and Rabat, Morocco (October 1998) in association with the Moroccan Centre for Strategic Studies.

The group members came from Europe, Japan, the Middle East, North America and Russia.[1] All acted in their private capacities and did not represent any official body or government. The discussions were off the record. The objective was to identify and explore the issues which the group members felt would have to be addressed in any future attempt to create a Middle East security regime and to suggest ideas for further discussion.

This report is both a synthesis of the Expert Group's discussions and an attempt by Dr Peter Jones, who was leader of the SIPRI Middle East Security and Arms Control Project and Chairman of the Middle East Expert Group, to develop the wide variety of ideas reviewed. It highlights the areas of convergence and disagreement which came out in the sessions and suggests possible ways forward which emerged. The report was discussed intensively at the final meeting of the Expert Group. However, not every group member necessarily agreed with every idea expressed in the report. Dr Jones is solely responsible for the text.

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[1] See the full list of members of the Expert Group in the appendix.

1. Introduction

The SIPRI Middle East Expert Group did not intend to design a regional security regime for the Middle East. Such a task can only be undertaken by the appropriate authorities of the region's governments. Rather, the aim of the group was to identify and understand what issues would arise should these governments try to establish such a regime. In some cases, members of the group made recommendations, which were discussed and are presented in this report.

The Expert Group began its work by examining the experience of other regions of the world in designing approaches to regional security. During this phase of the study the group members developed insight into the kinds of issues which are involved in the development of such regimes. These insights stimulated the search for ideas as to how the peoples of the Middle East might design their own regional security regime. However, the members of the Expert Group did not believe that the experiences of Asia, Europe or Latin America could simply be transferred to the Middle East. They recognized that each region of the world is unique and faces particular problems and a unique tradition of dealing with them.

The group was keenly aware of the difficulties which will face the Middle East in coming decades. It was under no illusion as to how difficult it will be to manage these problems. However, all of the members of the Expert Group expressed the view that an effort must be made to develop a new approach to security in the Middle East, leading to the evolution of a comprehensive regime for security in the region. They also believed that such a regime must adopt a more inclusive approach to security than has existed to date: comprehensive and inclusive in terms of both its agenda and membership. Finally, they shared the view that any hope of addressing the long-term security issues which confront the region must rest on the foundation of an end to the Arab–Israeli dispute.

This final point is primarily, although not exclusively, a question of the establishment of a just and lasting settlement of the Arab–Israeli dispute and particularly the Israeli–Palestinian dispute. Such a settlement will have to include security for Israel and self-determination with dignity for the Palestinian people on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, the Oslo agreements (the 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the 1995 Israeli–Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, known as the Interim or Oslo II Agreement) and the Madrid peace process. (The Middle East peace talks were launched at a 1991 conference held in Madrid.) Without these accomplishments, or significant and ongoing progress towards their attainment in an atmosphere of trust, it is probable that attempts to give life to the ideas which are contained in this report will be particularly difficult.

The members of the Expert Group noted that the international scene is evolving rapidly following the end of the cold war. A new and broader agenda for security is developing throughout the world. Principles of democracy, respect for

human rights and the peaceful resolution of conflicts are on the ascendant. In many regions of the world the difficult process of putting aside long-standing animosities is under way in an effort to address the fundamental questions of security which confront the inhabitants of those regions. The Middle East cannot stand outside this process.

The Middle East is marked by multiple, often overlapping conflicts at the national, subregional and regional levels. Many of these conflicts have multiple causes and effects which extend from the internal security of the states of the region to their relations with each other and outside powers. As noted, the Arab–Israeli dispute, particularly its Israeli–Palestinian dimension, is the conflict on which the most attention is presently focused.

There are, however, many other conflicts in the Middle East. The number of people killed in conflict in the region in the past 50 years and the amount of money spent on weapons by the states of the region demonstrate that these other disputes exist. This report does not attempt to describe in detail the current security situation in the Middle East. Such a description would be either brief and largely anodyne or so complex as to overwhelm the report. In their discussion of the current situation the Expert Group focused on four particularly important areas where a fundamental change in thinking must underlie any future approach to regional security in the Middle East.

First, it was agreed by the group that the Middle East region suffers from an almost total reliance on so-called 'zero-sum' thinking as regards security matters. This approach, in which one party's gain is necessarily the other's loss, characterizes most types of interaction in the Middle East. Instead, the group agreed that it is necessary to slowly develop a 'sum-sum' approach with respect to the fundamental issues of security in the region so that all sides gain, or lose, together on a given issue. Even if the gains are not equal on each issue every time, the basic idea is that all must make equal gains in security over time through the mutual creation of a new regional security order. Fundamental to the development of such an approach is recognition that security is shared by all of the peoples of the region, rather than an object of competition. Another point is that the development of a sum-sum approach to security is particularly important for the smaller states of the region, although it is also important for the larger states.

Second, and following from the above, the members of the Expert Group expressed concern that the various organizing concepts or visions which are being discussed in many quarters for the future of the region's security are all based on the exclusion of certain states of the region and peoples on national, ethnic or religious grounds. Some of these concepts even draw legitimacy by making certain excluded parties the villains against whom the others must band together. The group members agreed that this is not the way to construct a truly regional approach to security. Until this mentality is challenged, a regional security regime will be difficult to construct.

Third, it was recognized that the region is characterized by asymmetrical relations between its states in terms of wealth, resources, populations and relationships with external actors. Although differences in the social, political, eco-

nomic and military power of the states of the region are inescapable and exist in all regions, in the Middle East these discrepancies can mean the difference between a state's living in fear of its survival and not. It is difficult to imagine any other region of the world in which the smaller and less powerful states live in genuine fear of their existence should the regional order be challenged. This may have been the case in Europe 60 years ago, for example, but it is not the case today. In the Middle East it is.

Fourth, the Middle East is a region where the so-called 'security dilemma' is acutely felt. Simply put, as each side tries to maximize its own security through unilateral steps, such as the acquisition of ever more capable weapons, this causes others to feel increasingly insecure. They, in turn, take actions that are designed to increase their own security, and the cycle repeats itself with the result that no state's security is actually enhanced. All states end up feeling even less secure in an atmosphere of ever-increasing regional military capabilities. The problem is compounded further in that the resources devoted to military spending are diverted from economic and social development, thus leading to an erosion of security on another level. The Middle East will not break out of this cycle overnight. There is no magic formula, but the group members felt that the security dilemma must be broken and that the development of a new way of approaching security in the region is the only way to do so.

During the group's work the Middle East peace process was suffering a dangerous malaise. In such an atmosphere it was sometimes difficult for the participants in the Expert Group to devote their thinking to long-term issues and take a constructive approach to these questions. However, they were determined to do so. This, in itself, gives cause for hope. The Expert Group brought together many people who have given these questions serious thought, all of whom have followed the security of this region for many years. The ideas espoused in this report are intended to serve as a stimulus to consideration of a regional security regime for the Middle East.

This report is organized in four additional sections. Section 2 outlines the meaning of the terms 'comprehensive security', 'cooperative security' and 'security regime' as discussed by the Expert Group. Section 3 advances ideas discussed in the group as to what the elements of a regional security regime should be and how they might fit together. Section 4 contains recommendations as to the way ahead and section 5 the conclusions.

2. Basic concepts

Comprehensive security

The term 'comprehensive security' has been much used since the end of the cold war, but with different meanings. To some, it simply refers to the ideas encompassed by the need to address the 'security dilemma'. To others, however, in its broadest sense—the sense used here—comprehensive security refers to the idea that the security of individuals and nations encompasses more than the relative military balance between the countries in a region and their potential military adversaries. Although this balance is important, especially in the Middle East, concentration on it hides the fact that a vast range of other factors also affects the security of nations, many of which are only peripherally military in nature.

Moreover, for many Middle Eastern countries a differentiation must be made between the security of a state from external attack and security from internal challenges. Individual security from want or the kind of capricious violence which accompanies a corrupt or failed regime at the local level can have a 'spill-over' impact on wider national and regional security if it induces a segment of the population to act against the established order out of anger or hopelessness. Although many states faced with such a challenge rely on the military to deal with it, they are not military challenges to security and should not be seen as such.

The discussions of the Expert Group revealed that there are at least two basic and interrelated issues beyond military security which must be addressed in any discussion of comprehensive security in the Middle East: social cohesion within states and the region as whole; and the growing demographic problem and its attendant impact on the resources and environment of the region. Both issues highlight the importance of developmental, social and economic factors in the security of the region, alongside strictly political and military considerations. Although not all of these issues will result in conflict in the region, they may do so if they are not handled wisely and in a manner in which all recognize that their actions can adversely affect their neighbours and bring them into conflict with evolving international norms concerning these issues.

As they sought to define a manner in which these broader issues could be reflected within a regional security framework, some members of the Expert Group felt that a useful distinction could be made between actual *threats* to regional security (issues which have reached the point where conflict or unrest which will affect regional security is possible) and *risks* (issues which may develop into threats if left unattended). At a minimum, a regional security regime must provide mechanisms which will allow the states of the region to deal with the threats and prevent them from becoming the cause of wider conflict. However, a more fully developed regional security regime would also provide the countries of the region with ways to cooperatively address the risks.

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Comprehensive security

- Security encompasses more than traditional military issues.
- Social, economic and political issues are also critical to the maintenance of security.
- A security regime must recognize that such issues pose risks for regional security and that the regime should provide mechanisms whereby the states of the region can work cooperatively to prevent those risks from becoming full-blown threats to that security.

The security of the region can be threatened by several risk factors. The most obvious of these is widespread suffering and need, which involves the second issue, demographic growth and resource scarcity. There are also other more intangible challenges, such as a widespread sense in some states that the elite has become distant from the cultural or religious traditions which many still associate with the basis of the nation and its people. These difficulties may initially be experienced at the intra-state level.

In order to be truly effective, a regional approach to security must be comprehensive to the extent that it recognizes these pressures and makes provision for them. This does not mean that such a regime would necessarily call for intervention in the internal affairs of states, but rather that the regime would strive to create an environment in which such internal tensions do not lead to a threat to basic regional security. This can be done in several ways. It may be that the states of the region will choose to deal with these issues by not identifying them as security problems but as political and social issues affecting their internal affairs. Such an approach may be more consistent with the political needs and traditions of the region. However, the peoples of the region need to recognize that these issues will affect their security in fundamental ways. At the least, a future regional security regime will have to permit and encourage complementary steps to assist in dealing with the broader issues of comprehensive security.

This is the essence of the approach of the Expert Group to these issues. Because the group focused on more traditional aspects of regional security, this report takes a 'state-centric' view of how a future regional security framework may be created. As such, it focused on interstate security in the Middle East, but the group members recognized that intra-state issues are critical to the security of the region. Their view was that a future regional security regime must complement efforts to address these wider issues of comprehensive security, as well as play a role at the point (to use the analogy developed above) where risks become threats.

Cooperative security

There was consensus within the Expert Group that the only organizing principle that would be acceptable in the region was *cooperative* security. The members of the group understood the idea to mean that the states of the region would seek to cooperate in the maintenance of security: first, by agreeing to a set of regional

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Cooperative, coordinated and collective security

- Cooperative security is the only possible basis for progress at this time towards a broader regional security regime for the Middle East.
- As used in this report, the term 'cooperative security' means an approach to security which stresses largely informal cooperation and dialogue between the states of the region in the development and implementation of a set of agreed regional principles of conduct.
- Specific bilateral and subregional arrangements may be based on coordinated or even collective security, but they should not be in competition with the broader cooperative regional regime.

norms of conduct, and second, by developing a habit of dialogue and discussion to assist them in ensuring that their actions across a wide spectrum of activities are consistent with those norms. Ways to do this are discussed in the next sections of this report.

The ideas encompassed by the concepts of coordinated security and collective security were seen as inappropriate to the political situation and traditions of the Middle East. Coordinated security implies that states will actually coordinate their security policies to achieve certain agreed aims. Collective security implies that a group of states have identified a threat and are pooling their defence resources to deal with it so that an attack on any member of a regime is interpreted as an attack on them all. The group strongly held the view that neither of these concepts would work as the organizing principle of a Middle East regional security regime.

The fact that the security regime of the region as a whole would rest on the idea of cooperative security does not mean that individual states within the region could not establish their own coordinated or collective arrangements as well. Such models could exist within the region in addition to an overall concept of cooperative security, provided they do not upset the guiding principles of the wider cooperative arrangement. This means that any coordinated or collective defence arrangements in the region should avoid making other states of the region which are part of the larger cooperative regime into the 'enemy', if they are to be consistent with the broader cooperative security regime.

A regional security regime

The third term which requires an explanation is 'regional security regime'. The Expert Group scrutinized security regimes as they have developed in other regions of the world. It was agreed that no pattern exists. Different regions have developed the kind of regime which best suits their history and needs, and each has done so in a unique way. Europe, for example, has an approach which relies on treaties and institutions embodying certain norms within which competition can be played out, and a broad agenda including such issues as human rights. Asia has opted for a more informal approach, stressing instead the need for quiet diplomacy, consensus and a desire to avoid public discussion over controversial

Regional security regimes: experience of other regions

- There is no set pattern to the development of regional security regimes in the world (Europe has opted for a formal, institutionalized regime, Asia for an informal, dialogue-based regime, and Latin America for a regime which combines features of the other two).
- The key is the adoption of a set of agreed norms within a given region which best expresses the local traditions and desires (discussion of agreed norms for the Middle East is advanced below in the subsection 'Guiding principles').
- The creation of such regimes does not, in itself, guarantee an end to conflict, rather it signifies a desire to develop a regional way of dealing with differences by creating mechanisms which offer alternatives to conflict.
- Regional security regimes must be inclusive; they cannot automatically exclude any actor that wishes to join and abide by the agreed norms just because that actor has a point of view that is not subscribed to by all.
- Membership in regional security regimes must be voluntary.
- In many respects, the evolutionary *process* of developing a regional security regime is most important because each actor's perceptions are shaped over time by this process.
- This process is open ended because any regional security regime must be able to adapt and develop in response to new concerns and issues.

issues to minimize (and in certain cases to deny or cover up) the existence of competition. Latin America has developed a regime which is a hybrid of the two approaches.

None of these approaches is perfect. However, each seems to embody an agreed approach which the states of the region take to issues that divide them so that those issues can either be resolved or at least played out in a manner short of conflict. A security regime does not have to guarantee that differences between nations will gradually wither away, or even that every difference will be resolved rather than simply being defused. Both expectations seem unrealistic. What it does mean is that the states in a given region, or the majority of them, have agreed that they will adhere to a set of norms regarding their relations with each other, and that they will settle their disputes in a certain way—most importantly, without recourse to or the threat of violence.

This is the essence of a regional security regime. It is not the creation of regional security by removing all differences between states, but rather *a way of trying to pursue regional security by developing an environment which recognizes the inevitability of the continuation of differences but seeks to prevent their getting out of hand*. One of the key factors in the creation of such a regime is a recognition that open conflict is not worth the greater losses which all of the states in the region will suffer as a result. Another factor is acceptance of the notion that such a regime must develop in a way which allows for the inclusion of different views. It is not realistic to expect that states will give up long-held views on matters of great significance in the initial stages of the development of a regional security regime, or even when it is well developed. What can be expected of the members of such a regime is that they will be prepared to express differences that they may have over those views in a peaceful manner.

Obviously, at the highest end of development, a regional security regime is one in which all the governments of the region strive to create a certain unanimity of outlook on fundamental issues, as is the case with the European Union (EU). Conflicts between nations in a region will only be rendered impossible when all of its states have essentially congruent views on the elements that constitute acceptable order in the region. The long and arduous reconciliation which marked the European security process was made possible by the fact that European governments considered the status quo an acceptable basis for discussion in terms of both boundaries and recognition that different systems had a right to exist. It is clear that such a level of acceptance does not exist in the Middle East today. However, at the present time states can develop regional rules of conduct which provide a means of channelling their conflicts and differences away from violence.

Often this process is marked by the creation of a set of norms which are enshrined in a document outlining the fundamental understanding of how relations between states shall be conducted in that region. Such agreements are not in themselves sufficient to prevent violence. They are not self-implementing and must be given life by a conscious act over a long period. Moreover, the early stages of a process of creating a regional security regime are sometimes marked by lapses in the observation of agreed norms. However, in cases where the development of a regional security regime is successful, there seems to be a gradual process whereby the peoples and states of the region come to recognize that it is more in their interests to preserve the values enshrined in the document than to pursue the gains that they might make by taking unilateral actions which violate those norms.

Regional security regimes throughout the world are voluntary. No state can be induced to join a regime if it does not believe membership to be in its interests. Moreover, most regional regimes have included only some of the states of the region at the outset and have grown. However, *no successful regional security regime has begun with statements that certain countries or views must forever be excluded*. Rather, an inclusive approach to membership has been taken so that new members may join when they demonstrate that they are prepared to abide by regional norms as established by the members of the regime, rather than when their basic 'character' has changed. Although this sometimes amounts to the same thing in practice, the distinction is crucial in that security regimes must be prepared to accept different models of societies and seek to develop means of enabling them to live together in relative harmony. An organization devoted to destroying a particular view or society has more the character of an alliance or a pact than a security regime as the group members understood the term.

Another point regarding security regimes is that they often begin modestly and evolve over time, both shaping and being shaped by events. In this sense, the concept of an ongoing *process* of developing a regional approach to security is critical. The process never ends, nor is it expected to end. The world is changing too rapidly to expect that any system will one day be completed in some sense.

History does not end. As soon as one issue is resolved others arise to take its place. What can be developed, however, is a mechanism which allows the states of a given region to deal with issues as they arise without recourse to the threat of violence.

3. Elements of a regional security regime for the Middle East

At its first and second meetings the Expert Group met in two smaller subgroups to facilitate discussion of the elements of a future regional security regime. These discussions were intended to serve as 'brainstorming' sessions with the objective of compiling a list of the elements and exploring their relationship to each other. At the conclusion of the second meeting a draft List of Elements was developed by the chairman of the group to reflect these discussions. The structure of this section follows the outline established by that list. Each of the points in the List of Elements can, and should, be the basis of further work. However, the group did identify the critical elements and explore the relationship between them.

Political and military dimensions

Objectives and elements of a security regime

In considering the potential objectives and elements of a security regime for the Middle East, the Expert Group sought to avoid burdening such a regime with too many specific tasks and expectations. Indeed, in the initial stages of developing a regime, many in the group felt that it would be wise to avoid setting specific objectives if they would necessitate the creation of an overly institutionalized approach (the specific question of the institutionalization of a regime is discussed below). Instead, discussion focused on the more general objectives which the participants in a regime might have.

As noted above, the creation of a regional security regime will not remove competition from the region. What a regional approach to security can do, however, is to assist in the gradual lessening of a zero-sum mentality from such competition and its replacement with a sum-sum mentality. This is essential for transforming the region from one in which basic security is at stake every time there is a major difference on an important issue, to one in which the states of the region either cooperate on such issues or at least agree that competition should take place within agreed parameters—notably, a renunciation of violence.

The second objective of a regional security regime is to reduce the prospects and incentives for escalation of disputes. The group members took the view that many future conflicts in the Middle East will be caused by pressures and/or misunderstandings relating to resources and growing political tensions within and between the countries of the region over social and economic issues. In these circumstances, it becomes crucial that the states of the region have an outlet for discussion and action on such causes of conflict before they reach the point where violence is possible—before the risks become threats. The creation of a regional security regime which is designed to provide a platform for dialogue can play a role in both developing ideas to deal with these issues before they reach the crisis point and in calming disputes which may arise. In this context, the

group members believed that 'people-to-people' contacts are essential in overcoming misperceptions and developing a 'culture of peace' in the region.

Of course, group members recognized that many cases of possible confrontation could and will be dealt with bilaterally or subregionally, and they encouraged this trend. They also noted that it would be inappropriate for others to interfere unless asked to do so. However, it is also true that many seemingly internal or bilateral issues can have a wider impact on regional stability. Therefore, others in the region should be able to express their willingness to help if such a problem threatens to develop into a matter of wider concern. At the least, the adoption of a set of regional principles as to how differences should be settled would assist bilateral and subregional attempts to do so by providing a basis. The question of the guiding principles for a regional security regime are dealt with in the next section of this report.

Based on these objectives, the Expert Group took the view that the elements of a future regional security regime should include a mechanism for regular and ongoing dialogue at the senior level over a wide range of issues of regional concern. Between such meetings, groups could gather at less senior levels to review and discuss specific issues, as directed by the senior levels. The number and agenda of such groups is best left to the participants in the regime to decide in a flexible and pragmatic way as needs arise. Finally, group members identified the need for a Regional Security Centre of a more standing nature.[1] The tasks of such a centre could vary. At the basic level, such a centre could provide a vehicle for regular and continuing dialogue on regional security issues. In exceptional circumstances, and if the parties agree, such a centre could seek to provide a measure of 'early warning' of possible disputes and to permit rapid exchanges of views on them. While all agreed as to the utility of such a centre, and that its creation would be beneficial to the region, concerns were expressed that it might lead to a degree of 'institutionalization' of the security regime which the political situation would not permit. The question of the appropriate degree of institutionalization of the regime is discussed in a subsequent section of this report.

In addition, the view was expressed that a regional approach to security would, at least in the first instance, have to take account of the fact that many states of the region are very jealous of their sovereignty. Attempts to create institutions which might appear to compromise that sovereignty might be misinterpreted. Thus, participation in all such discussions should be voluntary, and these discussions would exist to exchange views and ideas in a cooperative environment. The governments of the region would determine if they wished to act on the ideas developed and how to do so.

The essential objective was substantive regular dialogue, within the framework of a set of guiding principles of regional conduct, as to how states in the region should conduct their relations and further the development of a cooperative security environment. How best to develop this dialogue is a matter left for the

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[1] It was noted that discussions regarding the creation of such a centre took place within the multilateral track of the Middle East peace process. The discussions were hosted by Jordan and made significant progress before being halted over wider political differences.

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Objectives and elements of a regional security regime for the Middle East

- Specific objectives which will require the creation of institutions during the initial stages should be avoided.
- General objectives would include:
  - lessening of 'zero-sum' mentality and its replacement by 'sum-sum' mentality,
  - reducing incentives and prospects for escalation of disputes by allowing for discussion of problems before they become crises,
  - providing a set of regional norms of conduct which can be useful in dealing with bilateral or subregional problems as well as regional concerns.
- The elements of a regime should therefore be developed in a flexible and pragmatic way to emphasize the principle of voluntary participation in dialogue and might include:
  - a mechanism for regular dialogue at senior levels to discuss broad issues of regional security,
  - senior-level dialogue supplemented by specific dialogues at the working level on selected issues as directed by the senior levels of the process,
  - establishment of a Regional Security Centre to provide a mechanism for the exchange of views on regional issues and possibly provide early warning of disputes and assistance in the task of conflict prevention.

governments of the region, but group members believed that it should be done in a voluntary, flexible and pragmatic way and without overemphasis on institutions and formal mechanisms (with the possible exception of a modest Regional Security Centre), at least in the first stages of the process. Specific ideas on these objectives are discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

Guiding principles

The elaboration of a set of guiding principles for a regional security regime has often proved to be one of the most vital aspects of its creation. Many regional forums have resorted to a mixture of ideas from the United Nations Charter and seemingly anodyne, if worthy, statements concerning non-use of force and the promotion of human rights and freedoms. This has sometimes led observers to criticize these documents as rather meaningless. However, the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of the Organization of American States and the Association of South-East Asian Nations Zone of Peace, Friendship and Neutrality have had an impact far beyond what was expected when they were first promulgated.

In each case, the document in question contained a set of guiding principles which, over time, came to be regarded as the foundation of relations between the states of the region and of the way in which individuals in these regions expected to be treated by their governments. One result of the adoption of such principles seems to be to set a standard for the governments of the region in their dealings with each other. The principles of non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes have, over time, created diplomatic and political norms in these regions which are quite powerful. In effect, they have become taboos which, if they do not make conflict impossible, certainly make its initiation a grave violation of an agreed regional norm. They also tend to make the retention of gains made through conflict an equally grave violation of a norm.

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Guiding principles

- Experience of the other regional case studies demonstrates that it is necessary to establish a set of norms of conduct throughout the region which should form the backdrop of efforts to resolve problems on all levels.
- Such principles should complement and expand upon norms which already exist in the United Nations Charter.
- However, even though they may be very similar to existing global norms, the experience of other regions seems to indicate that the adoption of a specific set of regional norms of conduct can have a considerable impact on regional affairs.

It may be said that these norms already exist and are set out in the UN Charter, and this is true. However, their reciprocal adoption by conscious act on the part of a group of states in a region which has heretofore known much conflict seems to hold special significance in such regions. When successful, this act becomes more than just a restatement of existing international norms. Perhaps it is the case that, just as individuals place more emphasis on events which affect the quality of life in their own town than they do on events in a town many kilometres away, so too do the states of a particular region tend to be influenced by and react with greater vigour to the violation of an agreed *regional* norm by a state in their immediate vicinity than to a violation of a broader global norm occurring in another region.

The Expert Group considered what kinds of guiding principles should suffuse the creation of a security regime for the Middle East. Not surprisingly, they did not achieve consensus, nor did they ever try to. Such a list of principles will have to be worked out by negotiation over a period of time. It should be noted that much work was done towards the elaboration of a set of principles for security in the region by the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group of the multilateral talks of the Middle East peace process.[2] The examples provided by other documents of this type, such as the UN Charter, the 1995 Barcelona Declaration—which established cooperation between Europe, North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean—and other regional security documents, point out that certain fundamental ideas are common to such documents. In no order of precedence they are:

- respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- equal rights for all peoples and recognition of their right to self-determination;
- non-interference in the internal affairs of others and respect for the sovereign equality of states;
- settlement of disputes by peaceful means, including the renunciation of the use or threat of use of force to settle disputes;

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[2] The Statement on Arms Control and Regional Security is reproduced in Feldman, S. and Toukan, A., *Bridging the Gap: A Future Security Architecture for the Middle East* (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, Md., 1997), pp. 103–107.

- recognition of the right to legitimate means of self-defence within an overall commitment to ensure that military establishments are kept to the lowest level consistent with purely self-defence needs; and
- commitment to the principle that weapons of mass destruction should be abolished.

The scope of a future Middle East security regime: from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf [3]

Any regional security regime must rest on an agreed understanding of the area to be covered. There is probably no scientific or uniform way to define a region. In the end, a sense of region is something that develops over time. It involves geographic, ethnic, historical, security and economic factors, of course, but it also involves deeper feelings of belonging on the part of its peoples. To take the example of a town used above, a region may simply be an area where events in countries have a special resonance for their neighbours, beyond that which they have for those in countries 'outside' the region. This is profoundly unsatisfactory for social scientists and diplomats alike, but it may be the best one can do.

In considering this issue, the Expert Group sought to develop practical ideas as to how the Middle East might be defined for the purposes of a security regime. Perhaps the most important idea to come out of the discussions was that any definition of the region should be both flexible and pragmatic, and that it should subscribe to a functional principle. This means that, within certain parameters, the definition should be a function of the issue being discussed. Furthermore, due consideration must be paid to how any extra-regional, but interested, states may interact with decisions, and the criteria for who these are should also be based on the issue under discussion.

Generally, the members of the Expert Group believed that any definition of the region must include different layers, but the relationship between them would change depending on the issue being addressed. As a general rule, the first layer consists of the core states: the members of the League of Arab States,[4] Iran and Israel. The second layer is comprised of what the Expert Group called 'proximate' states, those which border the region and whose actions could affect its security (e.g., Turkey, Pakistan, India, Europe, some Central Asian states and possibly others). In this context, many group members indicated that the role of Turkey is especially critical in many different functional areas. The third layer consists of states and groups outside the region which have a demonstrated role to play in its security, such as the Permanent Five (P5) members of the UN Security Council, Europe, Japan and others. With respect to fundamental security issues, such as those dealing with proliferation, it will probably be neces-

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[3] Differences exist over whether the body of water in question is properly referred to as the Persian or Arabian Gulf. Group members were not agreed and the term Persian Gulf is used throughout the report as that is the preference of the author. However, the use of this name does not imply that all group members agreed with it.
[4] The members of the League of Arab States are Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

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Scope of a future Middle East security regime

- It must be recognized that it is impractical and impossible to 'scientifically' define the term 'Middle East'.
- Instead, a multi-layered approach should be taken and the working definition which is achieved should rest on flexibility, pragmatism and the functional principle as applied on a case-by-case basis.
- A working definition of the Middle East developed by members of the Expert Group includes all states of the Arab League, Iran and Israel.
- Some issues would have to be dealt with on a regional basis, while others could be dealt with subregionally.
  It is necessary to recognize the importance of including 'proximate' states and states outside the region which can influence the security of the region (e.g., Turkey, is expected to have particular importance in many functional areas, as are the P5 states).

sary that regional arrangements will have to be negotiated and implemented on a region-wide basis and be equally binding. They will also have to include appropriate provisions for outside powers to play a role, particularly as regards such issues as security guarantees.

In other cases, subregional arrangements could be appropriate. In such circumstances, a region-wide set of principles would be adopted, but their implementation would be undertaken primarily on a bilateral or subregional basis. The states in a given subregion of the Middle East would work out for themselves how to implement the objectives of the regional principles and what modifications they might require to make them relevant to their subregion.

The states of the wider Middle East security regime, probably including all members of the Arab League, Iran and Israel, would have had a role in initially setting the wider regional norms and would be entitled to maintain a watching brief over subregional activities in order to ensure that they are consistent with broader regional norms and complementary where possible and would pledge not to undermine the activities in different subregions. The wider regional regime members could assist in the development of each other's subregional arrangements in two ways: they would seek, where possible, to harmonize the various subregional approaches and develop synergy where useful and necessary; and, if concerns from one subregion threaten ed another, the existence of a wider set of regional norms linked to a regional regime would provide a basis for discussion.

Finally, states outside the region which are either neighbours of a given Middle East subregion, or have significant activities in the area which could pose concerns, would also be consulted and their cooperation sought. In the case of the Maghreb,[5] for example, this would include Europe. These countries would be

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[5] Maghreb is an Arabic term for north-west Africa. It refers to the areas of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia that lie between the Atlas Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. The Arab Maghreb Union, established in 1989, includes Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

asked to assist in the implementation of the regional approach, or at least not to hinder it.

This discussion illustrates the essential qualities of flexibility, pragmatism and functionalism which underline the group's idea as to how the Middle East should be defined for the purposes of a regional security regime. Within the framework of a certain core group of states which would constitute the basis of the regime, and which would have accepted the basic guiding principles on which it is founded, each issue would be treated in the manner best suited to its needs. In some cases, a region-wide arrangement would be the primary vehicle, backed up by the 'proximate' states and other extra-regional states. In others, subregional arrangements would take precedence, backed up by region-wide principles and the involvement of necessary extra-regional states. The difficult question of how many of these 'core states' must participate to activate such a regime is addressed below in the section on the 'Steps towards a regional security regime'.

The role of extra-regional states

Although it is perhaps self-evident, the most critical role for the extra-regional states would be to promote and reinforce the process of establishing a regional security regime for the Middle East. In the initial period, which probably would last for some time, this would take the form of support for the Middle East peace process. This is largely dependent on the reciprocal commitment of the outside powers demonstrating that they are in for 'the long haul' and the regional parties scrupulously adhering to agreements once they are signed so as not to call into question the credibility of any guarantees which may have been made by outside states.

Extra-regional states will have to support the creation of a regional security regime in many additional ways if the process is to succeed. One of the most fundamental of these is that the extra-regional states will have to accept and abide by any decisions made by the participants in such a regime. This requirement will not always be easy as individual decisions may go against the perceived short-term interests of some of the extra-regional states. In such cases, those states must balance their individual concerns against the long-term, overriding inherent good of a security regime. However, it is incumbent on the regional states to recognize that extra-regional states also have security and other interests in the Middle East. The regional members of a security regime should be prepared, whenever possible, to avoid decisions that are inimical to those interests, particularly if they seek guarantees from the extra-regional states.

Another fundamental area where extra-regional states will be required to assist in the transformation of the region's security will be in the matter of security guarantees. This will be particularly important for the P5 states in relation to any new regional arrangements concerning arms control in the Middle East. Although security guarantees are associated with existing international arms control regimes, some states of the region are not likely to regard them as adequate, at least in the first instance as they strive to overcome long-standing animosities. The provision of further guarantees is a matter of the most signifi-

Role of extra-regional states

- Extra-regional states must respect and adhere to agreed regional norms and values in dealings with the region and its peoples.
- Such states can support and reinforce specific regional agreements achieved within the framework of these norms.
- The provision of security guarantees from key extra-regional states will eventually be necessary but is unlikely to be possible at the initial stages of the creation of a regional security regime.
  All extra-regional states can use good offices to assist in regional attempts to resolve differences, including NGOs and multilateral processes.

cant importance, both for those who are providing the guarantees and for the recipients. Each side in the equation accepts fundamental obligations as to its future actions, obligations that they are not likely to enter into lightly with states which they mistrust. The gravity of this step implies that it is unlikely to be taken, or accepted, except in the final stages of the creation of a new regional security order. This statement has obvious implications for the sequence in which issues will be addressed in the creation of a regional security regime. This is discussed below in the section 'Steps towards a regional security regime'.

The question of arms transfers by outside states is another area of obvious significance. Although the regional demand for weapons is the primary reason for such transfers, outside states must be prepared to display greater willingness to work together to resist the temptation to supply weapons to the states of the region if an attempt at regional arms control is to succeed.

Finally, extra-regional states can further promote the goal of a regional security regime by providing 'good offices' and other support in the formative stages of such a regime. This will be especially critical in cases where states in the region wish to begin dialogues with each other but cannot do so directly because they do not recognize each other. In such cases, extra-regional states, perhaps acting through research institutes and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at first, can provide a platform for discussion and exploration of new ideas. The role of extra-regional states is thus not limited to states. Useful roles can be played by non-state actors and even by multilateral processes, such as NATO and the EU are currently playing in the context of the Mediterranean.

The role of subregions and the relationship between bilateral, subregional and global security arrangements

Broadly speaking, the members of the Expert Group recognized the existence of three distinct subregions in the Middle East: the Persian Gulf; the states of the 'central area' of the Middle East (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine[6] and Syria); and the Maghreb. Of course, these subregions overlap in terms of both

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[6] Different views were expressed in the group as to whether the name 'Palestine' or 'Palestinian Authority' should be used. 'Palestine' is used as it is the preference of the author. Use of this term does not imply that all group members agreed with it.

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Role of subregions and relationship between bilateral, subregional and global security arrangements

- Three subregions exist in the Middle East:
  - the Persian Gulf region,
  - states of the 'central area' of the Middle East (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria) and
  - the Maghreb.
- Creation of a regional regime should not be at the expense of, or in competition with, bilateral and subregional attempts to address issues.
- Adoption of regional guiding principles could assist efforts to address bilateral and subregional issues by providing a basis for regional conduct.
  The relationship of a regional regime to global instruments should be flexible and pragmatic, with global arrangements providing the basic framework for resolving an issue, complemented by specific regional efforts.

their membership and their concerns. In an era of rapid communications, long-range missiles and other developments, many of the distinctions between subregions are breaking down. The promotion of subregional interdependence and integration is a key stepping stone to greater regional integration throughout the Middle East.

Members of the group believed that the creation of a region-wide security regime should be undertaken in a manner which is synergistic with bilateral, multilateral or subregional approaches to security issues. This could best be accomplished by establishing a broad set of principles, as suggested in the above discussion on guiding principles, which would be relevant to all levels of discourse in the region and then taking a functional approach as to which issues should be dealt with at which levels and in what manner. Some issues, such as those related to weapons of mass destruction, will require a regional approach. Others may best be dealt with subregionally.

However, the existence of a regional security regime should not be taken as a sign that all members of the region would automatically have the right to be involved in settling specific bilateral disputes. It would, for example, be generally inappropriate for all or some of the members of a regional regime to take an active role in the settlement of a bilateral border dispute, unless they were asked to do so by the parties. However, even in cases where the parties to the dispute preferred to settle the matter bilaterally, the existence of a wider regional regime could serve two supporting purposes.

First, by providing a set of norms and guidelines for regional conduct, the existence of such a regime would provide a measure of assistance to the states involved in the dispute by outlining the general limits of acceptable conduct in the settlement of disputes; it would set a climate. Group members noted that the existence of such norms has sometimes been helpful in resolving such disputes in other regions (e.g., the Asia–Pacific region), or at least in managing them so as to prevent open conflict. Second, and in the worst case, if that dispute threatened to

be the cause of a conflict which could have ramifications for the entire region, the existence of a regional security regime could provide a means whereby other states would be able to express their concerns within a recognized procedure for such matters. In neither case could the avoidance of conflict be guaranteed, but the existence of agreed norms of conduct and even mechanisms for dialogue (should it be necessary) could help to defuse the situation should the parties to the specific dispute choose to make use of them.

The question of the relationship of a regional regime to wider global arrangements is critical. The Expert Group believed that a flexible and pragmatic approach would best serve. Essentially, they took the view that the widely recognized global arrangements, such as the UN Charter and various international agreements on security and other issues, provide a basis for the conduct of relations in the region. The Middle East, neither as a region nor its individual states, cannot simply disregard established global norms of conduct. That being said, the Middle East, like any other region, has a particular history and reality and the application of many of these arrangements to the region will not in itself ensure security. What seems to be required is an approach which provides for regional complements to these global arrangements, or even subregional ones where appropriate.

Institutionalization of the regime and the nature of obligations in a security arrangement: formal and informal, political and legal

There was strong agreement within the group that the initial phase of any Middle East security regime would feature minimal institutionalization and be based primarily on informal, political arrangements. Although some members of the group felt that an institutionalized regime with binding commitments was preferable, even they agreed that it was highly unlikely that such a regime would develop in the foreseeable future.

In this sense, the Asia–Pacific model was seen as worthy of further consideration. In particular, the group members were attracted to that regime's emphasis, during the initial stages of its evolution, on the avoidance of formal mechanisms in favour of opportunities for quiet dialogue within the framework of a set of guiding norms. Although the weaknesses of this approach, particularly in times of stress, were noted, it was felt that no other approach would command any hope of development in the Middle East. The group members were also impressed with the way in which 'Track Two' dialogues (unofficial, academic workshops in which officials take part in their private capacities together with academics and others) have played a critical role in the Asia–Pacific region. They regarded this as the way to stimulate the necessary 'people-to-people' contacts in the Middle East, which are vital to the creation of a 'culture of peace' in the region.

It was accepted, however, that regional development on certain issues would be greatly assisted by the creation of institutions. The example from the multilateral track of the peace process of various institutions such as a regional development bank and desalination programme are instructive. However, it was

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Institutionalization and nature of the obligations in a Middle East security regime

- There will be minimal institutionalization of any future regional security regime in the Middle East in the foreseeable future.
- Informal political arrangements are most probable at the beginning of the process, as opposed to legally binding commitments, and Track Two should be emphasized.
- Specific institutions may be created on an as-needed basis, however (e.g., a Regional Security Centre).
  Eventually, legally binding commitments and the creation of standing regional institutions will be necessary in such functional areas as a regional weapons of mass destruction-free zone.

agreed that any such institutions should be limited to clear and functional objectives and that participation could only be voluntary. Similarly, many members of the Expert Group believed that a modest Regional Security Centre, as discussed above, should be established. Such a centre would be a unique institution created specifically to address the reality of the situation in the Middle East. Although it might bear a superficial similarity to the Conflict Prevention Centre of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, for example, it would be less formal in its roles and not have the same early-warning or mediation functions built into its mandate as the European model.

The idea that an informal, non-binding approach is best suited to the Middle East is relevant primarily to the initial stages of the creation of a regional security regime. Once that regime has moved into areas such as the creation of a Middle East weapons of mass destruction-free zone, however, the reliance on informal commitments would have to be modified. As is discussed below in the section on 'Weapons of mass destruction-free zone' , such a zone can only work if the commitments associated with it are legally binding and if a regional institution for verification is established. The idea of a process of evolution in the creation of a regional security regime is reinforced by this observation.

Steps towards a regional security regime

The question of the sequence of the steps to be taken in the development of a regional security regime is complex and multifaceted. As an overriding concept, group members recognized that the issue will be conditioned by the need to accept a *geometry variable*. This concept recognizes that not all parties will be willing to proceed at the same rate on all the same issues, and it also provides the essential flexibility which group members identified as necessary to the initial steps of the creation of a regional security regime. Above all, it permits a high degree of pragmatism as countries of the region move from what is currently achievable to what is desirable in the long term. Practically speaking, this recognition has two aspects. First, there is the question of *when* efforts can be made to begin the development of such a regime in relation to other political issues that are under consideration in the region. Second, there is the question of

the *order in which* a regional security regime should attempt to deal with the issues on its agenda.

In terms of the first question, *when*, the Expert Group identified two critical issues which will affect the development of a regional security regime: the peace process, and the question of how many regional states will be prepared to join in the development of such a regime at its outset. In relation to the peace process issues, and as noted in the 'Introduction', it is highly unlikely that any steps can be taken towards the development of a regional approach to security until the Middle East peace process has made what is widely regarded in the region as irreversible progress towards a just and lasting settlement of the Arab–Israeli dispute, and particularly the Israeli–Palestinian dispute. That being said, many argued that it would not be wise to wait until the Arab–Israeli dispute has been completely resolved before making a modest beginning at establishing a wider regional regime. It was recognized that many disputes exist in the Middle East which are not related to Arab–Israeli issues and that they too would benefit from the creation of a regional security regime. In this context, many members of the Expert Group believed that the Regional Security Centre should be created immediately as an investment in future regional stability. Moreover, it is to be hoped that a point will come in the current peace process where the consideration of wider regional concerns will be a necessary complement and spur to further progress towards resolution of the Arab–Israeli dispute.

At the least, a set of widely endorsed regional norms concerning the basis of relations in the Middle East could set both the bilateral peace talks and all bilateral relations in the region on a firmer foundation. Thus, many group members believed that discussions to create a set of guiding principles for the region should begin as soon as possible and include all those states prepared to take part.

Second, even if the Arab–Israeli dispute were well on its way to resolution and an atmosphere of genuine trust were being developed, there may be some states which would not be prepared at the outset to participate in talks aimed at establishing a cooperative regime for regional security. Although people from many countries of the region were prepared to meet under SIPRI auspices to consider the question of a regional security regime from an academic standpoint, they did so as individuals. Not all of their governments may yet be prepared to work towards the development of such a regional regime. If that is the case, to allow the process to begin some concept must be found to determine at what stage a sufficient number of governments of the region have indicated their willingness to take part. The Expert Group agreed that there is no way to scientifically deduce this.

If it is accepted that, for the purposes of a security regime, the Middle East consists of all of the countries of the Arab League, Iran and Israel, then at least a majority of these states (either in terms of the number of states, or the relative population and wealth which those states represent within the region as whole) should be included from the outset, provided that they are prepared to subscribe to the regional guiding principles. Talks on the creation of such a regime cannot

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Steps towards a regional security regime

- There is a need for further progress in the Middle East peace process in order to create a suitable political climate for the creation of a regional security regime.
- However, regional peoples should begin to explore ideas inherent in the creation of a regional security regime as soon as possible as these ideas may further the peace process.
- The exploration of such ideas may also prove helpful in dealing with the many other regional security concerns of the region which exist outside of the Arab–Israeli dispute.
- It is recognized that not all of the states of the region will join the process of creating a regional security regime at its inception.
- In this case, the process should be informed by the concept of a *geometry variable* and should start with the 'willing', enable others to join when they are ready and recognize that latecomers will have to accept decisions that have already been made.
- The sequence of issues to be addressed should take account of all concerns, while retaining the ability to deal with specific agreed issues according to a flexible timeline.
The need to address all basic issues should be accepted by all members of the regime in the guiding principles.

take place until those countries which are prepared to take part believe that their number constitutes a meaningful quorum. However, the members of the Expert Group recognized that this is primarily a political decision. The only rules which the group could determine were *start with the willing* and *leave a seat at the table for others to join when they are ready*. However, it was recognized that latecomers would have to accept that which had been agreed before they joined.

Views differ regarding the *order* in which the issues of a future agenda should be addressed. Some members of the Expert Group advocated the establishment of an agenda which would set goals and develop a sequence for their realization. It was felt by them that only in this way could the progress of efforts to develop a regime be charted and the talks avoid degenerating into an endless series of consultations devoid of objectives. Support for the idea of developing a regional security regime might be weak at first and unless tangible progress could be achieved on important issues within a reasonable time the process could be fatally weakened.

Others believed that discussion of specific goals and a timetable for their realization could create division until a new atmosphere of trust had been achieved in the region. Squabbling on the precedence of particular issues and when the achievement of agreement on them would allow progress on others would poison the wider process of the regime development. This idea was expressed by some in the group as the need to 'avoid a road map' because it would be extremely difficult to agree on its layout. Moreover, it might subsequently be found to be the wrong map or impossible to follow exactly as laid out, and this should not be allowed to endanger the overall process of developing the security regime.

Both these views have a high degree of conceptual and political validity. There is no right answer. Despite the objection of some to a road map, it is important to note that progress cannot be made towards the advanced stages of the process

without the previous stages having been accepted by all sides. However, it is important that a commitment be made to address the whole range of issues which are important to all and recognize that progress will sometimes involve trade-offs between different issues. It is also important to note that the question of which states join and at what stage will affect to some degree the ability of participants to make decisions on certain issues.

Developmental, economic and social issues as they affect regional security

In considering what some refer to as the 'soft security' aspects of the agenda the Expert Group members were strongly of the view that this is a profound misnomer. There was consensus that, of all the problems faced by the region over the long term, it was those that fall under this umbrella which are most likely to cause civil unrest, arms races and wars. In the Middle East, the issues of 'soft' security have a very hard edge.

Part of the reason is that these problems exist simultaneously on many levels and are inextricably intertwined. As noted above, they can be either immediate threats to regional security or long-term risks to it. The questions of political reform, social unrest, extremism, rapid demographic growth, environmental degradation and economic fairness are impossible to resolve in isolation from each other. They are at once issues relating to the personal security of the region's citizens from want and oppression, the internal stability of regimes in the region, relations between those regimes and relations between the region's states and outside powers. If it is to have any hope of contributing to the development of a more peaceful and stable region, a regional security regime for the Middle East must recognize these issues.

The question of how to do so is a particularly vexed one. In all cases, these issues are fundamentally bound up with both the internal and external policies of states. Agreeing to a regional approach for dealing with them necessarily implies that all participants reciprocally give up a degree of sovereignty in the service of the greater good. If some states are reluctant to relax certain sovereignty requirements, progress in dealing with these issues is likely to be difficult. Despite the fact that it can be demonstrated that no nation in the region can deal with these issues on its own, and that some traditional approaches do not work in the medium to long term, states are reluctant to change their ways. As noted, many countries in the region are very protective of their sovereignty. Many of these countries are comparatively new states, although their cultures are very old.

Despite this there are signs that change is coming. The cradle-to-grave welfare states to which many in the Gulf had become used are now a thing of the past for most, and those states are having to adapt both economically and politically. The relentless pace of technology is making it difficult to cut off access to ideas from the outside world. Calls for greater political openness and transparency are growing throughout the Middle East. The region's dismal performance in terms of the wider global economic revolution can no longer be ignored, and some

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Developmental, economic and social issues as they affect regional security

- The questions of refugees, development, debt, water, the 'prosperity gap' and others are the issues which will cause future arms races, wars and instability in the region unless they are addressed.
- These problems are intertwined in both functional and political terms and usually involve questions traditionally associated with the internal affairs of the states of the region.
- Actively dealing with these issues on a regional level will require the creation of several regional institutions, which may prove difficult at this time if it is attempted as an integral part of the creation of a regional security regime using the European model of 'baskets'.
- On the other hand, a regional security regime based on dialogue and consultation may serve to create the necessary atmosphere of good will and trust to permit such institutions to be established on an as-needed and functional basis, even if they are formally outside the regime per se.

states have undertaken far-reaching economic reforms of the type advocated by such international institutions as the International Monetary Fund.

Although many of these reforms are successful as defined by conventional economic indicators, group members noted with concern that increasing numbers of the young and other groups are being disenfranchised by such programmes as traditional social and economic patterns break down. The safety net being created to replace those traditional patterns is tenuous, or even non-existent. This is the classic breeding ground for extremism and violence. In many respects, the most difficult task that will be faced by the governments of the region in the coming years will be managing rapid social, political and economic change in the face of stagnant economic growth (if not decline) and populations without the educational and social tools to adapt quickly to change. The fact that some governments of the region are weak to begin with makes for an explosive mix.

While recognizing that these issues are among the critical ones for the future of regional security, participants in the Expert Group were of two minds as to how a regional security regime might be able to assist in dealing with them. On the one hand, actively dealing with these issues—ranging from demographics, to water, to reallocation of economic power in traditional societies—will require the establishment of many regional institutions and programmes to assist in the difficult transitions which lie ahead. The Expert Group recognized the need for this work and encouraged its rapid development. A beginning was made towards addressing many of these issues in the multilateral talks associated with the peace process. However, differences over larger political questions have hampered this.

On the other hand, the development of a set of regional institutions and programmes to deal with such problems is not entirely consistent with the belief of the members of the Expert Group that a future regional security regime for the Middle East should be based on an approach which initially emphasizes informality and caution in the creation of standing institutions. Group members were

firm in their belief that an approach mirroring what they perceived to be the European approach to regional security, which emphasizes the creation of many 'baskets' and overlapping institutions to deal with different aspects of security in a broad sense, would not work in the Middle East for some time to come if it were made an integral part of a future regional security regime. This type of approach is simply not consistent with the political traditions of the region.

Ultimately, the matter of whether these types of issues will be relevant to a regional security regime, as envisaged in this report, is one of whether a given problem moves from the realm of risk to that of a more immediate and specific threat to regional security. If this is so, an informal, dialogue-based regional security regime can still make a valuable contribution to the region in two ways. First, by providing a set of guiding principles as to how states should conduct their relations with each other, and dialogue mechanisms, such a regime can help the states of the region to manage their relations through the turbulent times ahead to prevent the risks from becoming immediate threats to security, or to deal with them when they do. Although this may not seem as dramatic a contribution as many might like, it should not be underestimated. The deeper social, political and economic problems which face the region may generate considerable pressure on its governments to engage in adventurous foreign policy initiatives, either to relieve political pressure at home or to gain access to the resources of neighbours. A set of agreed regional principles which specifically forbid such actions and a mechanism to permit continuing dialogue will provide a valuable tool for diplomats of the region as they seek to prevent tensions from becoming the causes of actual conflicts.

It is important not to be naive. These principles and dialogue mechanisms will not in themselves prevent conflict or provide a guarantee of peace in the region. Only a firm political decision to renounce the option of war and pursue a course of cooperation with one's neighbours on tackling the serious problems ahead will do that. However, if the region's governments (or a majority of them) are prepared to commit themselves to such principles and to seriously work at observing them, some hope exists that future conflicts in the region can either be avoided, or at least minimized when they occur.

The second way in which the establishment of a limited regional security regime may provide some assistance in dealing with wider sources of regional tension is that the increasing interaction between the region's states on security issues may help to create the broader political atmosphere required to establish the institutions to deal with wider security problems. A call for the creation of a regional institution or programme to deal cooperatively with a region-wide issue like the shortage of water is not likely to succeed today, whether it is made independently or as part of the creation of a regional security regime. The mood of the region would not permit such an initiative to go ahead. However, if a security regime of the type envisaged by this report were to be created, within the framework of generally improved relations, the political atmosphere in the region may improve over a period of time so that such an institution could be created.

In such a case, the various institutions and programmes which might be created could exist either outside the regional security regime or within it. The states of the region could decide that for themselves at the appropriate time. The important thing is that they would have been established, and the creation of an informal, dialogue-based regional security regime would have been a step in this. The Expert Group did not, of course, regard the establishment of regional institutions and programmes to deal with wider issues as the inevitable outcome of the creation of a regional security regime. Success is not guaranteed and there are many other ways of dealing with these issues, or not dealing with them. What is certain is that they are not being dealt with today in a cooperative fashion which seeks to minimize the chances of conflict, and they are not likely to be dealt with unless some steps are taken to redefine the way in which the region's peoples and states think about and pursue security.

Confidence building and arms control in a Middle East security regime

The control of the Middle East arms race will be one of the most significant challenges before any regional security regime. For analytical ease the group members discussed this subject as different subtopics. They recognized, however, that these issues are inextricably interwoven. Although this report outlines slightly different approaches and possible timetables for each subtopic on the regional arms control agenda, this is done in the knowledge that an integrated approach to arms control as a whole will be required within the framework of a regional security regime. The Expert Group also recognized the essential link between progress on the wider question of political rapprochement on several levels and the creation of successful arms control regimes in the region. Thus, a need exists to think about the regional arms control agenda as a holistic one. Moreover, group members recognized that there will be political trade-offs among the issues on the regional arms control agenda.

Confidence- and security-building measures

The concept behind confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) has become so amorphous that it is difficult to specifically define. Confidence building is a psychological process. Any measure which adds to the sense of security from threat or attack (however defined) can be called a CSBM. Critical to the understanding of confidence building is the idea that it is a process. Over time the implementation in good faith of various specific measures has the potential to create a sum that is larger than its parts. If successful, such a process gradually leads to a situation whereby regional elites and peoples begin to transform their views of each other.[7] Even if it does not, however, CSBMs can at least play a role in stabilizing a difficult relationship short of outright conflict.

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[7] For more on this view of CSBMs as agents of transformation of views see MacIntosh, J., *Confidence-building in the Arms Control Process: A Transformation View* (Department of Foreign Affairs: Ottawa, 1997).

Obviously, a transformation in basic views takes time, particularly in cases where animosities are deep and of long standing. Moreover, the success of such a process cannot be guaranteed. It cannot be expected that decades of mistrust will vanish overnight. Nor should one focus exclusively on military-to-military CSBMs in such a process. The Expert Group members recognized that many other avenues for confidence building exist. For example, in the environmental area, cooperative monitoring of environmental issues using satellite and other remote-sensing technology has been explored and is feasible.

A commitment to begin to work towards a set of guiding principles for regional conduct would be a significant CSBM and would lay a foundation for many others. Increased contacts between academics and other opinion makers of the region would help to bring down barriers. The Expert Group was, in itself, a confidence-building exercise. Of course, there is already significant confidence building under way in the region. Several Persian Gulf states are tentatively exploring the possibility of new relations with each other and are engaging in modest CSBMs to further this process. Several neighbours of Israel have been prepared to enter into CSBMs with it, despite their often tense relationship.

Confidence building has, at times, been regarded as the 'poor sister' of arms control: a lesser form of activity in which states engage when they are not able to agree on arms control treaties. The group rejected this evaluation. Instead, they believed that CSBMs are both an essential aspect of the arms control process and worthy of pursuit in their own right. The discussion and implementation of CSBMs was seen as a particularly important activity at the initial stages of a process of constructing a regional security regime.

CSBMs are particularly useful in this context in that they are actions which states may take with a minimum of disruption to their military activities, with a minimum of 'risk' to their security and on a purely voluntary basis. In other words, at the beginning of a process of rapprochement between former adversaries, when trust is not yet developed, CSBMs can help to transform attitudes to the point where more ambitious arms control agreements are possible. CSBMs are also useful in that they often require the parties concerned to work together to both negotiate and implement them. This process of mutual cooperation over time can be extremely important in breaking down barriers of mistrust or misunderstanding. Once again, this can facilitate more ambitious arms control agreements. In essence, this type of activity is at the heart of the process of transforming views on security choices from that of a zero-sum mentality to that of a sum-sum one, as explained in the first section of this report.

Group members identified several different types of CSBMs which they believed governments of the region should actively consider. These are:

- openness and transparency measures, to reduce the likelihood of surprise attack and to assist states in gradually restraining their demand for weapons;
- communications networks and links, to provide regional authorities with a means to exchange information;
- declarations of peaceful intent, to reduce the level of tension in the region;

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Confidence- and security-building measures

- CSBMs exist as part of a larger process intended to assist in transforming the views of former enemies throughout the region.
- CSBMs exist on many levels, not only military-to-military but also political and societal levels.
- The establishment and implementation of a set of guiding principles for regional conduct would be a critical CSBM in the Middle East at this stage.
- CSBMs are especially useful in that they are steps which countries can take without affecting their fundamental security decisions but which build up trust over time.
- The cooperative aspect of the negotiation and implementation of CSBMs is critical in breaking down barriers of mistrust and misinformation.
- The most important single CSBM at this time is the peace process. Another important CSBM would be for all sides in the region to tone down their rhetoric.
- Once established, CSBMs and other agreements must be rigorously observed as tenuous progress towards reconciliation can be undone.

- military cooperation measures, to provide for cooperation between military authorities in non-combat areas such as humanitarian actions (e.g., search and rescue); and
- the creation of a Regional Security Centre, as discussed above.

One other type of suggested CSBM would simply be for all states in the region to restrain their use of provocative language in referring to each other. Although a seemingly obvious measure, this could have an impact over time in terms of setting a mood in the region which would make it possible for political figures to explore new avenues for cooperation.

Critical to the success of such initiatives to establish a new basis for relations in the region, however, is continuing success in the existing peace process. If CSBMs are primarily related to breaking down barriers and demonstrating that a new way of viewing former adversaries is possible, one key is for both sides to demonstrate that new patterns of conduct are also possible in the region. Another point that is relevant to the current peace process and to the task of developing a new approach to security in the region generally is that any steps agreed to in a process, no matter how modest, must be scrupulously observed by all those involved. Years of hard work to slowly overcome mistrust can be undone in days if commitments are not observed.

Weapons of mass destruction-free zone

The Expert Group noted that all of the region's states have accepted the notion that the Middle East should be a weapons of mass destruction-free zone (WMDFZ). The group members all believed that a WMDFZ must be a key objective of a future regional security regime and one to which all countries of the region should rededicate themselves. Some states of the Middle East are already members of the African nuclear weapon-free zone.

For the purposes of their discussion, the group members defined weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and, in some cases, their delivery systems. They also recognized that, just as there are many types of WMD, so too are there multiple reasons for the possession of weapons of mass destruction by the states of the region. Briefly, these include: disputes with other states of the region, perceived internal security requirements, and a perceived need to be able to raise the costs of intervention in the region by outside powers. In some cases, considerations of national prestige are also associated with decisions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Often, the reasons for the possession of WMD are a combination of several of these pressures.

Thus, the key task in the creation of a regional WMDFZ is not to eliminate a particular WMD programme of any given state in the region but to devise a comprehensive system of security whereby all states in the region believe that they can give up the option of such weapons without detriment to their security. This will require the development of a security regime within which the states of the region take significant steps to address the pressures which have led to the development of these weapons in the first place. This agenda is much broader than weapons of mass destruction.

Ultimately, the question of the creation of a regional WMDFZ is tied to the development of a much more inclusive regional security regime. The creation of a zone is likely to be the outcome of the process of establishing a regime, rather than one of its initial accomplishments. However, it is equally true that the states of the region must begin the process of creating a regional security regime by committing themselves to the creation of a WMDFZ as one of the fundamental outcomes of the process and by entering into serious talks as to how a zone might be established and what its components might be. These talks must include discussions of the conditions under which the states of the region would be prepared to give up their WMD options and the interim steps on the road to the creation of a WMDFZ. Such steps would be intended to prevent the regional WMD situation from becoming worse. An example of such a step could be consideration of a 'no first use' of WMD declaration for the region.

In assessing how a future WMDFZ might work in the region, the Expert Group achieved consensus on several important issues and identified questions for discussion concerning others. First, with respect to the issue of the 'scope of prohibition' and 'obligations', it was agreed that a WMDFZ must contain a prohibition on the possession of all weapons of mass destruction—nuclear, biological and chemical. *No proposal for a zone can work unless all types of WMD are equally prohibited throughout the Middle East. There can be no 'permitted' weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and no special arrangements for particular countries.* The prohibition of missiles is discussed below in the section 'Missile control'.

The second issue is that of a potential 'zonal definition'. The Expert Group agreed that a suitable way to discuss this issue would be to conceive of the definition as multi-layered. The first layer of a Middle East WMDFZ would

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Weapons of mass destruction-free zone

- The conclusion of a politically and legally binding WMDFZ agreement must be a central objective of a regional security regime for the Middle East.
- Such a regime must mandate the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction in all the states of the region; there can be no exceptions.
- It must be recognized that weapons of mass destruction have been introduced into the region by many countries for many different reasons and any regional approach to them must address all of these cases within the context of the larger security regime.
- As a first step, all the states of the region should commit themselves to the creation of a WMDFZ in the region and to entering into serious discussions regarding the nature and establishment of such a zone.
- The membership of such a zone must include at least all of the states of the Arab League, Iran and Israel, with associated protocols for 'proximate' states whose observance and cooperation will be vital.
- Such a zone will also have to backed up by security guarantees from the P5 states.
- A Middle East WMDFZ will have to include special verification provisions for intrusive and reciprocal regional inspections, including challenge inspections.
- Many members of the Expert Group expressed the view that it will also be necessary for all the states of the region ultimately to adhere to the international standards as regards the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction within a regional WMDFZ.

include the regional participants in a regime, which the group members suggested should ideally include all of the member states of the Arab League, Iran and Israel. These countries would agree to renounce all WMD programmes and to accede to legally binding commitments to that effect. They would also agree to effective verification and other arrangements to be mutually agreed on in order to ascertain compliance. There was discussion in the Expert Group as to whether the existing international agreements concerning non-proliferation would provide a sufficient basis for both the required legally binding commitment and the verification regime. Many members of the group felt that they would be adequate, but others felt that special arrangements would be required in the Middle East, although they did not discount the potential role of the international agreements in this regard. Negotiations will be required to establish the correct relationship.

The second layer of a Middle East WMDFZ would consist of those states which are geographically proximate to the Middle East and whose security policies could affect the security of the countries in the first layer. As is the case with other such WMDFZ arrangements, the countries around the region (e.g., Turkey, Pakistan, India, Europe, some Central Asian states and possibly others) would be expected to respect the Middle East WMDFZ. This would include agreements not to take steps which might jeopardize the security of the states in the zone such that they would be forced to acquire weapons of mass destruction for their own security.

The third layer would be the P5 states, which are also the recognized nuclear weapon states under the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). These countries would pledge to respect the Middle East WMDFZ and to cooperate with each

other and the members of the regime to assure its success. They would probably be called upon to provide wide-ranging security assurances, beyond those which already exist in the international non-proliferation agreements, to the regional members of the regime in return for their having renounced WMD and accepted special verification provisions. Additionally, the P5 countries would be expected to assist the states of the region in their efforts to acquire legitimate technologies for peaceful uses in return for the states of the region having entered into the WMDFZ. Obviously, all of these undertakings require that the P5 states be involved in some way in the negotiation of any future regional Middle East WMDFZ.

The members of the Expert Group were content with this as an initial proposal for discussion, although they recognized that much work needs to be done to develop it. One obvious practical difficulty with the proposal is that it includes countries which do not presently recognize each other, and yet whose participation in such a WMDFZ is crucial to its success. Leaving aside the question of whether a Middle East WMDFZ can be achieved without the participation of all countries of the region, a question exists as to whether it can even be discussed unless all of the required actors are prepared to sit with each other.

There are potential ways around this. Recognizing that this will be a long-term process, initial discussions could be held informally as part of the ongoing Track Two work in the region. This would obviate the need for official recognition of various countries by others, while allowing academics and officials from those countries to meet in their private capacities. Such a procedure would address the need for official recognition before discussions could begin, although it would not resolve the problem since no understandings that might be achieved could be brought into force as long as some of the states in the region refused to recognize each other.

This point illustrates the extent to which the creation of a WMDFZ is intimately bound up with broader political and security issues in the Middle East. It also illustrates the fact that no progress is possible on any issue of the arms control agenda, least of all such a fundamental security question as a WMDFZ, without the progressive development of an atmosphere of trust and reconciliation which is the motivating force behind the broader objectives of a regional security regime. This demonstrates the importance of CSBMs as they relate to overall regional arms control.

While formal, conventional arms control negotiations are unlikely to succeed in the region as a whole for some time, specific cases of bilateral or subregional concern may be amenable to such negotiations and such efforts should be encouraged. The third issue is the relationship of such a regional WMDFZ regime to the existing global arrangements for the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, such as the NPT, the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention and the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Most members of the group took the view that universal adherence to these arrangements is desirable; many regarded it as essential. However, there was some difference of view as to whether such adherence was a precondition for establishing a WMDFZ or an

outcome, combined with special regional arrangements. A minority view was also expressed that adherence to the international agreements was not, in itself, the critical factor, so long as appropriate and equally binding regional variants could be achieved. The Expert Group was unable to reach consensus on these questions, but many of its members took the view that the answer lies in developing the notion that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive.

The issue of the verification of such a zone will be extremely important. Some Expert Group members maintained that the case of Iraq demonstrates that the verification protocols associated with existing international arrangements are not sufficient for the Middle East. While others disagreed with this claim, all members of the group accepted the notion that any future Middle East WMDFZ will have to incorporate special and additional verification measures if it is to be politically, technically and publicly acceptable. The Expert Group did not possess the technical qualifications to enter into detailed discussions of these measures. However, there was general agreement that any special verification regime would have to allow for mutual, reciprocal and intrusive inspections of both a routine and challenge nature. Whether this would be done by the countries involved directly or by a special organization set up for the purpose and employing their nationals, was also raised as an important question for further discussion. The case of the Argentine–Brazilian Nuclear Accounting and Controls Commission—a bilateral nuclear control commission which the group examined in detail—may offer useful insights for further discussion of this issue.

As a final point, and although all were agreed on the need to develop appropriate ideas to help halt and reverse the development of WMD in the region, some pointed out that the imperative to accomplish this objective should not be used as an excuse to impose restrictions on their country's access to technology for legitimate purposes. Fears were expressed that an approach to the WMD issue which stressed a 'supply-side' philosophy of export controls would not work. These lead to resentment, and can be defeated by a determined state. Others expressed the view that such controls would be necessary for some time to come, although they accepted their inherent long-term weaknesses and the fact that the adversarial approach they signify is inconsistent with the wider objectives of a cooperative regional security regime. All were agreed that the adoption of and adherence to a set of broader guiding principles for regional conduct, as outlined in a previous section of this report, would provide a basis for arguing that those states which had done so should not be subject to export restrictions. Ultimately, this will be a process of developing trust between former adversaries, a point which again highlights the importance of CSBMs.

Conventional arms control

Although weapons of mass destruction have commanded a considerable share of the public debate on Middle East security and arms control, it was recognized by group members that conventional weapons have caused far more deaths in the region and consumed a much greater proportion of its arms budgets than WMD. While weapons of mass destruction are easily identifiable, carry a social and

political stigma, and can have relatively limited sources of supply and few military purposes, conventional weapons are multifaceted in their roles and ubiquitous in their supply. They are also not the subject of international treaties in an international system which recognizes the inherent right of states to provide for their self-defence.

The group members recognized that any proposal to eliminate conventional weapons from the region would be naive, but they did believe that the countries of the Middle East spend a dangerously disproportionate share of their limited wealth on conventional weaponry. One of the fundamental objectives of any regional security regime must be to assist them to reduce such spending so that resources can be spent on more productive avenues of social and economic development. The Middle East simply cannot afford to sustain its current levels of spending on conventional weaponry.

Unlike the case of weapons of mass destruction, however, much spending on conventional arms in the region is done to address primarily subregional concerns. The Arab countries of the Gulf do not buy conventional weapons because of the Arab dispute with Israel, for example, nor is it probable that the conventional capabilities of the Maghreb states figure prominently in Gulf military planning. Instead, in each case, conventional weapons are bought because of perceived threats closer to home. This is not completely true, of course, but it is a definite trend in basic terms.

Thus, while any arms control approach to WMD in the Middle East will have to take place simultaneously on a regional scale, it is possible to e
nvisage the approach to the problem of conventional arms reductions as essentially subregional, with some broad regional issues addressed in an umbrella agreement. One of these, for example, would have to be an arrangement whereby conventional forces in one subregion could not be quickly introduced into another, thereby upsetting the balance. Such principles would have to be endorsed by both the states of the region and the major suppliers of conventional weapons outside the Middle East. Furthermore, in its early stages, such a process might not require deep cuts, but rather the achievement of a 'balance' of conventional forces in the subregions, although what such a balance might be would ultimately be a political decision.

Most important in this process will be a recognition that the purchase of weapons is bound up with broader security questions. Pressures to purchase weapons will be eased in proportion to the extent to which broader security anxieties are reduced. Inasmuch as it can serve as a vehicle for such an easing of tensions in the Middle East, a future security regime will make its greatest contribution to conventional arms control in the short to medium term. In this way, a regional security regime has the potential to assist the states of the region in managing the flow of weapons into and around the region and to provide grounds for helping to create the conditions in which the states of the region may be able to restrain their appetite for such weapons. Of course, there are more specific ideas which can be incorporated into the decision-making process when-

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Conventional arms control

- The Middle East states spend a disproportionate amount on conventional arms.
- A regional security regime must strive to create an environment which will make it possible for them to exercise restraint, while accepting the notion that all states have a right to acquire some arms for their legitimate self-defence requirements.
- Extra-regional suppliers of weapons must also accept this need and demonstrate a willingness to forgo excessive arms sales in the region.
- Unlike a regional WMDFZ, which must exist throughout a region, conventional arms control might best be dealt with subregionally, within the context of a broad overall approach to the issue.
- As a first step towards a regional conventional arms control regime, states should begin to discuss with each other, on a subregional and non-committal basis, their threat perceptions, doctrines and the reasons why they acquire various conventional weapons.
- While formal, conventional arms control negotiations are unlikely to succeed in the region as a whole for some time, specific cases of bilateral or subregional concern may be amenable to such negotiations and such efforts should be encouraged.

ever states of the region consider the purchase of new conventional weapons or states outside the region consider whether to sell them.

Perhaps the most important of these is enhanced dialogue between regional military establishments over the process whereby states decide to purchase conventional weapons and how they will deploy them. While no one in the Expert Group expected states to give up important military secrets, there was a feeling that some arms purchases in the region are undertaken because states harbour fears of each other which could be lessened through the greater exchange of views on threat perceptions and military planning. Fundamentally, there is a need for the states of the region to begin to talk to each other about what conventional weapons they believe they need and why. Such discussions could, at first, be non-committal and of the character of sharing 'threat perceptions', rather than specific information on military budgets and purchases. Moreover, such a process of dialogue would not result in an overnight reduction of conventional inventories, nor should it be expected to. However, such discussions, carried out in good faith over a period of time, and in concert with conscientious adherence to the broader guiding principles of regional relations, could lay the foundation for much greater restraint in the acquisition of conventional weapons on the part of the states of the region.[8] Once again, the essential link between confidence building and broader arms control objectives is highlighted by this statement.

It is obvious from the above discussion that group members did not believe that formal negotiations on conventional arms control are likely to open in the Middle East for some time. It is far more useful to try to develop conditions in which states in the region, and external weapon suppliers, will act informally to

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[8] It was pointed out that mechanisms to promote transparency already exist in the form of the UN Arms Register and the associated UN Register of Military Spending. Few regional countries, however, regularly return data to either of these registers.

restrain the situation Towards a regional security regime for the Middle East: conclusions and discuss with each other how this might be done. The first stages of this process could be accomplished through the sorts of initiatives generally associated with CSBMs, particularly as regards dialogue. In this context, discussions on such issues as military restructuring, doctrines, force deployments and the general state of readiness would be particularly useful.

There is one circumstance where formal negotiations and agreements to constrain conventional arms may be helpful, however. In situations where nations face each other across a tense border, bilateral or even subregional agreements to limit deployments can have a positive impact. These agreements can be negotiated either as a part of an agreement to resolve the particular dispute, or as a measure to freeze the conflict so that it does not break out inadvertently. In the latter case, such arrangements need to be based on the notion that neither side is renouncing its larger political claim. The Expert Group studied the Egypt–Israel experience with such arrangements in the Sinai and was convinced that there is no practical reason why such arrangements cannot work in other areas of the Middle East if the political will is there.

Missile control

The introduction of ballistic missiles into the Middle East is having a particularly destabilizing impact, regardless of whether they are armed with conventional warheads or used as delivery vehicles for weapons of mass destruction. Because of their increasing ranges, short flight times and the great difficulty of defending against them, missiles tend to raise the level of tension inherent in any crisis. The time required to properly assess the other side's intentions is dramatically shortened and the likelihood of mistakes increases. Military commanders are more likely to perceive themselves as faced with the need to adopt strategies which force them either to pre-empt or launch at the first sign of warning. Some members of the Expert Group also identified a disturbing trend towards acquisition of anti-ballistic missile systems by states in the region. This could further complicate regional defence planning and will certainly cost much more than the states of the region already spend on weapons.

It is unlikely that any proposal to ban ballistic missiles from the Middle East will succeed in the short to medium term. The genie is already out of the bottle. There are also legitimate reasons for states in the region to possess such technologies (e.g., space-launch capabilities). The reasons for possessing long-range missiles overlap and include bilateral, subregional, regional and extra-regional security problems. No single measure is likely to address all of these concerns for all states in the region, and if one state retains missiles others will feel compelled to do so as well. The best that can be hoped for is a recognition that the elimination of such weapons, like the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, should be one of the most important arms control issues for a future regional security regime. In the meantime, states should be encouraged to exercise self-restraint in their approach to these weapons.

Missile control

- Ballistic missiles, whether armed with conventional warheads or weapons of mass destruction, represent a dangerous escalation of the regional arms race and exacerbate regional tensions, particularly in times of crisis.
- The trend towards acquisition of anti-ballistic missile systems by the states of the region is also of concern.
- A regional security regime must seek to eliminate them from the region, although this will be a long-term goal.
- Control of ballistic missiles in the region is more likely to take the form of unilateral restraint by states than binding agreements, at least for the first few years, but binding restraints will ultimately be necessary.
- Steps which would be useful in this regard might be pre-notification of launches, range limitations and the capping of missile stocks.
- The interplay between missiles and certain types of conventional weapons must be recognized and understood.

At the same time, however, as is the case with weapons of mass destruction in the region, discussions can begin on how to establish a regime for the elimination of ballistic missiles from the region. Such talks will be difficult in that it may not prove possible to completely eliminate such weapons. This will render verification more problematic in that a partial ban is more difficult to verify than a complete one. Instead, such things as launch pre-notifications, capping arsenals and range limitations may have to be introduced. In some cases, advanced conventional weaponry—particularly long-range strike aircraft—is cited by the states of the region as the motivation for their efforts to procure missiles. This again highlights the critical interplay between restraint in the acquisition of conventional and non-conventional weapons.

4. A way ahead

In considering how to translate their ideas into concrete steps towards the creation of a regional security regime for the Middle East, the Expert Group recognized that it may take time before the governments of the region are prepared to accept some of the ideas advanced in this report. However, there was widespread consensus that the region needs to move quickly. Already, pressures created by demographic and environmental change are placing new strains on governments of the region and exacerbating old ones. Unless the region can move beyond its current malaise, it faces the prospect of its old problems making its new ones more difficult to deal with.

In this context, it may be time for governments of the region, or at least those willing to do so, to begin non-binding and informal discussions on a set of broad guiding principles for regional security. This report makes proposals as to what those principles might include while recognizing the importance of further progress in the peace process as an impetus to the creation of a regional security regime for the Middle East. Many members of the Expert Group took the view that at least making a tentative start towards defining the long-term security objectives of the region could have a beneficial complementary impact on the peace process.

The reticence of some states to make the necessary long-term commitments required by the peace process may reflect concerns that broader regional trends are not encouraging. In such an atmosphere, unwillingness to make immediate concessions becomes bound up with concerns about the future. The resulting process is as destructive to the hopes for peace as it is self-reinforcing. It is important today to try to break out of that cycle and gradually replace it with a positive and constructive one.

In considering how to move ahead, it seems unlikely that broadly based official discussions of all the ideas in this report will be possible soon, and this is regrettable. However, that does not mean that some sort of dialogue on these ideas cannot take place. One possible avenue for such discussions might be Track Two initiatives.

The use of Track Two mechanisms is a creative way around several problems. It permits experts from the regions and governments to put forward and consider ideas without necessarily having to adopt them as 'policy' before they have had a chance to develop their thoughts and see how others will react. Track Two initiatives can also circumvent many of the problems that are created by countries which do not officially recognize each other. It is much easier for officials from countries which do not recognize each other to meet at an academic session than at an official one, provided all of the players recognize the ground-rules.

In particular, many Expert Group members expressed the view that Track Two work must begin to develop what was called 'a culture of peace' in the region. Such a culture would be one in which officials and experts would try to develop a lexicon of concepts related to the way a peaceful Middle East might 'look' and

function. Another suggestion was the creation of a Track Two 'way ahead' group for the region: a group of noted experts from the Middle East and elsewhere who would meet regularly to list achievable objectives, monitor the progress of its implementation and draw up new lists as political circumstances made this possible.

Track Two is not a new idea. Such East–West dialogues were conducted throughout the cold war. The Asia–Pacific approach to regional security has elevated Track Two to a position of almost semi-official status. Even in the Middle East, the Track Two approach has been a part of the regional dialogue for many years. There are presently several Track Two initiatives under way on regional security of which this Expert Group is only one.

Members of the group believed that there is a need to place Track Two in the Middle East on a firmer footing. In particular, governments of the region need to demonstrate a greater commitment to it than they have to date, and Track Two meetings must begin to take on the character of a coherent *process* which is ongoing, rather than a series of isolated meetings. This desire to create a continuing process was part of the reason why the SIPRI Middle East Expert Group was organized as it was, and the group will continue to develop the ideas contained in this report in detail.

However, nothing can replace official discussions on these issues. Track Two can help to prepare the ground, but at some point governments must make the transition from talking about security in an academic setting to agreeing on it at the negotiating table. It is possible to construct many scenarios as to when and how that might happen, but the key is political leadership, courage and vision. As in all of the great changes which have taken place in the world in recent years (e.g., glasnost, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of apartheid) and those which have taken place in the Middle East itself (the Camp David Accords and the Oslo Process), great leaders must recognize that they cannot continue as in the past and must accept the need for far-reaching change. The Middle East stands at such a juncture today.

5. Towards a regional security regime for the Middle East: conclusions

The members of the Expert Group came from many nations and backgrounds to offer this report as a means to stimulate further discussion. These ideas do not constitute the final word or the only possible approach to securing a more peaceful future for the Middle East. It was the belief of the group that it is important for citizens and governments of the region to begin seriously to discuss these ideas and act upon them, no matter how tentatively they may do so at first. The fact that the SIPRI Expert Group was able to embark upon a serious, mature and in-depth process of intellectual consideration of these difficult issues proves that it can be done. Discussions of these issues need not degenerate into polemical arguments.

The group members recognized the challenges which face the region in undertaking the steps necessary to realize the ideas outlined here. Taken to their logical conclusion, these ideas represent a fundamental reordering of the security environment in one of the world's most troubled regions. Moreover, although they are dramatic, the ideas in this report present a *starting point* for the steps which need to be taken to secure a more peaceful future for the Middle East. There are many issues relating to social, economic and political reforms which were only touched upon in this report, as group members believed that these issues would require a different type of security regime than the one which they believe is possible in the Middle East today. The essential relevance of these issues to security in the region is without question, however.

Although the current situation in the Middle East may cause readers to legitimately wonder whether any of these ideas can be achieved, the members of the Expert Group felt that they could not accept such a view. To despair is to surrender the future to the forces of intolerance which are all too prevalent in the Middle East today. If official discussions of some of these issues are not possible, unofficial discussion must go ahead in the meantime.

The Middle East stands poised at the edge of an era of rapid change from which there is no going back. Its citizens and their leaders have difficult choices to make. They can go on as before; this is the easy path in a political sense. Or they can summon the courage to attempt some difficult and even frightening changes; this will be much harder politically. However, all of the members of the Expert Group were united in the view that change is coming to the region. The politically easy path, going on as before, will not prevent it. Instead, it will ultimately lead to change under conditions of greater suffering and unpredictability. Nor will some states be able to shield themselves from the adverse effects of change by virtue of advanced technology or wealth. The kinds of crises which confront the Middle East in the near future will affect everyone in the region and many outside of it at a basic level. The only way to avoid them is to prevent them. And the only way to prevent them is to accept the notion that the security of the Middle East is an indivisible whole which its peoples must stop competing over and begin to shape together through cooperation.

Afterword. Lessons from the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group

Introduction

No official negotiations on arms control and disarmament in the Middle East have been held since the demise in 1995 of the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group (ACRS), one of the thematic working groups established in 1991 under the Madrid framework for Middle East peace negotiations.[1] ACRS remains the only attempt ever made in the region at official multilateral talks on these issues.

Nevertheless, there have been other significant developments related to Middle East arms control and disarmament in the past two decades. One was the work of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM; 1991–99), mandated to ensure the dismantlement of Iraq's capabilities to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Although UNSCOM was disparaged at the time by the administration of United States President George H. W. Bush, and it was hardly submitted to in a voluntary or cooperative manner by Iraq, it proved that a WMD inspections regime can be effective and represents something of a precedent for discussions of a future WMD-free zone, at least in its verification aspects. In the early 1990s the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the USA) made some desultory efforts to develop a common approach on supplies of conventional arms to the region, but little came of them. Since the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA)—the voluntary mechanism for reporting arms transfers to and from UN member states—was launched in 1991, the Middle East has had one of the worst reporting records of any region.[2]

Meanwhile, Iran has progressed in its nuclear programme to the point that few still believe that it is solely about the peaceful application of nuclear technology—although a debate rages over whether Iran has decided to develop nuclear weapons or only seeks to become a 'threshold state', capable of producing a

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[1] For more on ACRS see Fahmy, N., 'Special comment', *Disarmament Forum*, no. 2, 2001, pp. 3–5; Feldman, S., *Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control in the Middle East* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1997), especially pp. 7–16; Jentleson, B., *The Middle East Arms Control and Security Talks: Progress, Problems and Prospects*, IGCC Policy Paper no. 2 (University of California: Los Angeles, 1996); Jones, P., 'Arms control in the Middle East: is it time to renew ACRS?', *Disarmament Forum*, no. 2, 2005, pp. 56–62; Jones, P., 'Negotiating regional security in the Middle East: the ACRS experience and beyond', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3 (Sep. 2003); and Landau, E., *Arms Control in the Middle East: Cooperative Security Dialogue and Regional Constraints* (Sussex Academic Press: Brighton, 1996).

[2] Holtom, P., Béraud-Sudreau, L. and Weber, H., 'Reporting to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms', SIPRI Fact Sheet, May 2011, <http://books.sipri.org/product_info?c_product_id=424>.

This text is based on a background paper originally presented at the EU Seminar to Promote Confidence Building and in Support of a Process Aimed at Establishing a Zone Free of WMD and Means of Delivery in the Middle East, organized by the EU Non-proliferation Consortium, which took place in Brussels, 6–7 July 2011.

nuclear weapon but not crossing that line. Fears are also growing that non-state actors in the region may master crude but effective WMD technologies. Importantly, the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) adopted language calling for concrete action within a specified time frame to advance the long-standing idea of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East.[3]

The Middle East is currently undergoing one of its most profound political upheavals in decades. Although it is too soon to say whether the ultimate impact of the events of the so-called Arab Spring will be positive, the mere fact that despots have been overthrown by popular action has taken the region in a new direction. Many of the national governments which emerge are likely to be more influenced by popular opinion than their predecessors.

Taken together, all of these events and trends demonstrate not only the ongoing need for regional dialogue over security and arms control issues, but also the continuing complexity and difficulty of starting such a process.

This afterword seeks to draw some lessons from the experience of ACRS and subsequent work on Middle East regional security that could be relevant for current and future arms control and disarmament efforts in the region, particularly in light of recent developments. It first reviews the ACRS experience and identifies issues which confronted the group. It then considers ideas which have emerged from Track Two work on regional security. The afterword closes by offering some conclusions.

The Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group

Overview

The Madrid framework for Middle East peace negotiations, sponsored by the USA and the Soviet Union (later Russia), featured an interlocking framework of bilateral and multilateral talks.[4] Aimed at resolving specific bilateral disputes, the bilateral talks involved Israel in direct negotiations with its neighbours Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinians and Syria.[5] The bilaterals were complemented by a set of multilateral talks involving a broad range of parties from the Middle East and beyond, aimed at resolving wider regional issues. There were five thematic multilateral working groups, of which ACRS was one. Each had an extra-regional chair (or 'gavel') and met both in plenary and in intersessional groups.[6] The official multilateral activities effectively ended in 1995, as the bilateral process faltered.

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[3] Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, opened for signature 1 July 1968, entered into force 5 Mar. 1970, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 729 (1970). 'The Middle East, particularly implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East', Conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions, 2010 NPT Review Conference, Final Document, NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I), 28 May 2010, <http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2010/>, pp. 29–31.

[4] The Madrid process was officially launched at the Madrid Peace Conference in Oct. 1991.

[5] Initially, negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians took place in nominally bilateral meetings between Israel and Jordan, at Israel's insistence.

[6] For more on the multilaterals see Peters, J., *Pathways to Peace: The Multilateral Arab–Israeli Peace Talks* (Royal Institute of International Affairs: London, 1996).

Informal activities continued in many areas, however, sometimes on a Track Two basis.[7]

ACRS held six plenary sessions between May 1992 and December 1994. A number of intersessional activities also took place, both in and outside the region. These intersessional activities were largely organized into two 'baskets': operational and conceptual. By and large, the operational basket concentrated on the negotiation of specific confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). These were often based on CSBMs that had been adopted in other regions, although considerable effort was expended on adapting them to the Middle East. The conceptual basket dealt with longer-term questions, including threat perceptions, visions of a future regional security order and how to deal with the region's WMD problems.

There are many reasons, including logistical, why this two-basket structure was chosen. A significant feature was that it separated the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the region from specific CSBMs being developed for implementation. Although it was never officially stated that the nuclear question was a long-term one, placing it in the ACRS conceptual basket implied that it was seen as a question to be addressed only once the regional security dynamic had changed considerably. This was the view held by Israel. Egypt argued that the nuclear question must be addressed early in the negotiations, a position supported to varying degrees by the other Arab delegations. Egypt proposed that, at the least, Israel should specify a date or set of conditions for it to renounce its nuclear ambiguity and join the NPT. Israel refused to do so and Egypt eventually declined to participate in further sessions of ACRS.

Nonetheless, ACRS was a considerable success in many ways. It accomplished a great deal, particularly in the elaboration of several far-reaching CSBMs. Although none of the ACRS texts was ever formally adopted, some of its proposals have been informally implemented by states of the region.

Why ACRS collapsed

The reason for the demise of ACRS lies, in part, in the political realities of the Middle East as the peace process was faltering. This was a dynamic beyond ACRS; if all of the multilateral talks failed, it is difficult to see how ACRS could have continued. But there were also problems with the way ACRS was structured. Indeed, ACRS stalled before the other four multilateral working groups because of the differences over the nuclear issue.

The first key problem of ACRS was its composition. As ACRS was a part of the Middle East peace process, Iran, Iraq and Libya were not invited to participate

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[7] 'Track Two diplomacy' refers to low-profile meetings between non-officials from the countries involved. Track Two diplomacy has been much used in the Middle East over many years on such issues as the Israeli–Palestinian dispute. For more on this, and on Track Two generally, see Agha, H. et al., Z., *Track-II Diplomacy: Lessons from the Middle East* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 2004); Fisher, R. J., 'Historical mapping of the field of interactive conflict resolution', eds J. Davies and E. Kaufman, *Second Track/Citizen's Diplomacy: Concepts and Techniques for Conflict Transformation* (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, MD, 2002), pp. 61–80; and Jones, P., *Canada and Track Two Diplomacy* (Canadian International Council: Toronto, Dec. 2008), section 1.

by the ACRS gavels. It may be that the USA was not prepared to involve these states because of its own differences with them, and it is anyway unlikely that they would have agreed to participate had they been invited, as they did not support the peace process. Of the Arab states directly involved in the peace process, neither Lebanon nor Syria would agree to participate in the multilateral groups until their bilateral negotiations with Israel had reached resolution. These absences had a critical impact on the ability of the working group to seriously address regional security issues. For example, it is hard to imagine how discussion of a regional WMD-free zone could have borne fruit without the involvement of Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria—all states suspected at the time of WMD activities.

The second problem was that ACRS made discussion of regional security an element of the Arab–Israeli peace process, even though security in the Middle East is about much more than the Arab-Israeli dispute. Many Arab delegates, for example from Gulf states, said privately that they were not especially concerned about Israel and could have adopted CSBMs with that country if the political situation had permitted. These states would have liked to explore CSBMs with their immediate neighbours, but ACRS did not allow space for such discussions.[8] Moreover, with Iran and Iraq not participating it is difficult to see how there could have been serious discussions of Gulf issues.

The third problem lay in the conditionality some parties brought to the negotiations. At least two distinct but interrelated attempts to impose conditionality affected ACRS. First, a peace process-wide linkage was created between the bilateral and multilateral negotiations. Many Arab delegations expressed a fear that going 'too far' in the multilateral talks would 'reward' Israel with normalized relations before it had made the necessary concessions in its dealings with the Palestinians and, to a lesser extent, the Syrians. As a result they deferred the adoption of many ACRS texts for reasons that had little to do with ACRS itself. Second, and more serious in many ways, was the insistence by many Arab states on early Israeli commitments in the area of nuclear disarmament as a condition for further progress in the ACRS discussions.

Finally, ACRS did not begin with serious discussions on the concept of a truly indigenous Middle East cooperation and security system. There was some discussion of regional mechanisms at the very start, but this consisted largely of a series of lectures on the experiences of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), but without any in-depth consideration of whether other regional models were even appropriate for the Middle East, or of how such a regime might be created there. Indeed, the underlying assumption of many delegations regarding broader questions of regional security was that the success of the peace process would provide a vision of the Middle East around which to frame a regional cooperation and security structure. Thus, regional security was cast chiefly as a function of the resolution of the Arab–Israeli dis-

[8] There was informal discussion by some ACRS participants of the idea of creating a subregional process within ACRS, but it was never seriously acted upon before the group stalled. This and other observations of the internal workings of ACRS are based on the author's recollections.

pute. In fact, even if the Arab–Israeli dispute were to be resolved tomorrow, there would be many other serious security issues to be dealt with in the Middle East.

Lessons from the ACRS experience

If some new form of official regional arms control and security dialogue is created, the states concerned would do well to reflect on the experience of ACRS and learn some lessons from it. In particular, they should avoid some of the approaches that undermined the success of ACRS. The following six points recommend some changes in approach. They are not meant to be an exhaustive list but to provide a starting point.

Discussion of regional security and arms control should not be made part of the Arab–Israeli peace process. The Middle East needs a dialogue on the subject of regional security for its own sake, not as an offshoot of the peace process. Inevitably there will be a relationship between the willingness of Middle Eastern states to consider new approaches to regional security and the success of the peace process, but that relationship should not be institutionalized. There are many security issues between, and within, states in the Middle East that involve the Arab–Israeli dispute only peripherally, if at all. More people have died in the region's other conflicts than have died in Arab–Israeli conflicts, and the only instances of WMD use in the Middle East have had nothing to do with the Israeli–Palestinian issue.[9]

Another benefit of separating any new regional security and arms control talks from the peace process is that it could allow states like Iran to reconsider their participation. This may require a creative approach at first; for example, contacts involving representatives of certain states acting in their official capacities may not be possible, but a semi-official Track One and a Half approach might allow at least preliminary discussions to go forward.[10] Some experiences from Asia could be relevant here.

The value of process should be recognized. ACRS became very focused on achieving results in the form of signed agreements. This created an opportunity for those who wanted to demand trade-offs to stall the process. It also meant that there was little time for the sort of discussion process that allows parties to educate each other about their needs and perceptions and, in doing so, build confidence. Experience shows that the creation of a new regional security dynamic is a lengthy, and by no means linear, process. Indeed, in those regional processes that have greatly changed the perceptions and dynamics of other regions of the world, long-term, regular interaction and dialogue has been at least as important as any of the specific agreements achieved.

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[9] E.g. chemical weapons were used in the 1962–67 civil war in the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen), in the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq War, for internal suppression in Iraq.

[10] Track One and a Half could be characterized as informal discussions that are facilitated by unofficial bodies, but directly involve officials from the conflict in question. For more information see Nan, S. A., 'Track one-and-a-half diplomacy: contributions to Georgian–South Ossetian peacemaking', R. J. Fisher, *Paving the Way: Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking* (Lexington Books: New York, 2005).

Any future efforts should begin with sustained dialogue over what states of the region want to come out of the process—in effect, an exploration of first principles. There should be discussions about threat perceptions, examinations of how other regions have approached regional security (not in order to imitate them, but as a stimulant to Middle Eastern thinking about how a unique and indigenous process could be created), and a discussion of what 'security' means in the Middle East context.

New topics, structures and approaches should be explored. As the Arab Spring is demonstrating, there are many issues that need to be discussed in the Middle East that are only peripherally related to security as traditionally defined. It is increasingly necessary for states of the region to have a dialogue over how they will manage change in their countries in such a way as to avoid confrontation. Topics that could be discussed include the security consequences of environmental change and even social issues with a security bearing for the region.

Above all, the states of the region must take the lead in developing a vision of the region's future and needs—extra-regional players cannot force such a shared vision to emerge, although they have an important facilitative role to play. Such an indigenous process is easy to talk about but may prove harder to realize. Many Middle Eastern states have specifically avoided such discussions in the past because they did not want to confront the difficult issues that they would raise. That may eventually change as a consequence of the Arab Spring, but it is not yet certain. The willingness of at least some states of the region to take the lead, perhaps not right away but at some point after a new process begins, will be a key indicator of how successful a new regional security process is likely to be.

It is impossible to say in advance what the structure of such a process might look like, but it probably will not resemble ACRS. For example, instead of the conceptual and operational baskets, the new process might develop into an interlocking set of region-wide and subregional dialogues, depending on the issues in each case. The key is to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

The goal should not be a specific agreement but a new approach to regional cooperation and security. In the detailed discussions of texts at ACRS meetings it was sometimes forgotten that no one agreement, no matter how ambitious, can serve as the foundation of a new approach to regional security in the Middle East. Thus, any successor to ACRS must be structured to recognize a very different relationship between arms control and security questions. Simply put, it is the creation of a new approach or system for regional dialogue and cooperation that will set the stage for successful arms control. Research and writing on this idea have explored the concept of some sort of Middle East cooperation and security structure. Much of this research has drawn on the experiences of other regions, such as Asia and Europe, although the Middle East is, of course, unique.[11]

Expectations should be kept realistic, especially at first. Whatever structure a Middle Eastern dialogue eventually has, it will be a long-term, multigenerational

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[11] See e.g. sections 1–5 in this volume; Feldman and Toukan (note 3); and the collection of essays in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3 (Sep. 2003), 'Building regional security in the middle east: international, regional and domestic influences', special issue.

process. Placing too high expectations on a new process at its outset will only lead to frustration. Moreover, it is naive to believe that all issues of Middle East security can be addressed by any one process, particularly in the early stages. Some issues will continue to be discussed in other forums, or even bilaterally.

Demands that one side or the other renounce long-standing security policies as a prelude to beginning a process—such as the Egyptian demands in the ACRS process regarding Israel's nuclear ambiguity—are not realistic. Such policies are renounced as a result of a process that changes regional security realities. This is particularly true of the WMD concerns in the Middle East. Indeed, the renunciation of such policies is itself more often a complex process than a single event.[12] Even if a state commits to ridding itself of its WMD capability, it is likely to hedge until it is certain that the regional security situation has developed to the point where a rapid deterioration is no longer possible.[13] Given the difficult history of the Middle East and its many interlocking rivalries, it is likely that attempts to establish a Middle Eastern WMD-free zone would have to deal with hedging by several potential members for a time. Thus, at least in its WMD dimension, a new regional arms control and security dialogue would initially seek to (*a*) impose some rules on hedging behaviour; (*b*) offer rewards for those who go beyond hedging and completely renounce the WMD option, including security guarantees; and (*c*) promote the eventual renunciation of hedging itself, although that would take years and only be achieved in the context of fundamental changes in the regional security paradigm.[14]

The optimal role for extra-regional actors should be considered. ACRS was chaired by Russia and the USA, with the USA leading. Other extra-regional states facilitated work on specific CSBMs. The involvement of key extra-regional states is necessary to provide, for example, financial support. Nevertheless, consideration must be given to what role external actors should have in any successor to ACRS. It might be more appropriate for external actors to act as facilitators rather than leading and directing the process. The USA will, however, be critical in providing such things as security guarantees if arms control agreements are struck.

As for other extra-regional states, care must be taken to invite only those that have a helpful role to play, and can play it without overwhelming the process. The extra-regional participants in ACRS outnumbered the regional participants by three to one, which bogged down the process and introduced numerous unhelpful agendas.

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[12] See e.g. Paul, T. V., *Power versus Prudence: Why Nations Forgo Nuclear Weapons* (McGill-Queens University Press: Montreal, 2000); Reiss, M., *Bridled Ambition: Why States Constrain Their Nuclear Capability* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press: Washington, DC, 1995); Solingen, E., 'The political economy of nuclear restraint', *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 2 (fall 1994); and Potter, W. C., *The Politics of Nuclear Renunciation: The Cases of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine*, Occasional Paper no. 22 (Henry L. Stimson Center: Washington, DC, Apr. 1995).

[13] The idea of hedging was advanced by Ariel Levite. Levite, A. E., 'Never say never again: nuclear reversal revisited', *International Security*, vol. 27, no. 3 (winter 2002/03).

[14] Jones, P., *A Gulf WMD Free Zone within a Broader Gulf and Middle East Security Architecture*, Gulf Research Center Policy Analysis Paper (Gulf Research Center: Dubai, Mar. 2005).

The states of the region must take on more active leadership in determining how a new regional security and cooperation body should work. It was the constant hope of the active extra-regional participants in ACRS that they would. Many Middle Eastern states, however, preferred a more passive role, perhaps in keeping with their sense that serious discussion of regional security should await the resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict. As noted above, if a new process is to be launched, perhaps the most critical indicator of whether it will succeed will be the attitude of Middle Eastern states towards driving it themselves.

Track Two discussion of regional security since ACRS

While ACRS was active and since its demise, a set of unofficial dialogues has arisen to explore arms control and regional security issues at the level of Track Two diplomacy.[15] Some of the first Track Two activities were designed to support ACRS by helping to develop the working group's agenda and to improve regional officials' understanding of the issues they would face.[16] Track Two work was also meant to stimulate the creation of a regional epistemic community of experts—both official and academic—which could support an intensive and sustained regional arms control process.[17] As ACRS activity ground to a halt, some saw Track Two diplomacy as a way to keep a semi-official process going during what was supposed to be only a temporary hiatus. When it became apparent that ACRS was not going to restart, some of the most successful Track Two projects took on a life of their own, moving far beyond what ACRS was able to consider. Many Track Two projects have also sought to incorporate participants from states unable or unwilling to participate in ACRS.

Track Two diplomacy on regional security in the Middle East has thus now moved beyond the ACRS era and come into its own. Over several years, a variety of groups have been active.[18] In analysing the differences between the Track Two projects, they can be categorized as (*a*) those concentrating on either the Gulf or the Mediterranean as specific subregions in which a cooperation and security system should be developed first before a region-wide system; (*b*) those exploring a region-wide cooperation and security system, but not ruling out the simultaneous development of subregional approaches; and (*c*) those focussing on aspects of arms control and not addressing the question of whether region-wide or subregional approaches should be prioritized.

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[15] For more on Track Two and regional security in the Middle East see Jones, P., 'Filling a critical gap or just wasting time? Track Two diplomacy and regional security in the Middle East', *Disarmament Forum*, no. 2, 2008; Kaye, D. D., *Talking to the Enemy; Track Two Diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia* (RAND Corporation: Santa Monica, CA, 2007); and Landau (note 1), chapter 2.

[16] Personal discussions between the author and organizers of and participants in early ACRS-related Track Two projects.

[17] Epistemic communities are networks of experts who have jointly developed a common set of understandings on an issue. See Adler, E., 'The emergence of co-operation: national epistemic communities and the international evolution of the idea of nuclear arms control', *International Organisation*, vol. 46, no. 1 (1992).

[18] See Kaye (note 15), chapter 2; and Jones (note 15) for a summary and analysis of various regional security Track Two projects. The author has led or been involved in several of these projects.

A second characteristic that differentiates many of the projects is their response to the question of what kind of security is sought.[19] Most Middle East regional security projects have concentrated on either collective or cooperative security, in their state-centric meanings. *Collective security*, or *collective defence*, describes a system whereby a group of states band together to oppose a perceived common threat. An example is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was originally established to counter the threat of European Communism. *Cooperative security*, in current usage, refers to a system whereby a group of states that have identified a common set of security issues or concerns establish a set of rules of conduct and a mechanism to discuss their concerns in order to develop more predictable relations.[20] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the OSCE are examples of cooperative security arrangements.[21]

Both types of security arrangement can exist within a given space, provided that their objectives are not contradictory. For example, in Europe the OSCE coexists with NATO; the OSCE's predecessor, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), coexisted with both NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. In Asia, ASEAN coexists with collective defence arrangements such as the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), which involve two ASEAN states—Malaysia and Singapore—along with Australia, New Zealand and the UK.

Some Track Two regional security projects in the Middle East have been primarily focused on collective security, while others have examined cooperative security. Those projects examining a collective security system, whether at regional or subregional level, have envisaged the participation of a limited number of states, which would be banding together with the USA to resist a perceived aggressor.[22] Some of those that were keenest on a Gulf subregional system in the wake of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq were largely advancing the idea of a collective security arrangement between the USA and certain Gulf states, possibly to form the backbone of an eventual broader system.[23]

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[19] These ideas are further developed in Jones, P., 'Is a common threat perception a necessary precondition for the creation of a regional security and co-operation system?', *Conflict in Focus*, no. 21 (Oct. 2007). For a discussion of the different kinds of security see Dewitt, D., 'Common, comprehensive, and cooperative security', *Pacific Review*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1994).

[20] For more on cooperative security see Nolan, J. E., *Global Engagement; Cooperation and Security in the 21st Century* (Brookings Institution: Washington, DC, 1994). Confusion exists because the term *cooperative security* was used after World War I by US President Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations in a way more akin to what is now called collective security: a group of states banding together to collectively deter and resist aggression. In this paper, the term is not used in that sense.

[21] ASEAN and the OSCE both have social and economic functions which go beyond narrowly defined security.

[22] See e.g. the different ideas proposed in Yaffe, M. D., 'The Gulf and a new Middle East security system', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3 (fall 2004); and Russell, J. A., 'Searching for a post-Saddam regional security architecture', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Mar. 2003).

[23] This idea is put forward in Yaffe (note 22); Mokhtari, F., 'Security in the Persian Gulf: is a security framework possible?', *American Foreign Policy Interests*, vol. 26, no. 1 (Feb. 2004); Russell (note 22); Pollack, K. M., 'Securing the Gulf', *Foreign Affairs*, July/Aug. 2003; McMillan, J., Sokolsky, R. and Winner, A. C., 'Toward a new regional security architecture', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 3 (summer 2003); Rathmell, A., Karasik, T. and Gompert, D., 'A new Persian Gulf security system', RAND Issue Paper, 2003.

Other projects have advanced the idea of a primarily cooperative regional security system. These projects anticipated the participation of a much greater number of Middle Eastern states in a system that would be open to all. It would come about based not on a perceived common threat, in the form of a specific country, but rather on a general agreement that uncertainty and lack of common standards of behaviour were the danger. It would thus seek to develop a code of conduct and associated dialogue mechanisms to give that code effect.[24]

Matters are further confused by the fact that some of the Track Two projects have sought to tackle various geographical dimensions and some have taken an all-or-nothing approach. Most of the authors advocating a Gulf subregional approach in the wake of the invasion of Iraq argued that this would work because, as none of the states directly involved in the Arab–Israeli dispute would participate, that dispute would not feature in or dominate subregional security discussions. There is an appreciation today that initiating a purely Gulf approach would not be so easy and would not yield swift or dramatic results. The experience of several Track Two projects has shown that the Arab–Israeli dispute cannot simply be taken off the table. Moreover, Arab analysts outside the Gulf have argued that their states should be included in the subregional deliberations, as their interests are bound up in it.[25] More recently, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has suggested admitting Jordan and Morocco as members.[26] The neat separation of one subregion from the wider Middle East is thus not as easy as it seems.

Interestingly, there have been considerable differences of view among those advocating a Gulf subregional approach as to what kind of security should be sought. Particularly after the invasion of Iraq, some have envisaged a collective security arrangement that would exclude Iran.[27] Others have advanced the idea of a primarily inclusive, cooperative subregional security system.[28] This difference is important in that it demonstrates that, even within the supposedly simpler subregional approach, there are still considerable differences of opinion as to what is being sought. It is hardly surprising that progress has been far slower than anticipated by those who were early proponents of this scheme.

One interesting question in the debate between region-wide and subregional approaches is whether the two are mutually exclusive. One author, writing in the immediate aftermath of the invasion of Iraq and perhaps trying to generate policy impetus in the USA, argued that 'pan-Middle East strategies have a single major problem: they don't work' and should therefore be abandoned. Instead, he proposed that all efforts should be concentrated on a Gulf-based collective security system involving the USA and selected Gulf states which might, in time, be

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[24] See section 2 in this volume; Jones (note 14); *The Future of Gulf Security: Project Summary Report* (Stanley Foundation: Muscatine, IA, Nov. 2007).

[25] See e.g. Kadry Said, M., 'Potential Egyptian contribution to a security framework in the Gulf', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3 (fall 2004).

[26] The current GCC members are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

[27] See e.g. Yaffe (note 22); and Russell (note 22).

[28] See e.g. *The Future of Gulf Security: Project Summary Report* (note 24).

replicated in the other subregions of the Middle East and possibly be tied together into a region-wide network of collective security arrangements.[29]

Others have rejected the idea that one approach must be favoured over the other. In the late 1990s the SIPRI Middle East Expert Group examined the questions of whether collective or cooperative security arrangements and subregional or region-wide approaches were most appropriate for the Middle East. The group found that:

. . . the creation of a region-wide security regime should be undertaken in a manner which is synergistic with bilateral, multilateral or subregional approaches to security issues. This could best be accomplished by establishing a broad set of principles (for regional conduct), which would be relevant to all levels of discourse in the region and then taking a functional approach as to which issues should be dealt with at which levels and in what manner. Some issues, such as those related to weapons of mass destruction, will require a regional approach. Others may best be dealt with subregionally.[30]

The fundamental mechanism by which a sufficiently flexible concept could be achieved was identified by the SIPRI process as a 'geometry variable'.[31] This is a notion that, within the framework of an overall set of regional principles, progress on different issues will be made at different speeds and in different forums, and even by different constellations of actors, as appropriate to the issue at hand. Some approaches will be primarily collective; some will be primarily cooperative; some will be subregional; some will be region-wide. What is required, however, is an overarching set of norms of conduct to bind the whole together.

Conclusions

If another attempt is made to create a regional security and arms control dialogue in the Middle East, it should be very different from ACRS. Most importantly, it should not be linked to the Middle East peace process, even if there is inevitably an informal linkage in practice. This review of ACRS and the related Track Two projects, along with the findings of the SIPRI Expert Group, points to a few key lessons.

First, arms control agreements and an underlying security system cannot be created with a few declarations. Establishing an effective arms control and regional security system is a lengthy and difficult process of dialogue and small steps towards big goals. Expectations must be kept realistic, even as a vision that some might consider idealistic is pursued. Above all, the creation of such a system ultimately requires the states of the region to accept significant changes to their most fundamental policies, and this is something that does not usually happen quickly.

Second, process really does matter. The temptation to seek agreements too quickly should be resisted. In every other case where a region has successfully

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[29] Yaffe (note 22). Interestingly, this same article then goes on to make the point that several key issues do require a region-wide approach.

[30] See section 3 in this volume.

[31] See section 3 in this volume.

established a regional security and arms control order, the agreements have come out of a process of discussion. During this process the states of the region have educated each other as to their needs and perceptions and, in doing so, built confidence. It was from this investment in time that the outlines of subsequent arms control treaties emerged. There is no reason to expect that the Middle East will be any different.

Third, arms control is not achieved in a vacuum. Emphasis should thus be placed on creating a regional cooperation and security system first, and on arms control second. This is not to say that discussions of arms control issues should wait until a regional system has already been established; the two sets of discussions go hand in hand.

Fourth, any new process must be more inclusive than ACRS. Key states such as Iran and Iraq must be offered a seat at the table. This will require creative ways to facilitate dialogue between states that do not yet recognize each other, for example greater use of various forms of Track One and a Half and Track Two diplomacy. Who chairs the process could also be important. If the Iran–US rivalry makes it difficult for Iran to participate, perhaps others could take the lead.

Fifth, either/or or one-size-fits-all formulations as to objectives, definitions of the region and other key issues should be avoided. It is impossible to know in advance what format will work best. Where appropriate, some Middle Eastern states and some extra-regional powers will create their own collective security arrangements. This does not mean that an inclusive cooperative security system cannot also be explored. The two have coexisted in other regions to their mutual benefit. Similarly, both region-wide and subregional dialogues could be developed simultaneously—each tackling the issues that are most appropriate.

Finally, it is important to be realistic. Real change in the region's security dynamic will require reforms and changes within some states, or between them as a result of bilateral processes. The experience of other regions is that the establishment of a regional system provided a framework within which such changes could be managed peacefully, and this framework was crucial. There is, again, no reason to expect that things will be different in the Middle East.

The creation of a regional security system in the Middle East will be complex. States have different conceptions of the basic notions of security; the issue of when to take region-wide and subregional approaches requires thought; the optimal role of extra-regional powers remains vexing. One way forward may be to accept that no single approach or regional security system can possibly address all of the many questions. Rather, it might be best to focus on exploring the idea of a 'system of systems'.

The development of arms control and security systems in other regions has been a long process. Patience and a long-term view are required, along with a degree of flexibility. It may well be that, at first, not all states will be prepared to participate in official discussions until the Middle East peace process is completed. Perhaps only a few Middle Eastern states will take part in any official

track at the beginning of the process, and official discussions might have to be limited to relatively uncontroversial topics.

However, a broader cross-section of Middle Eastern states may be willing to participate in a structured, semi-official process that discusses a broad range of issues. This would require the creation of an ongoing Track One and a Half process. Such a system might draw some lessons from the practice of Track Two diplomacy in the Asia–Pacific region, where a standing unofficial process exists to complement and support the official ASEAN process. Though not without its difficulties, this process permits Asia–Pacific states to explore ideas that are too sensitive for the official process, in a low-key, relatively low-risk environment.[32]

The advantage of such a system for the Middle East would be its ability to assist the states of the region in transcending the 'recognition barrier'—that is, the barrier to talks created by the fact that Arab states, with the exception of Egypt and Jordan, do not officially recognize Israel—which is so tied up in the Arab–Israeli process. It would be important to ensure that such an unofficial setting had sufficient structure and was sufficiently connected to the official track that it was capable of fostering useful, policy-relevant discussions. Decisions could not be taken or adopted in this setting—only official meetings can do that—but it would serve at least as a forum for discussions on matters of mutual interest until political developments in the region progressed to the point where an official process could be established.

What is likely to be seen in the Middle East is some messy combination of all the structures discussed in this paper. There will continue to be bilateral security arrangements between the USA and certain states. There will continue to be a debate over whether a subregional or region-wide approach is best—and probably the two will be combined in some way. Hopefully, however, there will also be room for the development of a more cooperative type of arrangement which seeks to develop rules for regional conduct and which creates a truly region-wide mechanism for dialogue over pressing concerns. That would be a major departure from the present regional architecture.

Above all, a longer-term vision is required. Policymakers need a broad sense of where the region needs to go, even if the map to get there is not yet fully fleshed out. Policymakers need also to bear in mind that a regional security system of systems will not spring up overnight. It may, in the first instance, feature small steps over small issues. It may begin on both official and Track Two levels simultaneously. Such a system of systems is a necessary component of the Middle East's responses to what has happened in Iraq and to broader trends evident in the Arab Spring. The Middle East desperately requires rules of behaviour for its states and a mechanism to allow ongoing dialogue over security issues. Some argue that this must await the resolution of the Arab–Israeli dispute. However,

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[32] For an analysis of Track Two diplomacy on regional security in the Asia–Pacific region see Ball, D., Milner, A. and Taylor, B., 'Track 2 security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific: reflections and future directions', *Asian Security*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2006, p. 182. See also Job, B., 'Track 2 diplomacy: ideational contribution to the evolving Asian security order', ed. M. Alagappa, *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, 2002).

nowhere else in the world has it been necessary for the region's central dispute to be resolved before a new approach to regional security could be created. Indeed, the creation of such an approach has been seen as critical in managing and ultimately helping to resolve the central dispute.

Appendix. List of the participants of the SIPRI Middle East Expert Group

All members participated in their private capacities. Not all members participated in every meeting.

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**Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East:
Issues and options**

Of all the world's major regions only the Middle East lacks an inclusive system for dialogue and cooperation over security issues. Originally published in 1998, the report of the SIPRI Expert Group remains a landmark study by a distinguished group of regional experts on how such a system could be created in the Middle East. In this edition, the original report is republished in its entirety, along with an extensive new afterword by the author identifying lessons from work to date on a regional security system that are relevant to today's Middle East. This new edition is one of the most comprehensive, far-reaching examinations of regional security in one of the world's most troubled areas.

Peter Jones (Canada) is Associate Professor at the University of Ottawa Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. He spent 14 years in the Canadian Public Service, dealing with arms control, proliferation and national security affairs. During that time, he was a member of the Canadian delegation to the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group (ACRS) of the Middle East peace process. From 1995 to 1999, he led the Middle East Project at SIPRI. He holds a PhD in War Studies from King's College London and an MA in War Studies from the Royal Military College of Canada.