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THE MIDDLE EAST MULTILATERAL ARMS CONTROL AND REGIONAL SECURITY (ACRS) TALKS: PROGRESS, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS

THE MIDDLE EAST MULTILATERAL ARMS CONTROL AND REGIONAL SECURITY (ACRS) TALKS: PROGRESS, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS[*]

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Overview

The record of the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) Working Group thus far is a mixed one. On the one hand, the very creation of a multilateral process for arms control and regional security in a region where no comparable process ever before existed is in itself a significant achievement. A working agenda then was defined, and by late 1994 a series of initial multilateral agreements had been negotiated for confidence-building measures (CBMs), confidence-and-security-building measures (CSBMs), and other regional security initiatives.

Since then, however, ACRS has virtually broken down. The next steps, from negotiation to implementation, for the most part have not been taken. A number of factors have contributed to this breakdown, most notably Egypt's linkage of progress on the entirety of the ACRS agenda to the conflict with Israel on the nuclear issue. A plenary meeting has not been held for almost two years, and ACRS has gone from leader to laggard among the Middle East multilateral working groups.

Events and developments outside of ACRS also have demonstrated both the new possibilities and the continuing problems for regional security cooperation. Particularly notable achievements have been the 1994 Israel–Jordan treaty, which includes provisions going beyond bilateral security agreements to delineate shared positions on multilateral regional security issues, the military and security cooperation agreements signed between

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Israel and Turkey, and the March 1996 anti-terrorism summit held in Sharm el-Sheikh. On the other hand, progress such as in the Israel–Jordan and Israel-Turkey relationships also precipitated counter-reactions by Egypt, Syria, and others; the very need for the Sharm summit was caused by the spread and intensification of terrorism; and the April–May 1996 fighting along the Israel-Lebanon border demonstrated the risks and volatility that persist on the Syrian/Syria-dominated front.

The first section of this paper reviews ACRS' record thus far, assessing the bases both for the progress that has been achieved and for the problems that have been encountered in pursuing greater regional security cooperation. The second section advances a series of policy recommendations for enhancing prospects for getting ACRS back on track.

Assessing the ACRS Record, 1992–96

The Global and Regional Context

The double-barreled effects of the end of the Cold War and the U.S.-led victory in the 1990–91 Gulf War created unprecedented opportunities for launching the ACRS Working Group. Without the Soviet Union, Middle East "rejectionists" were bereft of a superpower patron. In contrast, with its profound political victory in the Cold War and overwhelming military victory of the Gulf War, U.S. prestige was at an all-time high—commitments had been honored and military superiority demonstrated. Moreover, however tacit and indirect their Gulf War cooperation had been, this was a conflict in which Israel and most of the Arab world found themselves at the very least with a common enemy, if not de facto on the same side. And all the "what-ifs" of the Gulf War—what if the war had spread? what if it had escalated to nonconventional weapons? what if Saddam had not been defeated?—left many Israelis and much of the Arab world with a palpable sense of having peered into the abyss. "There are real ties that bind the peoples of the Middle East together," stressed Secretary of State James Baker in his speech at the organizational meeting for the Middle East multilateral peace process held in Moscow in January 1992; they "have all suffered from the very tragic costs of war."[1]

Indeed, the rationale for an ACRS process followed especially well from the three purposes that Secretary of State Baker laid out in his speech as defining the value of the multilaterals generally: to facilitate the work of the bilaterals by sending "a powerful signal that all [regional] parties are unequivocally committed to peace and reconciliation"; to "address on their own merits a range of regional problems crying out for resolution"; and to "create a basis for greater stability in the area" and help forge "a vision of what real peace might mean."

But while the ACRS talks may have logically and conceptually fit these overarching purposes at least as well as any of the other multilaterals, a number of factors had long made the whole area of security cooperation a difficult set of issues. There is a reason, as they say, why the Middle East has lagged so far behind virtually every other region in developing multilateral regional security cooperation. The most obvious reason was the existential dimension of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Prior to the 1993–94 breakthroughs, most of the Arab parties long found it difficult to accept, much less acknowledge, Israel's right to exist as a sovereign entity in the Middle East—an essential prerequisite for any security cooperation beyond truces and cease-fires.

A second key factor is a structural one: the "strategic asymmetries" that make mutuality—indeed, even the very definition of mutuality—in security arrangements inherently problematic. These asymmetries, as Geoffrey Kemp points out, "range from the character of weapons inventories to cultural and ideological differences, including

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[1] At the October 1991 Madrid Middle East peace conference, in addition to the bilateral tracks of peace talks, five sets of multilateral "working group" talks (on water, environment, refugees, economic cooperation and development, and arms control and regional security) involving Israel and a broad range of Arab states were established. For a review of the multilaterals, see Alan Makovsky et al., *Building a Middle East Community: The Future of the Middle East Multilateral Peace Process* (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, forthcoming), and Joel Peters, *Pathways to Peace: The Multilateral Arab–Israeli Peace Talks* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996). For working group reports from IGCC's ongoing track-two Middle East multilateral talks, see IGCC Policy Papers no. 1 (all, Moscow, October 1991), no. 4 (ACRS, La Jolla, April 1993), no. 7 (ACRS, Delphi, January 1994), no. 14 (all, Vouligmeni, November 1994), and no. 23 (ACRS, Petra, December, 1995), and *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, Vol. I: Arms Control and Regional Security; Vol. II: The Environment, Water, Refugees, and Economic Cooperation and Development* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), edited by Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin.

the willingness of governments to accept casualties in war in pursuit of political ends and the nature and role of armed forces within society. Also highly relevant are geographic, demographic, and economic asymmetries."[2] While some of these elements can be mitigated by the peace process, others will remain even in the context of best-case scenarios. The obvious example is Israel's physical-territorial lack of strategic depth, which paradoxically in strict military terms could become more of a problem as the peace process "succeeds." Another example is the difference between the state-to-state definition of military parity to which the Arab states tend to subscribe— and which they argue is even more pertinent in the context of the peace process—and that of the Israelis, who hold to their need for the foreseeable future to take into account the potentially combined military capabilities of possible Arab coalitions.

A third and related factor has been fundamental differences in basic approaches to regional security cooperation, both in terms of sequencing and emphasis. The general Arab view, advocated most strongly by Egypt, has tended to give priority to direct arms control measures and, within that category, to the "nuclear issue" in particular.[3] Israel, on the other hand, has stressed the need to start with confidence-building-measures (CBMs) and confidence-and-security-building-measures (CSBMs)[4] in order, first, to establish greater political trust and make tangible, even if limited, improvements in regional security and, second, to take some initial arms control steps as necessary prerequisites for moving to broader arms control measures, which in turn would include conventional as well as nonconventional limitations. Because these differences are not only manifestations of strategic doctrine but also a political matter, they have been all the more contentious. As we will see, ACRS has continually sought to strike a balance between the two approaches, with some—but only some—success.

A fourth factor is that the Syrian boycott of the multilaterals has been more problematic for ACRS than for the other multilaterals. While Syria clearly is a key player in any and all regional arrangements, it is especially central to calculating the regional military balance. It maintains an army of over 400,000. It has the largest inventory of tanks in the region. It continues to seek to add to and advance in sophistication its arsenal of ballistic missiles and other systems capable of nonconventional weapon delivery.[5] And it continues to support terrorism. Thus, while some substantial progress can be and has been made in ACRS without Syria, the difficulties and limits imposed by Syrian nonparticipation have been much more constraining than on the other multilateral tracks.

Fifth is the problem of the "regional rogues," states such as Iraq, Iran, and Libya, which were not invited to participate in the multilaterals but which nevertheless are a factor in issues of regional security. Even with the defeat suffered in the Gulf War and the forced partial disarmament and monitoring measures imposed by the UN Security Council, the Iraqi military remains the largest in the Gulf—and it would be foolish for anyone to be

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[2] Geoffrey Kemp, "Cooperative Security in the Middle East," in *Global Engagement: Cooperation and Security in the 21st Century*, edited by Janne E. Nolan (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994), 407.

[3] I intentionally characterize this as the "general" Arab view and not the singular one. The intra-Arab differences that have existed and that have emerged over the course of ACRS will become apparent as the discussion proceeds.

[4] The distinction between CBMs and CSBMs is both policy based and conceptual. It was first made in the East–West context in the framework of the Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CDE), which was held in Stockholm between 1984 and 1986. Earlier CBM agreements dating back to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the creation of the Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) largely had involved measures of a general nature intended to provide reassurance, prevent war by misunderstanding or miscalculation, and otherwise "build confidence" of nonaggressive intent and commitment to security cooperation. As recounted by Richard Darilek,

> the addition of "security" to the title of CBMs in that document (the Stockholm Document on Confidence and Security Building Measures of 1986), thereby making them CSBMs, signified more ambitious objectives for such measures. In the language of the document the new measures were to be more "militarily significant, binding, and verifiable" than

> their predecessors. They were to have more politico-military "bite," hence a greater security component.

As quoted in Richard E. Darilek, "East–West Confidence Building: Defusing the Cold War in Europe," in *A Handbook of Confidence-Building Measures for Regional Security*, edited by Michael E. Krepon (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1993), 20–21. Roughly the same criteria have been used in ACRS to distinguish between CBMs and CSBMs.

[5] Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Arab–Israeli Conventional Balance and 'Self-Stabilizing' Deterrence," paper presented at the Workshop on Arms Control and Severity in the Middle East," sponsored by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC), Petra, Jordan, December 1995; Gerald M. Steinberg, "Israeli Security and the Peace Process," *Security Dialogue* 25 (March 1994), 54–55; see also Michael Eisenstadt, *Arming for Peace? Syria's Elusive Quest for "Strategic Parity,"* Washington Institute Policy Paper no. 31 (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992).

particularly sanguine about Saddam Hussein's intentions. Recent American and Israeli intelligence reports purport to confirm Iran's active and high-priority pursuit of nuclear weapons capability, and its continued support for terrorism. Such incidents as its clash with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over claims to the Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tumbs Islands in the Persian Gulf underscore the threat it continues to pose. Libya appears once again to be seeking to develop chemical weapons.

Finally, there have been substantial differences over whether ACRS should simply be a means of supporting the bilaterals or should vigorously pursue an independent agenda. No one involved on any side has denied the priority of the bilaterals, or of keeping to the implicit rule that the multilaterals should stay "one step behind" the bilaterals. Beyond that, though, differences have been apparent over how much of a life and agenda of their own the multilaterals in general should have, including whether they should be institutionalized so as to continue after the bilaterals. Differences here have not been strictly Arab–Israeli; different Arab states have taken different positions on just how far the building of multilateral security institutions should go.

The ACRS Working Group: Four Phases

ACRS has included 14 Middle Eastern states and parties: (1) the "core" states and parties involved in the bilateral peace negotiations: Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and (as of May 1993) the Palestinians, with Syria and Lebanon invited to participate but boycotting ACRS as well as all the other multilaterals; (2) the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates; and (3) Arab Maghreb states: Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and (as of February 1994) Mauritania.

Table 1 lists the principal ACRS meetings and activities thus far. Analytically, these can be divided into four phases:

1. *Establishing the ACRS process,* from the January 1992 Moscow organizational meeting through the September 1993 second plenary (also in Moscow).
2. *Defining an ACRS work agenda,* beginning with the May 1993 third plenary (Washington) and the launching of "intersessional" activities in the period leading up to and then following the fourth plenary in November (Moscow).
3. *Negotiating initial agreements,* on actual measures of multilateral security cooperation, albeit "first generation" ones, as continued through the fourth (November 1993, Moscow), fifth (May 1994, Doha, Qatar), and sixth (December 1994, Tunis) plenaries and the intersessional and other activities they mandated.
4. *Breakdown of the process*, as has occurred in 1995–96 for a number of reasons, most particularly Egypt's linkage of any further progress on any of the ACRS issues to the conflict with Israel over the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other issues relating to nuclear arms control.

Phase One: Establishing the ACRS Process

The guidelines set at the January 1992 organizational meeting reflected the caution and circumspection with which the participants approached the subject of arms control and regional security. First of all, as with the other multilaterals, this was to be a "working group" and not in any formal sense a negotiating round. Second, the initial approach would be a seminar-type format, emphasizing discussions and exchange of ideas, as distinct from presentation of national negotiating positions on particular issues. Third, the focus of these seminars was to be the

Table 1: ACRS Plenaries, Intersessionals, and Other Meetings and Activities

Year	Month	Event	Location
1992	January	Multilaterals Organizational Meeting	Moscow, Russia
	May	**First Plenary**	**Washington, D.C.**
	September	**Second Plenary**	**Moscow, Russia**
1993	**May**	**Third Plenary**	**Washington, D.C.**
	June	Air Base Visit	United Kingdom
	July	Verification Workshop	Cairo, Egypt
	September	NATO Exercise Observation	Denmark
		Maritime Measures Workshop	Nova Scotia, Canada
		Communications Measures Workshop	The Hague, Netherlands
	October	Information Exchange and Prenotification of Certain Military Activities Workshop	Antalya, Turkey
		Long-Term Objectives and Declaratory Measures Workshop	Vienna, Austria
	November	**Fourth Plenary**	**Moscow, Russia**
1994	January	Technical Experts Meeting on Communications	The Hague, Netherlands
	February	Conceptual Basket Workshops and Meetings	Cairo, Egypt
	March	Operational Basket Workshops	Antalya, Turkey
	May	**Fifth Plenary**	**Doha, Qatar**
	July	Maritime Demonstration Exercise	Italy
	August	Senior Naval Officers Symposium	Halifax, Canada
	October	Conceptual Basket Workshops and Meetings	Paris, France
	November	Operational Basket Workshops	Jordan
	December	**Sixth Plenary**	**Tunis, Tunisia**
1995	January	Maritime Exercise Planning Meeting	Tunis, Tunisia
	March	Communications Network Experts and Operator Training Meeting	Cairo, Egypt
	April	Operational Basket Workshops	Antalya, Turkey
	May	Communications Network Experts Meeting	The Hague, Netherlands
	July	Preparatory Meeting for Senior Naval Officers Symposium	Ontario, Canada
	September	Regional Security Centers Organizational Meeting	Amman, Jordan

experiences of non–Middle Easterners in negotiating and establishing arms control and regional security structures, particularly the United States, the Soviet Union, and Europe, with lessons to be drawn for the Middle East.

The ACRS Working Group also adopted more restrictive rules than the other multilateral working groups regarding participation of extra-regional parties. ACRS is the only working group in which the "co-sponsors" of the overall Middle East peace process, the United States and Russia, are also the working group convenors ("gavel-holders"). This reflects Israeli concern about discussing such sensitive issues under even the quasi-authority of any state other than the United States, and then the concomitant need to have the other co-sponsor share the gavel. Indeed the very participation of other extra-regionals in ACRS initially was restricted to expert-level presenters, attending on an invitation-only basis, whereas the other multilateral working groups allowed official governmental participation by extra-regional parties from the outset.

It was only after the first plenary (May 1992) that some extra-regionals other than the co-sponsors were invited to be ACRS parties. The European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) were invited to join as collective entities but not with individual country representation, an issue that grated for a number of European governments. Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Turkey, and Ukraine also were invited to join. The UN was not invited until a year later at the third plenary (May 1993). While some

individual European states did increase their involvement in 1992 and 1993 (notably the Netherlands, which mentored the Communications intersessionals), it was only at the fifth plenary (May 1994, in Doha), and at the instruction of the Steering Group, that EU and EFTA member states were granted extra-regional party status as individual states.

The first ACRS plenary, which convened in Washington in May 1992, followed the agreed-upon seminar format with briefings from experts and veterans of U.S.–Soviet and East–West European arms control and regional security negotiations. The two principal lessons stressed were that (1) while some progress was made on arms control while relations were still hostile, and while this arms control progress in turn did contribute to improved political relations, the major arms control agreements were achieved only after the political climate was substantially improved; and (2) both sides must recognize that arms control and other forms of security cooperation are not necessarily "favors" done or concessions made to the other side, but rather actions that can very much be in one's own security interest. There was a general sense among delegates that while having its limits, the East–West experience did have at least some useful applicability to the Middle East.

The second plenary (September 1992, Moscow) moved toward more explicit and direct focus on the applicability of East–West lessons to the Middle East. The United States and Russia presented a "CBM List" working chapter that was discussed at the plenary and then taken back to capitals by regional parties for analysis and comments as to applicability to the Middle East. The second plenary also called on regional parties to submit statements of their national views on long-term arms control and regional security objectives for consideration at the third plenary. Agreement was also reached on a priority list of topics for more focused attention, including a Middle East conflict prevention center; maritime measures, such as agreements for prevention of incidents-at-sea (INCSEA) and search-and-rescue (SAR); exchange of relevant military information, including establishing thresholds for prenotification of certain military activities; and declaratory measures establishing norms, principles, and statements of intentions for arms control and regional security objectives. The final plenary statement showed an interesting mix of pragmatism and vision, with its affirmation of

"ambitious goals" to be pursued in a "step-by-step, realistic way."

Yet in the process of moving toward this more direct focus on the region and its own issues, tensions and conflicts among the parties were brought more to the surface. This was evident, for example, in the comments submitted to the co-sponsors on the CBM List. The original co-sponsor list consisted almost exclusively of measures that were precursors to actual arms control, geared first to building confidence and trust in the most pressing and/or easiest areas—for example, a system for both routine and crisis communications, data exchanges on less sophisticated military equipment, and joint observations of NATO exercises.[6] Israel largely supported this approach. Egypt, however, pushed for moving toward explicit arms control measures, in particular those directed at eliminating Israel's ostensible nuclear weapons, arguing that confidence could best be built by dealing directly with threats of the greatest potential magnitude.[7]

In a sense, though, the surfacing and even intensification of these differences was entirely normal for states that had long-standing differences and a region that lacked virtually any tradition, institutions, or norms for multilateral security cooperation. Nevertheless, the very fact that Israeli and Arab states were meeting at all to discuss issues of arms control and regional security was an achievement in itself. It meant, for example, that Israel's standing doctrinal reliance on military superiority and deterrence was being tempered at least somewhat with the notion that security also could be enhanced through cooperative measures with Arab states.[8] For the Arab world, it meant not

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[6]In his speech at the January 1992 organizational meeting, Secretary Baker had stated that while not intending to "discourage or rule out" arms control measures, starting the process with CBMs and CSBMs "based on our experience offers the best chance for success." He also stressed the value of CBMs and CSBMs, given both the history of the Middle East and the reality of still-high tensions and mistrust, for dealing with the immediate requisites of "lessen[ing] the prospects for incidents and miscalculation."

[7] Jordan and Oman also submitted written comments on the CBM List. Both pushed the nuclear issue, but not nearly as hard as Egypt. For example, they called only for an Israeli statement of intent to sign the Nonproliferation Treaty, whereas Egypt called for more immediate measures like refraining from production of weapons-grade material. Aside from Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Oman no other parties submitted written comments on the CBM list.

[8] Shai Feldman and Ariel Levite, eds., *Arms Control and the New Middle East Security Environment*. (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1994); Alan Platt, ed., *Arms Control and Confidence Building in the Middle East.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1992); Steven

only a similar recognition of the possibilities for security cooperation but the beginning of an even more fundamental shift toward tacit acceptance of Israel's permanence as a state.

Moreover, the ACRS meeting also fostered a process of "mutual familiarization" among the delegates themselves. Delegations were headed at the sub-ministerial level and included military officers as well as diplomats and other civilian officials. Egypt composed its delegation principally from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel principally from its Ministry of Defense, and Jordan with the Science Advisor to King Hussein as the chief of the delegation. Many Maghreb and Gulf Arab states, though, relied more on representation from their local embassies, a practice that had obvious conveniences but left them with delegates with limited security issues expertise. Even so, there was a general feeling that the meetings—in the formal sessions and perhaps especially in the informal conversations in the corridors over cups of coffee and at receptions— were an invaluable opportunity to begin to break down stereotypes and to establish respectful and even in some instances amicable relationships. "Track two" meetings and conferences, including some run by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC), further facilitated this process by providing unofficial settings conducive to less restricted and more broadly based dialogues.

Phase Two: Defining a Work Agenda

The third plenary (May 1993, Washington) marked the transition for ACRS into a second phase, defining a work agenda. The plenary final statement affirmed consensual support for moving into "a more active stage of work." It also mandated "intersessional activities" that would meet between plenaries, each of which would focus on a specific aspect of the ACRS agenda and, led by a "mentor," would be conducted in a less formal and more hands-on manner than the plenaries, with the added participation of specialists. Extra-regional parties, including but not limited to the United States and Russia, were to be the mentors. This was both a practical and a political matter: there was now much more work to be done, yet Russia was not in a position to commit significant additional resources (manpower, let alone financial) and the United States was not inclined to do so; and many of the Europeans and other extra-regionals were dissatisfied with the highly limited role they had been allowed thus far and had significant expertise to offer.

Canada became mentor for the intersessionals on maritime measures, such as prevention of incidents-at-sea (INCSEA) and search-and-rescue (SAR) agreements, the Netherlands for communications, and Turkey for exchange of military information (EMI) and prenotification of certain military activities (PCMA). In acknowledgment of the sensitivity of the topics involved, the United States and Russia were designated co-mentors for the paired workshops on long-term objectives (LTOs) and declaratory measures (DMs) and for a workshop on verification.[9] The LTO workshop involved papers that, although not quite full doctrine, presented each party's guiding strategic objectives. The DM workshop involved efforts to agree upon a list of potential declaratory CBMs and related principles that could set norms and rules for regional security cooperation. Other areas of activities also were set up, including observation of a NATO military exercise and other extra-regional site visits, and a number of studies and papers were initiated.

It is important to note that this shift to defining a work agenda *preceded* the Israel–PLO Declaration of Principles by four months, indicating the parties already had begun to view ACRS not just as a means toward progress in the bilaterals, but as having important ends and objectives in itself.[10] That viewpoint was not universal, however. The newly participating Palestinian delegation (the May 1993 plenary was the first time the Palestinians had been granted participation in ACRS as their own delegation) sought both to ensure that any progress in ACRS did not "outpace" progress in the bilaterals and to give precedence and priority within ACRS to

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L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, eds., *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, Volume I: Arms Control and Regional Security* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995.)

[9] Both the LTO and the DM agenda items originally were pushed primarily by Egypt. The Israeli view was that the only way they would even consider the kinds of declaratory commitments that would be part of the DM workshop was if they were put in the larger strategic context of discussions of the overall long-term security objectives held by the different ACRS parties—thus, the pairing of the two workshops.

[10] It is, of course, impossible to say whether the intersessionals would have made even the initial progress they did had the Israeli-PLO DOP not been signed September 13, 1993, since most of the workshops took place after that date. Indeed, the well-attended maritime measures intersessional was meeting in Canada the actual day of the signing, and the delegates watched the signing ceremony together on television and had a celebration that evening at which position papers gave way to embraces, festivities, and what one participant characterized as "a magical evening."

political issues from the agenda of the bilaterals, such as endorsement of the idea of "self-determination."

There also continued to be differences over just how "active" this next stage of work should be. Part of the problem was the unwillingness of most Arab states to commit to the regular and expert-level participation in ACRS called for by the May 1993 plenary. Only Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinians, and Oman (as well as Israel) consistently participated in the intersessionals at the expert level; Tunisia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates did somewhat and sporadically; most other Arab states either sent non-expert representatives from local embassies or didn't attend at all. Part of the problem also was an increasingly active "anti-active agenda" role being played by Saudi Arabia (see later discussion).

Nevertheless, the intersessionals, both as independent activities and then in the "basket" format adopted at the November 1993 Moscow plenary,[11] proved to be quite an effective means of defining the ACRS work agenda:

- The LTO-DM workshops, while highly contentious and requiring long, repeated, and often difficult negotiations, did produce a draft *Declaration of Principles and Statements of Intent on Arms Control and Regional Security.* This "ACRS DOP" was modeled on and inspired both by the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, in particular its "basket one" of regional security norms and principles, and by the Israeli-PLO DOP. As drafted at the February 1994 Cairo intersessional, it had four principal components: a preamble, putting the ACRS DOP in the broader context of the various aspects of the overall Middle East peace process; a section on core principles for regional security relations, such as the peaceful resolution of conflicts; basic guidelines for the ACRS process, including the ambitious-goals/step-by-step approach and

decision making by consensus; and statements of intent on major objectives, including CSBMs, conventional arms control, and establishing a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. While the Cairo draft did contain some clear areas of disagreement,[12] the parties agreed to work on these as well as any other issues raised after delegations brought the Cairo draft back to their capitals, and to then consider formal adoption at the May 1994 Doha plenary.

- Rapid progress was made under Dutch mentorship in developing plans for an *"ACRS Communications Network."* Such a system was seen as having immediate practical value—for example, easing and improving the efficiency of ACRS-related communications—as well as longer-term potential as a CSBM with crisis-prevention and crisis-management value. The initial plan was for an interim "hub" located in The Hague piggy-backed onto the existing CSCE system based there, with a permanent system to be set up within the Middle East as soon as practical. Egypt expressed the strongest interest in being the locale for the permanent network.

- Back in the early 1970s INCSEA, and to a lesser extent SAR, were among the first areas for CBMs in U.S.–Soviet and East–West relations. The shared interests in avoiding inadvertent war (INCSEA) and for humanitarian assistance to distressed commercial and other civilian vessels (SAR) were strong, and the methods and mechanisms for cooperation were relatively non-intrusive. The same logic was followed within ACRS through Canadian-led *maritime measures* intersessionals. Discussions and working sessions made substantial progress, rapidly entering the realm of practicalities and modalities, including consideration of the applicability to both the region generally and its maritime-defined sub-regions (for example, Red Sea, Mediterranean littoral, Persian Gulf) of international agreements such as the 1979 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue; review of a draft INCSEA text prepared by mentor Canada; and contemplation of navy-to-navy contacts,

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[11] During the first intersessional period, activities were scheduled largely independently of one another. Because this made for an exceedingly grueling travel schedule, a new organizational approach of combining most of the meetings into two "baskets," one termed "conceptual" and the other "operational", was adopted at the November 1993 Moscow plenary. Included in the conceptual basket were the workshops on long-term objectives and declaratory measures, including the negotiations on the ACRS "Declaration of Principles," as well as sessions on verification, the conflict prevention/regional security center, and other topics. Included in the operational basket were the workshops on maritime measures, the communications network, and military information exchange and pre-notification.

[12] All the "bracketed text"—brackets around language in the draft indicated areas of disagreement—involved issues more central to the bilateral negotiations, as with Palestinian efforts to include explicit "right of self-determination" language in the section on regional security principles.

including greater involvement of senior naval officers in ACRS.[13]

- The *Exchange of Military Information (EMI)* and *Prenotification of Certain Military Activities (PCMA)* workshops, with Turkey serving as mentor, also sought to draw on the East–West experience. However, given the greater strategic asymmetries in the Middle East than in Cold War Europe, it quickly became clear that even more modification and adaptation would be needed in this area than in maritime measures. Moreover, the complications caused by Syria's nonparticipation are particularly acute in EMI and PCMA. Israel obviously is reluctant to share certain kinds of military information with other Arab states, from which it has to assume the information could reach Syria, without reciprocal exchange by Syria. Nevertheless some progress was made in identifying initial areas for possible information exchange (for example, unclassified military publications, organizational charts of defense ministries, biographies of senior military personnel) as well as in beginning to consider possible thresholds for prenotification of various types of military activities.

- The May 1993 Washington plenary called for "study of the concept" of a *conflict prevention center* (CPC). While there were differences over everything from its mandate as reflected in its name—a "crisis prevention" center, called on primarily at late stages of a conflict spiral, or a "conflict prevention" and even "conflict prevention/regional security" center, with a much broader mandate—to its potential future locale, in which at least three Arab states expressed interest, there was consensual interest in the basic idea.

- The workshops on *verification* were run largely in an informal seminar format and focused on extra-regional site visits as a way of bridging the differences between Egypt and Israel. Egypt pushed to give the workshops a nuclear focus and to engage the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) both in the sessions and as part of any verification regime; Israel sought to broaden the focus to include

chemical weapons and conventional forces verification and, seeking to limit the IAEA role, emphasized verification by regional institutions constituted by the regional parties and/or direct involvement of national government authorities.

Thus, the process had moved through its agenda-definition phase and had made enough progress so that a third phase was now possible: a phase of initial agreements on actual measures of Middle East multilateral security cooperation. It was this very possibility, though, that was the problem for a number of the ACRS parties.

Phase Three: Negotiating Initial Agreements

These tensions and paradoxes were exemplified by the circumstances and proceedings of the fifth plenary held in May 1994 in Doha, Qatar. On the one hand the venue in itself was significant: this was the first ACRS plenary to be held within the Middle East and only the second-ever official Israeli visit to a GCC country (the first being the Water Working Group plenary in Oman just a few weeks before). And the final statement issued by the plenary was the longest and most substantive yet, on its face seeming to indicate major progress.

On the other hand, the plenary was quite contentious. For one thing, it did not adopt the ACRS "DOP"—and not because of the brackets left in the Cairo draft. To the contrary, lifting the brackets was much less of a problem than were issues re-opened, issues newly injected, parties that simply failed to follow through on official consideration of the Cairo draft, and, especially, newly strident opposition from Saudi Arabia that was less specific to any particular issue or phrasing than an effort to scuttle the whole effort at an ACRS DOP. Indeed, at Saudi insistence the title was watered down to simply "ACRS Declaration," a downgrading of its standing that removed the qualities of centrality and permanence suggested by "declaration of principles."

Saudi opposition was a new factor both in its intensity and its significance. Up until this point the Saudis had played a relatively passive and even implicitly supportive role in ACRS. A number of factors appeared to contribute to the shift in their position, including characteristic concerns over anything suggesting issues of pluralism and human rights, as raised by the Helsinki Final Act language in the Cairo draft of the ACRS DOP; their disinclination for intra-GCC rival and self-styled gadfly Qatar to get too much credit for hosting a highly successful, let alone seminal, plenary; an

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[13] A highly informative and insightful account of the maritime CBMs is provided by Peter Jones, "Maritime Confidence-Building Measures in the Middle East," in *Maritime Confidence Building in Regions of Tension,* edited by Jill R. Junnola (Washington D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1996).

intensification of Syrian pressure to slow things down as the prospects for an ACRS DOP had become real; and domestic political considerations, particularly their concern that even this level of cooperation with Israel might be fodder for the Islamic fundamentalist opposition or others within their own country.

The Doha plenary did agree to establish an ACRS Communications Network along the lines developed in the intersessionals, but parties balked when it came to moving from a statement by a plenary to actually signing up for, setting up, and turning on the system. While some parties professed doubts about the network's utility, the immediate and practical value of such a system seems quite evident, given all the problems ACRS has had of timely coordination and reliable distribution of information. As to costs, the United States, Russia, and the Netherlands offered financial assistance to those parties for which this was a genuine barrier. The real issues were political: Egypt was holding out for assurances that it would host the permanent system, Saudi Arabia was displaying another manifestation of its general ACRS obstructionism, and other Arab parties were unwilling to break ranks.

Saudi opposition added to the other conflicts that had been part of the ACRS dynamics throughout. Egypt and Israel continued to contest a broad range of issues. The Palestinians and others continued to push for linkages to the bilaterals. Some Maghreb and smaller GCC states became more active and assertive, but most were still merely present rather than participatory.

The first post-plenary event was to be a SAR-INCSEA demonstration exercise staged by American and Canadian naval forces and coast guards. Originally this was to be held in regional waters, off Port Said, Egypt. But Saudi opposition forced last-minute changes to move it out of the region, ultimately to waters off the Italian coast. This caused all sorts of scheduling problems and gave the whole exercise diminished significance, leading to disappointingly low participation. In fact, only four regional parties (Israel, Egypt, Qatar, Kuwait) showed up.

All this fed an increasing sense that ACRS was losing ground, that when the test had come of moving beyond "talking shops" to actually reaching agreements, it was not passing muster. Some momentum was re-injected as a ramification of the Israel–Jordan peace treaty, signed in October 1994. Three aspects of the Israel–Jordan treaty were key with respect to ACRS.

First, not only was this the first full peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state since the 1979 Israel–Egypt treaty, it also went much further than the 1979 pact toward delineating a "warm peace." It was, as Robert Satloff points out, "not just a technical agreement to establish normal peaceful relations," but a "detailed blueprint for ongoing political, economic, social, cultural, and human interaction."[14]

Second, the treaty went beyond bilateral issues explicitly to address regional security issues, even mentioning ACRS directly. In the language of the treaty, Israel and Jordan pledge to "aim toward a regional framework of partnership in peace," including efforts "to work as a matter of priority, and as soon as possible, in the context of the Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security, and jointly toward . . . the creation in the Middle East of a region free from hostile alliances and coalitions." The parties also "commit themselves to the creation . . . of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCME)." Although the specific notion of a CSCME raises some concerns, the inclusion of provisions concerning multilateral security arrangements in a bilateral treaty demonstrated an important insight and underlying conception of security: that even the best bilateral agreements alone cannot assure security, but rather must be reinforced through regional multilateral arrangements.

Third, the treaty reflected a common bilateral viewpoint on the highly contentious issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Specifically, Israel and Jordan pledged "to work as a matter of priority and as soon as possible," through ACRS and "jointly," for "the creation of a Middle East free from weapons of mass destruction, both conventional and nonconventional, in the context of a comprehensive, lasting, and stable peace, characterized by the renunciation of the use of force, reconciliation, and goodwill." By not even mentioning nuclear weapons directly but addressing *all* WMD, by including conventional weapons in the definition of WMD, and by saying that the WMD-free Middle East would be achieved "in the context of" full peace (rather than *prior* to full peace), the Israel–Jordan treaty staked out a WMD position very different from the view advocated by Egypt.

In late August, before the Israel–Jordan treaty was formally signed, but with the joint

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[14]Robert Satloff, "Assessing the Israeli-Jordanian 'Partnership for Peace,'" *Peacewatch*, no. 38 (The Washington Institute For Near East Policy, Washington D.C., October 24, 1994).

announcement in Washington by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein of an end to their state of war already having been made in Washington the previous month, the Senior Naval Officers symposium was held in Halifax, Canada, with an impressive ten regional delegations participating (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, the Palestinians, Qatar, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen). Peter Jones, at the time a Canadian official and now a scholar at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), makes the point that the differences among the delegations were "not so much along Arab–Israeli lines as long geographic lines." Jones also emphasizes that "on professional questions, there were few differences. Indeed, there was a large measure of agreement, and the naval services were able to exchange experiences and views."[15]

The conceptual basket meetings held in Paris in October did not succeed in resolving differences over the ACRS DOP; indeed, differences widened as Israel and Egypt clashed over whether to add provisions regarding the NPT, and the title of the document was further downgraded to being called just a "Statement on Arms Control and Regional Security," no longer a "Declaration," much less a "Declaration of Principles." But progress was made in other areas, notably on developing the Conflict Prevention Center/Regional Security Center (CPC/RSC). Then, in November, less than two weeks after the Israel–Jordan signing in the Arava, the operational basket meetings were held in Jordan. The venue was quite significant in its own right—it was the first multilateral event in Jordan—and substantial strides were made in all the major operational issue areas. A number of steps were taken to move the ACRS Communications Network closer to implementation. Varying degrees of agreement were reached on draft texts on INCSEA, SAR, EMI, and PCMA. A follow-up meeting was also held on the CPC/RSC for particularly interested parties (Jordan, Tunisia, Qatar, Israel).

The sixth plenary was held December 13–15 in Tunis. The results were mixed. Taking the plenary's final statement at face value, further progress seemed indicated:

- The ACRS Communications Network was given a start-up date of March 1995, and Cairo was confirmed as the future site of the permanent communications system.

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[15] Jones, "Maritime Confidence-Building in the Middle East."

- Another attempt at an INCSEA-SAR demonstration activity was agreed to, this time off the coast of Tunisia and with regional navies participating. And further headway was made on draft INCSEA and SAR agreements.

- Initial agreements were reached on some nonsensitive areas for exchange of military information (for example, exchange of curricula vitae of senior military personnel and of certain unclassified military publications and educational or training manuals) and of some thresholds and parameters for prenotification of certain military activities.

- Agreement was reached to create a network of Middle East Regional Security Centers (RSC), with a central one located in Jordan and two "satellite" RSCs in Qatar and Tunisia, with functions envisioned even more ambitiously than in the CSCE Crisis Prevention Center.

The stage thus appeared to be set for the next round of intersessionals to move the process into a fourth phase of initial institutionalization and operationalization of the norms, structures, and agreements for multilateral regional security cooperation.

Breakdown of the Process, 1995–96

Instead, however, the process broke down. Even at the Tunis plenary there were some issues on which problems worsened—for example, the ACRS "Statement," now downgraded even further in status and significance, yet with prospects for agreement so bleak that the plenary devoted little attention to it. And in the ensuing months specific incidents arose, as with a story in the Israeli press quoting a government source on the joint naval activity that broke the private veil and was one of the factors causing a number of Arab states to pull out of participation. But the key issue was the nuclear one, and Egypt's intensified and increasingly vitriolic campaign to pressure Israel both in ACRS and in the global arena of the April–May 1995 NPT Review Conference.

It is extremely difficult to explain the rigidity and confrontational quality of the Egyptian position on the nuclear issue *strictly in security terms*. A genuine nuclear threat from Israel hardly ranks very high in the realm of immediate security threats that Egypt faces. While long-term concern about this specter is an understandable security calculus, there were other approaches available for dealing with it, as embodied both in the draft ACRS DOP and in the Israel–Jordan treaty.

Moreover, by linking any progress in ACRS to this one issue, indeed to this one approach to this one issue, Egypt has ended up self-denying benefits conducive to its own interests in other areas of regional security—for example, anti-terrorism, on which some initial discussions had begun in ACRS well prior to the shock-induced Sharm el-Sheikh summit.

The driving rationale for Egypt thus has been less a security than a political one. While the precise mix of factors requires further analysis and explication, it is clear that inter-Arab rivalry and Egypt's concern about maintaining its position as bloc leader have been particularly key. For most of ACRS' first three years Egypt largely dominated the Arab caucus, modulating progress and maintaining substantial bloc solidarity, notwithstanding the formal structure of these being multilateral negotiations. But as ACRS made its progress, and as other Arab states developed their own voices and roles in the process, Egypt was having more difficulty maintaining singular control and influence. This was especially true vis-à-vis Jordan, given both the alternative approach to the nuclear issue embodied in the Israel–Jordan treaty and the active role in ACRS played by the Jordanian delegation led by Dr. Abdullah Toukan, science advisor to King Hussein. Indeed one of the reasons that Egypt blocked the sixth plenary from being held was that it was to take place in Amman. It is in this sense that the nuclear issue, in addition to its own significance, has been a vehicle for broader Egyptian concerns about erosion of its relative position by a robust ACRS process.

A further complication was that the NPT issue was now especially salient because of the twenty-five year global review conference and consideration of indefinite extension of the treaty set for April–May 1995. The Egyptian–Israeli dispute going into the NPT review conference raised tensions to their most bitter and highest point since Camp David. It took high-level U.S. diplomacy, particularly by Vice President Al Gore, to persuade Egypt to back off its efforts first to block indefinite extension of the NPT unless Israel agreed to sign it soon, and then to push a resolution singling out Israel for particular criticism.[16]

While on the one hand the availability of ACRS as an alternative mechanism and venue for dealing with the nuclear issue helped defuse the issue at the global level and achieve the indefinite extension the United States wanted, there has been

a price to be paid within ACRS. U.S. efforts to restart ACRS accomplished very little. So too with a Peres–Mubarak meeting in December 1995, which yielded a statement that was sufficiently ambiguous in its wording that while hailed by the leaders at the moment as solving the problem, had little real impact. Indeed within days of the Peres–Mubarak statement, there were reports that the Arab League Secretariat, working closely with the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, had prepared its own version of a draft agreement for a WMD-free zone in the Middle East.[17] Nor in ensuing months was there any evidence of lessening of Egypt's linkage of the entire ACRS process to the nuclear issue. "There is no room for any discussion about regional security cooperation," Foreign Minister Amr Musa stated as recently as April 1996, "while the nuclear issue remains unsolved." Indeed attacks intensified in the Egyptian press on the United States for supporting Israel's position, as exemplified by the chief editor of *Al-Ahram* calling the whole U.S. role in ACRS "a farce."[18]

At the Arab summit held in Cairo following the May 1996 Israeli election victory of Binyamin Netanyahu and his Likud party, Egypt pushed the nuclear issue. The summit resolution called on Israel to "adhere" to the NPT and allow the IAEA full inspection rights. But this appeared to be largely boilerplate, indicating that even amidst the consternation caused by the Netanyahu victory there was reluctance among at least some Arab states to push as hard on the nuclear issue as the Egyptians wanted.

On the Israeli side, the significant shifts in approach to other areas of the peace process notwithstanding, the expectation was largely one of continuity on ACRS, as evidenced by the designation of David Ivry, long-time director-general of the Ministry of Defense and head of the Israeli ACRS delegation, for the new position of national security advisor to the prime minister.

Summary

To be sure, with almost two years having passed since the last ACRS plenary, and prospects for restarting the process soon limited at best, the outlook is far from bright. And even if Egypt were to reassess its position on the nuclear issue, the persisting problems that ACRS has encountered

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[16] See the forthcoming study by Gerald M. Steinberg, *Middle East Peace and the NPT Extension Decision*.

[17] "Arab Draft Accord on Nuclear-Free Mideast Detailed", *FBIS-NE*, December 14, 1995, pp. 1–2.
[18] "Egypt: Musa—Nuclear Threat Blocks Regional Security Cooperation," *FBIS-NES*, April 2, 1996, p.12; "Egypt: Papers Comment on Nuclear Weapons, Peace", *FBIS-NE*, April 4, 1996, pp. 15–16.

since its inception, and as discussed at the beginning of this section, would remain: for example, vulnerability to negative reverberations from problems encountered on the bilateral tracks, both in the negotiations and from terrorist attacks as has happened a number of times; the strategic asymmetries inherent to the region; Syrian unwillingness to participate; the outside-the-process but inside-the-region threats of non-invitees Iran, Iraq, and Libya; and continuing consternation by the Saudis and other Arab states for domestic reasons of going too far too fast toward what can be perceived as normalization.

Yet not only in spite of these factors, but to an extent precisely because of them, the basic rationale for multilateral regional security cooperation in the Middle East remains fundamentally sound. The recent problems do not negate the progress made through the first three phases of establishing a process, defining a work agenda, and negotiating initial agreements—progress that in both its pace and content compares favorably to 1970s East–West Europe and other regions in their early stages of building regional security cooperation. A number of factors contributed to this progress: the success the bilaterals have had that allowed the multilaterals to move meaningfully forward and still remain the "required" one step behind; the beginnings of a conceptual acceptance of the notion of regional security cooperation and the benefits it potentially can bring to all ACRS parties; and the loosening of old-style Arab versus Israeli "bloc-ism," as at least some Arab states have become more willing to take independent national positions on regional security issues.

In sum, what has been achieved thus far in ACRS is neither to be overestimated nor underestimated. A process for multilateral security cooperation has been established, an initial agenda defined, and a first round of initial agreements reached—in a Middle East in which the very term *regional security* for so long had been simply an oxymoron. The prospects for sustaining and advancing this progress, and some ideas and proposals for doing so, are taken up in the next section.

An Agenda for Building Multilateral Security Cooperation

The end of the Cold War has meant that in all regions of the world, the respective principal security threats have become much more regionally

rooted than globally transmitted—and, if anything, this is even truer in the Middle East. Indeed, as important as regional cooperation is on all the multilateral peace process tracks, ACRS has a special role to play in building a stable and secure peace in the Middle East. Even if (or when) all the bilateral tracks are successfully resolved, it still is hard to conceive of broad and enduring peace in the Middle East without greater multilateral cooperation on issues of arms control and regional security.

To be sure, there can be no underestimating the difficulties ACRS faces. Yet the fundamentals are there for building multilateral security cooperation in the Middle East. Nothing that has transpired in the last two years has changed that. While one cannot predict whether or not the parties will choose to recognize and act on the mutual interests they do have in getting ACRS back on track, the principal intention in this section of the report is to argue why they should and to present ideas and proposals for doing so. I first lay out a broad strategic approach for thinking about the key issues, goals, and strategies for building multilateral security cooperation in the Middle East. Specific recommendations for key substantive issues on the current ACRS agenda are then presented. I then consider issues of process and procedures.

Long-Term Goals and Strategies

The essence of the challenge of regional security cooperation in the Middle East is, as stated in the draft ACRS DOP, to take advantage of the opportunity created by the Arab–Israeli peace process "to cooperate in addressing additional issues of region-wide concern," and to pursue "the common purpose of achieving full and lasting relations of peace, openness, mutual confidence, security, stability, and cooperation throughout the region."[19]

The very articulation of such notions as *region-wide concern* and *throughout the region* amounts to a closing of the gap between the reality and the rhetoric of the region. For despite the fact that the history of the region has been one of wars, crises, rivalries, and instability hardly limited to the Arab–Israeli conflict, political discourse rarely ever before got beyond the Arab–Israeli dimension. Similarly, *cooperation* and *common*

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[19] This and other quotes that follow are taken from the draft of what then was still called the "Declaration of Principles and Statements of Intent on Arms Control and Regional Security," as published in the *Mideast Mirror,* May 3, 1994, pp. 18–19.

purpose speak to the recognition of the opportunity at least to ameliorate the classical "security dilemma," in which states are locked into zero-sum calculations of my-security-is-based-on-your-insecurity. To be sure, realism requires that even the most optimistic visions for regional security cooperation recognize the need for individual states to continue to provide (self-help) for their national security and self-defense. It is possible, though, as we saw in the East–West context and as we are beginning to see in the Middle East, for multilateral cooperation to make at least part of the security calculus more one of "mutual-sum," in which in some respects my-security-and-your-security-can-be-enhanced-through-cooperation.

Thus, the guiding long-term goals of regional security cooperation in the Middle East are analogous to the goals for regional security cooperation in other global regions:

- *Prevention of war*—"safeguarding the region from the dangers and ominous consequences of future wars," as also stated in the draft ACRS DOP—by establishing norms, building confidence, requiring greater transparency, and pursuing arms control in ways that reduce the risks of surprise attack, preemptive war, and inadvertent war.

- *Crisis prevention and management,* that is, establishing mechanisms and procedures for communication and consultation both to avert crises from occurring and for managing them short of war should they occur.

- *Conflict resolution and reconciliation,* so that the peace not be "cold," that the "common purpose" of "full and lasting relations of peace" be pursued broadly and deeply, through ACRS and other forms of multilateral cooperation, as well as through bilateral normalization of relations between Israel and individual Arab states.

- *Arms control and nonproliferation,* that is, preventing "the excessive accumulation of conventional arms" and "establishing a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and their delivery systems," both of which also come from the draft ACRS DOP.

Before getting into the specific issues on the immediate ACRS agenda, it's important to establish a sense of overarching strategy to guide the process. Here four broad points are key.

1. Implementation and Institutionalization of CBMs and CSBMs

Priority should continue to be given to establishing CBMs and CSBMs. As Secretary of State Baker put it in his speech at the January 1992 multilaterals organizational meeting, ACRS should continue to strike a balance that does not "rule out" arms control measures but does recognize that in the initial stages of building regional security cooperation, CBMs and CSBMs "offer the best chance of success." Baker's frame of reference was the East–West European security experience of the 1970s and 1980s in which, as noted earlier, arms control was more product than precursor of improved political relations and enhanced mutual confidence. Although some progress was made on arms control while East–West relations were still hostile, and although this arms control progress did in turn contribute to improved political relations, the major East–West arms control agreements were achieved only after the political climate was substantially improved, a process in which CBMs and CSBMs played a crucial part.[20]

Nor is it just a matter of what succeeded elsewhere. It is not in any way a belittling of the historic achievements of the peace process to acknowledge that the building of trust and the establishment of confidence are processes that still have a long way to go in the Middle East. Even after peace treaties, Israel cannot be expected to relegate to the past any and all concern about the possibility of hostile Arab powers or alliances. The reassurances of nonaggressive intent, establishment of safeguards against both surprise and inadvertent attacks, development of agreed procedures and rules for military transparency and accountability, and demonstrations of an initial viability for security cooperation through CBMs and CSBMs thus are prudent prerequisites to moving on to arms control and other more far reaching cooperative security measures. It is in this sense that the CBMs/CSBMs that have been under development by ACRS provide the basis to begin to institutionalize regional security cooperation.

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[20] See also Feldman and Levite, *Arms Control and the New Middle East Security Environment;* Platt, *Arms Control and Confidence Building in the Middle East;* Spiegel and Pervin, *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, Volume I: Arms Control and Regional Security*; Ariel Levite, "Confidence and Security Building Measures the Middle East", paper presented at UNIDIR's "Regional Conference of Research Centers in the Middle East", Cairo, April 18–20, 1993; Kemp, "Cooperative Security in the Middle East."

2. Arms Control: Setting Objectives and Heeding Caveats

It must be stressed that the recommendation for emphasis and priority on CBMs and CSBMs does not mean a strict sequencing by which any and all progress on arms control would wait until a later phase. It also is necessary that the principal objectives for arms control be established and that commitments to them be affirmed by all parties. It is one thing to follow a sequencing in which CBMs and CSBMs precede arms control measures in terms of actual initiation and implementation. But this is only viable as a basis for regional security, given the need for a balanced approach, if the parties agree now as to key objectives to be achieved down the road through arms control, including with regard to nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Moreover, the CBM-CSBM/arms-control distinction is not a strictly dichotomous one, as there are some arms control components inherent to some of the CBMs and CSBMs—for example, thresholds and parameters for prenotification of certain military activities, specification of arms control objectives in the ACRS DOP, and some elements of the INCSEA agreement.

Particular mention is warranted of the *nuclear arms control issue*, given both its inherent importance and the extent of the controversy it has generated in (and beyond) ACRS. Two points are crucial in this regard.

First, there is no disagreement among the parties that the Middle East would be more secure if it were fully freed of the threat of nuclear weapons. The differences, especially between Egypt[21] and Israel[22] are over the following:

- *Global versus regional approaches:* whether to proceed under the auspices of the global NPT/IAEA regime (Egypt), or through complementary but independent regional arrangements (Israel).

- *Sequencing:* whether commitments on the nuclear issue should be an early or even first step in the arms control and regional security process (Egypt), or whether they should follow from CBMs and CSBMs and only in the context of general overall progress toward peace (Israel).

- *Geographic scope:* whether commitments by the existing ACRS parties are sufficient to proceed (Egypt), or whether non-ACRS regional states, such as Iran and Iraq, must also be a party to them (Israel).

- *Types of weaponry:* whether the "weapons-free zone" under discussion will focus primarily on nuclear weapons (Egypt), or give equal weight to chemical and biological weapons and mass destruction-capable conventional weapons (Israel).

Second, it has to be recognized that this is a political and not strictly a security issue. It is hard to explain the rigidity and confrontational quality of the Egyptian position strictly in security terms. Calculations of the political value of championing the anti-Israel nuclear cause for the Mubarak government's global, inter-Arab, and domestic standing also are driving forces. On the other side, for Israel, anything more than long-term commitments on the nuclear issue at this point in the peace process would have been much more than the domestic political traffic could bear under the Rabin and Peres governments and has limited if any political support in the Netanyahu government.

To be sure, opposition to Israeli nuclear weapons in the Arab world is, to use an American colloquialism, an "apple pie" issue. But where once there existed fairly strong Arab world solidarity behind the kind of maximalist position Egypt continues to push, there has come to be a significant degree of variation as to how and on what terms to deal with this issue. The formulation in the early 1994 draft ACRS DOP, prior to Egyptian efforts to make explicit reference to the NPT, was very similar to that formally adopted in the Israel–Jordan treaty, casting the objective as "a zone free of *all* weapons of mass destruction" (emphasis added) and sequencing the objective as something "the participants agree to pursue . . . in the context of achieving a just, secure,

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[21] For background on the Egyptian position, see Egypt's official response to the UN Secretary General's Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone study in Beker, ed., *Arms Control Without Glasnost: Building Confidence in the Middle East* (Jerusalem: Israel Council on Foreign Relations, 1993), pp. 205–208; Mahmoud Karem, *A Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East: Problems and Prospects* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); Mohamed Nabil Fahmy, "Egypt's Disarmament Initiative", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November 1990, pp. 9–10 (Fahmy is the head of the Egyptian ACRS delegation); Feldman, *Extending the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty*; and Steinberg, *Middle East Peace and the NPT Extension Debate.*

[22] For background on the Israeli position, see, for example, Israel's official response to the UN Secretary General's "Study on Effective and Verifiable Measures Which Would Facilitate the Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East," October 1990, in Beker, *Arms Control without Glasnost,* pp. 199–203; Feldman, *Extending the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty*; and Steinberg, "Middle East Peace and the NPT Extension Debate"; and Steinberg, *Middle East Peace and the NPT Extension Debate.*

comprehensive, and lasting peace and reconciliation."[23] Indeed, by not even mentioning nuclear weapons explicitly but addressing all WMD, by including conventional weapons in the definition of WMD, and by sequencing the WMD-free zone as to be achieved "in the context of" a full peace, rather than *prior* to full peace, the Israel–Jordan treaty staked out a sharply distinct position from Egypt's.

In contrast to the excessive attention given to the nuclear issue, *conventional arms control* has gotten too little attention in ACRS thus far. The ACRS DOP sets "reducing stockpiles of conventional arms and preventing a conventional arms race in the region" as objectives, but little focused activity on these subjects has been conducted at the intersessionals.

This unintegrated approach is short-sighted for a number of reasons. First, Israel insists on the inseparability of the issues of conventional and nonconventional weapons limitations because of the inherent strategic asymmetries that, while less severe than pre-peace process, still shape its threat perceptions and corresponding security requirements. Second, as the Israel–Jordan treaty affirms, conventional weapons also can be weapons of mass destruction; for example, Dresden-like scenarios of massive civilian destruction wreaked by indiscriminate aerial bombardment, such as with fuel air explosives and missiles with huge destructive capacity but poor accuracy. Moreover, it often is conventional weapons that carry the most worrisome offensive capabilities and potential first-strike advantages.

Any serious efforts to control conventional weapons must involve both suppliers and purchasers; thus ACRS, with its wide regional and extra-regional participation, is all the more appropriate as the venue for developing conventional arms control proposals that have a realistic chance of working. The Bush administration's 1991 Middle East arms control initiative, ambitious in its goals but as yet never seriously pursued, could provide a useful starting point for such efforts.

3. Sub-Regional Security Cooperation

For all its benefits, multilateralism in security matters also has the disadvantages, inherent to all multilateral processes, of the potential for the pace of progress to be set by the slowest participant and for agreements to be pushed down to the level of the lowest common denominator. Consequently, as

important as the ACRS Working Group is, it would be a mistake to require all regional multilateral security cooperation to occur strictly through its mechanism. There is no inherent contradiction—indeed, there arguably is a strong potential complementarity and synergy—between emphasizing ACRS as the principal modality of regional security and fostering sub-regional security cooperation, as long as any sub-regional agreements are not damaging or prejudicial to the security interests of other ACRS parties.

In this regard, the far-reaching nature of the Israel–Jordan treaty holds out hope that those two states might form a community of common interests that could lead to deepened bilateral security cooperation and joint (or parallel) efforts to increase the pace of programs throughout the region. Indeed, as noted earlier, and quite unusual for a bilateral treaty, it explicitly addresses regional security issues, the two nations pledging to aim "toward a regional framework of partnership in peace," to forge a "region free from hostile alliances and coalitions," to establish the CSCME.

Israel and Jordan do not present the only possibility for sub-regional security cooperation. For example, it may prove more practical to begin to implement INCSEA and SAR agreements on a sub-regional basis. Given that participation in these agreements is voluntary, and taking account of bureaucratic and political obstacles, it is highly unlikely that all ACRS parties will readily come forward to join. A sub-regional approach—for example, regimes confined to the Mediterranean littoral states or the Persian Gulf states—could create the sense of shared interests needed to overcome the obstacles. Once implemented, a sub-regional regime might in turn set off its own "tide" toward full regional implementation.

Similarly, with respect to military information exchange and prenotification, neighboring states may set lower thresholds or other special arrangements that go further than regionwide ACRS standards. These also are to be encouraged and facilitated as long as they are not prejudicial to the interests of other ACRS parties.

4. Threats from Outside ACRS

Even if agreements were to be reached on the full ACRS agenda, the future of regional security cooperation would not be assured, given the threats still posed from outside ACRS—that is, from the nonparticipants, from the uninvited, and from Islamic fundamentalist movements within some key ACRS states.

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[23] *Mideast Mirror*, May 3, 1994, pp. 18–19.

Syria and Lebanon: The Nonparticipants

The nonparticipants are Syria and Lebanon, or more accurately stated, Syria deciding on behalf of both itself and Lebanon. Syria has sought on a number of occasions and in a variety of ways to block progress, if not undermine the entire ACRS process. On the one hand, it is encouraging to note that ACRS has made progress despite these Syrian efforts. On the other hand, the ultimate viability of regional security arrangements in the Middle East requires that Syria be a party to them. Thus while the process should remain open to Syria deciding to end its boycott, Damascus should be given to understand that it must catch up to ACRS and that ACRS will not slow down to wait for it. This is very much the message of the relevant provision of the original draft ACRS DOP, which acknowledged the need for Syrian participation ("the full realization of the objectives continued in this Declaration would be facilitated by the involvement . . . of all regional parties") but set the terms for that participation as "calling on all such parties to *support the principles contained in this Declaration and, in this connection*, to join the arms control and regional security process at an early date" (emphasis added).

It may well be that the best way to get Syria to reassess its position is for ACRS to get back on track and to demonstrate not only that the process will not be derailed but that, to push the metaphor, the train is leaving the station. True, multilateral security cooperation can only go so far without one of the region's principal military powers on board. Without Syria, for example, it would be very difficult to move from setting arms control objectives to actually negotiating and implementing arms control agreements; there also would be limits on how extensive exchange of military information and prenotification of military activities could be. But ACRS has not yet reached these points and thus can continue to make limited, albeit significant, progress even without Syria, if it can overcome its other problems.

Iraq, Iran, Libya: The Uninvited

The "uninvited" refers to those states—Iran, Iraq, and Libya—generally considered part of the region but whose continued aggression, support for terrorism, and pursuit of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction have precluded their being invited to participate. The problem for ACRS is that these states are both difficult to include and imprudent to ignore. Nor is it only against Israel that these states pose threats: just ask the Kuwaitis (Iraq), or the Saudis (Iran, Iraq), or the Tunisians (Libya). Arms control efforts of all types, but especially those concerning nuclear and other WMD, are necessarily constrained by the absence of the uninvited. Persistent reports about Iran's nuclear ambitions and concerns that Iraq intends to rebuild its WMD capabilities have served to underline both the immediate and long-term significance of the threats these states continue to pose.

Consequently, ACRS should be at least theoretically open also to this trio of states, if and when they demonstrate a genuine and credible willingness to abide by rules and norms of peaceful resolution of conflict, of nonaggression and nonuse of force of any kind (including terrorism), of pursuing peace and reconciliation, and of reducing armaments and eliminating all WMDs. Although there is nary a sign of encouragement that these three states are ready to accept these norms—and the burden of proof must not be allowed to be lightened by wishful thinking—the possibility that any or all of these states might someday join ACRS should not be closed off. Of course, in the larger picture it remains incumbent on the United States and other major extra-regional powers to lead the efforts at containing, deterring, and countering any aggressive designs or actions by these states.

Islamic Fundamentalist Movements: Threats from Below

A third general concern is the internal stability of some of the key ACRS participants, particularly those that face domestic threats from Islamic fundamentalists. Algeria, for example, has been supportive of the ACRS process, albeit in a limited role. But would the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS, by its French acronym) continue such a policy if it were to come to power, or would it renounce the multilaterals and the peace process? And what about Tunisia, which has been quite active and constructive in its ACRS role but faces a more limited yet not insignificant Islamic fundamentalist threat? And Egypt, which has such a crucial role in all aspects of the peace process? Or Saudi Arabia? Relatedly, what of Turkey and its new government led by the Islamic Welfare Party, and whether it will stick with the recent bilateral and military cooperation agreements with Israel?

On the one hand, the fundamentalist threat to regimes poses the difficult issue of continuity of commitments. Much of this report has focused on the difficulties of achieving arms control and

regional security agreements and, concomitantly, the significance of such agreements when achieved. Injecting the uncertainty of whether agreements achieved might be abandoned either by Islamic fundamentalist forces that gain power or even by existing governments facing the pressure and fearing the threats of fundamentalists can cast a pall on the whole ACRS process. On the other hand, ACRS could serve as a basis and vehicle for enhanced multilateral anti- and counter-terrorism efforts, along the lines envisioned at the March 1996 Sharm el-Sheikh summit.

Key Issues on the Immediate ACRS Agenda

1. Adopting the ACRS Declaration of Principles (DOP)

For too long, various drafts of an ACRS DOP have been discussed without resolution. Expedited adoption of a strong DOP is crucial for anything more than piecemeal progress in ACRS.

The building of genuine and enduring multilateral cooperation on arms control and regional security requires the firm and unequivocal commitment of the parties to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, renunciation of the threat or use of force of any kind for anything other than defensive purposes, noninterference in internal affairs, and respect for each other's sovereignty and political independence. This was true in Europe, as embodied in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. It is at least as true in the Middle East, and the ACRS DOP with its explicit enunciation of these and other fundamental norms and values can provide a comparable basis for building regional security cooperation. Even if there were to be an overall DOP produced by the Steering Group, as has been discussed, it would not obviate the need for reaffirmation and elaboration with such norms and principles in the security-specific context of ACRS.

The most recent efforts to finalize the ACRS DOP, at the Tunis plenary in December 1994 and at the May 1995 Helsinki conceptual basket meeting, were stymied by continued disagreement between Egypt and Israel on the nuclear arms control issue. But even if this issue were to be resolved, and no other issues reopened or new ones injected, what remains problematic is the generalized effort to weaken and diminish the significance of the overall document. As originally drafted at the February 1994 intersessional, it was titled the "Declaration of Principles and Statements of Intent on Arms Control and Regional Security." At the May 1994 Doha plenary, largely under

pressure from a recalcitrant Saudi Arabia, it was retitled "Declaration on Arms Control and Regional Security." At the October 1994 Paris intersessional it was further downgraded to a "Statement on Arms Control and Regional Security."

This is about more than words. In the same way that there are emulative lessons in the Helsinki Final Act, there are precautionary ones in the mistakes made in the 1972 U.S.–Soviet Basic Principles Agreement (BPA). Both sides proclaimed the BPA as the charter for détente, but it was so full of ambiguities that each side felt free to interpret it in its own self-serving way, thus undermining rather than becoming a foundation for building security cooperation. [24] This is the reason for emphasizing not only expedited adoption of an ACRS DOP but also that it be kept a strong document. It is in this vein that I have continued to refer to it as a "DOP" and urge that its full title, with its full meaning, be restored.

2. Maritime CBMs/CSBMs

In the Middle East, as previously in East–West relations, maritime CBMs/CSBMs can move ahead more rapidly than those in other areas because of the common interests that do exist and have begun to be recognized in avoiding incidents that can escalate tensions and lead to inadvertent war and in the humanitarian goal of search and rescue for distressed vessels. This area also is the least militarily contentious, in large part because it is the least intrusive. The April 1995 operational basket intersessional finalized a full initial INCSEA agreement ("Guidelines for Operating Procedures for Maritime Cooperation and Conduct in the Prevention of Incidents on and over the Sea in the Middle East") and made further progress toward a framework for agreement on SAR. But as with all ACRS agreements, approval of a text does not assure a commitment to abide by and implement it. In neither case, however, were firm commitments made for actual implementation. While this procedure of "noncommittal agreement" has been deemed necessary in order to achieve the consensus required by ACRS rules, it risks leaving such agreements hollow and, moreover, feeding the criticism of ACRS as merely a "talking shop." It therefore is important that the United States places a very high priority on working with Canada

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[24] Alexander George assesses the BPA as little more than a "pseudo-agreement". See his article, "The Basic Principles Agreement of 1972: Origins and Expectations," in his book, *Managing U.S.–Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 107–118.

(mentor for the maritime activities) to get prompt commitments from at least most ACRS parties to implement both the INCSEA and SAR initial agreements.

The SAR-INCSEA demonstration activity that was agreed to at the December 1994 Tunis plenary ultimately did not take place. While this is largely a symbolic event, there is a lot to be said for the symbolic value of Arab–Israeli naval cooperation. It has been this very symbolism that has caused these repeated last-minute cancellations and is the reason why a third effort should be made and given a high priority by the United States.

3. Exchange of Military Information (EMI) and Prenotification of Certain Military Activities (PCMA)

Also back at the April 1995 Antalya intersessional, an initial set of five agreements for military information exchange were set. These include exchange of certain unclassified military publications, exchange of biographical sketches of senior military personnel, and prior notification of certain military activities. Yet, the voluntaristic nature of actual implementation is even more problematic for these than in the maritime area. It would only be prudent for Israel to assume that information it provides one Arab state that reciprocates could be shared with others that do not reciprocate, be they other ACRS states or from among the nonparticipants and uninvited. Thus, at minimum, there needs to be ACRS-wide implementation if these agreements are to work. While some of the initial Antalya measures are sufficiently nonstrategic that the immediate nonreciprocity problem would not be that severe, it would be much more of an issue for "second generation" military information exchange and prenotification agreements.

In addition, military-to-military contacts, comparable, for example, to those among naval officers at the August 1994 symposium in Halifax, should be developed. These should include visits to and observations of military and defense-related sites in the region, not just at NATO and other extra-regional sites. Israel, for example, extended invitations to all ACRS parties to visit a defense-industrial site as well as a military installation. This should be pursued, as should reciprocal visits.

4. The ACRS Communications Network

Even the ACRS Communications Network, which seemed so straightforwardly functional and on which agreement finally had been reached, has been obstructed by the overall freeze on ACRS. Three states (Egypt, Israel, Jordan) had agreed to start up under the interim arrangements with the hub based in The Hague, and six other regional parties—Bahrain, Oman, the Palestinians, Qatar, Tunisia, Yemen—were leaning toward joining the Network. Efforts should be renewed to get the interim network up and running, to expand participation to include all ACRS regional parties, and to make maximal and creative use of the Network to facilitate commun-ications on security-related matters. Once the practical benefits of the Network are demonstrated, many if not all of the ACRS states not yet "plugged in" are more likely to have the incentive to join.

The relative innocuousness of the functions of the Network as currently defined—transmitting ACRS-related messages and documents, military officers' curricula vitae, and so on—belies the significance of the very establishment of Israel-Arab ministry-to-ministry technological links. Moreover, the Network has valuable potential to facilitate other CBMs/CSBMs, such as maritime measures and military information exchange and prenotification, and other ACRS projects, such as the data bank being jointly developed by Russia and the Netherlands and the Regional Security Centers. Its crisis-communication ("hot line") potential also should be further considered and developed. Planning also should be continued for moving the network from its interim hub in The Hague to a permanent site in Egypt (as agreed at the Tunis plenary) as soon as is practical.

5. Middle East Regional Security Centers

The proposals approved at the Tunis plenary for the Middle East RSCs provide an opportunity not just to replicate the European Crisis Prevention Center (CSCE CPC) but to significantly improve on it. The Middle East RSCs have been given a very broad mandate, including broad support of all ACRS activities and initiatives, running training and education programs in support of ACRS, and working with nonofficial groups on pertinent conferences and meetings. It is in this sense that the naming of these centers was not confined to conflict prevention but rather has been set in the broader terms of regional security.

The conflict and especially crisis prevention functions of the RSCs do remain central and should be developed with all the necessary technical expertise and in coordination with the ACRS communications network and planned data bank. Even more critical will be the political components of agreement on protocols and

procedures for consultation through the RSC in the event of a crisis or major conflict. These protocols and procedures can be developed in ACRS, but the commitments to abide by them must be made at the highest levels. If such agreements are to be effective, all ACRS parties must commit to them and do so well before a crisis sets in.

Given their broad mandate, the RSCs also should take the lead in elaborating significant security matters that tend not to get adequate attention in the standard basket workshops—for example, long-term objectives, mutual threat perceptions, and military doctrine. Such topics deserve more serious and in-depth treatment—in some instances, by making the RSCs the intersection points for working with "track two" initiatives to bring in nonofficial experts and explore these ideas.

6. Verification

Thus far the ACRS verification workshops have been little more than joustings between Egypt, leading efforts to push the nuclear issue, and Israel, strongly resisting. The net effect has been to crowd out what could be useful efforts to develop ideas and initiatives for all aspects of verification (conventional and nonconventional, as well as related to EMI and PCMA).[25]

The sine qua nons for effective verification are that (1) commitments be mutual, (2) violations be detectable in an early and reliable manner, and (3) violations be credibly punishable and at least potentially reversible. If these conditions cannot be met, parties cannot be expected to have the high levels of confidence needed for arms control and other cooperative measures to proceed very far.

Whatever the merits of their positions, the reality is that Israelis do not have sufficient confidence in either the evenhandedness or the effectiveness of the IAEA to agree to give it the major role in monitoring a Middle East nuclear-weapons-free zone. The development of regional agreements, mechanisms, and procedures is necessary, both on this issue and in general. Such a regional strategy should combine national technical means (NTMs) with more directly intrusive yet cooperative monitoring, including on-site inspections by national authorities. Both the concepts and the technologies are available to make this effective, if the political will is there.

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[25] It has been in the tract-two meetings that much of the interesting work has been and continues to be done in this area, for example, the Sandia National Laboratories' sessions on cooperative monitoring and other verification technologies and methods.

Process and Procedural Issues

1. Stronger U.S. Leadership

There have been concerns among some of the ACRS parties that the United States has not given ACRS a higher priority in its overall strategy toward Middle East peace. Some of the policy disputes and process-coordination problems that have slowed ACRS could have been more readily and fully overcome if U.S. engagement had been more consistent, systematic, and higher level. Moreover, given both the sensitivities and the complexities of ACRS' next phase, strong and engaged U.S. leadership is all the more crucial.

The gaping discrepancy between the extremely high level of U.S. engagement in the bilaterals— the creation of the position of Special Middle East Coordinator (SMEC), the numerous trips to the region by the secretary of state to deal with the bilaterals but with very little if any attention to the multilaterals, the frequent active involvement of the president—and the continued confining of all the multilaterals to lower political levels of leadership should not be continued. The solution lies not in lowering the bilaterals but in elevating the multilaterals. One of the mechanisms for doing this would be creation of a *Special Ambassador for the Middle East Multilaterals.* Such a person would need to have the necessary authority to ensure a more concerted and higher-level involvement for the United States. It also is crucial that the secretary of state and other senior administration officials demonstrate more support, both publicly and through diplomatic channels, and particularly that they be more willing to intercede strategically.

2. Roles of the Mentors and Other Extra-Regionals

The mentors—Canada for the maritime CBMs/CSBMs, the Netherlands for the ACRS communications network, Turkey for military information exchange and prenotification—have been widely praised for playing effective roles. They have brought their own experience and expertise to bear on their issue areas, drawn in others for additional expertise as appropriate, and shown admirable follow-through in working on the issues in between the intersessionals. It therefore is very much in the interest of continued progress in ACRS that the roles of the existing mentors be continued and even possibly increased.

A particular issue of some disagreement between the United States and the mentors has been whether to allow the mentors to participate in

intersessionals other than their own—for example, in the conceptual basket meetings. The United States has resisted such participation on the grounds that, as working sessions, the intersessionals should be restricted to the regional parties, the co-sponsors (United States and Russia), the relevant mentors, and uninvited expert presenters as warranted by the nature of the topics. However, given the regional parties' familiarity with the mentors and support for their roles, it is doubtful that their presence would inhibit free and businesslike exchange among regional parties at intersessionals. Indeed, there would be much to be gained in terms of coordination and even synergy among the different elements of ACRS.

There also have been some tensions over other extra-regional parties' seeking to expand their roles. As with all ACRS procedures, any such changes must have consensus among the regional parties. Beyond that, the United States should seek to strike a balance between the problems that could arise from widening too much the scope of participation by other extra-regionals in the intersessionals and the potential benefits to be gained from those extra-regionals prepared to provide additional expertise and lend more active support.

3. Full and Genuine Multilateralization

ACRS still needs to become more fully and genuinely "multilateralized"—by which is meant two things in particular. First, there must be a breaking out from the remaining vestiges of positions taken reflexively and dogmatically and structured too rigidly along Arab bloc versus Israel lines. To be sure, there will continue to be issues on which Arab states will take bloc positions. This is not just their right; it also is inherent to the reality of a transitional stage of relations in a region so long divided antagonistically. That is why, for example, time for meetings of the Arab caucus has been built into the schedules of ACRS plenaries.

At a number of plenaries, however, the Arab caucus has taken on such a dominating role as to disrupt and almost paralyze the entire schedule. Its efforts have created significant obstacles to progress by exerting strong pressure on individual parties to maintain bloc solidarity—pressure that a number of Arab delegates privately have lamented but nevertheless felt compelled to accede to—and by marginalizing many of the security issues not strictly cut along Arab–Israeli lines, that is, those "of region-wide concern," as stated in the draft DOP. A key to an effective multilateral process is

that participating states and parties be free to take individual positions and flexibly coalesce on the full range of regional security issues according to their own national interests.

A second key to full and genuine multilateralization is for all regional states to take a more active role in ACRS activities and meetings. This means that participation must become both more regular, including all intersessionals and not just plenaries, and at a more expert level, with delegates sent from capitals rather than just from the embassy nearest to the site of the activity. All ACRS parties need to designate offices or bureaus within their ministries of foreign affairs and defense as having primary and continual responsibility for ACRS. Jordan, Egypt, Israel, and, to some extent, Tunisia, Oman, Qatar, and the Palestinians have organized themselves along these lines and thus have been able to play the most prominent roles in ACRS. It is in the interests of both the other ACRS states and the process as a whole for participation to broaden and to be at a more expert level.

4. Utility of "Track Two" Conferences

ACRS has been well served by a number of "track two" diplomacy initiatives. These have been and continue to be run by such organizations as the University of California IGCC, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Henry Stimson Center, Search for Common Ground, the American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the United Nations Institute on Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), and SIPRI. They generally have involved conferences that bring together officials from ACRS governments and outside experts in unofficial settings intended to maximize free exchange and facilitate mutual familiarization beyond what is possible in the more formal settings of official ACRS meetings.

To optimize the value of future track-two efforts, sponsors need to better keep pace with developments in and adapt their program to the process they are intended to serve. While the free exchange and process-broadening aspects of track-two conferences and meetings continue to have value, progress in ACRS itself has rendered these track-two functions less essential than in the past. What would best serve ACRS now would be more tightly focused conferences and studies in which ideas are explored and proposals developed both on key issues facing ACRS as it begins implementing initial cooperative regional security

measures and on the broader and longer-term challenges of institutionalizing regional security cooperation.

Of course, track-two efforts also have value, in and of themselves, in developing a Middle East community of officials, scholars, policy analysts, professors, and other professionals with interest and expertise in regional security. Ultimately regional security cooperation requires much more than government-to-government agreements; it requires more generalized acceptance in Arab and Israeli societies. Contacts among Arab and Israeli universities, research institutions, journalists, and other "opinion-leader" communities thus should be broadened and deepened. One particular way of doing this would be to develop a Middle East consortium of strategic studies research institutes that would meet for an annual conference, publish its own journal, and sponsor studies on key regional security issues. Thinking toward the longer-term, one can envision student exchange programs between Israeli and Arab universities, for graduate students specializing in security studies as well as undergraduates majoring in political science or related fields.

The United States and other extra-regionals can facilitate such initiatives by providing funding and other support. The U.S. government has been providing some funding for track-two activities, as with the support provided by the Department of Energy for the IGCC conferences. The United States should also consider supporting some of the aforementioned initiatives through its Fulbright scholarships and other relevant programs. Other extraregionals should consider making similar commitments.

Looking to the Future: The Middle East as a "Normal" Region?

To be sure, even if every one of the recommendations in this report were to be followed, there would still be tensions and conflicts over security issues in the region. Even in Europe, all the security regimes and multilateral institutions notwithstanding, there are still elements of competition and rivalry between allies such as France and Germany, as well as concerns about post-Soviet Russia resuming its pre-Soviet and Soviet-era pursuit of regional power and status. The persistence of such rivalries and uncertainties shows that a certain amount of competition for power and influence is "normal" to any region. As noted earlier, successful resolution of the bilateral tracks of the Middle East peace process is a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving regional security; the region must also develop the kind of multilateral security cooperation that is the goal of the ACRS Working Group. Still, the further corollary needs to be added that even a highly successful ACRS process would not put an end to the conflicts, tensions, and rivalries inherent—indeed, "normal"—in the regional competition of states.

Thus, the goal of ACRS, as it is with regional security arrangements in other regions, is to forge the agreements, create the understandings, develop the structures, and inculcate the habits of cooperation that help limit the scope and manage the intensity of tensions and conflicts. Substantial progress has been made in this direction in these first four years. The process has been established. The agenda has been defined. Initial agreements have been reached. Now, the current impasse must be broken, the process gotten back on track, and implementation and institutionalization must move ahead. Although the challenges are formidable, the opportunity exists to make even greater progress in the coming year and beyond. ⍦