

DOCUMENTI

IAI

THE ARAB-ISRAELI SECURITY DILEMMA AND THE PEACE PROCESS

by Gerald M. Steinberg

Paper presented at the conference "Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: Notions and
Perceptions of Security with Respect to Western Security Alliances"
Rome, 15-16 December 1995

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

THE ARAB-ISRAELI SECURITY DILEMMA AND THE PEACE PROCESS

Gerald M. Steinberg

D. THE MIDDLE EAST IN A CHANGING INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

For the past five decades, the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region, which is embedded in the Middle East, has been characterized by a high level of conflict. In addition to the Arab-Israeli zone, this region also includes conflicts in the Persian Gulf, Lebanon, confrontations between Turkey and Syria, and Egypt and Libya, as well as numerous internal disputes. These conflicts and zones are not independent, but overlap, extending the level and radius of violence and threat of war.

Many factors caused and contributed to these conflicts, including ancient ethno-national-religious conflicts, the remnants of Western colonialism and the problems of state building, the impact of the Cold War, internal power struggles, and conflicting economic interests. The relative role of these factors has varied over time, with some becoming less salient while other growing in importance.

In the past two decades, the nature of the region and the conflicts have changed significantly. The Arab-Israeli relationship has slowly evolved into a mixed-sum game, in which the major states involved have gradually sought to maximize common interests, particularly with respect to the prevention of war and terrorism, and cooperation in economic endeavors, water resource development, and environmental issues. In the Gulf, the fundamentalist Islamic regime in Iran, and the effort to export its radical ideology, has contributed to increased internal conflict within the states, and extended the range of terrorism in the region. Domestic political, social, and economic instabilities have contributed to this process.

Events in each of these conflict-zones and within the individual states and societies have had and will continue to be influenced by both global systemic and regional factors. In the past, the major powers, (Europe through the 1940s, and the US and Soviet Union through

the 1980s), have had a major role. Now, with the structural changes in the international system, the end of the Cold War and the bipolar balance of power, the role of the United States is central.

However, European economic and political interests are still linked to events and conditions in the Middle East, particularly with respect to access to petroleum, and the impacts of political instability and violence, and the spillover into Europe. As a result, the Atlantic Alliance and Western Europe have a continued interest in the success of the Arab-Israeli peace process. Europe can contribute to expanding the radius of cooperation and rate of economic and political development in the region to include all the confrontation states and parties in the Arab-Israeli zone.¹

A full and detailed analysis of the various causes of continued conflict in each of the zones in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East is beyond the scope of this analysis. This paper will focus on the accomplishments of the Arab-Israeli peace process in increasing regional stability, and the continued threats and conflicts, with a particular emphasis on the role of the security dilemma and possible responses.

II) THE FRAGILE PEACE PROCESS AND THE CONTINUING THREATS TO STABILITY

The Arab-Israeli peace process started after the 1973 war, with the Egyptian-Israeli interim disengagements agreements, and continuing with the 1979 Peace Treaty. This treaty marked a fundamental change in the security environment of the Middle East. Egypt became the first Arab state to formally accept and recognize the legitimacy of Israel. Rejection of this legitimacy was a fundamental cause of the wars and terrorism, and with the end of this rejectionism, conflict amelioration and resolution became possible for the first time. The extension of the peace process to other states in the region depends on the rejection of the images of Israel as a "foreign Crusader state", or "Western settler state", and acceptance of the legitimacy of the Jewish state.

The 1991 Gulf War and the defeat of Iraq created conditions for the Madrid conference in October 1991, and the beginning of the broader Arab-Israeli peace process.

These negotiations led to the 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestinians, and the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaty. These accomplishments have reduced instability and decreased the prospects for renewed military confrontations and large-scale wars in the region.

Strategically, Egypt was the largest and most powerful of the "confrontation states," and the linchpin of the coalition facing Israel. The 1979 Peace Treaty greatly reduced the probability of another major Arab-Israeli war.

The security arrangements incorporated in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty are important elements in maintaining stability and preventing war. The demilitarization of the Sinai and the presence of the multinational observer force (MFO) provide a critical buffer zone. The width of this zone (200 kilometers) and the desert terrain provide both sides with a long warning time, and make surprise armored attacks very difficult to implement. Given Israel's small size and vulnerability to surprise attack, this arrangement is and remains essential to stability on this front.

The 1994 Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty and the accompanying security arrangements provided additional elements in the development of regional stability. While Jordan has not posed a major military threat to Israel for many years, Jordanian territory was used in the past by Iraq in attacks on Israel (specifically in 1948 and the aftermath of the 1967 war). Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, the Iraqi Air Force flew reconnaissance missions along the Israel-Jordan border, and there were concerns that Iraq would mount ground attacks through Jordan. Syria could also use Jordanian territory to attack Israel in the North. (The threat of Syrian military intervention during the civil war between the Jordanian government and the Palestinians in September 1970 led to Israeli mobilization designed to deter the Syrian activity.)

Iraq's conventional capability continues to be quite formidable, in regional terms, despite the defeat inflicted by the international coalition in 1991. The sanctions imposed by the United Nations have reduced access to ammunition, spare parts, and replacements, thereby limiting Iraqi military capabilities at this time.

The Israel-Jordan peace treaty includes limitations on the ability of third countries (such as Iraq) to use the territory of the other for military purposes. The text specifically commits both countries to undertake "necessary and effective measures to ensure that acts or threats of belligerency, hostility, subversion or violence against the other Party do not originate from and are not committed within, through or over their territory ..."²

The 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles (DOP) marked the beginning of reproachment and mutual acceptance between Israel and the Palestinians. Historically, this was the core factor in the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and this agreement created a framework for its eventual amelioration. The DOP created a three stage process, including the first interim stage of Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian autonomy (Gaza and Jericho), the second stage (signed in September 1995, and extending autonomy to parts of the West Bank areas of Judea and Samaria), and permanent status negotiations beginning in May 1996.

III) CONTINUED CHALLENGES TO REGIONAL STABILITY

1) Syria and Lebanon - weak links in the chain

Currently, the Syrian-Israeli front is the primary source of conventional instability in this conflict zone. Syria maintains a large standing army (three to four times greater than the Israeli standing army). Since the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement, Syria has sought to achieve strategic parity with Israel, with the capability for independently challenging the Israel Defense Forces. Damascus has strengthened its tank and mobile armored forces steadily, as well as increasing the advanced combat air capability and mobile air defense systems. In addition, the Syrian forces have acquired advanced ballistic missiles and chemical weapons, as will be examined in detail below.³

The continued confrontation between Syria and Israel is also a major factor in the negotiations over the future of the Golan Heights. This area, which is less than 40 kilometers wide, dominates the ground below. While the Syrians object to the Israeli presence 40 kilometers from Damascus, Israel is concerned that if Syria controlled the Golan, a Syrian attack could sweep down from the Heights across northern Israel, and reach the

Mediterranean in a few hours. As a result, the Israeli negotiating position includes the demilitarization of the Golan, ground-based early warning stations to insure against surprise attack mounted from beyond the demilitarized region, significant reductions in the size of the Syrian standing army to reach parity with the Israeli capability, and prenotification of military exercises. Such measures would enhance stability and security for both countries, and greatly reduce the threat of large scale conventional warfare in the region.

2). Terror and Small Scale Warfare

For over 70 years, terrorism has plagued this region, and helped to trigger a number of major wars, particularly in 1956 and 1982. Terrorist attacks against Israel, including suicide bombings which killed many Israeli civilians, led to reprisals, escalation, and, in the cases noted above, full scale warfare.⁴ Ironically, as the Middle East peace process proceeds, the level of terrorism has also increased. In the past year, the number of civilian deaths in suicide bombings and other attacks mounted by Islamic fundamentalist groups against Israel has exceeded 150. As Dr. Said Aly has noted in his paper, the hostility directed at the West and at Israel continue to provide the rationalization for terrorism among fundamentalists and Arab conservative radicals.

While the Palestinians focus on demands for autonomy and sovereignty, Israel places primary emphasis on security and the threat of terrorism. The DOP and the subsequent agreements emphasize the link between continued withdrawal and the ability of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to prevent terrorism against Israeli targets. Israeli leaders have indicated that continued terrorism will halt the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This, in turn, is likely to lead to renewed conflict, escalation and a return to the intifada and the situation of the 1950s and 1960s. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process is still at a very fragile stage, with many complex issues, including the status of Jerusalem, the question of a Palestinian state, and the future of the Israeli settlements still to be resolved.

In Lebanon, the small scale war between Israel and the radical groups led by Iranian-supported and trained Hizbollah has escalated recently. This conflict can be traced to

the 1960s, when Palestinians used Lebanon to mount terrorist raids against Israel. Israel responded with a series of attacks against bases in Lebanon, and, in 1982, a wider war including the siege of Beirut. In 1985, Israel withdrew its forces from most of Lebanon, but maintained a presence in the security zone in Southern Lebanon in order to block terrorist attacks aimed at Israel's northern border. Since then, the security zone and the area to the North have been the site of continuous clashes.

In order to break the cycle of violence, and to end the threat of escalation, it will be necessary to resolve this conflict. The Lebanese government and military will have to demonstrate exert full control over the region, and disband Hizbollah and other such groups as military organizations. In return, the Israeli government has declared its readiness to withdraw its forces to the international border.

Terrorism is a threat to all countries and governments in the region. In Egypt, fundamentalist violence is aimed at undermining the Mubarak government. In Israel, Jewish terrorist attacks directed at Palestinians were designed to prevent Israeli withdrawal, and, most recently, led to the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Rabin.

While many of the states in the region have acted against terrorist organizations, and weakened their capability to act, this is not the case in Syria and Iran. In Damascus, terrorist activities continue, and the leaders of a number of radical organizations enjoy protection. In Lebanon, the Syrian army allows Hizbollah and other terrorist groups to act freely and to receive training, funds and supplies from Iran. In order to achieve regional stability and an end to the threat of terrorism, Syria will have to curb the activities of these groups, both in Lebanon and in Syria itself.

3) The Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long-range delivery systems is a source of major concern for the states in the region and for the security interests of the West.⁵ Prior to the Gulf War, Iraq had stockpiled a massive arsenal of chemical weapons, (using materials and technology purchased in Europe), and, is finally being revealed, biological

weapons. Saddam Hussein was also very close to reaching a nuclear weapons capability, despite the fact that Iraq had signed the NPT and was subject to IAEA safeguards.⁶ In addition, hundreds of extended range modified SCUD-B missiles provided Iraq with the ability to strike population centers in Saudi Arabia, Israel, and throughout the Middle East. In a recent analysis of the Iraqi documents, Rolf Ekeus, the head of UNSCOM, revealed that the Iraqi military possessed 25 missile warheads with biological agents in August 1990. These, as well as chemical weapons, could have been used against Israeli cities.⁷ Such an attack, and the Israeli counterattack that it would have precipitated, would have engulfed the Middle East in a catastrophic war.

The determination of UNSCOM and the maintenance of the international sanctions have prevented Iraq from rebuilding these capabilities. However, once these sanctions are lifted, the Iraqi chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs will be revived. Only a concerted long term effort to insure that Iraq does not have access to these technologies, and the threat of international action, will deter or prevent Iraq from gaining WMD capabilities.

A number of other countries in the region are generally credited with WMD capabilities. Egypt and Syria have an arsenal of chemical weapons (Egyptian forces used CW in the early 1960s in Yemen), and there are many that Iran is seeking or has developed such weapons. While many states in the region, including Israel, have signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, neither Egypt nor Syria have done so. Israel maintains a nuclear deterrent option (as will be discussed in detail below), and Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons. Syria has also continued to pursue nuclear technology, including efforts to acquire a reactor from Argentina.

Long-range delivery systems are also proliferating in the region. In addition to the extended range Iraqi Scuds, Syria has deployed SS-21 missiles, capable of striking targets in Israel. Both Iran and Syria have obtained Scud-C and NoDong missiles from North Korea, and have been seeking M-9 missiles from China. The missile technology control regime (MTCR) has failed to block the proliferation of ballistic missiles and related technology in

these states. According to press reports, Israel is capable of countering these capabilities with the Jericho-2 missile.⁸

The combination of ballistic missiles and WMD in the Middle East is highly destabilizing and creates the potential for very destructive conflict. The long ranges extend the radius of conflict, allowing countries such as Iran to play an active role for the first time. (Iran is too far away to deploy significant conventional weapons in the Arab-Israeli theater.) Thus, while there is progress in reducing the threat environment and instability among the traditional confrontation states (Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and perhaps Syria), the entry of more distant antagonists, such as Iran, with weapons of mass destruction, is highly destabilizing.

IV) THE SECURITY DILEMMA AND THE PEACE PROCESS

As noted above, the successes of the Arab-Israeli peace process has reduced the threat of conflict, but there are still major uncertainties regarding long term stability. Beyond the problems of Syria and Lebanon, the long-term and long-range threats posed by Iran and Iraq, and of terrorism, the relationship between Israel and Egypt remains problematic, and the potential for instability continues. In addition, many of the states in the region, including Saudi Arabia, are still a state of war with Israel, and only a few have established diplomatic relations or fully ended the economic boycott. In addition, regional security arrangements, including the broader range of states, from North Africa to the Persian Gulf, are necessary.

To consolidate the process, these tensions must be confronted directly. Confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs) are important in increasing the stability and preventing renewed conflict.

These tensions and potential sources of instability can be analyzed in terms the security dilemma. This concept, as developed initially by Robert Jervis, focuses on the cycle of mutual misperceptions regarding the intentions and capabilities of potential rivals.⁹ A state that perceives itself to be threatened by other states takes actions designed to deter or defend against possible attack. These policies, in turn, are perceived by the other states in the region as threats in themselves, leading to further steps to increase defense and deterrence. Each

state perceives itself to be the weaker party, vulnerable to the capabilities of the others, and planners design responses based on exaggerated threat perceptions and worst-case analysis. This cycle continues, and the system becomes overly sensitive to minor events which could trigger major military conflict.

The security dilemma provides an important conceptual framework for examining the fragility of the relationship between the Arab parties and Israel, and, as will be discussed below, for developing regional CSBMs designed to reduce the threat of renewed conflict. Despite the various agreements and treaties, most of the states are maintaining or increasing their military capabilities. A wide gulf of mutual suspicions, tensions, misperceptions, and misunderstanding continues to separate many of the states in the Arab-Israeli zone.

The Egyptian-Israeli Security Dilemma

As the first state to recognize the Jewish state, Egypt was expected to play a leading role in breaking down the social and cultural barriers and distrust that has characterized relations between Israel and the Arab world. However, in this respect, Israeli have been very disappointed by the Egyptian "Cold Peace", rationalized by myths "Israeli domination", and the continued expressions of hostility.

Despite breakthroughs achieved in the 1977 visit of President Sadat, and the 1979 Peace Treaty, the "cold peace" remains a major problem and obstacle to further cooperation. Until 1994, Egyptian civilians wishing to visit Israel were restricted by a maze of bureaucratic regulations, while intellectuals and political leaders were reluctant, or in some cases, totally unwilling to set foot in the Jewish state. The opposition and official government press publishes articles that cast Israel in a very negative light, accusing Israel of conspiring against the Arab world (and even being responsible for the spread of AIDS). President Mubarak's refusal to visit Israel since taking office after the assassination of Sadat, despite multiple visits by Israeli officials, was a very salient point that helped create the perception in Israel that the Egyptian commitment to peace was weak.

In addition, Egyptian policy has clashed with Israeli positions in a number of key areas. After over 40 years of war, and continuous threats to national survival, Israel continues to be concerned about the threats posed by large-scale conventional attacks. Israel's very small size does not provide for any strategic depth, and Israel could not absorb a major first strike mounted from any direction. (At the narrow points outside Tel Aviv, pre-1967 Israel is only 15 kilometers wide, and defense of these borders is impossible. A full-scale attack across any border could easily reach major cities in a few hours.) In 1948, Egyptian tank columns attacking the nascent Jewish state reached the outskirts of Tel Aviv, and in 1967, the mobilization of the combined forces of four Arab armies, and Nasser's threats to "cut Israel in two" and "throw the Jews into the sea" triggered the war. These events formed the foundation of Israel's strategic culture.¹⁰

Despite the 1979 Peace Treaty, Egypt maintains large ground forces and has increased and modernized its combat air capability. Egypt continues to devote scarce resources to the licensed production of M-1 A1 tanks, and is planning to produce over 500 of these modern armored vehicles. In addition, over 130 F-16s have been delivered or are on order. As long as Egypt remains committed to peace, and the Sinai continues to be demilitarized, the Israeli military will be able to respond to any potential threat. However, military planners in any state would be negligent if they did not plan for "worst case scenarios", and the continued Egyptian buildup raises concerns in Israel. Although there are tensions involving Sudan and Libya, these states do not form formidable military threats justifying the extent of weapons acquisition. While Egyptian leaders and analysts stress the perceived threat from Israeli technological capabilities, including satellite launchers and the nuclear deterrent (see detailed discussion below), they have not considered Israeli perceptions and fears. (Ironically, analysts from both states refer to asymmetry, but while the Egyptians view this asymmetry as favoring Israel, Israeli take the opposite view.)¹¹

In addition, the instabilities of the security dilemma have been increased by Egypt's broad international campaign focusing on the Israeli nuclear weapons potential. From the

Israel perspective, the ambiguous nuclear policy, (neither overtly deploying nuclear weapons nor demonstrating the absence of this capability), provides the optimum combination of deterrence and prospects for future negotiation of a regional nuclear weapons free zone in the region.¹²

Deterrence, against both large-scale conventional attacks that threaten national survival (existential threats) and WMD attacks, is a central element of Israeli security doctrine, and reflects the history of invasions and threats. This policy and the credibility of the Israeli deterrent are credited with having prevented an Iraqi chemical or biological attack prior to and during the 1991 Gulf War. Although Saddam Hussein possessed both missiles and CBW warheads, the failure to use them against Israel can be attributed to deterrence and the threat of massive Israeli retaliation.

Israeli leaders are also increasingly disturbed by Iran's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. In February 1995, Foreign Minister Peres stated that Israel will consider signing the NPT only when a comprehensive peace in the Middle East is reached and only when the region is demilitarized of weapons of mass destruction. "I see no reason why Israel should assure Iran, Iraq and Libya that they have nothing to worry about and that they can try and destroy Israel," Peres added.¹³

In its campaign to force Israel to relinquish its nuclear option, Egyptian representatives have not demonstrated any understanding of the sources of the Israeli strategy, or suggested realistic alternatives. (The issue of Israel's nuclear capability was raised in the Camp David talks that took place in August 1978. Prime Minister Begin rejected any discussion of this issue, and it was dropped from the agenda. As Prime Minister Peres has noted, "Since Camp David, there has been no change in our position and the distance between Dimona and Egypt has also not changed."¹⁴) While Israeli leaders and policy makers focus on the continued existential threats, both conventional and non-conventional, the Egyptians ignore the Israeli perceptions. From the Israeli perspective, the small size and vulnerability of the state make it vulnerable to combined conventional attacks (and, in this sense, such conventional

concentrations become the equivalent of weapons of mass destruction in threatening the survival of the major cities and the state itself).¹⁵

Although Arab analysts and political leaders assert that Israeli qualitative capabilities allow for regional "domination", Israeli planners have a very different perspective. They note that despite the peace process, Egypt and other Arab states maintain large and growing conventional forces, and in a combined attack, a coalition of Arab forces would have a superiority of 4 to 1, or much more, depending on Israel's ability to mobilize reserve forces.¹⁶ Thus, despite Israel's technological superiority, a full-scale combined conventional attack from the pre-1967 borders, similar to the 1948 and 1973 attacks, could overwhelm Israeli forces, causing very high casualties, and threatening the survival of the state.

In February 1995, Shimon Peres (then Foreign Minister) stated that Israel will agree to consider participation in a nuclear weapons free zone two years after bilateral peace agreements are signed with all states, including Iran.¹⁷ From the Israeli perspective, this policy is similar to NATO's during the Cold War, when the alliance retained an intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) to counter Soviet and Warsaw pact conventional superiority, as well as geographical advantages in the central front. Under these conditions, NATO rejected proposals to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons, and linked negotiations on limits in intermediate range and tactical nuclear weapons to an agreement on conventional force reductions (MBFR).

Israeli leaders note that the nuclear deterrent potential does not threaten any of the states in the region. In August 1994, Peres rejected Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Mousa's claim that the Israeli capability posed a danger to Egypt, noting that although the United States "has a very large arsenal, ... it has a policy of peace. ... I know that our Arab neighbors generally, and clearly Egypt, know that Israel doesn't have any belligerent intentions..."¹⁸ As a weapon of last resort, this capability is an important element in regional stability. The Israeli nuclear potential, or option, is not a threat to any state, unless that state seeks to threaten Israeli survival. The IDF has not developed a nuclear war-fighting doctrine, and no exercises

or other preparation for such a strategy exists. Like the US, France, and the UK, Israel is a status-quo state and the nuclear capability is designed strictly for deterrence purposes.¹⁹

Finally, Israelis note that their tacit nuclear potential is also linked to the peace process, while the Egyptian campaign works to undermine that process. There is good reason to believe that Egypt entered into this process in the realization that Israel could not be destroyed. Senior Egyptian military leaders have noted, the attack in the 1973 war was limited in response to the Israeli nuclear deterrent.

In addition, the Israeli deterrent allows the political and military leaders to accept the military risks embodied in withdrawal from territory. Although this withdrawal greatly reduces Israel's strategic depth (already very small, even prior to withdrawal), the threat of massive retaliation provides an alternate strategic foundation. Public opinion polls and statements by political leaders across the spectrum of parties and ideologies indicate very broad support for maintaining the current policy of nuclear ambiguity, and any change would mean the end of Israeli willingness to accept the risks of territorial withdrawal.²⁰

Thus, the Egyptian effort to "strip Israel of its deterrent" is not viewed in Israel as policy based on substantive security concerns, but rather as a political policy designed both to isolate Israel and increase political support for the Mubarak government within Egypt and in intra-Arab politics. The "Cold Peace" that has existed in relations with Israel, the continued arms purchases, the initiatives to remove the Sinai MFO buffer force, patently false accusations that Israel planted land-mines in the Sinai before withdrawing in 1982, efforts to block the creation of regional economic cooperation projects involving Israel, combined with the nuclear campaign have created many doubts about the Egyptian commitment to the broader peace process.

V). THE ROLE OF REGIONAL CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY BUILDING MEASURES

In response to the dangers and instabilities posed by the security dilemma, emphasis has been placed on the development of a regional security framework. Discussions of measures to increase regional security and stability are being conducted in a combination of

bilateral and multilateral forums and measures. At the bilateral level, as noted above, the peace treaties between Israel and Egypt, Israel and Jordan, and the Oslo Declaration of Principles with the Palestinians include fundamental measures for conflict prevention and the development of confidence and security. These include demilitarization, establishment of agreed rules and procedures, and coordination against terrorist attacks and other mutual threats. An Israeli-Syrian agreement, including extensive CSBMs and arms limitation measures would add significantly to this still fragile and uncertain foundation.

The multilateral working group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) was founded in the 1991 Madrid conference, and provides the only dedicated regional forum focusing on security issues. The ACRS involves most of the countries in the region, from North Africa to the Persian Gulf (Syria, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq have refused to participate.) In addition, the US, Russia, the EU, Japan, and other outside states are active participants. The meetings and discussions cover national assessments of security threats, visionary goals and long-term objectives for the future of regional security, and the implementation of confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs). The participation of each state is voluntary, allowing the more advanced parties to increase the pace of the transition from conflict to cooperation, while not subjecting this process to the veto of the most reluctant participants.²¹ These workshops have demonstrated that each of the participants has its own security concerns, and efforts to develop a united bloc or Arab consensus have not succeeded.

The ACRS is central to efforts to counter the security dilemma, and the development of confidence building and a regional security system. It is somewhat similar to the CSCE process that began in the 1970s as a forum of dialogue between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. (Although this was a period of relative detente, and coincided with US-Soviet summit meetings and the ABM/SALT I arms control treaties, the Cold War was still quite intense. Relations were characterized by sharp conflict over deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, human rights in the Soviet Union, and political repression in Eastern Europe.)²² The

CSCE forum provided a framework for the continuation of communications, amidst rising conflict, and for the gradual transition from confrontation to cooperation.²³

In this sense, the conditions in the Middle East, and the mix of both dialogue and conflict, are similar to those that existed in this early period of the CSCE. The ACRS working group, the peace treaties involving Israel, Egypt, and Jordan, and the agreements with the PLO have created an infrastructure for discussion and negotiation, but major differences and the potential for conflict and war remains. The relations between Israel and Syria continue to be tense, and deployment of new weapons is unabated.

Like the CSCE, the ACRS is a vital forum that allows former and current enemies to exchange views and information in the effort to prevent accidental war and the escalation of conflict. As in the case of Europe during the 1970s, the prospects for conflict resolution in the Middle East and the reduction of military instability are closely linked to increasing the level of openness, greater access to information, and human rights.²⁴

Politically, many states in the Middle East are still in the pre-perestroika era, and the preconditions for many of the features that were central to the CSCE process do not yet exist. In many areas, conflict still dominates over cooperation, and the essential requirements for sweeping arms limitation and tension reductions measures have not been created. Ancient hatreds remain, violence and terrorism are still embraced by significant groups, and the threats of war and total destruction have not disappeared. Under these conditions, the steady incremental process of creating institutions for communications, and the implementation of other CSBMs is the only possible course. At this stage, efforts to implement more ambitious arms limitation measures are premature and unrealistic.

At the same time, European contributions to efforts to prevent aggressive unstable regimes from seeking weapons of mass destruction are increasingly important. As the Iraqi case has demonstrated, in closed states with large areas in which to hide illegal facilities and materials, the global nuclear non- proliferation regime, based on the NPT and the IAEA, is limited in its capability to detect and deter violations of safeguards and agreed limits. In

response, it is clear that for the Middle East, in particular, a dedicated regional regime, consisting of all the states in the region, is necessary.²⁵ This regional framework has been endorsed in United Nations resolutions promoting the development of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. Such a framework must include all forms of weapons of mass destruction, as well as large stockpiles of conventional weapons.

Europe can also contribute to the development of a security dialogue between Israel and the Arab states that would reduce the impact of the misperceptions and dangers posed by the security dilemma. The addition of specific CSBMs, such as pre-notification of military exercises, regular military-to-military contacts and consultations parallel to the political consultations, cooperation in the framework of a bilateral or regional strategic studies center, and other activities would strengthen the fragile Israeli-Egyptian security relationship. If the pace of negotiations between Israel and Syria increases, similar CSBMs will be necessary.

Conclusions:

Conflict management and resolution are difficult and tenuous under any circumstances. As events in the Balkans have reminded all of us, intense ethnonational and religious conflicts that have their roots in ancient history may be controlled for some time, but sudden political shifts and changes in the military balance of power can trigger a resumption of conflict.

For this reason, the process of developing a regional security framework for the Middle East must proceed carefully, and expectations must be tempered by a realistic understanding of the threats to stability. The major factors in the Middle East include unstable political and social systems in many states in the region, historic hatreds and intolerance, a readiness to resort to violence and random terrorism, and large military forces in close proximity.

As noted in this analysis, instability in the Middle East can spill-over and effect European interests and security. In the past, this impact has largely been limited to economic

effects related to access to petroleum from the Persian Gulf. However, the social and political instability in the region, and the large migration of refugees, as well as terrorism, will continue to have a direct impact on European security interests.

Notes and References:

1. For a detailed analysis of European security interests in the region, see Gerald M. Steinberg, "European Security and the Middle East Peace Process: Lessons from the CSCE," Mediterranean Quarterly, February 1996

2. The Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty also prohibits:

"a. joining or in any way assisting promoting or co-operating with any coalition organisation or alliance with a military or security character with a third party the objectives or activities of which include launching aggression or other acts of military hostility against the other Party...

b. allowing the entry stationing and operating on their territory or through it of military forces personnel or materiel of a third party in circumstances which may adversely prejudice the security of the other Party."

3. Michael Eisenstadt, "Arming for Peace? Syria's Elusive Quest for 'Strategic Parity'", Policy Paper No. 31, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992); Dov Tamari, "The Syrian-Israeli Balance of Forces and Strategic Parity", in The Middle East Military Balance: 1989-90, edited by Joseph Alpher, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990)

4. Jonathan Shimshoni, Israel and Conventional Deterrence, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y. 1988

5. Southern Europe is in close proximity to the Middle East, and states that acquire medium (500 to 1500 km) or long-range ballistic missiles (1500 to 2000 km) or combat aircraft will have the capability of striking targets in Europe. In 1986, Libya fired two SCUD missiles at a base on Lampedusa in retaliation for a US air attack on Tripoli, which, in turn, was triggered by Libyan support for terrorist attacks on a number of US targets, including aircraft and military personnel in Europe.

6. The failures and weaknesses of the NPT/IAEA regime, and similar global frameworks, in cases of closed, totalitarian states, such as Iraq, Iran, Libya, and North Korea, are of particular concern to Israel. In August 1994, Peres noted the NPT's "weak points" as illustrated in the cases of Iran and Iraq. He noted that in the Iraqi case, the NPT "became a laughing matter. They signed an NPT and they built a nuclear capacity." JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE, ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER SHIMON PERES, EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AMRE MOUSSA, (QUESTIONS & ANSWERS IN ENGLISH) Jerusalem, August 31, 1994

7. Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, "Unearthing Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Progress Report", Special Policy Forum Report, Policywatch 175, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, DC, November 20, 1995

8. Since 1988, Israel has launched three Ofeq satellites. The technological requirements for satellite launchers and ballistic missiles are essentially identical. As a result, these launches demonstrate that Israel has the technical capability of producing ballistic missiles.

9. Jervis Robert "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," World Politics, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978).

10. Perceptions of vulnerability are enhanced by its small population (5 million versus an Arab population of over 200 million).

11. See Gerald M. Steinberg, "Arms Control and Regional Security in the Middle East", Survival, Spring, 1994

12. In January 1993, Foreign Minister Peres presented a comprehensive policy statement on regional security and arms control. This policy includes the establishment of a "mutually verifiable zone, free of surface-to-surface missiles and of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons" in the region. Such a zone would require the establishment of comprehensive peace treaties, confidence building measures, a reduction of the "incentives and capabilities for launching surprise attacks", mutual challenge inspections, limits on defense expenditures and conventional weapons. (Address by the Foreign Minister of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres at the Signing Ceremony of the Chemical Weapons Convention Treaty, Paris, January 13 1993).

13. Israeline (Computer-based information service), Israeli Foreign Ministry, February 1, 1995

14. Haaretz, February 13, 1995

15. The link between conventional arms reductions and nuclear weapons limitations in the Middle East was emphasized in the report of the United Nations, entitled Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Region of the Middle East Study on effective and verifiable measures which would facilitate the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Report of the Secretary General, United Nations General Assembly, A/45/435, 10 October 1990.

16. A combined attack including Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria, could deploy over 10,000 main battle tanks, thousands of artillery and mortar launchers, and hundreds of combat aircraft, outnumbering Israeli standing forces by as much as 4 to 1 (3 to 1 after mobilization of reserves). Based on data from the Middle East Military Balance 1992-3, (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1993) pp.440-1 See also The Military Balance 1993-4 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993), p.225.

17. Haaretz, February 21, 1995

18. JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE, ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER SHIMON PERES EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AMRE MOUSSA, (QUESTIONS & ANSWERS IN ENGLISH), Jerusalem, August 31, 1994 (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

19. In his January 1993 policy statement, Peres noted that "priority in this process ought to be assigned to systems whose destabilizing potential and effects have been proven through their use in wars and have inflicted mass casualties."

20. Gerald M. Steinberg, "Israeli Arms Control Policy: Cautious Realism", The Journal of Strategic Studies, Summer 1994

21. For detailed analyses of the activities of the ACRS working group, see Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East, Vol. I, Arms Control and Regional Security, Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, editors, Garland, New York, 1995; and Gerald Steinberg, "Arms Control and Regional Security in the Middle East", Survival, Spring, 1994; and Joel Peters, Building Bridges: The Arab-Israeli Multilateral Talks, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1994

22. Ariel E. Levite, "Confidence and Security Building Measures in the Middle East", in Conference of Research Institutes in the Middle East: Proceedings of the Cairo conference (18-20 April 1993). New York : United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1994.

23. James Macintosh, "Confidence Building Measures in Europe: 1975 to the Present", Encyclopedia of Arms Control and Disarmament, Richard Dean Burns, editor, Charles Scribners' Sons, 1993; Alan Platt, editor, Arms Control and Confidence Building in the Middle East United States Institute for Peace, Washington, DC, 1992

24. There are critical differences between the situation in Europe that led to the success of the CSCE process, and conditions in the Middle East. Sweeping agreements only became possible after fundamental political change in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. Gorbachev's rise to power, political and economic changes, and the policies of "glasnost" and "perestroika" began a process that led to the end of Soviet control of Eastern Europe. This, in turn, ended the confrontation with the US and the West, increased openness and individual freedom within the USSR, and, in the longer term, resulted in the demise of the Soviet empire. These were essential conditions for the success of the CSCE, and without the radical changes within the Soviet Union, there would not have been an agreement. See the text of speech by Dr. Wilhelm Hoyneck, Secretary General of the OSCE, Tel Aviv University, 5 March 1995

25. See Gerald M. Steinberg, "Non-Proliferation: Time for Regional Approaches?", Orbis, Vol. 38, No. 3, Summer 1994, pp. 409-424

INSTITUTO AFFARI ECONOMICHE - ROMA
15860
18 GEN. 1996
ECA