

This article was downloaded by: [Canadian Research Knowledge Network]

On: 27 November 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 783016864]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Survival

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713659919>

## Structuring Middle East Security

Peter Jones

Online publication date: 24 November 2009

To cite this Article Jones, Peter(2009) 'Structuring Middle East Security', Survival, 51: 6, 105 — 122

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/00396330903461682

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00396330903461682>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# Structuring Middle East Security

**Peter Jones**

Of all the world's regions, only the Middle East lacks an inclusive mechanism for the promotion of regional cooperation and security.<sup>1</sup> Europe has the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); Asia the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); the Western Hemisphere the Organisation of American States (OAS); Africa the African Union; and so on. Not all of these regional systems are equally effective, of course. But the lack of any such system in the Middle East is striking. Why does the Middle East stand outside this worldwide trend? Is it in the region's interest to try to develop such a system? How could the first steps be taken towards such a goal, given the Middle East's many rivalries and conflicts?

The Middle East is characterised by multiple, sometimes overlapping conflicts, both between and within states. While some of this is due to the Arab–Israeli dispute, many regional security issues are only peripherally related to that problem, if at all. More people have died in the region's other conflicts than in the Arab–Israeli dispute.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the development, or attempted development, of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons in the region has had as much to do with other regional disputes or imperatives as it has had to do with the Arab–Israeli dispute. Certainly, the only instances of the *use* of such weapons in the region – Iraq's use of chemical weapons against Iran and its own population, and Egypt's use of chemical weapons in Yemen – have had nothing to do with Israel.

---

**Peter Jones** is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa.

This is not to deny the importance of the Arab–Israeli conflict, particularly in its radicalising effects throughout the region. But any truly regional approach to security and cooperation will have to accept as a starting point that a broader approach will be required. Focusing purely on the Arab–Israeli dispute as the sole security problem of the region does not reflect the Middle East’s complex and multidimensional security environment.

The idea of adopting a regional approach to enhanced cooperation and security in the Middle East has generated considerable interest over the years. One of the first regional leaders to take up the idea was President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who raised the possibility in April 1990 in the context of a broader disarmament plan for the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan referred several times in the 1990s to the idea of a ‘Middle East OSCE’. In 2002, then Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia alluded to the need for some sort of Middle East system in the context of his Peace Initiative to the Arab League Summit in Beirut.<sup>4</sup> Most recently, at the IISS Manama Dialogue convened to address these kinds of issues in a major track-two setting, the foreign minister of Bahrain made public statements in favour of

the establishment of a regional organisation in which all countries in the Middle East and North Africa region are members, without exception ... a genuinely Middle Eastern body in which Middle Eastern countries sit down to reach Middle Eastern solutions to Middle Eastern issues.<sup>5</sup>

Complementing these official regional musings, academic and track-two diplomatic efforts have for some years been devoted to exploring this question.<sup>6</sup> These efforts have developed many of the ideas surrounding this issue, and have produced a cadre of regional experts with in-depth knowledge of the possibilities. Though there is little tangible evidence that the ideas generated in these forums have reached the political realm, some argue that attempting to measure the specific impact of such efforts misses the point; it is precisely the development of an ‘epistemic community’, and the general diffusion of new concepts into the region’s discourse, which are the true accomplishments of such activities, though these may be difficult to quantify.<sup>7</sup>

### The critical questions

The Middle East does have experience with cooperation and security systems, but this has been limited. The Arab League is the most broadly inclusive system in the Middle East, but it is exclusive of non-Arab states. Moreover, the league's members have, to date, seemed reluctant to imbue it with the necessary capacities and authority to act as a real security mechanism for the region.

There was an attempt made as part of the multilateral track of the Middle East peace process to create an ongoing process for regional security and arms control, known as the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group (ACRS). ACRS was one of five multilateral working groups created as part of the Madrid peace process. It met in plenary six times between 1992 and 1995, and held numerous working sessions between the plenary meetings. Several notable confidence-building measures were agreed. However, a dispute over the question of how to address Israel's nuclear status led to the group's demise in 1995.

Among its weaknesses, ACRS was never fully representative of the region, as important countries were either excluded (Libya, Iran, Iraq) or chose to stay out of the process (Syria, Lebanon). Moreover, ACRS was intimately tied to the Arab–Israeli peace process, and its underlying conception was that regional security is primarily a function of the Arab–Israeli dispute. This is not necessarily true.<sup>8</sup>

With the end of ACRS, attention turned to the idea of creating a more inclusive and far-reaching cooperation and security framework for the Middle East. This raised numerous complex questions, including:

- What kind of security are we talking about in discussions of a regional system for the Middle East?
- Should the Middle East strive for a region-wide approach, or opt for subregional systems, probably focusing on the Persian Gulf in the first instance?
- What role should be played by outside powers, particularly the United States, in such a system?
- Can a regional cooperation system be launched in the Middle East before the Arab–Israeli dispute is resolved?

To a very large extent, these questions are intertwined and cannot be answered in isolation.

### What kind of security?

Given that any regional system that might be created in the Middle East is likely, for the foreseeable future, to be primarily state-centric, the types of security which are most relevant to this debate are 'collective defence' and 'cooperative security' – a term used here not in the sense associated with Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, but rather in the sense of states cooperating to establish norms of behaviour and mechanisms to give those norms effect over time.<sup>9</sup> Whether any future regional system is

---

*CENTO  
was never  
particularly  
robust*

ultimately designed to provide either type of security will depend on the underlying threat perceptions of the Middle Eastern countries that take part.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the experience of other regions has shown that institutions providing different forms of security can co-exist within a given space, provided their objectives are not mutually contradictory, raising the possibility that both collective and cooperative mechanisms will emerge simultaneously in the Middle East.

If we imagine that the type of regional architecture sought for the Middle East is a collective defence arrangement, this would mean, in practice, an alliance of some sort (even if it is not called that), in which only a certain number of regional countries would band together, probably with the United States, in an attempt to resist a perceived aggressor. This would require a high degree of congruence with respect to the basic consideration of what the threat was, even if regional politics and cultural norms meant that it was never formally identified.

Historically, there has been at least one attempt to create a multilateral organisation of this type in the Middle East, the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), sometimes known as the Baghdad Pact. This Cold War alliance against Soviet penetration of the region existed from 1955 to 1979, but was never particularly robust. The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), created in 1981, has some elements of a defence alliance and may develop further along those lines. Though the latter does not identify a specific enemy,

both CENTO and GCC arrangements contain the idea of collective defence against aggression, though this is expressed far more weakly than it is in, say, the NATO Treaty.

In place of multilateral defence treaties, many Middle Eastern states have traditionally relied on bilateral defence arrangements with outside powers. The United Kingdom was once the primary defence partner for many in the region, until it was replaced by the United States. Often these arrangements are not codified by formal treaties, but by a web of basing agreements, mutual exercise arrangements and other expressions of intent. For the most part, the threat which these bilateral defence arrangements are meant to deter is not formally mentioned, but is quite clear. For the individual GCC states, for example, it was originally Iraq and Iran, and is now Iran.<sup>11</sup>

If, on the other hand, the Middle East were to move toward a more cooperative regional system, one could reasonably expect that a greater number of countries would participate; that the system would be open to all of them, if they decided to join; and that it would not be aimed at countering a specific country, so much as developing a code of conduct and associated dialogue mechanisms to give that code effect. In other words, there would be no unifying desire to counter another country but rather a general agreement that uncertainty and lack of common standards of behaviour were the danger. To the extent that a threat was perceived, it would be more associated with concerns over the possible impact on regional stability of such issues as arms races, demographic pressures, environmental problems and other challenges faced by all of the region's states.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, in the case of such a cooperative security system, the bulk of the discussions, at least initially, would likely focus on fairly traditional issues of state-to-state security. But consideration might also be given to possible mechanisms for the discussion of social, economic and political issues in the region, particularly as they affect regional stability and security. It seems reasonable to expect that any such discussions would be relatively low-key in the first instance, as many regional states are not comfortable with the idea of multilateral dialogue on such issues.

Interestingly, the two types of security are not mutually exclusive. In Europe, the OSCE and NATO co-exist, as did the OSCE's predecessor (the

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) with both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Thus, member states do not necessarily have to pick and choose among different types of groupings. Members of collective defence arrangements (such as NATO) are also members of cooperative security mechanisms (the OSCE), and maintain that their collective defence arrangements enable them to better fulfil their cooperative security obligations, and vice versa.

### **Pan-regional or sub-regional?**

The 'Middle East' (a term invented by Westerners to describe the region's place in their own worldview, and not by those who live there) is a large and complex region. Though many of its inhabitants share a single language and religion, the cultural and other differences between them are significant. Some have questioned whether it makes sense to speak of the 'Middle East' as requiring one approach to security and cooperation.

Broadly speaking, most analysts accept that there are three distinct sub-regions within the Middle East: the Persian Gulf, the Levant and the Maghreb. Moreover, the boundaries of the Middle East are not entirely agreed. Some studies regard a suitable definition of the Middle East as including the members of the League of Arab States, Iran, Israel and Turkey.<sup>13</sup> While most would accept this intuitively, for the purposes of security, it leaves unanswered some important questions. How, for example, would events in Pakistan and Afghanistan, two countries 'outside' the Middle East, but whose security decisions affect many of its members, be factored in?

Initial proposals and studies, including the Mubarak plan and ACRS, took the view that a pan-regional approach should be adopted in the first instance. Though some of these did note that there should also be sub-regional systems, they assumed that the pan-regional approach would have a degree of primacy in setting the region's norms regarding cooperation.

Despite much discussion and study, however, this approach failed to generate any sustained traction in the period leading to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. There are at least three reasons for this. Firstly, as noted, a truly pan-regional approach was never actually tried. Each of the 'visions'

that informed the various approaches (the Arab League, the peace process, ACRS) was, to some extent, exclusionary in terms of how it defined the region and its members.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, it is doubtful that many regional leaders ever really accepted the notion of a genuine discussion of regional cooperation and security. Some took the view that the ongoing Arab–Israeli dispute made inclusive pan-regional discussion impossible. The Iranian revolutionary government was not accepted by some of its neighbours, in part because of its aggressive actions to ‘export’ its ideology in the immediate period after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Turkey exhibited a degree of ambivalence about its status as a ‘Middle Eastern’ country.

Thirdly, it seems that regional leaders across the Middle East have avoided real discussion of these issues because of a fear that any move toward cooperation might require a diminution of sovereignty, which many Middle Eastern governments cling to in an absolute sense. Some regional leaders have also seemed uncomfortable with the thought that any discussions would raise a variety of sensitive social, demographic and political issues that they are reluctant to air in what would be a relatively open forum.

In the wake of the US invasion of Iraq, a number of authors, many of them Americans, began to argue that a sub-regional approach, focused on the Persian Gulf, should be considered.<sup>15</sup> Most proponents of this idea took the view that such an approach could work because it would exclude the Arab–Israeli dispute from discussion by simply cutting Israel out of the debate. It was quickly shown, however, that such an apparently simple course of action would not necessarily yield early or dramatic results. It turned out that the Arab–Israeli issue could not simply be taken off the table, with key countries arguing that even a Persian Gulf approach to security must take account of Israel in some way.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Arab analysts outside of the Persian Gulf sub-region argued that their countries should also be included in any deliberations, given that they make contributions to that area and their national interests are bound up in it.<sup>17</sup>

---

*The Arab–Israeli  
issue could not  
simply be taken  
off the table*



Interestingly, there were considerable differences of view among those proposing a Persian Gulf sub-regional approach as to what kind of security should be striven for. Some of those who were most keen on a Persian Gulf system in the wake of the American invasion of Iraq supported collective defence arrangements between the United States and certain Gulf countries, which would exclude Iran.<sup>18</sup> Others advanced the idea of an inclusive, cooperative sub-regional security system.<sup>19</sup> Thus, even within the supposedly more 'simple' sub-regional approach, there are still considerable differences of view. It is hardly surprising that progress has been far slower than anticipated by those who were early proponents of this scheme.

One interesting question that has largely been lost in this debate is whether it is even necessary to choose between a pan-regional or a sub-regional approach, rather than pursuing both options simultaneously. Michael Yaffe, writing in the immediate aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq, and perhaps trying to generate policy impetus in Washington, went so far as to declare that 'pan-Middle East strategies have a single major problem: they don't work'.<sup>20</sup> Instead, he proposed that efforts be concentrated on a Persian Gulf-based collective defence system involving the United States and select regional countries, one which might, in time, be replicated in the other sub-regions of the Middle East, and possibly tied together into a pan-regional network.

But how realistic was this view? Are Middle Eastern countries likely to rely solely on an interlocking series of sub-regional collective security arrangements with the United States as the only basis of regional stability? The unpopularity of the United States across the Middle East gives reason for doubt.<sup>21</sup>

It seems more reasonable to suggest that there are some issues best dealt with on a sub-regional basis, while others require a more pan-regional approach. A group of regional experts, myself among them, who met several times in the late 1990s under the auspices of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) went over this ground in considerable detail. The group's final report, in a section entitled 'The role of sub-regions and the relationships between bilateral, sub-regional and global security arrangements', concluded:

the creation of a region-wide security regime should be undertaken in a manner which is synergistic with bilateral, multilateral or sub-regional approaches to security issues. This could best be accomplished by establishing a broad set of principles (for regional conduct) which would be relevant to all levels of discourse in the region and then taking a functional approach as to which issues should be dealt with at which levels and in what manner. Some issues, such as those related to weapons of mass destruction, will require a regional approach. Others may best be dealt with sub-regionally.<sup>22</sup>

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

Absent such norms, there is the risk that the system will devolve into a disjointed set of sub-regional dialogues proceeding in very different directions. While this may not be a problem in such areas as environmental cooperation, where the questions facing each sub-region will in most cases be quite different, it would be a significant problem in those areas where region-wide agreements will eventually be necessary, such as the Arab-Israeli dispute, nuclear-, biological- or chemical-weapons proliferation, and international terrorism.

### **The role of outside powers**

Another unresolved question concerns the proper role of states outside the region. Indeed, should outside powers have *any* role? These are questions that have given rise to some strong opinions. Hardliners in the Iranian government, for example, argue that all outside forces must leave the region before any new approach to security and cooperation can be advanced.

Some Western analysts, on the other hand, believe that future approaches to regional security will require an intimate network of collective defence arrangements between outside powers, particularly the United States, and selected regional states.<sup>23</sup>

Between these two extremes lie more subtle approaches. It seems clear that any regional security architecture in the Middle East will have several components. For example, while the overarching system may be based on notions of cooperative security, there will likely be some collective defence arrangements within it, involving defence 'understandings' between the United States and certain regional countries. (The recent musings of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton about a possible defence umbrella for the GCC states in response to Iranian nuclear ambitions may be a case in point.<sup>24</sup>) This is not necessarily unusual: other regions feature both approaches simultaneously, without having to choose between them.

It also seems likely that outside powers will play different roles in each level of any Middle Eastern security architecture according to the needs and desires of those involved. It is, for example, likely that the United States (probably with some involvement of the United Kingdom and France as well) will be the principle outside power involved in those issues pertaining to defence, on both the pan-regional and sub-regional levels. Europe is likely to be heavily involved in issues related to economic cooperation. China will also play an increasing role here.

Broadly speaking, there are two categories of outside powers with a potential role to play in any Middle Eastern security system. Firstly, there are those that are relevant across the Middle East and to all of its sub-regions. It would be logical to expect that these countries (or international bodies) would take part in many, if not all, of the deliberations of any regional or sub-regional bodies. It will be up to Middle Eastern states to decide which countries qualify for this role. The overlapping memberships of the G8, the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the Middle East Quartet may be the most likely candidates.

A second category of outside powers would be those countries that have a role to play on a functional basis, given the issue at hand, or those that are particularly relevant to a given sub-regional dynamic. One could

thus imagine that states such as India and Pakistan, though they would not be part of the regional system, could have a role to play in any discussion of, for example, a regional Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone,<sup>25</sup> perhaps in the field of guarantees to respect the zone. More broadly, states that border Middle Eastern sub-regions such as the Persian Gulf and North Africa could be invited to play a role in such areas as economic and environmental cooperation.

ASEAN provides an example of the type of system this flexible approach to outsider participation could take, in which regional states make up the inner core of the system, with various other countries and international bodies becoming involved in regional affairs on a functional basis. Ideally, the states of the Middle East would lead in the creation of any such system, setting the procedural and substantive parameters of the system and having first say in its operation and evolution. Outside powers would be present in a supportive role, and to ensure that their concerns about regional developments were given proper due.

But this may be too ambitious, at least at first. Several Middle Eastern states do not yet recognise each other. It will be difficult for them to come together in a sufficiently collegial manner to permit the degree of unanimity required to play the leading role in any regional system. Thus, we may expect that at least some outside powers will also play a facilitative role in the creation and early operation of a regional system. The trick will be for the region's states to avail themselves of this assistance without surrendering leadership over their future.

### **The Arab–Israeli peace process**

A final question concerns the possibility of constructing a regional cooperation and security system without first resolving the Arab–Israeli dispute. In an ideal world, this problem would not have to be faced: the peace process would be finished and two states, Israel and Palestine, would exist side-by-side in peace and harmony. But this is not likely to happen for some time, if ever.

As noted above, the Arab–Israeli dispute is far from the only conflict in the Middle East, nor is it the most deadly. But it does occupy a special

place in the region's political and social life. The Middle Eastern public is particularly attuned to this conflict, and it plays a significant role in the radicalisation of youth across the region. The development of a cooperative security system is thus tied to the Arab–Israeli dispute in practice, even if the issues are quite different. But this should not mean that the dispute has to be fully resolved before progress can be made on the wider system.

One key may lie in the notion that a new approach to regional security could assist the peace process indirectly. The growing importance of Hamas in the Israeli–Palestinian dispute, for example, may cause some of Israel's neighbours, notably Egypt, to wonder if a process of ongoing discussion and cooperation on security matters might be helpful in containing possible threats to stability. Such cooperation can go on quietly, behind the scenes – no doubt it already does on the level of the security services. But there is an argument to be made that a more diplomatic process could complement secret talks by contributing to the development of regional norms that

---

*A new approach  
to regional  
security could  
assist the peace  
process indirectly*

would support the goal of enhancing moderate forces and strengthening states as the primary actors on the regional stage. More broadly, by demonstrating that a new and more cooperative future is possible in the region, a more formal security system could make the difficult compromises required to make peace in the Arab–Israeli dispute seem less intractable.

It is worth noting that in no other region did the central dispute characterising the area need to be resolved before a more cooperative approach to security dialogue could be developed. This is not to equate the Arab–Israeli dispute with any other, though residents of the Middle East sometimes underestimate the gravity and bitterness of the Franco-German and later Cold War rivalries in Europe when they argue that their own rivalries cannot be so easily overcome. But it is clear that other regions have found ways to at least begin a dialogue over new approaches to cooperation, even as they have been locked in serious, and in some cases deadly, conflicts.

In Europe, the divisions of Germany and Berlin, the occupation of Eastern Europe, the existence of huge peacetime armies and the deploy-

ment of thousands of nuclear weapons were not used as a pretext to refuse engagement over regional stability; these factors made such engagement more complex, but also convinced leaders and peoples that it was vitally necessary. In Asia, the conflicts and pressures of decolonisation and the Cold War were not used as a pretext to refuse to engage in the process which would eventually lead to ASEAN; they made regional leaders more determined to do so. Other regions have had similar experiences.

This is not to equate the Middle East with Europe, Asia, or any other region. Each region is different in important ways. But it is significant that other regions have experienced war, occupation, proliferation and a host of other ills, and yet have managed to begin a process of dialogue and cooperation regardless. For too long some Middle Eastern leaders have used the pretext of the Arab–Israeli dispute to avoid uncomfortable decisions and discussions over wider questions and to mollify those within their own populations who have preached intolerance. The inability of regional leaders to move beyond the Arab–Israeli dispute and begin to develop the new regional structures which are required to deal with the political, security, economic, social and environmental challenges they now face is weakening their ability to deal with these problems and is strengthening those who seek to overthrow the existing regional order.

### Looking ahead

Without question, the creation of a regional security system in the Middle East will be a complex affair. There are different conceptions of the basic notions of security in play; the question of the proper relationship between regional and sub-regional approaches requires much deliberation; the role of outside powers remains vexing; and the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict is seen, at least by some, as rendering progress impossible for the time being. One way forward may be to accept that no single system is going to emerge – no single approach or regional security system can possibly address the many questions in play. Rather, it might be best to conceive of the road ahead as involving discussion of a ‘system of systems’.

Where appropriate, some Middle Eastern countries, along with certain outside powers, may seek to create collective defence arrangements. But

this does not mean that an inclusive, cooperative security system cannot also be explored. The two have co-existed in other regions and indeed enhanced each other. Similarly, there is no reason to think that pan-regional and sub-regional dialogues could not be developed simultaneously, each stressing different issues. Above all, it will be important to avoid 'either-or' approaches when considering the region's security future.

The key may lie in recognising that the development of such systems in all regions of the world has been a long-term, evolutionary process. No regional cooperation system was born fully formed. A patient, long-term view is required, as is a degree of flexibility. It may well be, in the first instance, that not all countries of the region will be prepared to participate in official discussions until the Middle East peace process is completed. Perhaps only a few regional countries will take part in any official track at the beginning of the process, and the issues discussed might be relatively uncontroversial ones.

However, a broader cross-section of regional states may be willing to participate in a structured, but unofficial, process addressing a wider range of issues. This would require the creation of an ongoing track-two process dedicated to the discussion of regional cooperation and security issues, but one that enjoyed close links to official diplomacy.<sup>26</sup> Such a system might draw lessons from the experience of the Asia-Pacific region, where a standing unofficial process exists to complement and support the official one. Though not without its difficulties, this process permits regional countries to explore ideas that are too sensitive for the official process, in a low-key, relatively low-risk environment.<sup>27</sup>

The advantage of such a system for the Middle East would lie in its ability to assist the regional states in transcending the 'recognition barrier' that is so tied up with the Arab-Israeli process. The logic is that, while it is practically impossible for many regional states to meet with Israelis in official settings, the same is not necessarily true of unofficial settings. The trick is to imbue unofficial efforts with sufficient structure and 'connectivity' to the official track that it is capable of fostering useful, policy-relevant discussions of critical issues. Such a track could not make or enforce decisions. Only official meetings can do that. But it would serve at least as a forum where

some discussion on matters of mutual interest could take place until political developments in the region progress to the point that an official process could be developed.

A longer-term vision is thus required. Policymakers need to have a broad sense of where the region needs to go, even if the map to get there is not yet fully drawn. A regional security 'system of systems' is not going to spring up overnight. It may, in the first instance, feature small steps to institutionalise dialogue over small issues. It may begin on both the track-one and track-two levels simultaneously. The details will have to be discussed and agreed, of course. What is required now is high-level recognition that this type of regional arrangement is a necessary component of the Middle East's response to what has happened in Iraq and to wider regional trends, and a willingness to begin the long process of its creation. The Middle East desperately requires some rules of behaviour for its states and a mechanism to allow for ongoing dialogue over security issues. As the experience of other regions has shown, individual conflicts, no matter how serious, need not stand in the way of regional institutional development. Indeed, in other parts of the world, the creation of cooperative systems was seen as critical in managing, and ultimately helping to resolve, the central dispute.

## Notes

- 1 The term 'Middle East' as used in this essay is intended to convey the sense meant by the larger term 'Middle East and North Africa' (MENA).
- 2 Although exact numbers are necessarily speculative, losses from the Arab-Israeli conflict are in the 60–70,000 range since 1948. The Algerian Civil War cost some 150–200,000 dead, the Yemen Civil War some 125,000 and the Iran-Iraq War some 500,000.
- 3 See *Letter dated 19 April 1990 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt addressed to the President of the Conference on Disarmament*, Conference on Disarmament document CD/989, 20 April, 1990.
- 4 The Saudi peace plan was advanced at the Arab League Summit in March 2002 and has since been adopted, with minor modifications, by the Arab League. It was re-endorsed at the Arab League Summit in Riyadh in 2007. See 'Text: Arab Peace Plan of 2002', [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/1844214.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1844214.stm).
- 5 See Sheikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al Khalifa, keynote address to the 5<sup>th</sup> IISS Regional Security Summit, Manama, Bahrain, 12 December 2008, <http://www.iiss.org/>



- conferences/the-iiss-regional-security-summit/manama-dialogue-2008/plenary-sessions-and-speeches/opening-remarks-and-keynote-address/keynote-address-sh-khalid-bin-ahmed-bin-mohamed-al-khalifa/.
- 6 Among the principal texts are Peter Jones, *Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East; Issues and Options* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 1998), available at <http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRI98Jones.pdf> (hereafter cited as the *SIPRI Report*); Shai Feldman and Abdullah Toukan, *Bridging the Gap: A Future Security Architecture for the Middle East* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997); and the collection of essays in the special issue on 'Building Regional Security in the Middle East: International, Regional and Domestic Influences', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, September 2003.
- 7 For more on how track-two efforts can contribute to the consideration of regional security matters, see Peter Jones, 'Filling a Critical Gap, or Just Wasting Time: Track Two Diplomacy and Regional Security in the Middle East', *Disarmament Forum*, no. 2, 2008, [http://www.unidir.org/bdd/fiche-article.php?ref\\_article=2726](http://www.unidir.org/bdd/fiche-article.php?ref_article=2726); Dalia Dassa Kaye, *Talking to the Enemy: Track Two Diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007); Dalia Dassa Kaye, 'Track Two Diplomacy and Regional Security in the Middle East', *International Negotiation: A Journal of Theory and Practice*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2001, pp. 44–77.
- 8 For more on the ACRS, see Bruce Jentleson, *The Middle East Arms Control and Security Talks: Progress, Problems and Prospects*, IGCC Policy Paper no. 2 (Los Angeles, CA: University of California, 1996); Peter Jones, 'Arms Control in the Middle East: Is It Time to Renew ACRS?', *Disarmament Forum*, no. 2, 2005, [http://www.unidir.org/bdd/fiche-article.php?ref\\_article=2278](http://www.unidir.org/bdd/fiche-article.php?ref_article=2278).
- 9 For more on this conception of cooperative security see Janne Nolan, *Global Engagement: Cooperation and Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 1994).
- 10 See Peter Jones, 'Is a Common Threat Perception a Necessary Precondition for the Creation of a Regional Security and Co-operation System?', *Conflict INFOCUS*, no. 21, October 2007, pp. 3–5, [http://www.rccp-jid.org/infocus/infocus\\_21.pdf](http://www.rccp-jid.org/infocus/infocus_21.pdf).
- 11 Some GCC states have also had concerns about each other.
- 12 See Jones, *SIPRI Report*.
- 13 See, for example, J. Prawitz and J.F. Leonard, *A Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 1996).
- 14 For a thoughtful discussion of the question of defining the Middle East region as a function of who is excluded, see Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'Future Visions of the Arab Middle East', *Security Dialogue*, vol. 27, no. 4, December 1996, pp. 425–36.
- 15 For examples see Flynt Leverett, 'The Middle East: Thinking Big', *The American Prospect*, 21 February 2005, [http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the\\_middle\\_east\\_thinking\\_big](http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_middle_east_thinking_big); Michael Yaffe, 'The Gulf and a New Middle East Security System', *Middle East Policy Journal*,

- vol. 11, no. 3, Fall 2004, [http://www.mepc.org/journal\\_vol11/0409\\_yaffe.asp](http://www.mepc.org/journal_vol11/0409_yaffe.asp); Fariborz Mokhtari, 'Security in the Persian Gulf: Is a Security Framework Possible?', *American Foreign Policy Interests*, February 2004; James A. Russell, 'Searching for a Post-Saddam Regional Security Architecture', *MERIA Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1, March 2003, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue1/jv7n1a3.html>; Kenneth M. Pollack, 'Securing the Gulf', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 4, July–August 2003, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58993/kenneth-m-pollack/securing-the-gulf>; Joseph McMillan, Richard Sokolsky and Andrew Winner, 'Toward a New Regional Security Architecture', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 3, Summer 2003, pp. 161–75; Andrew Rathmell, Theodore Karasik and David Gompert, *A New Persian Gulf Security System* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2003).
- <sup>16</sup> Prince Saud Al Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia, 'Towards a New Framework for Regional Security', IISS Gulf Security Dialogue: The Gulf Dialogue, Bahrain, 5 December 2004.
- <sup>17</sup> See, for example, Mohamed Kadry Said, 'Potential Egyptian Contribution to a Security Framework in the Gulf', *Middle East Policy Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3, Fall 2003, [http://www.mepc.org/journal\\_vol11/0409\\_said.asp](http://www.mepc.org/journal_vol11/0409_said.asp).
- <sup>18</sup> See, for example, Yaffe, 'The Gulf and a New Middle East Security System'.
- <sup>19</sup> See, for example, The Stanley Foundation, *The Future of Gulf Security: Project Report* (Muscatine, IA: The Stanley Foundation, November 2007); and Leverett, 'The Middle East: Thinking Big'.
- <sup>20</sup> Yaffe, 'The Gulf and a New Middle East Security System'.
- <sup>21</sup> A point noted even in the immediate aftermath of the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. See, for example, Riad Kahwaji, 'U.S.–Arab Cooperation in the Gulf: Are Both Sides Working From the Same Script?'; and Volker Perthes, 'America's "Greater Middle East" and Europe: Key Issues for Dialogue', *Middle East Policy Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3, Fall 2003, [http://www.mepc.org/journal\\_vol11/0409\\_perthes.asp](http://www.mepc.org/journal_vol11/0409_perthes.asp).
- <sup>22</sup> Jones, *SIPRI Report*, p. 22. A list of participants in the SIPRI process may be found on pp. 51–3.
- <sup>23</sup> Yaffe, 'The Gulf and a New Middle East Security System'.
- <sup>24</sup> Mark Landler and David E. Sanger, 'Clinton Speaks of Shielding Mideast from Iran', *New York Times*, 22 July 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/23/world/asia/23diplo.html>.
- <sup>25</sup> Vilmos Cserveny et al., *Building a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East*, UNIDIR/2004/24 (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2004).
- <sup>26</sup> This approach is sometimes called 'track-1.5' diplomacy. For more on this and the origins of the term, see Jeffrey Mapendere, 'Track One and Half Diplomacy and the Complementarity of Tracks', *Culture of Peace Online Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2006, pp. 66–81. Susan Allen Nan has defined 'track one and a half' as 'diplomatic initiatives that are facilitated by unofficial bodies, but directly involve officials from the conflict in question'.

'Track One-and-a-Half Diplomacy: Contributions to Georgia–South Ossetian Peacemaking', in Ronald J. Fisher, *Paving the Way: Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking* (New York: Lexington, 2005), pp. 161–74.

- <sup>27</sup> A thoughtful analysis of the accomplishments and limitations of track-two diplomacy on regional security in the Asia-Pacific region may be found in Desmond Ball, Anthony Milner and Brendan Taylor, 'Track Two Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific: Reflections and Future Directions', *Asian Security*, vol. 2, no. 3, December 2006, p. 182. The authors acknowledge that their

analysis builds on Brian Job, 'Track 2 Diplomacy: Ideational Contribution to the Evolving Asia Security Order', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 241–79. For more on the idea of Asian track-two meetings as a possible model for such dialogues in the Middle East see: Dalia Dassa Kaye, *Talking to the Enemy*, p. 120; and Peter Jones, 'Track II Diplomacy and the Gulf Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone', *Security and Terrorism Research Bulletin*, Gulf Research Center, no. 1, October 2005, [http://www.grc.ae/bulletin\\_WMD\\_Free\\_Zone.pdf](http://www.grc.ae/bulletin_WMD_Free_Zone.pdf).