Emily Landau

Egypt and Israel in ACRS:
Bilateral Concerns in a Regional
Arms Control Process

JCSS Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies

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Contents

Acronyms

ACRS: Arms Control and Regional Security

CBMs: Confidence Building Measures

CSBMs: Confidence and Security Building Measures

CSCE: Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

MENA Conference: Middle East and North Africa Economic Conference

NPT: Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

NWFZ: Nuclear Weapons Free Zone

OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

RSC: Regional Security Centers

SAR-INCSEA: Search and Rescue and Incidents at Sea

WMDs: Weapons of Mass Destruction

WMDFZ: Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone

Introduction

The Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) working group is one of the five working groups that together make up the multilateral track of the Middle East peace process initiated in Madrid in 1991.[1] The multilaterals as a whole were conceived as being future-oriented – that is, they were designed to examine various aspects of inter-state relations that would be relevant in a Middle East in which all outstanding bilateral conflicts had been resolved. As their name suggests, they were devised as a means of addressing those issues that are common to the region and do not necessarily respect national or geographic boundaries. Envisioned as a supplementary track of the peace process, there was a sense that they could be potentially less conflictual than the bilateral negotiations, as they addressed problems that were common to all parties in the region.

The perceived linkages between the multilateral and bilateral tracks of the peace process became more apparent as the process took shape and will be discussed below. While the US hoped for a positive spill-over effect from the multilaterals to the bilateral negotiations, it favored the multilaterals remaining a healthy step behind the bilaterals, so that they would not "out-step" the progress being achieved there. Some of the regional participants tended to view progress in the multilaterals as benefiting Israel primarily, and were wary of letting Israel gain too much in terms of improved regional relations before making real progress in negotiations with Syria and the Palestinians.

While there are differing accounts regarding the question of who was the first to suggest the idea of an arms control and regional security working group,[2] the goals of this forum were set out in the opening session held in Moscow in January of 1992. There, then-US Secretary of State James Baker set forth the agenda of these talks as:

> In the first instance...offering the regional parties our thinking about potential approaches to arms control...From this base, the group might move forward to considering a

set of modest confidence-building or transparency measures covering notifications of selected military-related activities and crisis-prevention communications. The purpose would be to lessen the prospects for incidents and miscalculation that could lead to heightened competition or even conflict.[3]

Following the initial meeting in Moscow, six plenary meetings and many intersessional meetings took place. During the years 1992-1995, major progress was achieved in the operational "basket" of ACRS; quite a few military Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) were agreed upon, and some had even begun to be implemented. These included agreements relating to maritime issues (e.g. conducting a Search and Rescue and Incidents at Sea – SAR-INCSEA – exercise), pre-notification of military exercises and a military information exchange, a regional communications network, and the setting up of three Regional Security Centers (RSC).[4] However, at the close of 1995, in the wake of increased intensity in the ongoing disagreement between Israel and Egypt over the question of when to place a discussion of a weapons of mass destruction free zone (WMDFZ) on the agenda of ACRS, official discussions were put on hold indefinitely. Egypt refused to continue the process until this issue was addressed.

This study attempts to contribute to the body of literature that already exists on the subject of arms control in the Middle East by looking at the way in which dialogue and interaction were carried out in the Arms Control and Regional Security working group. Part One lays out the major developments of ACRS – the set-up, procedures, and decisions taken. It also sets the stage by analyzing Egypt's position on the nuclear issue. Part Two deals with the dynamics of the strategic game of arms control: here I aim to show that while the nuclear issue was a point of contention between Israel and Egypt from the outset, the development of this issue, and the salience it acquired, were affected by the dynamics of the multilateral framework. In other words, ACRS did not function merely as a neutral context within which the Egyptian-Israeli dispute over nuclear capabilities was carried out; rather, the dispute itself – especially the way the nuclear issue was framed as an unsolvable zero sum issue – was shaped within this framework, and significantly influenced by shared understandings that were being fostered.

In fact, there was a very important development in ACRS; over the course of the three years in which it was active, more and more participating states converged upon an understanding of arms control that included CSBMs as a first stage. Thus, the multilateral process came to be characterized by two major – and conflicting – dynamics: one of 'convergence,' reflected most significantly in the growing agreement on Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs). The other dynamic – one of 'divergence' – was reflected in Egypt's growing disenchantment with the process as a whole, and opposition to the direction it had taken, even to the point that progress was no longer possible. The 'dynamics of convergence' were facilitated by the nature of the multilateral cooperative discussion, especially in light of the deliberate attempt to create a framework that encourages learning and mutual understanding. The 'dynamics of divergence,' in turn, increased in force as cooperation on CSBMs became more and more apparent.

Part Three highlights salient features of the arms control process *as a process.* This will be done in order to assess the potential of these features for overcoming the constraints to progress. Here focus will be placed on the implications of the seminar framework of discussions – the opportunities it affords for multilateral cooperation, as well as the limitations it faces. The potential contribution of Track II meetings to the arms control process will also be assessed. The Middle East Track II efforts refer to the informal, unofficial seminars, workshops and conferences that bring together academics, retired officials and army personnel, and serving officials participating in an unofficial capacity, in order to carry on discussions of various aspects of arms control and regional security and their possible application to the Middle East in a relaxed and informal setting. These initiatives, organized by various non-government organizations and academic institutions, began a few years before ACRS convened, continued throughout the years in which it was active, and since 1995 have provided the only context for continuing arms control discussions (and the process itself) in a regional setting. Finally, concluding attempts will be made to assess the prospects for getting the multilateral talks back on track.

The attempt to draw out and unravel the strands of interaction that took place in these talks is not an easy task. The major source of information in this regard will be material gathered on the basis of in-depth interviews carried out with many of the participants in this process.[5] The stories told in these interviews are clearly not entirely

reflective of "objective" reality, and they differ in their emphases and nuances. Some points were focused on by some and ignored by others; important aspects of the process sometimes found expression in what a particular participant chose *not* to say, or in an example used to illustrate a certain point. The reality upon which the interviewees are drawing is rich and complex; it is significant to note how each participant chose to deal with the questions posed about the process, as this provides insight into the dynamics that were taking place. The actual decisions taken at ACRS have been recorded, but the *meaning* of arms control, the interplay of differing approaches and the molding of positions and common understandings are not things that can necessarily be found in working documents or position papers drawn up by the various parties in anticipation of, and following the various rounds of talks.[6] It should be clear that while focus will be placed on the insights gained from interaction within ACRS, support for many of the understandings will be drawn from various other sources and contexts as well. When examining the prevalence of the nuclear issue in the Egyptian security concept, or the meaning attributed to normalization, for example, these find their way into numerous statements and comments not necessarily directly linked to the arms control process.

Potential critics of such an effort might note that ACRS is not really worthy of much academic attention, given that it seems not to have been a very significant process in the Middle East. Not only did it go into abeyance before reaching particularly noteworthy results, but there was a definite sense that most participants took part initially mainly in order to go along with the US. In fact, it has been noted by some of the participants that at the outset, no one really thought that the talks were all that important. Moreover, it was made clear by the organizers of the multilateral track that as far as the structure of the overall peace talks was concerned, the multilaterals would always be kept one step behind the bilaterals – that the bilateral negotiations would set the tone and pace for advancing in the multilateral talks.

The first response to this is that in terms of understanding the nature and implications of the multilateral *process*, the question of concrete results (arms control agreements or the establishment of a regional security system in the Middle East) while important, should not be the major focus of attention. In fact, over the years, it has become more and more apparent in the Middle East that achieving peace agreements is a long-term process – each stage in the process leaves the parties at a

different place than where they began. In the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, for example, the breaking of Israeli taboos can be traced over the course of many years: first agreeing to negotiate with the PLO, then accepting the concept of an eventual Palestinian state, and, most recently, the growing acceptance of the inevitability of some form of division of Jerusalem in the context of an agreement. In this sense, the significance of the peace process goes beyond the question of concrete results in each round, and is in fact worthy of academic attention.[7]

This becomes even more apparent when our focus in the process is on *interactions* between states as a major factor influencing how they conceive of their security concerns. In this sense, the unique nature of the multilateral framework – the tensions it created, the uncertainty it bred, as well as the opportunities it presented – makes it an especially interesting case for more in-depth analysis. The arms control dialogue that developed in the Middle East in the early 1990s was an innovative framework of dialogue for Middle East states in several important respects: it created for the first time a truly multilateral cooperative framework that joined Arab states and Israel; it dealt with a new and unfamiliar concept in the Middle East, and it involved an innovative framework for dialogue, taking the form of seminar-like discussions. The convergence of these features served to create a new and unfamiliar setting for the regional participants, as detached as possible from previous modes of interaction between Arab states and Israel, even when they had pursued modes of cooperation.

Finally, while states may have initially held relatively low expectations as far as regional arms control talks were concerned, their attitudes at the outset were not necessarily reflected in their positions later on. As both the opportunities and the potential dangers of ACRS as a multilateral forum became more apparent over time, the various parties began to have a more vested interest in the process and its outcomes. Interestingly enough, this is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the negative position ultimately adopted by Egypt. Clearly, the energy that Egypt invested in order to halt progress had to do with the importance that they attached to what was transpiring; it certainly did not attest to their *lack* of interest.

Part I

Setting the Stage

Chapter 1: **The History of ACRS: 1992-1995**

The Arms Control and Regional Security working group was active during the years 1992-1995. The following account will begin with a description of the overall structure of the working group: the general set-up and rules of procedure. Thereafter it will describe the major events and developments in ACRS, with emphasis on the actual progress that was made. Finally, the dynamics that led to the breakdown and indefinite postponement of the talks will be discussed.[8]

ACRS included participants from Israel, 12 Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania – as of early 1994), and representatives of the Palestinians (as of May 1993), in addition to over 30 parties from outside the region.[9] The Steering Group – which comprised the co-sponsors of the multilateral process (the US and Russia), Israel, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinians, Saudi Arabia (representing the Gulf states), Tunisia (representing the Maghreb), Japan, Canada, and the European Union – is the supreme body of the multilateral forum as a whole. It oversaw the activities of the five working groups, and was responsible for setting the time and venue of all plenary meetings.

The plenaries of each working group were authorized to approve agenda items and activities, as well as any agreements reached. The principle of consensus was adopted as an iron principle of the talks from the initial meeting that took place in Moscow in January of 1992, but it was decided that actual participation in different activities would be on a voluntary basis. This was done in order to diffuse some of the

opposition that could have arisen regarding implementation of some of the decisions. The "gavel-holders" of ACRS were the US and Russia; in practice they took on a role that extended beyond merely ensuring the smooth running of the meetings. US interest in the process emanates from its leading role in the peace process as a whole, as well as the special interest that it has developed in promoting arms control in different areas of the world, and especially in the Middle East.

In the second year of ACRS, in light of the work plan envisioned, a decision was taken to conduct additional meetings between the plenaries – called "intersessionals." Each intersessional meeting would, as Jentleson (1996) noted:

> [F]ocus 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.[10]

These intersessionals have included workshops, educational seminars, meetings of experts, tours of arms control-related facilities, etc. Much was achieved in the intersessionals in terms of learning and discussing the issues, clarifying positions, working out the details of decisions taken in the plenaries, and getting to know how the other side views the issues. Decisions mandating the activities of the intersessionals were made in the plenary sessions; recommendations of the intersessionals in turn required plenary approval. As will be discussed at greater length below, ACRS was, in fact, set up as a *working group*, rather than as a negotiating forum in the purest sense. As regards the initial plenaries, these were conducted as actual seminars, in order to educate the participants on the concept of arms control and the experience gained in other regions.

In his study on ACRS, Bruce Jentleson divides the activities of ACRS into **four phases**, which provides a convenient structure for relating the major developments that took place in the working group: (1) *initiation of ACRS* (establishing the process – from January 1992 to September 1992); (2) *definition of the work agenda* (from the May 1993 third plenary to November of that year); (3) *negotiation of preliminary agreements* (from November 1993 to the Tunis plenary in December 1994); and (4) *breakdown of the process* (1995).[11]

In the **first phase,** there were two plenaries: the first (May 1992) included briefings by experts on the US-Soviet and East-West arms control experience, and the second (September 1992) was focused more directly on the application of this experience to the Middle East. At the second plenary, regional parties were also asked to submit statements on what they perceived to be the long-term arms control and regional security objectives of the talks, for consideration at the third plenary. Agreement was reached on a list of topics that would thereafter be the focus of attention in the intersessionals. These included the idea of setting up a conflict prevention center; cooperation in the maritime realm; exchange of military information, including pre-notification of military activities; and declaratory measures regarding arms control and regional security objectives.

In the **second phase** the intersessionals became active, and mentors were assigned. As Jentleson (1996) noted:

> 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 pre-notification 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.[12]

Jentleson also points out that most of the Arab states were unwilling to commit to the regular and high level participation that was needed for effective progress in the intersessionals. Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinians, Oman and Israel did send experts to attend regularly, and Tunisia, Qatar and the UAE had somewhat more sporadic participation. Most others either sent representatives from local embassies or did not attend at all. Nevertheless, important progress was made in terms of delineating the work agenda of ACRS.

In the **third phase**, which began with the fourth plenary of November 1993, a decision to split the talks into two "baskets" was implemented. The *Operational Basket* would deal essentially with CSBMs in four areas: maritime issues, exchange of military information and prior notification,

the establishment of a regional communications network (based on the concept developed in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe – CSCE), and the Jordanian proposal for establishing a Regional Security Center. The *Conceptual Basket* would focus on the long-term concerns regarding regional security in the Middle East. As Feldman (1997) noted, the conceptual basket

> …would explore the possibility of reaching a consensus on principles to guide the future relations of the region's states; on the ultimate objectives of the arms control process; and on a set of declaratory measures that might provide the parties with effective mutual reassurances. The parties were also expected to define the region's boundaries; to articulate their threat perceptions; to elaborate generic verification methods; to design crisis- and conflict-prevention mechanisms; and to produce menus of confidence-building measures.[13]

Those who have written on ACRS[14] all note that the seeds of the dispute between Israel and Egypt over whether, how and when the nuclear issue could be included in the agenda of ACRS were apparent from the initial plenaries. Egypt believed that the nuclear issue must be on the immediate agenda of ACRS, including Israeli commitment to sign the NPT. This was the essence of arms control in their view. Israel adhered to the logic of CSBMs as a first stage in the process, in order to create the necessary mutual confidence in order to proceed to more difficult arms control issues. According to Peter Jones, the decision to split discussions into two baskets was a critical stage in the process. The split reflected, and to his mind probably reinforced the dispute between Israel and Egypt over the nuclear issue.[15] Israel was happy with the fact that real progress could be made on CSBMs in the context of the operational basket, and Egypt sought to give expression to its concerns in the nuclear realm within the conceptual basket. Egypt's position on the nuclear issue was especially pronounced in the context of discussions over the draft "Declaration of Principles"(DOP) and statements of intent on arms control and regional security (which, in an ultimately abortive attempt to reach agreement, was later watered down to a mere "Statement on Arms Control and Regional Security"). But the split reinforced the fact that there were two tracks for progress – one emphasizing CSBMs and

the other providing a forum for addressing nuclear concerns – and progress in one could easily be measured against progress (or lack thereof) in the other. This reinforced the tension over the differing views on arms control.

Throughout 1994 discussions proceeded in the context of the two baskets. In the operational basket, discussions focused on the four areas mentioned above. A technical experts meeting on communications was held in the Netherlands in January, and the first operational basket meeting was held in Turkey in March. Following the fifth plenary that took place in Qatar in May (for the first time, in the region), two events took place in the maritime realm: a SAR-INCSEA demonstration using Canadian and American warships, held off the coast of Venice, Italy, in July; and a Senior Officers' Symposium held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from August 29 to September 1, with the attendance of 10 regional delegations.[16] An additional operational basket workshop took place in Jordan, in November, dealing with the Jordanian proposal to set up a Regional Security Center, continued discussion of INCSEA and SAR, and pre-notification of military activities.

Two conceptual basket meetings were held during 1994 – the first in Cairo in February, and the second in Paris in October. At the February meeting, a draft "ACRS DOP" was drawn up, which included four principal components: a preamble which placed the DOP in the context of the Middle East peace process; a section on the core principles for regional security relations; guidelines for the ACRS process; and statements of intent on major objectives, including CSBMs, conventional arms control, and the establishment of a WMDFZ.[17] At the May plenary in Doha (which was characterized by significant Saudi opposition, to be discussed below), not much was achieved regarding this draft, and it was decided to continue discussion in the next conceptual basket meeting. At the October meeting some of the points of disagreement were worked out, and the document was renamed "Statement on Arms Control and Regional Security," but disagreement over the nuclear issue remained.

The Qatar plenary, which took place in May, was one of the stormier meetings in ACRS, mainly due to highly increased Saudi opposition. This seemed to have to do primarily with intra-Gulf politics: Saudi Arabia was not keen on having the meeting take place in Qatar, and was especially not interested in Qatar reaping recognition for hosting a successful meeting. The Saudis opposed the implications for increased

normalization of relations with Israel that could be understood as implicit in the wording of the DOP. Egypt in turn voiced its concerns over the unequal progress in the two baskets, claiming that progress in the operational basket was way ahead of what had been achieved in the conceptual basket.

The sixth and final plenary to date was held in Tunis, in December 1994. Progress was made on both the conceptual and operational levels. On the conceptual level, discussions focused on regional security concepts and threat perceptions, and work continued on the definition of long-term goals for arms control and regional security. There were also interesting developments regarding the delineation of the Middle East region for purposes of arms control and regional security. But, regarding the draft "Statement on Arms Control and Regional Security," disagreement between Israel and Egypt over the nuclear issue precluded agreement on the document. Israel agreed to the principle of establishing a WMDFZ in the Middle East, but Egypt insisted on including a specific clause that all parties in the region would adhere to the NPT in the near future. To this Israel would not agree.[18]

Significant progress was achieved on the operational level, which focused on CSBMs in four areas:

1. *Maritime issues*: two documents were endorsed on SAR and INCSEA; Tunisia agreed in principle to host an additional SAR-INCSEA exercise and a meeting of senior naval officers from the region;

2. *Pre-notification and military exchange*: an agreement on prior notification of military exercises was concluded; the parties agreed to exchange information in the areas of military personnel, unclassified military publications, and military training and education; and several delegations accepted Israel's invitation to visit a defense industry installation;

3. *Communications*: Israel, Jordan, the Palestinians, Tunisia, Oman, and Egypt agreed to participate in an interim regional communications network based on the CSCE. It was to be set up temporarily in the Hague, where it could use the excess capacity of the CSCE network hub located there. Egypt offered to host the permanent communications network, as soon as it could be set up. The system was viewed to be a means of facilitating immediate ACRS-related communications, as well as to serve long-term confidence building by providing a means for rapid and direct communication between governments to deal with possible misunderstandings among them;[19]

4. *Regional Security Center*: a decision was made to set up three Regional Security Centers – the primary one in Jordan, with secondary centers in Qatar and Tunisia. The main objectives of these centers were defined as crisis prevention, management, and resolution. It was agreed that a meeting for drafting a mandate for the center was to be held in Amman, in September 1995.[20]

Together with these notable achievements, the Egyptians became more adamant than ever on the nuclear issue, demanding that something be achieved in the nuclear realm that was equal to the progress in the operational basket. While they were finally persuaded to accept a statement which recognized the work done to date, and allowed for the continuation of these efforts, "the Egyptian delegation also served notice that Cairo would not necessarily attend any further ACRS meetings until the group began to take the nuclear issue with what Cairo considered appropriate seriousness."[21]

The **fourth phase** of ACRS was the breakdown of the process, which took place over the course of 1995. During 1995, the difference of opinion between Israel and Egypt over the agenda of ACRS was elevated to crisis proportions. It became increasingly difficult to implement agreements reached at the Tunis plenary, and postponement of the planned 1995 plenary (from the spring to the autumn, and then indefinitely) meant that activities and developments could not be endorsed.[22] Nevertheless, two important intersessionals did take place. An operational basket meeting was held in Antalya, Turkey in April. The regional communications network had begun operation in the Hague in March 1995, and discussion focused on the permanent center to be established in Egypt. Progress was also made regarding maritime issues and pre-notification and information exchange. A meeting devoted to a range of conceptual issues was held in Helsinki in mid-1995 (May 29–June 1). Delegations from almost all states participating in ACRS were present. Issues discussed included threat perceptions in the Middle East, seismic monitoring for nuclear tests, and cooperative use of space. A paper was submitted on the delineation of the Middle East region for purposes of arms control and regional security. In line with a decision made in Tunis, it was agreed that a seminar on military doctrines, organized by the French, would be held in Amman at the end of December 1995 (this was later canceled, when ACRS went into abeyance).

It should be taken into account, however, that in the first half of 1995,

as the NPT Review and Extension Conference approached (it was held in April-May of that year), Egypt linked its demand that Israel sign the NPT (as a condition for Egypt to support indefinite extension) to what it had been trying to achieve in ACRS. This resulted in increased Egyptian pressure, as well as US requests to Israel that it find some means of addressing Egypt's concerns. The negotiations over the various Egyptian and Israeli proposals in this regard were conducted at the top levels of the foreign ministries. Israel proposed in February to begin discussion of a NWFZ in the Middle East two years after signing peace agreements with all regional states, including Iran and Iraq, and then consider joining the NPT.[23] This proposal was rejected by Egypt, and in March, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa reiterated Egypt's demands in the nuclear realm: announcing a timetable for signing the NPT; opening Israel's nuclear installations to outside (international or Egyptian) inspection; and agreement to launch negotiations on ridding the Middle East of WMD.[24] In fact, in early April, Musa clarified that Egypt wanted Israel to agree, prior to the NPT conference, to begin discussing a NWFZ in the Middle East at the next meeting of ACRS, and to commit to signing the NPT within approximately two years of signing peace agreements with Syria and Lebanon.[25] When Israel rejected these proposals, and the NPT was extended indefinitely, Egypt's position became that it would not agree to any regional arrangements in the Middle East until Israel seriously addressed the nuclear issue by including discussion of a WMDFZ on the agenda of ACRS.

A final meeting of experts in the framework of ACRS, held in Amman in September 1995, was affected by this development. Prior to this meeting, reports in the Israeli media already indicated that regional arms control talks had been delayed due to the disagreement between Israel and Egypt over the nuclear issue.[26] The meeting itself was to deal with the mandate for the Regional Security Centers (as decided in Tunis). It was agreed that these centers would be geared to enhancement of security and stability in the region, and a range of activities for the centers was delineated by the group. In the end, however, consensus was prevented by Egyptian dissent; the Egyptian representative to the meeting said that Egypt objected to establishing regional institutions before there was progress on the nuclear issue. While there was agreement that the centers would be set up before the end of the year, a specific timetable was not set, at Egypt's insistence. Also, the proposed naval exercise to be hosted by Tunis was once again postponed.[27]

By the end of 1995, the positions of Egypt and Israel seemed irreconcilable, and the US became convinced that a compromise was beyond reach. This led to their decision to postpone the talks so that ACRS would not have an adverse effect on Israeli-Egyptian relations in general.[28] The talks have been in abeyance ever since.

Chapter 2: **Egypt's Perception of the Nuclear Threat**

My initial point of entry into the dynamics of ACRS is the point of breakdown – where all developments came to a head. At the point of breakdown, the nuclear issue had been positioned as the major stumbling block; Egyptian-Israeli relations were at the forefront of the talks; and Egypt's decision to halt all regional progress until the nuclear issue was dealt with led to the decision to put the talks on hold. This raises a number of questions: was the nuclear issue inherently zero sum in Middle East regional politics? Why did the nuclear issue become the focus of Israeli-Egyptian bilateral dynamics within ACRS, and why was this accorded such prominence? What were the interests of the other participating states, and how were they formulated in the multilateral framework? This chapter begins by focusing on Egypt's position on the nuclear issue in order to highlight the puzzles that arise in this regard, and that pose challenges for traditional explanations of the type of security calculations made by states in strategic games and negotiations. This will set the stage for the analysis of ACRS that will be pursued in Part Two.

An important caveat is in order at this point, regarding the focus on Egypt. The actual dispute over the nuclear issue was between Egypt and Israel, and as such both countries played a role in the entrenchment of positions and unwillingness to make the kind of mutual concessions that might have ultimately supported a formula for moving forward. An analysis of the dispute itself would thus clearly necessitate close examination of both parties' positions, and the mutual intransigence displayed on the nuclear issue. *The focus of this research, however, is not on the dispute* per se*, but rather on the dynamics that led it to become a major focal point within ACRS.* In these terms, as will be discussed in Part Two, Israel's interest in not having the nuclear issue on the agenda of the talks was a direct consequence of its deeply rooted and widely accepted nuclear deterrence posture, as well as its fear of finding itself isolated in this regard, facing a united Arab bloc that demands nuclear inspection and disarmament. Its willingness to move forward with other aspects of the arms control process resulted from its growing realization of the benefits to be accrued in terms of fostering wider regional ties, as well as a generally favorable orientation toward step by step progress in

negotiations where the more difficult issues are pushed to the latter stages of the process. The question of why Egypt insisted on placing this issue on the agenda, to the point of leading to the derailing of the process as a whole, is more complex, and requires close examination of the rationale for doing so, beginning with the explanation most commonly offered by the Egyptians in the context of the arms control talks: the direct threat these weapons pose. Ultimately, therefore, while the emphasis in the analysis is on Egypt, this is not done with the purpose of placing the onus for what happened on Egypt, but rather to come to a better understanding of the regional multilateral dynamics within which the arms control equations were devised and advanced, and the influence this has had on inter-state relations and the prospects for continuing the process.

Most analysts and researchers that have focused on the issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and arms control in the Middle East in the 1990s concur that Egypt's preoccupation with the nuclear issue was decidedly more pronounced in the years in which ACRS was active (in fact, beginning a year or two before ACRS convened) than at any previous time, but especially when one compares the situation with that of the 1980s. This emphasis found expression in the media – in countless commentaries – as well as in numerous statements, speeches and proposals made by high level political and military decision makers and personnel.[29] The common theme of these statements and commentaries was that Israel must in some way deal with its assumed nuclear capability, either by eliminating it, or at least subjecting it to external/international inspections and control. It was maintained that peace and security could not be achieved in the region as long as this issue was not dealt with. Israel's assumed capability could spur additional states to arm themselves as well, leading to greater instability in the region. An additional theme that was often mentioned was the double standard being employed by the West – and most clearly the US – vis-à-vis Israel and the Arab states in the non-conventional realm. While Iraq was being subjected to a most intrusive inspection regime, Israel was actually being aided by the US with regard to all aspects of its perceived qualitative edge. The claim made was that it could no longer be acceptable for one Middle Eastern country to remain exempt from the same international standards in the non-conventional realm to which all other states must adhere.

However, at the root of Egypt's demands in the nuclear realm (at least since the late 1980s) lies the explicit claim that Egypt is in fact threatened by the nuclear weapons that it presumes Israel to possess. Following the Vaanunu revelations of 1986, on the basis of which foreign sources began to cite that Israel had between 100-200 nuclear warheads, questions were raised regarding Israel's nuclear posture. If this potential was intended for purposes of last resort (the overwhelming assumption in the Arab world in the 1970s and 1980s), why did Israel need so many warheads?[30] The possibility was raised that Israel might be contemplating use of nuclear weapons in a scenario that was short of last resort. Egyptian questions and concerns cannot simply be dismissed – however, it is of no small significance that Israel has not only never even implicitly threatened Egypt with nuclear force,[31] but that the two states have a signed and upheld peace agreement.

So the question remains: What accounts for this notable quantitative increase in the amount of attention devoted to Israel's perceived nuclear capability in the designated period? Clearly, the very convening of ACRS placed all issues related to the arms control debate on the agenda. But, this does little to explain why the nuclear issue in particular was accorded such a prominent place in Egyptian commentaries and statements.

A number of attempts to provide explanations have been offered. A fairly common argument pinpoints the anticipation of the NPT Review and Extension Conference in April-May 1995 as the decisive event that focused Egypt's attention on this issue, due to its overwhelming desire to pressure Israel into joining this treaty. Taking at face value Egypt's concern with Israel's assumed nuclear weapons, this would seem to provide a convincing rationale. This conference signaled perhaps the last chance that Egypt might have for securing Israel's signature on this international treaty (which would require Israel to place all of its nuclear facilities under international inspection), before its indefinite extension. The advent of the NPT Review and Extension Conference would thus seem to provide a very plausible explanation of why concern over the nuclear issue was amplified in the period under review – to raise international consciousness as to the unacceptability of Israel's position regarding the NPT, and to pressure the US into pressuring Israel to join.

While the history of ACRS as reviewed above shows that this did have an effect on elevating the nuclear issue in Egyptian-Israeli relations, as an explanation, it ignores certain other factors. First of all, Egypt linked its demands in the context of the NPT Review and Extension Conference

to ACRS, at a time when the regional arms control talks were actually achieving initial successes. But, more importantly, other Arab states that had the same information regarding the dimensions of Israel's supposed nuclear arsenal and should also have submitted to the logic of "any proximate nuclear capability constitutes a concrete security threat", were much less active in this regard. If nuclear weapons were such an "obvious" security concern, why were these other Arab states noticeably less enthusiastic and concerned than Egypt? Moreover, why did Egypt allow its concern over the upcoming NPT conference and Israel's signing to completely overshadow, and eventually to undermine the actual progress that was being made in ACRS – progress that was being accepted by other Arab participants, and would ultimately no doubt have served Egypt's security interests as well? In fact, their effort could easily have been split – pushing the nuclear issue in the context of the NPT conference, and reaping the benefits of regional CSBMs in the context of ACRS.[32]

This raises the possibility that Egyptian concern with Israel's nuclear potential is not entirely born of the direct threat that these presumed weapons pose to Egypt. Additional attempts to explain Egypt's much amplified campaign in the nuclear realm address this to a certain degree, when they focus on two additional considerations:[33] first, Egypt's interest in leading the Arab world on the nuclear issue – i.e. using the nuclear issue as a means of consolidating its leadership position in the Arab world, especially at a time when the peace process was progressing without the active mediation of Egypt. This was no doubt an important motivation for Egypt, especially in light of the fact that many of the Arab states voiced their own concerns over Israel's assumed nuclear capability.[34]

The second point regards Egypt's interest in the nature of the Middle East once peace agreements have been achieved – in this future Middle East, Israel would most likely be Egypt's foremost rival for regional power, and Egypt was reluctant to reach this stage with Israel as a nuclear power. Both explanations go beyond the exclusive security realm (in terms of the threat that Egypt attributes to nuclear weapons themselves) to the wider political/regional realm where Egypt's interests in fact diverge from those of other Arab states, due to its different (perceived) regional identity and role.[35]

An important article that analyzes the Middle East arms control and regional security process in conceptual and theoretical terms, gives

expression to this mode of explanation. Bruce Jentleson and Dalia Dassa Kaye accept the basic constructivist argument that state interests cannot always be assumed from material conditions.[36] Examining the particular explanation they advance in their work will further clarify the direction of the present study. The authors pose two puzzling sets of questions regarding what took place within ACRS: "Why was ACRS able to make *progress* given the difficulty of establishing security cooperation in general and Arab-Israeli security cooperation in particular?" and "Why, especially given its unanticipated progress, did ACRS face *problems* that led to its breakdown? In particular, why did Egypt assume the position it did on the Israeli nuclear issue in the ACRS context?"[37]

The answers provided by the authors are basically that while the realist security approach provides a relatively strong explanation for the first question, i.e. the emergence of ACRS and the initial progress achieved, this approach breaks down as far as the second question is concerned, as it would "[lead] us to expect the impediments to Arab-Israeli security cooperation to stem from traditional security-related concerns, particularly altered military balances or aggressive designs by one or several parties."[38] The factors that were viewed as conducive to the achievement of progress in ACRS were the "profound shift in the global systemic structure of strategic alliances," and regional military balances and capabilities that were cooperation-conducive.[39] As the authors found that the objective security environment remained largely unchanged in the period of breakdown, they conclude that the stronger explanation comes from *status* and *identity.* Accordingly, while Egypt's concerns in the nuclear realm are well taken, they do not point to an immediate nuclear threat to Egypt from Israel:

> [O]n the specific issue of the nuclear threat, the political and identity-harming effects of this issue appear to be as great or greater than the actual military threat posed by the Israeli capability, despite some genuine fears of Israeli capabilities (military and economic) prevalent in the Arab world.[40]

Jentleson and Kaye go on to note that this is due to a deeply entrenched self-perception of Egypt as a leading force in the Arab world:

> Egyptian foreign policy elites perceive their nation as a regional leader and an important player in the international

community, a perception which has spanned different leaderships and ideological orientations...[.] Indeed, Egypt's position on Israel's nuclear capabilities follows a pattern of Egyptian security policy where concerns for regional and international status have contributed to its positions on other important issues, such as the Suez crisis and its intervention in Yemen."[41]

In other words, in order to understand the emphasis that Egypt placed on the nuclear issue, one must go beyond traditional security explanations and realize that "nuclear capability" actually meant much more for Egypt – in fact it was viewed to have very significant political and regional implications that overshadowed the incentives for taking part in the arms control process as it had been progressing.

In considering these explanations, the first point that should be noted is that a different take on traditional realist thinking would lead us to the conclusion that this type of thinking actually *can* provide a possible explanation for both the progress and the breakdown of ACRS. One could claim that the basic perceived asymmetry in the non-conventional realm was one of the major factors that initially brought the parties to agree to take part in the arms control and regional security talks. There is evidence from both Egyptian and Israeli participants in ACRS that attest to the fact that Egypt was interested in dealing with the nuclear issue from the outset. In these terms, Egypt simply grew increasingly frustrated by the fact that this perceived threat was not being addressed in the framework of ACRS, and there came a point where it refused to continue with a process that was not viewed as addressing its security concerns. Thus, one need not search for evidence that the military balance was altered – rather, the very military balance that served as a motivation to begin discussing arms control was perceived as not being addressed by the talks themselves. Moreover, the fact that agreement could not be reached on the nuclear issue could be viewed as further evidence of the severe constraints and asymmetries that characterize the Arab-Israeli conflict in general. While progress could be achieved on the "softer" aspects of confidence-building measures, when the time came to deal with the hard-core security concerns, there was no way to circumvent the zero sum game equation in the non-conventional realm. The problem is that we are still left with the question of why Egypt viewed this as important enough to cause it to actually derail a process that had not only achieved

some initial successes, but one in which the other participating states, that presumably had the same security concerns, were willing to continue to take part.

However, what is particularly interesting about this type of explanation for Egypt's position in ACRS is that while it has been advocated by Americans and Israelis (both those that took part in the process and those that subsequently researched it), it has been rejected by Egyptian scholars and practitioners. Egyptians who have taken part in this process emphasize that their sole concern when pushing the nuclear issue has been with the destructive potential of nuclear weapons and the threat that they faced in this regard. They reject these other explanations out of hand, although there is sound evidence that they did in fact play a role. Egypt's regional concerns – regarding its leadership role and its fears of Israel in this regard – are widely expressed in many contexts. As will be discussed below, very frequent mention is made in the Egyptian media of various grandiose regional designs that Israel supposedly harbors, and its ability to carry them out due to its overwhelming qualitative edge – with nuclear weapons heading the list. Regarding their quest for influence in the Arab world, Egypt clearly led the campaign to try to compel Israel to sign the NPT, as has been noted.

All of this provides reason to believe that the dynamics were even more complex. It will be proposed that the role attributed by Egypt to nuclear weapons in the 1990s was shaped at least in part by the dynamics of the arms control talks themselves. Egypt had to deal with both bilateral and regional concerns in an unfamiliar and undefined multilateral framework. It sought to convince other Arab states of the seriousness of the nuclear threat in order to rally their support, and tried to use this as leverage to enhance its regional role. However, its zero sum bilateral nuclear concerns vis-à-vis Israel were being discussed in a multilateral regional forum where the advantages of *non*-zero sum attitudes became increasingly attractive to many of the participants, to the point that they began to resist Egyptian attempts to impose an agenda. In light of this resistance, Egypt's interest in making its nuclear threat claim unequivocal actually became stronger, so as not to be perceived as being less than genuine in this regard.[42] Thus, as its leadership role became challenged, there was a reluctance on the part of Egypt to concede that questions of regional status were ever involved in its position so as not to further alienate other Arab states. These are the themes that will be developed in the next section.

Part II
The Strategic Game of Arms Control

Chapter 3: Shaping the Arms Control Equation
Within ACRS

Having begun the discussion of ACRS from the point of the centrality accorded to the nuclear issue, I have sought to establish the rationale for probing the arms control process from the vantage-point of inter-state dynamics. Focusing on the interaction that took place in the arms control process is offered not merely as an additional explanation for positions taken, but rather as a different approach for understanding them. In this sense, it should not be viewed as challenging the other explanations that have been offered above for Egypt's emphasis on the nuclear issue (these are in fact all accepted as important contributing factors), but rather as building on them and offering a broader perspective on the formulation of national security interests. This has implications for all the parties that took part in ACRS.

For analytical purposes, one could conceptualize this perspective in terms of stages. The initial stage is one of acceptance that security concerns and threats are constructed by states in the framework of their understanding of regional relations. The next step is to explore how they are concretized and further shaped in important ways in the very discourse and interaction that takes place among these states. In fact, not only are the inter-state relations as played out in the multilateral regional framework to be viewed as an explanation for positions adopted regarding the arms control equations, but this study will develop the proposition that the contours of the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli strategic rivalry itself were shaped and sharpened on the backdrop of the

multilateral framework of inter-state discussion. Thus, focusing on the actual interstate interaction allows one to go one step further than the very fact that nuclear weapons can take on a political meaning beyond their actual destructive potential, and hopefully come to some important insights about Egyptian-Israeli relations in general, the way they have been played out in the multilateral regional framework, and the implications of this for continuing the process in the future.

In focusing on the multilateral negotiating framework, an attempt will be made to demonstrate how an approach based on the dynamics of multilateral discussion and interaction is capable of providing the conceptual tools for understanding the meaning that was attached to the array of arms control notions and equations that, over the course of the three years in which ACRS was active, became the "stuff" of the arms control talks. My focus, when studying this mode of inter-state interaction, is on the manner in which certain meanings and understandings are created within the framework of the talks – particularly, how participants taking part in a multilateral discussion create a context within which their actions are analyzed.

Up until this point, the focus has been on Egypt in order to set the stage for understanding the role that the nuclear issue assumed within the talks. As the major protagonists in the talks, Egypt as well as Israel will in this section be a major focus of attention. But, as the dynamics of the process unfold, it will become apparent that the positions adopted by the other more peripheral Arab states that took part in ACRS – toward the issues, toward each other, and toward Egypt and Israel – became increasingly important. At the outset, most participating states had only relatively vague ideas about arms control and regional security and what they hoped to achieve in the multilateral framework. Going along with the US was a major incentive for agreeing to take part, and the control of WMD, while generally accepted, was not a driving force. There was an initial acceptance of Egypt's more prominent position in the talks, especially due to its much more clearly formulated positions, as well as its leadership role in the region. However, as the process became more truly multilateral, in the sense that states began to more clearly define their interests and positions, this situation began to change.

The dynamics of ACRS built on the interaction that took place between the participating states. Before probing this interaction, we should consider a number of important factors that influenced the major parties' positions from the outset. Appreciating such background factors

and influences is important because they provide the backdrop for some of the trends that were thereafter underscored or amplified in the talks themselves. In fact, the shaping of security interests begins *before* states begin to interact: these are the cultural factors and processes of framing that occur at the national level – *within* states, before they begin to discuss the issues in a cooperative framework.[43]

Opening Positions: How the Major Protagonists Entered the Game

Egypt

As has been discussed above in the context of attempts to explain Egypt's preoccupation with the nuclear issue, for Egypt, one of the most important of these factors is its pervasive view of itself as destined to fulfill a leadership role in the Middle East.[44] Egypt has historically viewed itself as a major regional player, and it has attempted to set the tone and impose its influence regarding many of the developments in the Middle East, especially as far as the Arab-Israeli peace process is concerned. Having signed a separate peace agreement with Israel in 1979, in the 1980s Egypt attempted to mediate between Israel and the Palestinians. Egypt had committed itself to working toward the goal of establishing a comprehensive peace in the region, and in 1985 Mubarak devised a plan focusing on peace talks that would be conducted between a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and Israel. In 1989, he drew up a ten-point plan leading to elections in the West Bank and Gaza.[45] In the 1990s, after being fully reintegrated into inter-Arab politics, Egypt increased its efforts to reassert its leadership role. It continued its attempts to mediate in the bilateral peace process, and its energies have also been directed to dynamics on the regional level, in an effort to consolidate its influence on the course of regional developments and the peace process.[46]

Egypt's self perception as the major power in the Middle East with a central role to play finds explicit expression in commentaries and in statements made by various Egyptian officials in the 1990s. In May of 1995 Amr Musa was quoted as saying that "Egypt has to be treated as a regional power. [...] Egypt and the Arab identity it defends are intimately linked, and this should be welcomed as an element of stability. Any attempt to destroy Arab identity by marginalizing Egypt is a recipe for disaster."[47] Somewhat later, in a representative statement regarding its role in the peace process, Mubarak, answering a question about the

possible role Egypt might play in resolving the problem of Hebron in late 1996, made clear that "Netanyahu 'should not say that Egypt *might* have a role, because the Egyptian role is pivotal to the peace process....It is not a question of 'might and might not' because the Egyptian role is active and indispensable.'"[48] That Egypt viewed its role as central to other aspects of regional cooperation is expressed, for example, in a commentary relating to the MENA conferences. One of the active Egyptian participants in these conferences commented that "Egypt is the cornerstone of any sustainable regional economic cooperation. Historically, Egypt has always been leader [sic] of the Arab world, Africa and the Middle East region."[49]

Another very significant factor that serves as a backdrop to ACRS is a set of deeply rooted perceptions and images regarding the range of capabilities that together comprise what is often referred to as Israel's *qualitative edge*. Attitudes toward this inherent advantage that Israel enjoys find expression in numerous statements and commentaries that have been published in Arab sources, but it is most pronounced in the case of Egypt. The areas that have been mentioned in the context of Israel's qualitative edge over the years range from images of Israel's "long arm" that extends deep into the Arab world (and vertically, into space, by means of Israel's satellite capability), through its overwhelming economic and technological prowess, to the apex of Israel's military edge: its capabilities in the realm of non-conventional weapons, most significantly, its assumed nuclear weapons arsenal.[50] Frequent mention is also made of the vast military assistance and overall support that Israel receives from the West, and most prominently from the US – the significance of this assistance goes beyond the actual sale of superior equipment and technology and fosters a clear sense that Israel can count on US backing and support in almost any threatening scenario in which the country finds itself.

Perceptions of Israel's qualitative edge lock into fears of Israel's supposed hegemonic designs for the region. In this context, it is pertinent to consider certain images of Israel that attribute to it Western colonialist designs.[51] As Yehoshafat Harkabi has written, Israel is in general viewed as an imperialistic phenomenon. Imperialism has come to be viewed by Arab commentators as more than direct rule over other countries. It has come to connote any manifestation of advantage, or cultural or political influence, even to the point of being a symbol of everything evil in international relations.[52] Emmanuel Sivan, analyzing Arab political

myths, discusses the greatly increased Arab interest in the Crusader phenomenon in the post-World War II period, as the result of a growing sense that the Crusades are highly relevant for understanding modern Western colonialism. Sivan discusses the 'Crusader myth' as a symbol of the inherent tendency of the West to dominate Arabs and Moslems throughout history. According to Sivan, many books written by Arab scholars in the 1950s and 1960s viewed Israel as the modern manifestation of the Crusades – similar to the Crusader rule in Jerusalem both in terms of its strengths (technological superiority, Western assistance) and its vulnerabilities.[53] These deeply rooted and enduring images of Israel are components of the cultural background that influence the assessment of Israel's present-day overwhelming qualitative edge. They are cultural resources that commentators and policy makers draw upon in their framing of the security implications of this situation.

Finally, to these perceptions of Israeli technological superiority must be added often expressed feelings of Arab scientific and technological inferiority.[54] This inferiority has been attributed to economic constraints, inability to foster Arab unity and pooling of resources to develop technological capabilities, and, most importantly, to what are viewed as deliberate efforts on the part of the West to *maintain* this state of affairs. It is believed that the West is collaborating with Israel (in some kind of Western imperialist coalition) in order to perpetuate Arab backwardness.[55] These perceptions only serve to increase the frustration felt in the face of Israel's overwhelming qualitative edge.

Israel

For Israel, one of the most pertinent images in terms of providing a context for evaluating the prospects of ACRS was the dominant view that Israel was dangerously isolated in the Middle East. There was a sense that in any interaction with Arab states in a multilateral framework, Israel would most likely face a virtually automatic Arab majority opposing it on every decision. There was also a sense that the Arab world was basically monolithic – a bloc of states – and this led to the implicit assessment that there was probably no variation in their interests vis-à-vis the arms control and regional security process.[56] Israel's dealings with Arab states up until this point had been on a bilateral basis, and the implications of multilateralism seemed quite ominous from Israel's point of view.

Israel also had its own images in the nuclear realm. Without going into the intricacies of the place of nuclear capabilities in Israel's security thinking,[57] it is clear that they have a very special role. Israel's nuclear potential is one of the most non-controversial issues in Israel's security debate, and is overwhelmingly regarded as one of the most important reasons why Israel has been able to survive in the region. The policy of nuclear ambiguity is highly guarded within the Israeli security community and almost across the board within the broader community of Israeli scholars and even media commentators dealing with this issue. When coupled with the fear of multilateral forums and the implications they have in terms of the pressure that might be brought to bear on Israel regarding all issues on the table, there was a fear of what is known as the "slippery slope" in the nuclear realm (i.e. once you agree to initiate negotiations, you may find yourself very quickly at the point where you must sign an agreement). This led to a sense that Israel's potential in the non-conventional realm was basically non-negotiable within the arms control talks.

Interaction Within ACRS

The following section analyzes the interaction that took place in ACRS on the backdrop of a number of tensions that were central to the process:
- between arms control and the overall peace process;
- between "arms control" and "regional security";
    1. between the *zero sum game* view of national security that was inherent in the type of arms control equation that was advanced by Egypt, and the *non-zero sum game* type of thinking on national security implied and encouraged by a focus on elements of regional security and cooperation (win-win situation);
    2. between the centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict as the primary context for discussing arms control in the Middle East, and the range of additional regional concerns that other states had an interest in dealing with in the context of a regional security dialogue;
    3. over the meaning of Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), and their role in the overall arms control process;
- between the *multilateral* context of the working group, and the central *bilateral* Egyptian-Israeli dynamics.

In fact, these tensions are interrelated and together they created the foundation upon which different understandings of arms control drew their legitimacy and strength. Multilateral cooperation could prove to be more than the sum of its parts – it is a form of international cooperation that can foster new conceptions of security that expand beyond the confines of narrowly conceived national security calculations. Probably the major difficulty encountered in ACRS was the fact that it was dominated by the injection of the Israeli-Egyptian bilateral relationship and balance of interests into a multilateral framework. The multilateral context created a sense of new opportunities for many of the participants, that began to be expressed in initial agreements on CSBMs. However, this had an adverse effect on Egypt's willingness to take part in these dynamics, and served to strengthen its position on the nuclear issue. Ultimately, the Israeli-Egyptian bilateral dynamics hindered the prospects of multilateral cooperation. The present chapter will focus primarily on the first two sources of tension mentioned above, while in the next chapter I will tie these together with the third source of tension: the central interplay of inter-state relations in the bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

The **first** source of tension that affected ACRS regarded the relationship between arms control and the overall peace process. The basic issue in this regard was that of timing or sequencing. In short, which was to come first – an arms control and regional security process, or comprehensive peace in the Middle East. As noted, there was widespread agreement regarding the general view that the bilateral track of the Madrid peace process should take precedence over the multilateral track. Multilateral, future-oriented regional progress (in all five working groups, not just ACRS) would have to await progress on the bilateral track. There was only so much that could be achieved on a regional basis before the bilateral conflicts were dealt with.

But beyond this, the question of which takes precedence was played out in interesting ways within the dynamics of the process itself, making this relationship somewhat more complex. On the one hand, for some of the participants, lack of progress on the bilateral track was viewed as at least potentially detrimental to the progress of ACRS, and there was a sense that Israel should not be allowed to reap the benefits of the regional process without paying the price in terms of bilateral concessions (this was true especially for Saudi Arabia). But, in conceptual terms, when Israel claimed that discussion of nuclear aspects of arms control can

commence only after comprehensive peace had been achieved, this was not accepted by Egypt because now Israel was not paying the full price in the regional sphere – it was willing to proceed regarding some regional issues but not others. Here it was not taken into account that the achievement of comprehensive peace would entail those very same bilateral concessions that it seemed that Israel was trying to avoid.[58] In short, the interrelations between the tracks were recognized, but the specific links drawn tended to change according to circumstance. The Qatari position was most interesting in this regard. For Qatar, ACRS and the peace process were conceptually one and the same. The very context of their participation in ACRS was the attainment of peace. ACRS was viewed as a step toward lasting peace, as one means of achieving peace, and as such they were in favor of it. Qatar had a real interest in the establishment of one of the Regional Security Centers (RSC) on its territory: as one Qatari participant said, Egypt was focused on nuclear weapons, but *the RSC was part of the peace process*, and a tool for getting ACRS to go forward.

A complicating factor in this regard was of course the notion of normalization of relations between Israel and Arab states. Normalization has been traditionally regarded in Arab states as the fruits of peace agreements, and over the years it was often presented to Israel as a reward for advancing in the peace process. Israel's sense that relations with Egypt suffer from lack of normalization, and Egypt's sense that Israel must proceed toward comprehensive peace in order to increase normalization have been a constant source of tension in the two countries' relations. Normalization has also become tied up with the arms control process because as a regional multilateral process, virtually regardless of the specific issues on the table, the opportunities for Israel to create bilateral ties with some of the peripheral states in the Gulf and Maghreb were readily apparent. As will be discussed below, Egypt attempted to impress upon other Arab states the danger of premature normalization of relations through the 'back door' of ACRS, and that CSBMs themselves were a means by which Israel could achieve such normalization.[59]

Regarding the **second** source of tension, two different ways of thinking about national and regional security seemed to be at the basis of the tension in this regard. According to the first, national security was a function of one's relative position in the regional arena, whereby one state's military advantage was an inherent threat to the others. Security

(national or regional) could not be achieved in light of such an advantage, and the only way to deal with the disadvantaged side's sense of vulnerability was to eliminate the other side's advantage (zero sum game). This was basically the position that Egypt adopted, and because Israel's qualitative edge is the very element that provides it with a sense of security in a region in which it still faces concrete threats from states not taking part in the talks, this created an unsolvable security equation: Egypt's security was dependent on disarming Israel of the very military potential that Israel felt ensured its security vis-à-vis other states in the region (as long as comprehensive peace did not prevail). This view of security stood in contrast with the type of win-win situation that was the essence of the regional security scheme. The goal of regional security is to find ways of creating regimes that enhance all parties' sense of security.

The fact that these two views of security came to be regarded as mutually exclusive was not a foregone conclusion. Rather, the attitude taken toward these two approaches to security was shaped in light of what was going on in the talks. The interaction that took place in this regard was played out in the form of two important dynamics that occurred simultaneously within the talks: the *"dynamics of convergence"* (bred of the growing sense of the opportunities that could be taken advantage of in light of the win-win nature of multilateral discussion), and the *"dynamics of divergence"* (the growing frustration of Egypt with the developments in ACRS that were converging on an understanding of arms control that did not deal in the first place with the issue of WMD). Here I will introduce these two opposing dynamics that characterized the talks to a significant degree, but they will be expanded upon in the following sections, especially in the context of the interplay between the multilateral and bilateral frameworks.

Dynamics of Convergence

The dynamics of convergence focused on the *opportunities* that the multilateral framework of discussions accorded the participants, in terms of dealing with regional and subregional interests that concerned the different parties. In effect, these perceived opportunities were closely tied to the notion of CSBMs, which were the major arena of progress in the talks as they unfolded. Thus, convergence on CSBMs was the major means by which the opportunities afforded by ACRS were expressed in

the initial stage. Within ACRS, Jordan, Israel, and the peripheral Arab states – particularly the Gulf states – converged on an understanding of arms control that included CSBMs. If at the outset arms control in the Arab states was conceived as being primarily directed to issues of disarmament, as the process progressed, there was greater appreciation of the value of CSBMs. They learned about these measures and came to appreciate their worth. Not surprisingly, therefore, these measures became the major focus for Egypt in its attempt to resist the convergence that it was not able to control.

Jordanian and Qatari participants also related to the importance of linking the multilaterals to the bilateral talks in conceptual terms. In this sense, the multilaterals were part of the overall peace process, and they could also help foster important gains in the economic realm, for example. Jordanian participants noted that while they had not shown a great interest in the multilaterals in the beginning, they thereafter began to realize the complete interrelation between the multilateral and bilateral tracks. The perception was that arms control must be linked with economic, political, and psycho-social processes. Jordan had a clear interest in establishing a regional security system. In fact, linking these processes, and strengthening economic and societal gains were viewed as important aspects of security.

There was also a growing sense among the participants that regional dynamics go beyond the confines of the Arab-Israeli conflict. One participant noted that on a number of occasions GCC states indicated that they had little interest in a process that focused exclusively on the Arab-Israeli conflict. They wanted to find out how the arms control and regional security process might be applied to threats from Persian Gulf powers.

Israel began the process with a fear that it would face an almost automatic Arab majority on every decision on the table. By strongly advocating that the principle of consensus be made an iron rule of the process, Israel gained two advantages: it was able to prevent certain developments, and it was able to buy time by deferring decisions. Moreover, Israel began to realize that ACRS was in fact a long-term process, and it would not have to make difficult decisions on an immediate basis. But, the most interesting realization was that there was a pluralism of interests in the Arab world. Israeli participants came to an appreciation of the fact that there was a complex balance of interests in the Middle East, a balance of competition and cooperation, as well as

cross-cutting identities. They realized that the important thing is to find a way to understand this complex balance – uncovering and understanding it would enable them to gain a lot from the process. Thus, Israel was quite happy to proceed with CSBMs and to explore the opportunities provided by the multilateral context.

Dynamics of Divergence

The dynamics of divergence focused on the *risks* that Egypt sensed in dealing with a multilateral regional forum that was becoming truly multilateral. Egypt found itself increasingly alone in its approach to the process – isolation which only served to entrench its position even further. Under the heading of leading the campaign in the nuclear realm that was actually in the interest of all Arab states, Egypt presented a zero sum arms control equation that effectively precluded the progress that was gradually becoming accepted by other participants. The dynamics of the talks themselves thus shaped, sharpened, and contrasted the different views on arms control.

Ultimately, the dynamics of divergence led Egypt to take concrete measures to slow down, and eventually stop the progress that was being made. One example of the tactics used by Egypt to slow down progress on CSBMs was demonstrated with regard to the agreement on the establishment of a Regional Security Center, which as noted was very near completion toward the close of 1995. At the small intersessional meeting that took place in Amman in September 1995 to draft the final agreement, Egypt sent a completely new participant who needed to be briefed on the entire situation. He then had to go back to his government to secure their agreement. Other participants viewed this as a means to purposely introduce complications that would slow down progress.[60]

The Meaning of CSBMs

The discussion that evolved surrounding the notion of Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) was in a sense a gauge of the dynamics of the arms control discussion itself (convergence vs. divergence). As noted, conceptually, CSBMs are virtually the essence of a win-win situation in the security realm because, by definition, these are any militarily significant measures *that accord with the security concerns of the different parties.* Thus, their raison d'être is to deal with those aspects of states' security that the parties are able to reach agreement upon, in

order to create the basis of mutual confidence necessary for proceeding to more difficult or hard core security concerns. CSBMs are almost inherently achievable (assuming that the parties have a basic interest in pursuing cooperative aspects of their relationship) due to the flexibility built into these measures in terms of content, i.e. the specific issues that they may relate to. The main value of these measures is in fact that they facilitate the parties' ability to come to agreement, rather than the specific content of the measures agreed upon. Moreover, agreeing upon, and upholding CSBM agreements over the years was a means of creating a cooperative infrastructure within which norms of communication and dialogue procedures could be fostered.

From the outset, CSBMs were accorded a prominent place in ACRS, with the initial educational seminars (following the logic set out by Secretary Baker at the opening plenary) placing much emphasis on their conceptual value, on the basis of past experience with CSBMs, particularly in the European context. In addition to the advantages of CSBMs discussed above, the role of these measures in the overall arms control process was also emphasized: the logic of "step by step" progress, building blocks and stages, as well as the dominant image of "learning to crawl before you learn to walk"[61] were the basics of the approach that was initially imparted to the participants in ACRS. Confidence building was presented as an almost essential step on the way to achieving more far-reaching arms control agreements.

The logic of CSBMs was from the beginning very much compatible with the Israeli approach. Israeli participants have noted that the educational phase was very convenient for Israel because the experience of other regions clearly demonstrated the importance of CSBMs as a first stage. Israel's real interest was in regional security, and CSBMs were conducive to this end. Arms control as a whole was viewed not as an ends in itself, but rather as a means for achieving regional stability. CSBMs were also a means of warding off demands in the nuclear realm, or postponing them to a later stage. Finally, it was noted that CSBMs could be a means of overcoming the asymmetries that characterized the relationship that the different states taking part in the process had with Israel: some had made peace, others maintained neutral relations, and still others remained openly hostile. In this sense, CSBMs were viewed as a kind of leveler – providing a common basis that was compatible with the different kinds of bilateral relationships within the multilateral framework.

Jordan was also very willing to proceed with CSBMs – the idea was accepted very favorably, and ideas for making progress in this area were developed by the Jordanian participants. The gradual convergence of other peripheral states on the value of confidence building was something that developed more slowly, as the process progressed and the advantages became more apparent within the dynamics of the talks. Within intersessional meetings – devoted specifically to working out the technical and other details of different arrangements being discussed in the operational basket – the degree of cooperation was often very significant. The specific focus on issues that were not conceived as being contentious enabled the cultivation of common modes of thought, especially when the participants from the different countries came together on the basis of their *technical expertise*. This was most pronounced in the maritime realm, when naval officers met and discussed issues. The universal naval language created an a priori common basis for discussion that was able to mitigate some of the nationally-based tensions that otherwise may have been more pronounced. Thus, the very technical focus was conducive to cooperative discussion. Other activities that took place, such as visits to sites with relevance to arms control issues, were a further means for enhancing the kind of bonding that had a positive effect in terms of identifying areas where commonalities exist and cooperation can be pursued.

From the beginning, Egypt was much less, if at all, interested in CSBMs. According to their clearly formulated interests, the Egyptians wanted to go directly to what became referred to as *structural* arms control, i.e. dealing with the control of military capabilities and specific categories of weapons systems (primarily nuclear capabilities). In practice, however, from early on CSBMs became the major arena for actual progress in the arms control and regional security discussions, in the operational basket. Interestingly, the convergence on an understanding of arms control that included CSBMs became over the three years such a dominant feature of the talks that Egyptian participants expressed their reservations over these measures not by rejecting them outright, but by attempting to fill them with alternative meanings. In effect, CSBMs became the tactical arena for concretizing the different arms control equations. Thus, in addition to their claim that equal progress should be made on nuclear issues, there was an attempt to undermine the very advantages attributed to CSBMs by creating an alternative interpretation.

The first means of doing so was by focusing on the sense of security fostered by CSBMs, but reinterpreting this to mean "whatever makes *my state* feel more secure is by definition a confidence building measure." According to this logic, Israel signing the NPT could be a very important CSBM for Egypt. Such a view of CSBMs obviously stands in stark contrast to the win-win logic of these measures (meeting the security concerns of all relevant parties), and empties them of potential impact in an arms control process.

Beyond this, they expressed dissatisfaction with the emphasis on the Western – especially European – model of CSBMs as the model to be emulated in the Middle East. They tended to regard this as a US attempt to impose its understanding of arms control and CSBMs on the course of the regional talks, and to force the European agenda onto a different context. The sense was that the US was presenting a ready-made set of CSBMs, prepared for signature. One Egyptian participant noted that the Europeans don't have a monopoly over CSBMs. He had the sense that everything was measured against European standards – if it didn't fit their definition, it wasn't considered a CSBM. He recalled the long and futile discussions over the definition of CSBMs: whether they were arms control; whether they should be political, declaratory, or militarily significant. He noted that Egypt didn't want to argue over whether CSBMs were arms control or not – for them it was enough that they allayed the parties' fears over certain issues, and that they be security related.

CSBMs also came to be regarded more and more by Egyptian participants as a means whereby Israel could postpone or even avoid dealing directly with the substance of arms control: military capabilities, and most importantly weapons of mass destruction. This led to their attempt to define CSBMs vis-à-vis these concerns; in effect, to define what were considered truly militarily significant measures. Accordingly, instead of wasting more time dealing with issues such as Search and Rescue (which did not have much significance in terms of security for the countries taking part in ACRS), the Egyptian view was that an attempt should be made to fill these measures with relevant content. They wanted "real" military related issues to be dealt with in the framework of CSBMs; for example, transparency and the exchange of military information on personnel, budgets, and Research and Development, relating to current military capabilities. In this context, it was claimed that the entire debate over CSBMs had been misunderstood. The issue was actually not over

the logic of CSBMs in the process, but rather over *the areas to which they could be applied.*

There was also an attempt to equate CSBMs with *normalization.* Here the objection was not to specific content, but rather to the ability of these measures to fulfill their designated role of building confidence. It was suggested that Israel favored CSBMs primarily as a means of developing relations with Arab states before dealing with all territorial disputes. Building on the negative connotation in the Arab world of premature normalization of relations with Israel, creating an identification between CSBMs and normalization was a means of undermining the value of CSBMs as a first stage on the road to more far-reaching arms control agreements. Egyptian participants believed Israel saw CSBMs as a means to facilitate the entire peace process – to strengthen the view that a process of normalization was in fact taking place. In these terms, CSBMs were not serving a role of facilitating the achievement of other agreements; rather, *they had become the objective itself.*

One interesting example demonstrates the negative connotation that CSBMs had assumed for Egypt over the years. Describing the long-term nature of the ACRS process, one Egyptian participant mentioned the ongoing Sinai process as a positive example of this. However, his intention was not to highlight the merits of confidence building; rather, he emphasized that arrangements can be reached even when there is *no* prior sense of confidence (directly following the 1973 War). But all of the elements mentioned as the assets of the Sinai process – arrangements that reflected mutual interests, that were low-level, and non-threatening, and that were verifiable – are the very advantages of CSBMs. He nevertheless preferred to call these arrangements "conflict avoidance," rather than CSBMs.

Finally, a very interesting article was recently published by Mohammad El-Sayed Selim providing an Egyptian perspective on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).[62] On the basis of European experience with CBMs, Selim comes to some interesting conclusions regarding these measures. He notes that CBMs were introduced in Europe within the framework of the CSCE: "This process began when two major developments occurred in global and European relations, namely, the East-West global strategic equilibrium and *the ensuing arms control agreements of the late 1960s and early 1970s,* and the stabilisation of the territorial status quo in Europe and state recognition."[63] After explaining the situation in Europe, and relating to the experience of

ACRS, he goes on to say that "[t]he two conditions, which paved the road to the effective application of CBMs in inter-European relations are lacking in the Middle East. The Middle East is characterized by a high degree of strategic disequilibrium *and no arms control agreements have been reached to deal with this situation.*"[64] Thus, in effect, Selim in conceptual terms turns the arms control sequence around, claiming that it is arms control agreements that are the necessary basis for agreeing upon and implementing CBMs.

What we see here is that the Egyptian participants were attempting to interpret CSBMs in a manner that reinforced their basic arms control equation. As will become clearer in the following section, the growing convergence within ACRS on an acceptance of the logic of CSBMs complicated Egypt's position. But, instead of opposing CSBMs head on, there was an attempt to harness them to the logic of their zero sum approach: to show that CSBMs were not addressing the right areas of security; that they were serving Israel's interests not only in stalling the process, but actually gaining something without paying a price (normalization); and, most recently, that perhaps the sequence was all wrong – in fact arms control was the precondition for CSBMs.

Chapter 4: **Egypt Between Israel and the Multilateral Frame of Reference**

The overall dynamics of ACRS, as played out over the three years in which it was active, were characterized by the injection of a bilateral relationship (Egypt-Israel) into a multilateral framework. The implications of this for the advancing of regional arms control and security proved negative. After attempting to use the bilateral nuclear issue to base its position in the Arab world, Egypt found that the multilateral framework itself is what ultimately imposed constraints on what could be achieved vis-à-vis Israel in a regional setting. Egypt's frustration over this situation led it to reinforce its independent position on the nuclear issue, and to place this unequivocal nuclear threat at the base of its unwillingness to proceed with the talks until it is addressed.

Needless to say, Israel also played a role in both the bilateral and multilateral dynamics. The advantages of ACRS for Israel were both in the growing convergence on an understanding of arms control that included CSBMs as a first stage, as well as in the realization of important cross-cutting regional interests. While the analytic logic of CSBMs in terms of the arms control process were important, Israeli participants have also noted the additional advantages of this situation: emphasis on CSBMs was a means of deferring the discussion over the nuclear issue, as well as a means of fostering direct ties with Arab states that Israel had not had access to previously. In fact, the stronger the convergence on CSBMs within ACRS, the less of an incentive Israel had for taking Egyptian concerns into account, or to concede that the overall profile of its qualitative edge (which included perceptions not only of superior weapons systems, but also of the ability to foster important bilateral/strategic ties, such as with Turkey) concerned Egypt in the multilateral framework. Thus, Israel's ultimate position was also marked by a considerable degree of intransigence: nuclear weapons continued to be a non-negotiable issue, but now Israel had gained a measure of legitimacy for its position of postponing this discussion within the arms control talks.[65]

All of these strands came together in the dynamics that led to the breakdown of ACRS. The following analysis will attempt to further

highlight the growing tension that characterized the intertwining of the bilateral and multilateral contexts.

The Multilateral Context[66]

Regarding the structure of the multilateral talks, most participants noted a clear distinction between what were often referred to as the major protagonists or players – Israel, Egypt, and Jordan (often in the role of mediator) – and the peripheral states – the Maghreb and Persian Gulf states. It appears that with regard to the basic arms control issues, the initial expertise of the peripheral states was in fact considerably less. Moreover, their commitment to the process was much less apparent, especially when measured in terms of the participants sent to take part in the talks and the continuity of participants over time. There was a tendency in some of these states to send people from the local embassy of wherever the meeting was held – these participants were basically there to "sign the book," but not much more. These factors had an effect on the relative weight of their participation. However, while it is no doubt true that initially the Gulf and Maghreb states were much less knowledgeable on arms control issues (and this has been attested to by all participants in the process, including the Qataris interviewed), this does not mean that they did not have other interests vis-à-vis the process, as has been discussed. Alongside the bilateral (and sometimes trilateral – with Jordan) dynamics that will be discussed below, there were also multilateral dynamics that developed in parallel to, and in a sense independently of, the dominant agenda set forth by the major protagonists.

At the outset, the peripheral states took part mainly to go along with the US, and to help the peace process along. While there was a general agreement that WMD should be dealt with in this process, this was not a cardinal issue.[67] Egypt wanted to begin with arms control: concrete regional and international agreements to deal with concerns stemming from the presence of WMD in the region. The Egyptian position was that one cannot have the ceiling before the floor; i.e., one cannot deal with a regional security system ('ceiling') before putting arms control agreements in place that address security concerns ('floor'). As a major regional player, and due to the fact that it had a clear position on how best to proceed in the talks, Egypt was instrumental in setting the tone in the initial stages.

However, as the process progressed, many of the participating states no longer wanted to follow Egypt's lead. They had been willing to do so for the first few years, when they did not have clear positions on the issues. But towards the end of the process they felt that they understood the issues enough to talk about them in a very authoritative way. Within the talks, Egypt would always claim that they were not just speaking for themselves, but for everyone. The ones that would be most vocal in stating that that was not quite the case would be Jordan. Others might just be very quiet, not comfortable taking a clear stand in opposition to Egypt (this was true for the Gulf states). But, in fact, there was also some evidence of independent positions that were adopted. For example, the head of one of the Gulf state delegations was very dynamic within ACRS, and not always coordinating positions with the head of the Egyptian delegation, Nabil Fahmy. Other participants noted Fahmy's frustration. As ACRS progressed, regional states that originally supported Egypt, came more and more to have their own opinions and views of arms control – they were no longer willing to stand behind Egypt as a united bloc. One of the clearest expressions of this was the support shown for CSBMs.

It was also apparent that as time went on, the Gulf states began to show more and more interest in other regional issues, like sharing information on international terrorism. It was not that they had clear ideas about what they were ready to do in these areas, but they wanted to begin dealing with the issues. These were sometimes the subject of bilateral talks between Israel and some of these countries on the margins of ACRS, and, according to one participant, through these developments one began to see a split on the perceived need to deal with the nuclear question first. Different GCC states would come and say that there was an issue they wanted to put on the table. They would note that the issue in question was not inherently pro-Israeli, but that beyond this they were not willing to funnel their entire agenda through the Egyptian position. Jentleson noted that another expression of the split was the Israeli-Jordanian treaty, which lays out a very different position on the nuclear issue than is evident in the Egyptian position.[68] The Jordanians were in effect legitimizing the notion of a different approach. These developments underscored for the Egyptians that the process was truly becoming multilateral.

What we see from this is a clear and growing difference of opinion or divergence between Egypt and the other Arab states, at least as far as

emphasis on WMD within the talks is concerned. While in principle all would probably not hesitate to agree that it is very important to deal with these weapons (this has definitely come out in numerous statements and commentaries that have appeared in the media over the years) such declarations tend not to hold when more decisive positions are required. When it came to taking action on the basis of such concerns, Egypt had to work to rally support, and to convince other states of the importance of taking a clear and unified stand.[69] This was most clearly apparent in Egypt's campaign within the Arab and Muslim world in early 1995 to formulate a unified position regarding their unwillingness to support indefinite extension of the NPT (at the Review and Extension Conference) if Israel did not join,[70] and it was also played out in the dynamics of ACRS.

As noted, Egypt was concerned by the growing convergence on an understanding of arms control that legitimized CSBMs as a first stage. Egypt did not take the CSBM agreements lightly because it was aware of the implications of this convergence in terms of the multilateral discussion that was being created. Interestingly enough, one participant highlighted the impact of the process in this regard. He noted that for some of the Gulf states, what happened was not a matter of accepting the logic of CSBMs and then looking how to apply it, but rather that they came to an understanding of the value of these measures *inductively*, through the process itself. In other words, as the value of dealing with other regional interests through these measures became apparent, they began to show an interest in them. The fact that ACRS was an on-going process meant that it was not a matter of a one-time defeat for Egypt, but rather that Egypt experienced a gradual loss of ground on the arms control equation it was pressing for. In fact, it became more and more clear that not only was the nuclear issue not fulfilling its role of a means for Egypt to enhance and hopefully consolidate its regional leadership role, but it was actually providing the basis for a growing *gap* between Egypt and the other Arab states taking part in the arms control process.

As its sense of isolation grew, Egypt attempted to convince that its firm position on the nuclear issue resulted from the fact that its own bilateral issues with Israel were actually much more significant. This resulted in a message that somewhat contradicted their previous one, according to which Egypt claimed it was speaking in the name of all Arab states. In this regard, they would note that other Arab states could afford to support CSBMs, whereas Egypt could not. Egypt needed to

take the lead in pressing Israel, because not only did other Arab participants not understand the issues as well as they did, but they did not have the same incentive to take a firm stand. A third 'take' on this (in an attempt to link the two opposing messages) was expressed by one Egyptian observer of ACRS when he noted that the dynamics of the talks were such that other participating states not adjacent to Israel (and thus not as threatened by it) also lacked expertise on arms control issues, and were therefore not as active as Egypt was. It thus *seemed like* Egypt was more obstructionist that the others, when in principle, other states shared Egypt's position on WMD. In other words, if the other states were not following Egypt's hard line on the nuclear issue, it was because they had less of an understanding of, or concern with the real issues, but not that they didn't share Egypt's position on the importance of dealing with WMD.[71] This juggling of messages demonstrates the clear tension that Egypt sensed when attempting to reconcile the clear-cut stand it took on the nuclear issue (anticipating full Arab backing) with a multilateral dynamics within which it was gradually losing control.

Egypt's preoccupation with the nuclear issue was thus shaped and amplified within the dynamics of the multilateral arms control process. The differential interests that began to be expressed within ACRS were something with which Egypt was not happy. One participant said that Egypt valued its position as the principal Arab interlocutor with Israel on issues related to regional security; therefore, *Egypt's interest in the process **decreased** as the process became multilateral and there became a genuine interest in having more than one Arab position.* The paradox between Egypt's disparate political and security interests meant that despite the potential benefit it could have reaped in pure security terms from a sequential process, the multilateral dynamics led to a sense that ACRS was dangerous in political terms (i.e., in terms of status and identity) to Egypt's self-conception as a leader in the Arab world. The fact that ultimately Egypt refused to allow other aspects of the process to go forward until their demand in the nuclear realm was met – although these would ultimately have been beneficial to Egypt itself – attests to the growing pressure that it felt within the multilateral framework. The actual forging of bilateral diplomatic ties between Israel and a number of Arab states in the period under review only served to increase Egypt's sense of uneasiness in the regional context.[72]

A final point is that Egypt's attitudes toward ACRS as a multilateral framework were not developed in a vacuum. There were a number of

additional regional forums that were taking shape in the early to mid–1990s, and these had an impact on the overall dynamics as well. Thus, supporting evidence for some of the conclusions drawn in this regard on the basis of ACRS can be found in these other frameworks.

Particularly illuminating in this regard is the series of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Economic Summits.[73] At the initial summit that took place in Casablanca, in October-November 1994, the general atmosphere among the participating states was very positive regarding the prospects for regional economic cooperation. Foreign Minister Amr Musa, however, showed much less enthusiasm. In his speech he emphasized Egypt's belief that resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict was the key for building a new era in the Middle East; economic cooperation could not take its proper course until peace was complete.[74] Moreover, on one occasion prior to the convening of the conference, and in regard to the conference, Musa noted that things were moving forward "whether Egypt liked it or not," and that Egypt needed to cooperate with developments within an Egyptian, national, and pan-Arab framework.[75]

While it was often claimed that the problems that these conferences faced from1996 onward were a result of the election of Binyamin Netanyahu and the lack of progress in the Arab-Israeli peace process, the evidence shows that Egypt was hesitant regarding the implications of the multilateral format from the outset. Fears of Israel's intentions to establish economic hegemony in the region were expressed, and the prospect of Israel being able to act independently in the region through such forums was clearly ominous from Egypt's point of view.[76]

An additional set of initiatives that involved some of the Middle Eastern players were the various European-Mediterranean forums – forums set up by European organizations (EU, OSCE, NATO) to establish partnerships between countries in Europe and the Mediterranean. Interestingly enough, a comparison of what was agreed upon in the Barcelona Declaration (as part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, or, as it has come to be known, the Barcelona Process[77]) with the ACRS draft "Statement on Arms Control and Regional Security" shows that Egypt did not insist on the same things in Barcelona that it did in ACRS as far as the nuclear question is concerned. The wording of the Barcelona Declaration regarding regional security in the Middle East is quite similar to the language proposed by the US for the draft statement in ACRS – a proposal that was rejected by Egypt.[78] The fact that Egypt did not insist in the Barcelona Declaration on a specific clause stating that all parties

would adhere to the NPT in the near future, as it did in ACRS, may be due to the fact that they did not want to overly upset the Europeans, especially taking into account the economic implications of this partnership in terms of aid and soft loans, and plans to help build an eventual free trade area between the EU and the Mediterranean region.[79] It seems highly probable, however, that the multilateral framework of Barcelona was simply less threatening from Egypt's point of view – with many participants from Europe and none from the Gulf, making it much less focused on Middle Eastern internal dynamics per se.

The Bilateral Context

Egypt's independent approach to the nuclear question has a clear bilateral dimension. According to one of the Jordanian participants, historically, Egypt has been obsessed with the nuclear issue. Seeing themselves as a large, central, and leading country, they cannot accept the idea that a small country like Israel would threaten them with nuclear weapons. In the multilateral framework, as has been discussed, Egypt's attempt to use the nuclear issue as a means of consolidating Arab support – with Egypt as the leader or champion of the campaign against Israel in the nuclear realm – was not successful. As discussed above, the dynamics of the multilateral discussion not only precluded Egypt from reaping the fruits of this attempt, but also pushed it into a corner. Ultimately, however, the emphasis on the nuclear issue served an additional purpose: it actually helped place Egypt on more equal footing with Israel as far as their dialogue in the non-conventional realm was concerned, albeit in a manner that has so far not been conducive to advancing the regional talks.

   The bilateral Egyptian-Israeli relationship is a complex one – with many over- and undertones that touch upon questions of approach, culture, diplomatic style, etc. Within the arms control and regional security discussion, one Egyptian observer mentioned that the sense was that Israel's negotiating style was: "what we have is ours; what you have is subject to negotiation." Moreover, the Egyptians felt that the Israeli negotiators had an implicit assumption, according to which Israel was the "good guy" and Egypt was the "bad guy," whose errant ways needed to be reformed. This comment is most interesting as it implies that Egypt's sense of technological inferiority translates also into a sense that they are somehow *normatively* inferior – they not only lack the technology

that Israel has, but it is almost as if they cannot be *trusted* with such technology. The fact that Israel is singled out in this way – entrusted to deal "responsibly" with weapons of mass destruction – is very difficult for Egypt to deal with and places them on the continual defensive. To this should be added the frustration that Egypt felt when it sensed in late 1995 that the US was seeking to place the blame for the deadlock in ACRS on them. Dealing with a sense of such deep-rooted structural lack of respect and discrimination made Egypt want to force Israel to take its security concerns into account. In these terms, they have emphasized that the very agreement on the part of Israel to place the issue of a WMDFZ on the agenda of ACRS would be an important indication to Egypt that Israel took its concerns seriously. There was a clear sense that the problems bred of bilateral concerns being amplified in a multilateral context were not being addressed by the parties in these terms. Rather, emphasis was placed on the nuclear issue *per se*; as such the nuclear issue was pushed to the foreground, and the situation became inescapably zero sum.

But, through the dynamics of ACRS, Egypt was also positioning itself as Israel's primary strategic dialogue partner. Thus, parallel to its growing sense of vulnerability in relation to Israel's qualitative superiority, as well as its inability to determine the agenda of the arms control talks, it was also creating the basis of a new strategic relationship with Israel. Since the arms control process began, the situation was defined such that Israel could not avoid dealing with Egypt on this issue. The fact that Egypt pushed the nuclear issue in many additional forums (regional and international) only helped to further entrench this development. Some of the Israeli participants in ACRS noted that although Egypt and Israel had achieved a political agreement with the signing of peace in 1979, this had not led to a real strategic dialogue between the two countries.[80] The first real dialogue of this kind was in ACRS.

Within the context of ACRS, and up until the present, this dialogue has been conducted mainly as a rivalry. Not only is Egypt Israel's foremost frame of reference for the discussion of non-conventional weapons in the regional context, but this issue has been elevated to a degree that it is constantly being reinforced – a fact which strengthens the rivalry itself. Thus, through the dialogue, and regarding its bilateral relations with Israel, Egypt has succeeded in transforming the nuclear issue into a basis of bilateral power and leverage. This, without ever having possessed nuclear capabilities. There have been only isolated

instances of actual exchanges of threats between the two countries over the nuclear issue,[81] thus it remains an issue of rivalry rather than an enemy relationship. The nuclear issue had a profound impact on the means by which the two countries conducted their bilateral relations in the 1990s, and has been cited as one of the reasons for the cold peace that continues to characterize these relations. Egypt seems to have developed an ongoing interest in maintaining this rivalry – as a source of power and influence. But, it would seem that both Egypt and Israel have an interest in ultimately transforming this strategic rivalry into a more productive strategic dialogue, especially as neither has an interest in jeopardizing the peace between them. More importantly, perhaps, Egypt has to keep in mind that its lack of success in the multilateral realm may very well come back to haunt it, because these regional processes are likely to reconvene at some point. Not only was Egypt relatively unsuccessful in establishing a leadership position in these talks, but Israel was much more successful than it anticipated at the outset, and is likely to have a better starting point in the next round. A bilateral strategic dialogue which deals with all aspects of the two countries' strategic relations could go far in terms of dealing with the bilateral concerns that interfered with the progress that was made in ACRS.

Summary

In the final analysis, the ACRS process turned out to be much more significant than might originally have been expected, especially when taken together with other regional processes that were taking place concurrently. Cooperative regional forums that included Israel were a new development in the Middle East, and participation in ACRS delineated the prospects for new opportunities as well as potential risks. Ultimately, the multilateral dynamics clearly had a differential impact on the different participating states, which found expression in their degree of willingness to proceed incrementally. These chapters have attempted to provide an explanation for this differential effect, based on an examination of the interaction that took place, once having diffused the nuclear issue of its independent explanatory power. In these terms, the arms control equation advanced by Egypt was a means of gaining a measure of control over uncertain regional dynamics. This has had implications in terms of both bilateral and multilateral relations in the region.

Part Three will look at the question of differential impact in light of the deliberate attempt to create mechanisms that would be conducive to instilling a more relaxed, step by step approach to arms control and regional security. This approach was designed to underscore the importance of the process itself as a means of fostering shared knowledge and norms of dialogue that are an essential basis of regional security in the Middle East. The dynamics of convergence in the arms control talks were treated in the above chapters mainly as the background for Egypt's growing sense of isolation, its increased emphasis on the security implications of nuclear weapons, and its ultimate conclusion that the process cannot go forward until this issue is addressed. The following chapters will be more focused on the process itself: this will include discussion of the unique features of the talks that enabled and encouraged the development of the dynamics of convergence, as well as the role of Track II diplomacy. This will place the question of differential impact in a broader framework, and focus on why the seminar framework in particular did not have the same effect on Egypt that it had on the other states.

The implications of the dynamics that characterized ACRS in terms of the prospects for the next round of talks, if and when they reconvene, will be considered in the concluding chapter.

Part III

Facilitating the Process: The Impact of the Seminar Framework and Track II Diplomacy

Chapter 5: **The Seminar Framework: Arms Control in Process**

ACRS was purposely designed to be a forum for opening channels of communication, and encouraging understanding, both of the issues involved and the perceptions and concerns of the various sides. The working assumption of the organizers was that many of the participants lacked essential knowledge of the concepts of arms control and regional security, as well as an understanding of how these concepts had been applied in other regional contexts. Accordingly, the initial meetings were set up as seminars to teach arms control and familiarize the parties with the superpower and European experiences with negotiating such agreements. ACRS was set up as a *working group* – encouraging states to engage in a process that emphasizes learning and creation of shared meanings over pure bargaining and compromise. In this sense, ACRS was more of a seminar-like discussion group than a negotiating framework. While this does not mean that bargaining tactics were not employed in the process (indeed, there is much evidence that they were), it does mean that other modes of communication were encouraged.

The goals of the arms control talks were defined and redefined as the talks progressed. In contrast to more straightforward negotiations (to resolve territorial disputes, for example) where there is a reasonably well-defined goal that the negotiators inch toward while making concessions

on the way, in the Middle East arms control process, the meaning and nature of the desired outcome had to a large degree been constructed as the process developed. Thus, more than making concessions to reach some more or less predefined goal that serves each side's predetermined self-interest, the parties actually were *creating* that goal, and their interests vis-à-vis questions of regional security along the way.

The framework that was devised also helped foster communication geared to understanding the concerns of the other side. Most participants in ACRS indicated that one of the achievements of the talks was the increased mutual understanding gained by all. Overall, the development of basic conceptual understandings and interpersonal relationships resulted in the initial stage in a process of socialization regarding arms control: the creation of a group of experts on arms control, with a common language for relating to the relevant issues. Sometimes the understanding gained was that people from different states came to realize that they use the same terms, but mean very different things. This of course came out most clearly with regard to "arms control" itself – whether it meant disarmament or something different, whether it related only to certain weapons categories but not to others, whether it meant joining international agreements or creating something tailored to the region, etc. Sometimes convergence on a common meaning was achieved; in other cases there was no convergence, but at least there was an understanding that there were different meanings. The informal atmosphere of the talks was considered a major asset, and it was noted that many of the more significant interactions took place in the most informal settings: at coffee breaks, dinners, etc. As one participant put it, "that is when people really spoke to one another."

Communication carried out in a context that encouraged openness and frank exchanges allowed for the development of an initial measure of mutual understanding and conceptual convergence on CSBMs. The process became truly multilateral when (as we saw in the case of CSBMs for the peripheral states) the shared meanings that developed were based on learning that was *indigenous to the interaction that took place*, rather than on concepts imposed from the outside. In fact, one of the themes raised by many of the participants in ACRS was that the measures agreed upon in ACRS should be tailored to the specific regional needs.

One of the Israeli participants pointed out that the implications of the dialogue that took place in ACRS went beyond the framework of the multilateral talks. He gave as an example the case of Jordan, where the

dialogue between Israeli and Jordanian participants within ACRS created a common language that proved very useful in the bilateral peace process. Another participant went even further when he said that it was not even clear that the progress made bilaterally with Jordan could have been achieved without the regional process. Through Jordanian presentations in ACRS and other Track II forums, Israelis began to learn about some of the problems that concerned the Jordanians; these understandings were carried directly into the bilateral discussions. Regarding the very *language* of regional security discussions, another example related to a Track II meeting dealing with security in the Persian Gulf. Kuwait had maintained a relatively low profile in ACRS, and the Kuwaiti participant at this particular meeting included in his presentation an approach to Israel that was totally anachronistic. It was the other regional (Persian Gulf) participants, those that had participated in ACRS, who turned to him with a look of absolute surprise. In light of what they had learned in the context of ACRS and other regional meetings, they had abandoned these outdated positions, and were surprised to hear them presented. Thus, it seemed to the Israeli participant that the language, if not the actual positions, had totally changed. In this sense, the decade of the 1990s brought about a real change.

Interestingly enough, Egypt was also part of these dynamics, at least to a certain degree. While the Egyptian participants interviewed were very firm on the nuclear issue, they were in agreement with the other participants regarding the importance of the understanding that was gained on all sides about other parties' threat perceptions and broader security concerns. Moreover, beyond (or perhaps parallel to) the attempts to undermine the importance of CSBMs as a first stage in the process, there was also a measure of acceptance that these measures in some way would be part and parcel of the arms control process.[82] There was recognition of the fact that if the nuclear issue was included in the agenda of ACRS, the discussion focusing on the various aspects of this would take *years* (and that no WMDFZ would be implemented before comprehensive peace was achieved); at the same time, they would continue discussion of all other aspects of CSBMs. Regarding the CSBMs that had actually been discussed, it should also be noted that Egypt had offered to have the permanent site of the ACRS Communications Network set up in Cairo.

Nevertheless, the dialogue that took place between Israel and Egypt over the nuclear issue was not predominantly characterized by the

relaxed atmosphere of the seminar framework. Here the element of hard bargaining and negotiations was quite pronounced; the bilateral agenda that was injected into the multilateral framework proved resistant not only to the very convergence on CSBMs as arms control measures, but consequently also to the manner in which the talks were conducted. As the positions hardened into zero sum conceptions of national and regional security, the "music" of the dialogue increasingly resembled more traditional bargaining situations, especially toward the latter stages that led to breakdown.

Thus, while the seminar framework that was adopted for the arms control talks was generally conducive to cooperation, it was not successful across the board, and this was expressed most strikingly in the case of Egypt. The question of whether the process can alter the dynamics of the game as set out in this study will be taken up following a brief look at the impact of Track II discussions.

Chapter 6: **Track II Diplomacy**

The overall arms control process in the Middle East has also included a parallel track of informal meetings that have taken place since the late 1980s, dealing with various aspects of arms control and regional security and the possibilities for applying some of these concepts in the Middle East. The common denominator of these efforts is that they deal with arms control and regional security, that they are organized by national and transnational non-governmental organizations, and that they include participants from Israel and any number of Arab states. Examples of such efforts include conferences and seminars organized by The American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS), The Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California (IGCC), The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and Search for Common Ground. These unofficial seminars and conferences have come to be known collectively as Track II diplomacy.

In terms of its overall objectives, Track II diplomacy is generally geared toward facilitating official diplomacy in a given area. The Track II meetings on arms control and regional security aim to achieve the following:
- to help reconceptualize the meaning of arms control and its application to the Middle East;
- to clarify all parties' concerns and modes of thinking about security (both national and regional);
- to serve as a sounding board for innovative ideas on arms control, whether in the realm of confidence-building or arms limitations, or more general regional security;
- to help improve communications and provide a framework for familiarizing the parties with each other – actually getting to know one another, beyond knowledge of policy positions.

These goals are of course highly compatible with the goals of the official talks themselves, due to the special seminar-like context for discussions developed for ACRS. Thus, on one level, the official and unofficial tracks can be viewed as being inherently complementary, as

they are pursuing the same kind of communication and convergence on common meanings and understandings. But, on another level, the two tracks are very different and potentially incompatible – this stems from the binding nature of Track I discussions and the totally nonbinding unofficial academic atmosphere of Track II. In light of this basic difference, there is a point to trying to assess the contribution of unofficial meetings to official talks on arms control, or the role of Track II in the overall arms control process.

The first question that must be answered in this regard is to what degree Track II meetings are in fact carried out with an eye to contributing to ACRS. There is a wide range of unofficial efforts – from purely academic gatherings to more focused efforts that are aimed at contributing in some way to the official process. Attention here will be directed to these more focused efforts (sometimes called Track "one and a half" to emphasize their closer link to Track I), where both the potential benefits of discussion, as well as the problematics that may arise due to the potential tension between officially geared discussion that takes place in an unofficial context, are higher. Two important questions must be considered: first, to what degree the goals of the Track II meetings are actually achieved, and, second, to what degree their collective impact is felt, taken into account, and viewed to contribute to the official discussions.

Taking each question separately, the first requires an assessment of the *content* and *structure* of the discussions. Specifically, this touches upon whether they are informative and focused, whether they foster relaxed exchange of ideas, whether there is continuity in the meetings and in the participants (in order to establish true dialogue), and whether there exists a means of transferring, formally or informally, the gains made to official sources.

The second question goes to an assessment of the cumulative impact of unofficial talks on officials and the official discussions, both in terms of the attitude that officials display toward these unofficial efforts (whether they are treated as basically helpful or primarily an unwelcome interference), and the actual integration of ideas raised in unofficial forums into the official talks. As to the attitude of officials, in order for unofficial diplomacy to be successful, it must at some point gain access to, and acceptance by official negotiators. Evidence of the salience of governmental approval of Track II efforts may be gathered from the fact that the organizers of unofficial talks tend to emphasize the importance

of access to official channels and/or integration of officials into the meetings (either by including them as direct participants – in their unofficial capacity – or by coordinating their efforts with governmental officials).

One important variable that may influence official attitudes toward the value of Track II efforts is the question of *timing:* whether unofficial discussions take place concurrently with official talks or not. When unofficial dialogue *precedes* official negotiations, officials are likely to be more receptive to these efforts – assuming they have reached the stage of an initial willingness to pursue cooperation in general. There is potential gain in such meetings, and not much risk involved, especially if they focus on the role of education and improving channels of communication. When, however, these efforts take place concurrently with official talks, the relationship is somewhat more complex. The parallel efforts may be complementary and reinforcing, but they may also be (at least in some respects) contradictory, thus causing a measure of friction. Unofficial diplomacy may be innovative, and attempt to take the lead by bypassing or leaping beyond official negotiations. Conflicts of interest may emerge when unofficial discussion departs from its focus on education and encouragement of interpersonal ties, and begins to deal with substantive issues that are being discussed at the official level.

At the present stage of the Middle East multilaterals, official talks remain suspended, and for the last five years the only channel for pursuing regional discussion on arms control and regional security has been Track II meetings. What are the implications of this for the arms control process? On the one hand, these meetings have been very important in terms of maintaining lines of communications, and keeping discussion alive. But, this is also a potentially difficult stage because the areas of disagreement within ACRS have been clearly delineated, and any deviation from the positions (or arms control equations) put forth could be viewed by officials as undermining their interests. Thus, as important as it is that these meetings continue to take place, some of the efforts have created difficulties, especially when academics have been perceived as discussing issues that could be understood as compromising official positions.

The degree of *coordination* that exists between unofficial efforts and government officials becomes a very important factor in this regard. The higher the degree of coordination, the better the chances are that information and ideas will reach officials, and the less chance there is

for friction. Clearly, however, such coordination undermines the unofficial, academic nature of Track II. Difficulties can also arise when the different parties taking part in a certain Track II effort relate differently to the nature of the meeting, in terms of its place along the spectrum that runs from purely academic Track II to highly focused and somewhat coordinated Track "one and a half." There is also a question of *image*: even when a Track II effort is purely unofficial, it is liable to face these same difficulties, if it comes to be perceived as being more than that. A final potential source of complication relates to an additional role of Track II – to broaden the community of participants in the arms control process. It is important to increase the number of individuals that are party to the new types of understandings being fostered in order to broaden the basis of support for the process as a whole. This, however, clashes with the need to conduct focused discussions, with continuity in terms of participation, in order to have an impact on the official talks.

In sum, at first glance it may seem that the impact of unofficial efforts is surely positive in light of the goals of increasing understanding, creating additional forums for familiarization, and further opening lines of communication. However, once concrete ideas come to be discussed (and depending on the stage of the official talks), problems can emerge. Track II initiatives are characterized by a basic structural tension between the intentional informality of their format on the one hand, and their aspirations to exert an impact on official processes on the other. The very asset of lack of formality can easily become a liability when the different types of efforts seem to be proceeding at cross-purposes. Additional important questions relating to Track II, but that are beyond the scope of the present study, are whether the dynamics of the Track II arms control talks have reflected those of ACRS (and perhaps reinforced some of the trends identified) or whether they produced a different type of interaction, due for example to the fact that they were often not region-wide in terms of participation. Also, whether Track II was conceived of as a forum for advancing issues that could not be pursued in Track I, to the point of serving as a means for purposely circumventing Track I in certain areas, is a question of some interest.

Chapter 7: **Can the Process Alter the Game?**

The arms control process was purposely designed with an eye to the long-term changes that would have to be achieved. Setting up the arms control working group as a seminar situation, and encouraging additional unofficial forums that would enable the continuation of discussion were both steps that the US initiated and supported. The logic was that over time regional states could come to an appreciation of the benefits of multilateral cooperation, even regarding issues that seemed to touch upon their most basic security concerns. It was hoped that the participants would succumb to the logic of a win-win situation that could be achieved in stages. The element of time (the fact that it was a long-term process) was built into the conception of step-by-step, building-block progress, that was the driving force behind the talks from the outset.

In these terms, Track II initiatives could in fact play an important role in maintaining channels of communication, as well as serving as the basis for setting up additional frameworks for continuing discussion not only of topics directly related to arms control and regional security, but touching upon the state of the peace process and its implications for regional politics and stability. Moreover, these discussions could very well provide a forum for assessing some of the difficulties that were encountered within ACRS, and for devising means for rethinking aspects of inter-state relations in more productive ways in order to enhance the prospects for moving forward. All discussions that took place would also have the added value of further clarifying dialogue procedures and strengthening the norms of multilateral communication in the Middle East. Even in light of the limitations discussed above, Track II initiatives are nevertheless an important forum for innovative thinking, provided due attention is given to the resistance that may arise at official levels.

But, what of the seminar framework itself? Why did it not have the same effect on Egypt as it did on the other participating states? Part of the answer has to do with the fact that Egypt came into the talks with a very clear idea of what it hoped to achieve thereby. Participants were already very knowledgeable on the subject of arms control in general, and Egypt's interest in this regard had been clearly articulated: Mubarak had set his arms control agenda back in April 1990, when he called for

ridding the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.[83] The dynamics of ACRS described in the previous chapter adds to this explanation by showing how the very convergence that was being achieved within the talks had the effect of causing Egypt to become even more steadfast in its position. While it became party to the language and concepts of ACRS to a certain degree, its security perceptions were only reinforced in the direction of zero sum equations for all of the reasons discussed.

A fuller explanation, however, goes back to the cultural and normative factors that influenced Egypt's position from the outset: particularly the question of leadership in the Arab world. For Egypt, these factors were part of a normative structure that dictated a different set of rules for conducting the talks. In this sense, ACRS was the scene of a clash between two different modes for understanding how cooperative strategic interaction between states is carried out, or how strategic games in the international arena are actually played. It was a situation where rationalist cooperation theory was imposed on practice with the hope of institutionalizing new norms of multilateral dialogue and cooperation. But, this attempt clashed with a pre-existing normative and cultural structure that had been established over the years in the context of inter-Arab dialogue.[84]

In this sense, there is a link between the two prevailing images with which Egypt entered the talks (its leadership position and its perceptions of Israel's qualitative edge) that induced a synergetic effect within ACRS. Egypt was attempting to consolidate its leadership position in a new regional framework that included the participation of its perceived rival for regional hegemony. What provided this rival with its strength were the various components of its perceived qualitative edge, the apex of which (nuclear capability) Egypt hoped would become the focus of the talks themselves. Thus, the implications of success or failure for Egypt were compounded, especially as it was also tied to Egypt's interest in serving as the champion of the Arab interest. The initial successes of ACRS only served to increase Egypt's uneasiness, especially as the cooperative mode itself was strongly identified with Israel.

The purposeful attempt on the part of the architects of the multilateral negotiations to impose the win-win logic of cooperation theory on a particular instance of regional multilateral interaction and dialogue worked up to a point, but was ultimately held hostage to itself, and to elements of the normative space within which the dialogue was

conducted, and whose rules it unwittingly reinforced rather than mitigated. Thus, Egypt continued to hold on, and play according to the familiar and well-established rules of Arab dialogue in what was an unfamiliar and potentially threatening regional framework, especially as far as Egypt was concerned, due to its desire to uphold its long-standing leadership role in the Arab world.

For the process to continue, the game needs to be understood, and ultimately somewhat altered. As long as the official talks remain in abeyance, it would be useful to integrate such discussion into the agenda of the Track II initiatives that continue to take place.

Concluding Thoughts:
Can the Talks Be Put Back on Track?

In light of the dynamics that characterized ACRS, as well as other features that relate to the overall process, what are the actual prospects for the regional arms control process, especially the possible reconvening of ACRS? Looking back to the initiation of ACRS, and the central role played by the US, clearly one of the most salient factors is the interest displayed by the US in pressing for this. While it seems that there is a general interest in getting the discussions back on track, it is not clear how much leverage the US wants to exert in this regard. The Clinton administration put a great deal of effort into pushing forward the bilateral peace negotiations, especially between Israel and the Palestinians, and the multilaterals as a whole were relegated to the 'back burner'. It is not yet clear what the attitude of the Bush administration will be.*

Beyond this, there is the question of the realities on the ground, especially the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, which on the surface seems to make the prospects for reconvening regional dialogue frameworks very dim indeed. Interestingly enough, however, Egypt has been relatively moderate toward Israel in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, exerting its efforts to negate the possibility of the conflict spreading to additional Middle East states. This conflict has perhaps paradoxically created a situation within which Egypt is able to exercise a measure of control and leadership regarding regional developments and dynamics.

But, in light of the dynamics of the strategic game of arms control as discussed in this study, the more intriguing question regards Egypt and

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* It is worth noting that the new administration's plans to go forward with a national missile defense program could have potentially negative implications in terms of the US's overall commitment to the arms control norm, which encourages diplomacy and dialogue as a means of dealing with non-conventional weapons threats.

Israel specifically, and the bilateral concerns between them. While one Egyptian participant was very firm in his unwillingness to link the problems faced by ACRS to Egyptian-Israeli relations, it seems that one cannot escape the conclusion that this is the crux of the issue as far as reconvening is concerned.

Three questions should be considered in this regard:

1. What are the minimal requirements for reconvening ACRS?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of reconvening ACRS for both Egypt and Israel?
3. Assuming there *is* an interest in reconvening ACRS, what developments indicate that there is room for optimism that this option will materialize; moreover, what can be done to increase the prospects for its success?

Minimal Requirements

Going back to the point of breakdown, it would seem that the minimal requirement for reconvening ACRS would be to address what was put forth by Egypt as the factor that precluded it from continuing with these discussions: the nuclear issue, and more specifically, Egypt's demand that discussion of a WMDFZ in the Middle East be included on the agenda of ACRS. In early February 2000, a meeting of the steering group of the five multilateral working groups took place in Moscow, after a period of several years in which all groups had been in abeyance. It was agreed to reconvene the four working groups dealing with economic cooperation, environmental issues, refugees, and water, but not ACRS.[85] At the time, Foreign Minister Musa was quoted as saying that regarding ACRS:

> No future regional scheme can be completed without a security regime that tackles arms control matters, in particular the establishment of a zone free of all mass destruction weapons in the Middle East. This is a crucial endeavor for which planning must start as from now, through, inter alia, the ACRS Working Group. We therefore call, as a matter of urgency, for an agreement on a comprehensive agenda for this group that addresses all arms control issues.[86]

It thus seems that, although greater emphasis has also been placed on the interrelation between the bilateral and multilateral tracks of the peace process, Israeli agreement to place the issue of a WMDFZ on the agenda of ACRS would in fact be a sufficient precondition.

An additional factor that must be considered is the question of Syrian participation in ACRS, which has become much more pronounced following the breakdown of the talks. While it is not clear whether there is a real interest in continuing with these talks before such participation is secured, it is probably not a requirement for getting them back on track. Again, the general assessment that Egyptian participants presented in their interviews is that Egypt is primarily looking for some indication that Israel is willing to commit itself to addressing Egyptian concerns by considering the nuclear issue.

As far as Israel is concerned, there has been no change in its willingness to include discussion of a WMDFZ on the agenda of ACRS. Interestingly enough, one of the Jordanian participants noted that there has been a noticeable change in Israel's willingness to address the nuclear issue: he noted that in a meeting that took place in Cairo in 1993 there was a sense that they could not even discuss the nuclear issue with the Israelis present, but by 1995 there was a sense that the subject was no longer a taboo. He maintained that this was a result of the process. Israel continues to fear the slippery slope, and is wary of the implications of "putting the issue on the agenda." Moreover, Israel today is much more focused on the threats that it faces in the non-conventional realm from Iran and Iraq, and the continued need to rely on nuclear deterrence in dealing with these threats. In this sense, Israel may be moving in the opposite direction of addressing Egypt's demands, especially as Iran and Iraq are very far from being included in regional arms control talks.

Interest in Reconvening ACRS

It would seem that there are clear advantages to reconvening ACRS from Israel's point of view, even in light of the non-conventional threats it continues to face. Assuming there is agreement on the fact that *implementation* of a WMDFZ would only happen after there is comprehensive peace in the region that includes Iran and Iraq, much can be achieved in the meantime. As one participant pointed out, arms control and regional agreements are a positive thing. If states upheld their commitments, arms control agreements would be good from Israel's

point of view. Regionally, of course, agreements, understandings, recognition, and relaxing of tensions are all things that increase stability. The clear disadvantage is if Israel faces mounting pressure to make concessions on the nuclear question.

For Egypt, the problems involved in the regional processes initiated in the first half of the 1990s, especially in ACRS, have been the major focus of this paper, and would seem to indicate that the process does not have much to offer Egypt. But, as we move from an assessment of the balance of advantages/disadvantages to a look at the actual grounds for optimism regarding the prospects for reconvening the talks, a clear distinction should be made between the problematic dynamics that hindered ACRS in the years it was active, and the advantages of the process itself. For Egypt there is also much to be gained from ACRS specifically, and from the regional processes in general. If a means could be found to address bilateral concerns within the multilateral framework, ACRS could perhaps afford a win-win situation – at least in those areas of regional security with which it deals – for all participants. As noted, Egypt had an interest in some of the CSBMs being discussed, and recognized the importance of such frameworks for understanding the security concerns of all relevant parties and building confidence between them.

How to Help ACRS Get Back on Track

The primary reason for optimism regarding the prospects of getting ACRS back on track is the fact that while the dynamics of divergence ultimately won out, the dynamics of convergence left everyone (including Egyptian participants) with a sense that the overall experience was a positive one, and that the effort was worthwhile. Moreover, on the WMDFZ question, Egyptian participants noted that the process will take years due to the many issues that that will need to be addressed in this regard; implementation will happen only far into the future.

In terms of how to help this process along, what emerges most clearly from the analysis in this paper is the need to deal with the bilateral Israeli-Egyptian relationship in a manner that reduces its potential for upsetting regional processes. In this sense, meeting the minimal requirement for reconvening ACRS is in fact only the first initial step. Without dealing with the implications of regional cooperative frameworks from Egypt's point of view, the process is likely to encounter the same difficulties all

over again. Egypt's self-perception of its regional role is a deeply embedded cultural factor that has affected the manner in which it has dealt with the nuclear issue in the regional context. It will have to be factored into the regional security scheme that is devised. Particular energy must be directed to turning the strategic rivalry that has developed between Israel and Egypt into a more productive *strategic dialogue,* which will require an increased degree of recognition on Israel's part of Egypt's concerns. The bilateral relationship should be based on a wider array of strategic issues of importance to both countries, with less of an emphasis on the nuclear element within it. Both sides will also need to make a real effort to decouple "recognition" from "concession." For Israel, it should be accepted that recognition of Egypt's concerns does not necessarily entail conceding to its perceived desire to strip Israel of its nuclear potential. For Egypt, recognizing that Israel has legitimate concerns in the non-conventional realm does not mean that it must concede its demand to place the issue on the table.

Perhaps there is a need to make Track II efforts more focused and openly coordinated with Track I in the interim period. The price paid in innovation and academic creativity must be balanced against possible official resistance to meetings that are viewed as impinging on vital national interests. The various initiatives that have been organized by IGCC have attempted to create focused and issue-oriented Track II efforts that include officials participating in their unofficial capacity, and academics that have established ties with the security establishment. The organizers have also made a determined effort to include participants from states that did not take part in ACRS – especially Syria and Iran (it should also be noted that Syria took part in the Barcelona process). Regarding Iran, the willing participation of Iranians in some of the more recent Track II meetings gives hope that there may be a basis for ultimately securing their participation in ACRS as well, once the talks reconvene.

There must also be a real effort to reassert the analytical logic of CSBMs as an important stage in the arms control process. This should probably entail a de-emphasizing of specific European measures with an eye to encouraging creative thinking on new types of measures. For Israel, this entails taking seriously the fact that CSBMs are in fact a stage in the process, recognizing that other stages will follow (and therefore can legitimately be placed on the agenda). For Egypt, this entails recognition of the fact that time must be allowed for the process to work,

and stages cannot be skipped over. The process will be long-term not only because Israel will not proceed in the direction of establishing a WMDFZ in the Middle East before comprehensive peace is achieved with all Arab states including Iran and Iraq, but because success ultimately demands that a regional security culture be created. Through the communication that takes place in regional talks, states must establish the normative basis for conducting a regional security dialogue which entails common norms, identities, and dialogue procedures.[87]

Notes

1. The four additional groups dealt with regional and economic development (REDWG), refugees, water resources, and the environment. For an overview of the multilateral track as a whole, see Joel Peters, *Building Bridges: The Arab-Israeli Multilateral Talks* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1994).
2. There is some dispute as to the genesis of this idea: the Egyptians have claimed that it was their idea, but there are reservations about this on the part of the Americans.
3. Remarks by Secretary of State James A. Baker, III before the Organizational Meeting for Multilateral Negotiations on the Middle East, House of Unions, 28 January 1992, US Department of State, Office of the Assistant Secretary/Spokesman (Moscow, Russia).
4. See Jentleson (1996). Further elaboration on the activities and achievements of ACRS will be provided in the section dealing with this.
5. Egyptians, Israelis, Jordanians, Qataris, Americans and Canadians (22 in all) who took part in ACRS or followed the process closely were interviewed by the author during the course of 1998-2000. A full list of the people interviewed, including the place and date of each interview, is in the author's possession. Remarks and comments will generally not be attributed to interviewees by name, as this was the basis upon which the interviews were carried out.
6. For a similar point made about the importance of decision makers' memos or memoirs despite possible lack of objectivity, see Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Kiron Skinner, "The Role of Structured Narratives in Security Studies: Reflections on Positive Political Theory and Archival Research" Draft paper, pp. 18-19: "Archival research is the best, albeit an imperfect, method for evaluating...beliefs and expectations. Of course, decision makers may write memos and memoirs with future historians in mind and so may distort the record, but still diaries kept and memoranda written during deliberations over a decision are the best evidence we are likely to have for the reasoning process that led to particular choices. Thus, archival analysis is the best means for assessing the explanation that underpins a theory's predictions."
7. Moreover, in February 2000 there were plans for reconvening the multilateral

working groups (although not ACRS in the first stage) – indicating that 5 years after being put into abeyance, these talks were still on the agenda of the peace process.

8. For a representative sample of articles written on ACRS, see: Feldman (1994b); Steinberg (1994); Jentleson (1996); Landau (1998); Jones (1997); and Jentleson and Kaye (1998). On arms control in the Middle East see Spiegel and Pervin (1995) and Feldman (1997). The following account draws on all of these sources.

9. The following description relies heavily on Landau (1998), pp. 44-45.

10. Jentleson (1996), p. 7; in this same publication, see p. 5 for a concise list of ACRS plenaries, intersessionals and other meetings and activities, arranged according to date, event, and location.

11. Jentleson (1996). The following description draws heavily on Jentleson, especially regarding the first two phases. Other sources relied on will be indicated separately.

12. Jentleson (1996), p. 7.

13. Feldman (1997), p. 10.

14. Jentleson (1996), Feldman (1997), and Jones (1997).

15. Jones (1997), p. 61.

16. For more on these activities, and in-depth analysis of other developments within ACRS on maritime issues, see Peter Jones, "Maritime Confidence-Building Measures in the Middle East," in Jill Junnola (ed.) *Maritime Confidence-Building in Regions of Tension* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 1996), pp. 66-68.

17. Jentleson (1996), p. 8.

18. For more on the various proposals and counter-proposals put forth in this regard, see Feldman (1997), p. 13. Also, for the exact wording of the draft and the three proposals put forth by the US, Egypt, and Israel, see appendix 13.

19. The network was actually set up, and was operational for some time. End-user stations were installed initially by Israel and Egypt, and some time later by Jordan. As of the time of writing, the network had quietly gone off the air. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE, previously CSCE) changed the architecture of their system and the ACRS system was not changed to keep up because there was not enough interest to justify doing so. However, officially, no decision was made to take it off the air. (Based on private communication with Peter Jones, September 2000).

20. Based primarily on Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information Division, Jerusalem, *Internet Homepage: The Multilateral Negotiations*, early 1995. For the current version of this page, see http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/

go.asp?MFAH00ii0.

21. Jones (1997), p.66.

22. The following account of the events of 1995 draws heavily on Landau (1998), pp. 47-50.

23. *Ha'aretz*, 23 February 1995.

24. *Ha'aretz*, 23 March 1995. On the nature of outside inspection (international or Egyptian), see article by Aluf Benn, *Ha'aretz*, 5 March 1995.

25. Interview with Amr Musa by Hillel Kuttler, *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 April 1995.

26. Voice of Israel in English (Jerusalem), 0500 gmt, 11 September 1995 (*FBIS-NES*-95-176, 12 September 1995).

27. *Ha'aretz*, 10 October 1995.

28. *Ha'aretz*, 1 December 1995.

29. Two of the most active high level officials in this regard were Foreign Minister Amr Musa and first Foreign Ministry under secretary and director of the President's Office for Political affairs, Dr. Usama al-Baz. For a review of statements up until 1994, see Levite and Landau (1994a); see also Feldman (1997).

30. Hanan Bar-On, head of the foreign ministry team in the Israeli delegation to ACRS, points to 1982 as the decisive turning point in Egypt's attitude toward the nuclear issue, following Israel's invasion of Lebanon. According to Bar-On, this had serious ramifications as far as the perceived ability to count on Israel to make rational decisions. (Interview with Bar-On, 13 August 2000).

31. Needless to say, Israel's long-standing policy of nuclear ambiguity obviously precludes any admission or denial of nuclear weapons capability, any comment regarding the number of weapons assumed to be in its possession, or any issuing of clear threats in this regard. (Although a case has been made that Israel issued implicit nuclear threats against Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War; see in this regard Shai Feldman, "Israeli Deterrence and the Gulf War" in Joseph Alpher (ed.) *War in the Gulf: Implications for Israel* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1992) esp. pp. 200-204).

32. To some extent this was the approach adopted by Jordan. Jordan was highly in favor of the idea of CSBMs (including advancing ideas of creating a Middle East organization comparable to the OSCE). Moreover, reports following the conclusion of the Tunis plenary of December 1994 (the last to date) indicated that Jordan had hoped to host the next plenary in Amman. However, Hussein also issued a statement in February 1995 whereby he expressed support for Egypt's efforts to get Israel to open its nuclear facilities to international inspection. See Aluf Benn, *Ha'aretz*, 20 February 1995. (Hebrew).

33. These explanations have been raised in a number of articles and chapters written on this issue. See Levite and Landau (1994a); Feldman (1997).
34. See especially Levite and Landau (1994a).
35. Iraq has also been a traditional contender for a leadership role in the Middle East, but in the period under review Iraq was not a contender in this regard due to what had transpired in the Second Gulf War.
36. The constructivist approach in general directs attention to the practices that create social reality. Accordingly, "how the material world shapes, changes, and affects human interaction, and is affected by it, depends on prior and changing epistemic and normative interpretations of the material world." In Emanuel Adler and Michael N. Barnett, "Governing Anarchy: A Research Agenda for the Study of Security Communities", *Ethics and International Affairs* (10, 1996), p. 72.
37. Jentleson and Kaye (1998), p. 206; emphases as appear in original).
38. Ibid., p. 227.
39. Ibid., pp. 225-27.
40. Ibid., pp. 232, 233.
41. Ibid., pp. 230-231.
42. One Egyptian participant explained that for Egypt nuclear weapons are "a real *scientific* strategic issue." The addition of the word "scientific" in this connection seems directed to convincing his interlocutor that it is objectively so.
43. The notion that decision makers' perceptions influence the manner in which national interests are conceived is a well-based one in international relations literature. What is suggested here, however, is more broadly cultural in the sense that it involves an element of *intersubjective knowledge* that impacts the way material capabilities are viewed. See Krause (1997), p. 4: "Material or 'objective' issues of disagreement and clashes of interests are often (if not usually) the greatest obstacles to security-building. But to stop at this point is to ignore both the role that intersubjective and perceptual elements can play in the unfolding (and often exacerbation) of these disagreements, and the fact that behind so-called 'objective' clashes of *interests* lie sets of *ideas*, which give practical content to states' (and regimes') definitions of their interests. There is no separate relationship between two distinct things – 'cultural ideas' versus 'material interests' – the point is rather that the way in which decision makers define their security interests is derived from their collective historical/social/cultural experiences and understandings." The intersubjective element of framing is discussed, for example, in a recent article that attempts to explain India's nuclear tests of May 1998 and the

signing of the CTBT in 1996. Mutimer (2000), p. 7 explains that "[f]rames allow us to identify objects as objects of a particular kind; they allow us to identify ourselves and others as particular sorts of actors in relationship to those objects, and they enable the definition of interests in the interactions of actors and objects." See also Jutta Weldes, "Constructing National Interests", *European Journal of International Relations* (2:3, 1996) pp. 275-318.

44. This is a theme that has been dealt with extensively in literature that focuses on inter-state relations in the Arab world, and is presented here in abbreviated form. For closer analysis see for example, Anwar G. Chejne, "Egyptian Attitudes Toward Pan-Arabism" *Middle East Journal*, 11:3, Summer 1957, pp. 253-268. For two more recent discussions, see Elie Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World: The Struggle Over the Baghdad Pact* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995) and Barnett (1998).

45. Landau (1999), p. 57.

46. See for example an article written on Egypt's role in mediating the Gaza-Jericho agreement: Samia Nakhoul, "Egypt Praised as Peacemaker Between Arabs, Israel" *Reuters News Service*, 1 September 1993. See also statement by Foreign Minister Amr Musa on Egypt's willingness to help advance negotiations on the Israeli-Syrian track: BBC Monitoring Service, Middle East, 28 September 1993. Beyond this, the frustration demonstrated by Egypt over some of its failures to mediate are testimony to the importance attributed to this role. Many commentators note, for example, Egypt's dismay at the fact that the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement was negotiated without their active mediation.

47. "Survey of Egypt (3) – Fight to Maintain Influence", Full Text *Financial Times*, 15 May 1995.

48. "'Egypt's Role Indispensable'", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 12-18 December 1996. See comments in article by Galal Nassar, "Out of Balance", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 19-25 January 1995. For two additional references to Egypt's central role in the peace process see: Arab Republic of Egypt Radio, Cairo, in Arabic, 1240 gmt, 11 March 1995 (BBC Monitoring Service, Middle East, 13 March 1995), and MENA News Agency, Cairo, in Arabic 2306 gmt, 11 December 1995 (BBC Monitoring Service, Middle East, 13 December 1995). See also much more recent statement made by Presidential Chief Adviser Usama El-Baz that it would be a mistake to expect Egypt's role to diminish *post*-peace. Baz is quoted as saying that Egypt's manoeuverability and potential will not decrease once a peace settlement is reached, but rather "magnify": "'Egypt's primary role is not as a mediator or facilitator in the peace process, but as a pioneer in the region, in the South, and in the non-aligned movement...

Without Egypt there would be a vacuum." In "Between Acts", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 3-9 February 2000.

49. The speaker is Shafiq Gabr, member of the US-Egyptian Presidents' Council: "MENA: Dead But Not Buried", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 20-26 November 1997. One Western diplomat was quoted in 1995 as saying: "The Egyptians want to play an important role on the issue of regional security. They are obsessed with the idea that nothing can happen without Egypt. They are working on an embryonic regional security framework." Samia Nakhoul, "Egypt Playing Poker in Nuclear Row With Israel" *Reuters News Service*, 20 February 1995.

50. See Levite and Landau (1994b). More recently, the strategic relations that have been cultivated between Israel and Turkey have also been regarded as a further manifestation of Israel's strategic edge. Beyond the perceived danger in terms of regional alliances, reference was made to the greater access Israel would have in terms of intelligence collecting from Turkey's airspace (see Cairo MENA in Arabic, 0830 gmt, 28 May 1996 (*FBIS-NES*-96-104, 29 May 1996) and MENA News Agency, Cairo, 0805 gmt, 2 July 1996 (ME/2654 MED/18, 3 July 1996)).

51. This paragraph is based on Ariel E. Levite and Emily B. Landau, "The Image of Power: Arab Perceptions of Israel's Qualitative Security Edge" Unpublished draft paper, January 1998.

52. Harkabi (1972), p. 143.

53. Sivan (1988). ch. 1.

54. See Levite and Landau (1994b), pp. 172-4, for discussion of additional aspects of Arab self-images of inferiority in the political, social, and economic realms and the frustration bred thereby, especially when contrasted to past glories.

55. One interesting example of this appeared in an opposition Egyptian newspaper *Al-Wafd* shortly after the second Gulf War. In this article the suggestion was that there is an American-European-Israeli plan to stop Arabs from acquiring high level scientific potential. Accordingly, even when the US sells advanced aircraft to Arab countries, it removes electronic components in order to assure that they are not as effective as the same aircraft sold to Israel. *Al-Wafd*, Egypt, 29 April 1991 (*Hatzav*, 20 May 1991/ 848/0478).

56. One participant noted that this tendency was so strong that, over the years, even when intelligence services provided evidence of processes of fragmentation in the Arab world, this evidence did not translate into a more complex view of reality. Rather, the image of "us" against "them" remained strong.

57. For an important review of this, see Feldman (1997), ch. 3.

58. Syria, which refused to take part in the multilaterals, claimed that confidence-building was totally irrelevant to the resolution of territorial disputes, thus the bilateral negotiations must be completed before regional issues could be discussed.

59. Regarding normalization, an interesting comment was made by the late Lutfi El-Kholi in 1998, at the time of the establishment of the peace movement in Egypt. El-Kholi, one of the organizers of the movement, was asked about the disagreements between the Israelis and the Egyptians in the framework of the Copenhagen talks. He answered that the Israelis were seeking normalization, while the Egyptians were advocating dialogue. While in general this is in line with the negative attitude toward premature normalization of ties, the distinction made between normalization and dialogue is interesting in itself. On one level, it embodies the idea that normalization is more of an end-state whereas dialogue is a less threatening open-ended process – thus, dialogue is the preferred option. But, in a deeper sense, perhaps, by decoupling dialogue from normalization, El-Kholi was thereby also *legitimizing* dialogue – a favorable development for long-term regional processes. See Yosef Elgazi, "The Movement for Saving Peace", *Ha'aretz*, 3 May 1998.

60. As noted, according to a report in *Ha'aretz*, 10 October 1995, this Egyptian delegate raised a number of objections to the establishment of a Regional Security Center in an attempt to preclude agreement on this issue. He stated that Egypt objected to the establishment of regional institutions before any progress was made on what Egypt views as important – discussion of the nuclear issue.

61. This image, which was repeatedly presented, especially in interviews with American participants as the logic behind the confidence-building approach, is interesting in that it implies a virtually *evolutionary process* whereby walking (arms control agreements) can only be accomplished by passing through a stage of crawling (CSBMs).

62. Mohammad El-Sayed Selim, "Confidence-Building Measures in Middle Eastern Conflicts: An Egyptian Perspective", *Perceptions*, June-August 2000. pp. 77-92. Note that CBMs and CSBMs are often used interchangeably.

63. Ibid., p. 82 (emphasis added).

64. Ibid., p. 90 (emphasis added).

65. It must, however, also be taken into account that in early 1995, as the NPT Review and Extension Conference approached, the US put pressure on Israel to make some kind of concession to Egypt in the nuclear realm, specifically regarding the NPT treaty. A series of contacts at the level of Foreign Ministers

resulted in different proposals that were offered by Israel to Egypt, with a view to addressing their concerns. A proposal was put forth by Israel in February 1995 to discuss a NWFZ two years after comprehensive peace was achieved in the region (including Iran and Iraq). At that time Israel would also consider signing the NPT. Egypt rejected the offer – they wanted Israel to commit itself to actual signing, not just considering. See *Ha'aretz*, 23 and 24 February 1995. For a more detailed description of the offers and counter-offers, see Landau (1998), pp. 49-50.

66. Most of the observations included in the following section are based on interviews with non-regional participants in ACRS; these are their assessments of what went on in the multilateral context.

67. One participant described the WMD issue as a kind of "apple pie" issue; the Arab states started the process from a position where they were together on this.

68. The treaty referred to WMD as opposed to nuclear weapons, and it included also conventional weapons in this category. It also stipulated that a WMDFZ in the Middle East would be achieved in the context of full peace. (see Jentleson (1996)). In a speech a year later, Abdullah Toukan, head of the Jordanian delegation to ACRS, provided a very broad definition of arms control as any measure that reduces the likelihood of war as an instrument of policy, or that limits the level of destruction or the duration of war should it break out. Abdullah Toukan, "From Bilateral Peace to Regional Security," lecture delivered to the annual conference of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Amman, Jordan, 10 September 1995.

69. Certain statements made by Egyptian officials gave the sense that Egypt was trying very hard to convince the world, Israel, and perhaps most importantly, other Arab states, that the position that it was taking was in fact the Arab position. In other words, that it was not that Egypt had to rally the support of the other Arab states, but rather that it was their own independent position. Interesting remarks in this regard were made by Egyptian Ambassador Ahmed Maher El Sayed in late April 1995 regarding Egypt's position on the NPT Review and Extension conference: " It is not only the position of Egypt, as I said; it is the position of the Arab League...This is a matter that concerns the national security of each and every Arab country and of each and every country in the area. And I do not think that they needed anybody to tell them *what is contrary to their national security and interests*." (emphasis added) Federal Information Systems Corporation; Federal News Service, April 25, 1995. It is interesting to note a much later statement by Presidential Chief Adviser Usama El-Baz when referring to

possible normalization with Israel once peace agreements have been achieved. Once again, the attempt is to convince that other Arab states will take a stand similar to Egypt's, locking into their same fears of regional hegemony: while he says that relations between Israel and Arab countries will grow closer, "'the normalization process will not necessarily happen immediately *because Arab countries realise the dangers of Israel assuming supremacy over them.*'" (emphasis added), "Between Acts", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 3-9 February 2000.

70. See Zeev Schiff, "Homa Gar'init Mi'vuzeret", *Ha'aretz*, 27 January 1995 (Hebrew). Egypt's efforts in this regard were also apparent surrounding signature on the CWC in early 1993. Here Egypt sought to link Arab states' signing of this international treaty to Israel's adherence to the NPT. Egypt was only partially successful in this regard – while Egypt, Jordan and Syria did not sign at the time, the Maghreb and Persian Gulf states did.

71. An interesting statement attributed to President Mubarak (after the talks had been put on hold) gives expression to the actual gap between Egypt and the other Arab states on questions of regional security: "Mubarak expressed his belief that it is possible to establish cooperation among the Arab countries similar to the cooperation and security agreement among the European countries. He said Egypt does not take unilateral positions, independently from the other Arab countries, toward major issues, such as nuclear weapons, settlements, and normalization with Israel. *But he stressed that Egypt cannot wait for a unanimous decision if it sees a weapon threatening it.*" Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic, 0500 gmt, 4 December 1996 *(FBIS-NES-96-234, 4 December 1996)* (Emphasis added).

72. For a succinct Israeli take on this, see Zeev Schiff as quoted in an article published in the *Jerusalem Post*, 24 February 1995: "Willingly or not, as a result of the peace process, Israel has been sucked into Arab politics. It signed a peace agreement with Jordan and is forging ties with Morocco, Oman, Tunisia, Qatar and other countries. Egypt is fearful that its hegemony is threatened, so it is deliberately overburdening the peace process with the nuclear issue."

73. This paragraph is based on Landau (1999), p. 77.

74. Cairo MENA in Arabic, 1950 gmt, 30 October 1994, and Cairo MENA in Arabic, 2030 gmt, 31 October 1994 (*FBIS-NES*-94-211-S, 1 November 1994).

75. Cairo MENA in Arabic, 2100 gmt, 15 October 1994 (*FBIS-NES*-94-200, 17 October 1994). See also Cairo MENA in Arabic, 1250 gmt, 22 October 1994 (*FBIS-NES*-94-205, 24 October 1994).

76. For more on this, see Landau (1999), pp. 77-83.

77. On 28 November 1995, in Barcelona, the European Union and 12 Mediterranean countries – Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and the Palestinian Authority – put their signatures to a declaration concerning the new European-Mediterranean (Euro-Med) Partnership. The Barcelona Declaration covered 3 major topics: a political and security partnership aimed at creating a common area of peace and stability; an economic and financial partnership designed to establish a common zone of prosperity, notably by gradually introducing free trade; and a social, cultural and human partnership designed to increase exchanges between the civil societies of the countries taking part.

78. See Barcelona Declaration Adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, 27 and 28 November 1995, and Draft "Statement on Arms Control and Regional Security," ACRS, Tunis, December 1994 (in Feldman (1997), App. 13).

79. See "Survey of Egypt (3) – Fight to Maintain Influence", Full Text *Financial Times*, 15 May 1995. The article states that Egypt's response to the EU's Euro-Med plan (which includes the elements mentioned) was welcoming.

80. In the nuclear realm, for example, Feldman (1997), p. 213, noted that in the 1980s, while Egypt continued to voice the demand that Israel sign the NPT in various public forums, "[it] rarely approached Israel directly regarding the nuclear issue."

81. In late December 1994-early January 1995 there was an exchange of heated rhetoric between then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and President Hosni Mubarak that included a statement by Rabin regarding the need to prepare for war in the medium to long term. In February 1995, Rabin was quoted as telling the Knesset that "a foul wind is prevailing in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry." See for example article by Samia Nakhoul, "Egypt Playing Poker in Nuclear Row With Israel" *Reuters News Service*, 20 February 1995. Again in late 1999 there was some escalation to threats regarding mutual preparations for war that did not reach the level of heads of state, and was relatively quickly over following Prime Minister Barak's intervention to calm the situation down.

82. One participant noted that among Egyptians outside the administration there was a sense that there was also understanding of the importance of CSBMs.

83. See John Fullerton, "Egypt's Mubarak Urges Nuclear, Chemical Arms Free Middle East," *Reuters News Service,* 8 April 1990. Mubarak's idea was further clarified in a letter sent by Egyptian foreign minister Esmat Abdel Meguid to UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar in mid-April, with three

recommendations for the control of WMD. See Carol Berger, "Egypt: Government Presses for High-Tech Weapons Ban," *Independent*, 19 April 1990.

84. For a very important study that examines this issue in depth, see Barnett (1998).

85. Since then, following a decision of the Arab League against normalization with Israel, the convening of the four groups has once again been postponed. See Aluf Benn, "Another Political Track Has Been Frozen: The Multilaterals Have Been Canceled," *Ha'aretz*, 16 April 2000 (Hebrew).

86. "Multilateral Negotiations Should Not Replace Bilateral Tracks," *The Egyptian State Information Service*, 2 February 2000.

87. It is interesting to note in this regard Joel Peters' description of the establishment of the REDWG (Regional and Economic Development Working Group) secretariat in Amman in 1996: "The creation of this secretariat represented an important, qualitative step in the institutionalization of the multilateral process, and in placing responsibility for driving the process of regional cooperation in the hands of the regional parties themselves. Although embryonic in its nature and functioning, the REDWG secretariat in Amman reflects the first tentative steps towards the fashioning of new common structures of cooperation, coordination, and decisionmaking in the Middle East. It is the first, and remains the only, functioning regional institution generated by the Middle East peace process in which Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian officials have been working together on a daily basis." Joel Peters, "Can the Multilateral Middle East Peace Talks be Revived?" *MERIA Journal* (3:4, December 1999).

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