

First Steps towards a Regional Security Architecture Unilateral and Multilateral Opportunities for Israel

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Since October 2013, Israel has actively engaged in multilateral consultations in Glion and Geneva, underlined by frequently sending a high-ranking envoy, with the perspective of attending the Helsinki Conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery vehicles (DVs) in the Middle East.¹ It also participated as an observer state in the 2015 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) for the first time in 20 years. The Israeli delegation also provided a comprehensive background paper reiterating Israel's willingness to participate in the Helsinki Conference, in principle, should its concerns regarding the formalities and the agenda be adequately addressed.² This demonstrates commitment and is no small achievement, especially given the initial rejection of such a gathering by Israeli officials.³

The 2015 NPT Review Conference could not agree on a final document, mainly because of unbridgeable positions with regard to the WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East. While this is certainly disappointing, it once again became very clear that the traditional juxtapositions between Israel and the Arab states still persist – despite the five rounds of multilateral consultations and the tireless efforts of Ambassador Jaakko Laajava of Finland, the Facilitator of the Helsinki Conference. Israel generally supports the concept of a regional approach to WMD disarmament. It has always framed it as a sequential step in the context of a comprehensive peace (“Peace First, Disarmament Second”) and has repeatedly stated that the Arab position of establishing such a zone prior to a peace settlement is utterly unacceptable.⁴ While the challenges to arms control and disarmament seem insurmountable in this context, this POLICY BRIEF will show that – once the dust of the NPT Review Conference has settled –

there are opportunities for regional states to prove their commitment to a WMD/DVs Free Zone and to revive the regional peace process.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA) reached between Iran and the E3+3 on July 14, 2015, provides an important window of opportunity in this respect. If properly implemented and verified, the agreement significantly mitigates the nuclear threat from Iran. While U.S. President Barack Obama as well as Western decision-makers and nonproliferation experts asserted that the accord will cut off every pathway for Iran to obtain nuclear weapons, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced the JCPA as a “historic mistake” that will exacerbate regional tensions.⁵ In the long-term, the agreement could, however, result in a more suitable environment aimed at the future establishment of a regional security architecture that is based on a multi-faceted understanding of ‘security’, including its military, political, economic, and ecological aspects.

The Interconnectedness of Peace and Disarmament: Outlining a Two-track Gradual Approach towards a Regional Security Architecture

Since it is generally agreed that the preconditions for implementing a comprehensive regional security architecture do not exist at present, initial steps regarding arms control and disarmament, as well as an improvement of the general political situation, can and should already be implemented. Thinking and theorizing on these avenues can begin, even (and perhaps *particularly*) during political stalemate and lack of progress on the official level. All regional states can work – both unilaterally and multilaterally – to advance the goal of establishing a WMD/DVs Free Zone, and

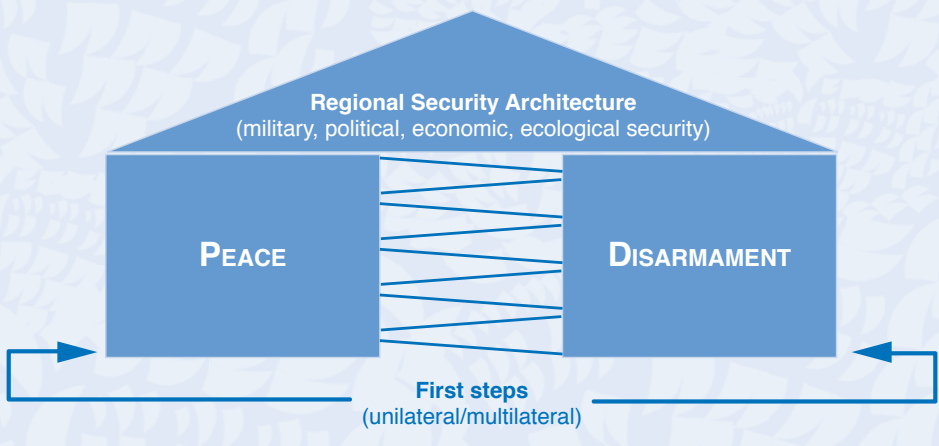
Abstract

The fact that the 2015 NPT Review Conference has failed to agree on a consensus document is certainly disappointing. The convening of five rounds of multilateral consultations between Israel and the Arab states since 2013 can surely be considered an achievement, but negotiations in New York were again characterized by traditional positions that prevented any substantial progress towards establishing a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East.

Against this backdrop, returning to a ‘business-as-usual policy’ with regard to nonproliferation and disarmament is therefore hardly possible. Once the dust has settled, regional actors would be well advised to make use of the multi-faceted opportunities, presented in this POLICY BRIEF, to prove their continuing commitment to disarmament and to revive the regional peace process as crucial steps towards the future establishment of a regional security architecture that is based on a comprehensive understanding of ‘security’. While such a two-track gradual approach requires many compromises by all relevant actors, Israeli diplomacy in the future may well make use of the rather pragmatic approach of its more moderate neighbors, who have shown less ideological and more compromise-oriented stances on various issues. Nevertheless, at the end of the day Israel has to be willing to commit, in principle, to far-reaching concessions in a security-compatible way. This would send an important message to the public of all Middle Eastern states that Israel is a true partner for peace, disarmament, democracy, and economic prosperity. ■

This POLICY BRIEF builds on two ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST workshops held in Nicosia on June 12-14, 2014, and in Berlin on March 11-12, 2015, with participants from Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United States, and Yemen.

Box No. 1: A Gradual, Mutually Reinforcing Approach towards a Regional Security Architecture



there are many avenues which can already be actively pursued, even in this current atmosphere of prolonged stalemate. Israel is often targeted for its insufficient participation in both the disarmament and political processes. Taking a more active role – either unilaterally or by engaging in a multilateral endeavor – could help it counter this criticism and prove its commitment to both arms control and peace in the region. Israel’s engagement as an active participant, or initiator of measures that can signal this commitment, will not only increase its influence over their formation and offer it real ownership, but could also meaningfully promote the regional processes of disarmament and peace.

The interconnectedness between the establishment of a regional security architecture and the achievement of regional peace should be clearly recognized. Peace (in the Israeli-Palestinian as well as its greater regional context) and disarmament can and should be pursued simultaneously, with the understanding that compromises and achievements reached on one track are likely to engender positive repercussions on the other. After years of unfruitful discussion between Israel and its neighbors on the question of sequencing, it is time to acknowledge that neither regional peace nor disarmament can proceed very far in isolation from one another: They must be pursued in parallel and will be mutually reinforcing. This finding is based on the established analytical premise that weapons and their regional context are not mutually exclusive but should be kept in their dialectical, yet asymmetrical relationship.⁶ This allows room for a ‘peaceful coexistence’ of various measures of different range.

Any future efforts should be, above all, multilateral in nature with compromise as the main element of joint decision-making.

Nevertheless, each country – Israel being no exception – could and should consider its options for unilateral action to advance the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone or more generally to advance any process of regional arms control and disarmament undertaken in earnest. While it is true that unilateral steps, if they remain unanswered, may prevent further serious bi- and multilateral engagement, it is even more true that compromise-oriented solutions will not be found without one side taking courageous first steps. In the following, several measures, in terms of hypothetical first steps, are presented which can serve to enhance confidence in the region and can be pursued by Israel unilaterally or in cooperation with its regional neighbors. The first cluster concentrates on improving the conditions for arms control and disarmament; the second focuses on furthering the efforts towards regional peace by discussing the Israeli Peace Initiative (IPI).

First Element towards Regional Security: Arms Control and Disarmament

Behind the rhetoric of the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone as a long-term goal, Israel thus far seems “firmly committed to maintaining its undeclared regional nuclear monopoly, viewing it as an indispensable and fundamental feature of its national security, and relying on its policy of nuclear opacity as the means of keeping discussion of these matters off limits.”⁷ If comprehensive progress is to go ahead, Israel’s government – like that of Iran, Egypt, and other regional states – will have to modify its stance on a number of salient issues and undertake steps it has been unwilling to execute so far. The following options for unilateral action could support the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone.

A Sign of Commitment from Israel: Ratification of the CTBT and CWC

Israel signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, and has been an active and contributing member of the regime since. Its ratification of the CTBT would give it a substantial legitimacy boost and show its commitment to the nonproliferation regime in particular and to a regional process in general. The same can be stated regarding Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) ratification: Israel signed the CWC as early as 1993, but has yet to ratify it. The ratification of this central disarmament treaty would go a long way in terms of proving the country’s seriousness regarding a regional arms control process. This is especially relevant against the backdrop of the Syrian accession to the CWC in 2013 and the destruction of its chemical weapons arsenal. In Israel, however, there are concerns that Syria may have retained caches of combat-ready chemical weapons.⁸

It is important to mention that Israel has substantial concerns regarding the verification regimes of both the CTBT and CWC and the potential for their abuse, as well as other technical issues. Notwithstanding these, it is clear that its adherence to these central global mechanisms would substantially support its position on arms control, and there have been some positive signs in these avenues.⁹ For the CWC, official policy is still set despite a positive statement from then-President Peres that Israel “will consider joining chemical weapons ban treaty.”¹⁰ However, the benefits of beginning a zonal process by addressing issues related to chemical capabilities (perhaps culminating in a Chemical Weapon Free Zone) is being seriously explored, and could offer many advantages.¹¹

Demonstrating Willingness in the Nuclear Field – Considering Unilateral Verification Measures as a Gesture of Commitment

The nuclear aspect is arguably the crux of the matter when considering a regional arms control and disarmament process in the Middle East, and Israel is at the center of attention in this regard. Israel is constantly urged, in this context, to place its nuclear facilities under inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to join the NPT.¹² However, considering Israel’s strategic and political situation in the region, and specifically its policy of ambiguity regarding its nuclear status, it is unrealistic to assume that Israel would allow any safeguards to be imposed regarding



its nuclear program *per se* at this time, let alone join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state (with all that this would require). However, if interested in demonstrating its willingness to partake in a process of nuclear arms control, Israel could voluntarily offer to place a *certain* aspect of its nuclear activity not subject to safeguards under IAEA inspection.

Thinking creatively, a scheme could be developed which would signal Israel's willingness to begin a process, while keeping in line with its opaque position regarding its military nuclear status, and not requiring it to refute any of its past declarations regarding nuclear activities. Such a gesture would represent a substantial measure of greater openness on Israel's part, and could therefore serve as a meaningful confidence-building measure, illustrating its commitment to greater transparency in the future.

Inspection in the framework of such a voluntary measure would be performed by the IAEA, thus establishing confidence in the region that Israel is indeed living up to its declaration.¹³ The scope of this voluntary measure could be expanded by Israel in the future, depending on Israel's evaluation of general progress made towards establishment of a regional arms control process, as well as other reciprocal measures offered by other regional actors for this purpose. This symbolic yet meaningful gesture would, in practical terms, begin a process of verified and habitualized inspections of nuclear activities, but would be limited and controlled by Israel according to its willingness to expand, and its analyses of utility. Such a gesture could begin to fulfill expectations and demands being voiced by regional actors for verification of Israel's nuclear activities, and should be interpreted as a substantial and forthright vote of confidence on the part of Israel regarding the WMD/DVs Free Zone process.

Changing the Discourse in Israel and Identifying 'Actors of Change'

A historical, unprecedented two-hour discussion on nuclear weapons and security took place in the Science and Technology Committee of the Israeli Knesset (parliament) under the auspices of Dov Khenin and Tamar Zandberg on June 16, 2013.¹⁴ In general, however, nuclear and WMD issues – especially the threat they pose, how this can be overcome, and what alternative diplomatic options exist – are topics that are not very prominent in the Israeli discourse. The same holds true for an informed discussion about whether Israel's



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strategic and military situation still requires upholding its alleged nuclear arsenal. As a result, little critical thinking is expressed on these issues and they are perceived as almost taboo in the general public. The development of grassroots and civil-society actors in Israel is key to expanding the discourse and empowering a well-informed and critical-thinking public, which in turn could support policy revisions. The establishment of local (as well as regional) non-governmental organizations, that specialize in arms control, nonproliferation, disarmament, and regional security, would be meaningful in empowering people to become part of the discourse and to take ownership of it in a knowledgeable and meaningful way.

Furthermore, greater engagement by the relevant scientific communities should be encouraged and supported for they hold key knowledge in any discussion on nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and industries. Media is, of course, the most prominent empowering agent, and the necessary tools for covering relevant stories should be made available to journalists (such as contact to academically/politically relevant experts for their contribution and as sources or basic training in the relevant terminology). Such developments are needed in all other regional states and will undoubtedly support both domestic and regional dialogue, currently completely nonexistent.

Capacity-building and Capacity-strengthening throughout the Region

Even if a political agreement to initiate negotiations on a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East materialized, many countries in the region lack both diplomatic and technical expertise and resources to support a regional arms control process or its implementation. Negotiation and implementation of regional verification instruments require each regional state to have the applicable national authorities and institutional mechanisms to handle the technical and legislative processes involved, and these must be staffed with relevant personnel equipped with the technical and political knowledge as well as sufficient resources. The establishment or strengthening of these capacities in each regional state can and should proceed as soon as possible so as to create a solid foundation to a regional arms control process.

These developments would also serve a meaningful confidence-building purpose, as the ability of a state to maintain its nonproliferation or disarmament commitments relies on these domestic capabilities. Against the background of extensive plans for national nuclear energy programs throughout the region, there is a dire need to ensure that the knowledge and materials acquired through these programs are used securely and safely, and solely for peaceful purposes. Nuclear industries – as well as chemical and biological industries – require strict measures of security, safety, and nonproliferation best practices and regulations. Capacity-building and capacity-strengthening in these contexts could be developed unilaterally while relying on the substantial legal, technical, and procedural foundations established by international organizations dedicated to these issues.

The ability of regional states to convince and reassure neighboring countries that nuclear, chemical, and biological activities are strictly peaceful and that they are safe and secure will be key to regional stability.¹⁵ The technical education, which forms the foundation for these national capabilities and institutions, should be coupled with nonproliferation and disarmament education: technical, scientific knowledge is the foundation, but it must be equipped with all the knowledge required to support and sustain critical and responsible technical development.¹⁶

Furthering Regional Cooperation – Some Possible Avenues for Multilateral Action

While the proposed Israeli-specific measures can be formulated as independent of any

official process, furthering multilateral initiatives will require a certain level of engagement between the conflicting parties and the political will for cooperation and compromise on all sides. In this multilateral context, Israel's extensive scientific and technical expertise and organization, which is wanted in most of the other regional states, would place it in a prominent position to take part in most of these processes that have a substantial (if not exclusive) technological-scientific basis. The plausibility of such regional and inclusive endeavors of course requires the agreement of other states in the region to collaborate with Israeli officials and representatives in cooperative and direct exchange. Some avenues which could be explored for such regional collaborations that would support future zonal efforts include:

- *Establishment of an expert group on Middle East-specific, technical features of arms control implementation and verification:* The utility (and sometimes indispensability) of the preliminary work of expert groups to the successful conclusion of arms control treaties has been strongly evidenced (the Group of Scientific Experts for the CTBT is the most prominent example, but other successful implementations can be explored, such as the Group of Governmental Experts for the Arms Trade Treaty). Preliminary work on scientific, scope, and parameter aspects of a possible treaty forms the technical basis on which a substantial negotiation process can be held. In the Middle East, a group of scientific experts designated by the regional actors could have a clear and specific (and feasible!) mandate focusing exclusively on technical features and thus avoid political difficulties. It can be agreed in advance that the expert group would aim at producing an agreed-upon document, yet this would not necessarily have to commit governments to the later official negotiation process.

The work of the expert group could also include aspects such as the identification of concrete transfer potentials from other regions – both technical and organizational – in terms of inter-continental learning. A most prominent source is the Latin American region, notably the relationship of Argentina and Brazil, which have experienced political rapprochement through the 'management of trust'. Both countries developed, via the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC),

a cooperation model with an emphasis on verification, which provides much more than a framework for neighbor-to-neighbor safeguards and mutual control at a regional level. The ABACC concept constitutes living proof of how a nuclear rivalry can successfully evolve into an atmosphere of cooperation by overcoming historical differences (see POLICY BRIEF No. 32 by Irma Argüello and Emiliano Buis). Lessons and ideas regarding technical measures for the development and enhancement of trust can be gained from the experiences of other regions as well. While the uniqueness of circumstances in each region is clear, and the Middle East case is, arguably, substantially more complex than those in most regions that have succeeded in regional disarmament processes, there is undoubtedly still much that can be learned and adapted for the benefit of the WMD/DVs Free Zone and for the security and co-existence of states in the region.¹⁷

Beyond the direct contribution of findings by such a group, its mere existence and joint exploration of technical aspects would have a positive effect on dynamics in the region. The work of such a group should include joint workshops and practical exercises on various technical matters, which could be considered for the zone, such as introduction to specific verification and control equipment or generic arms control verification exercises for the various WMD which would be prohibited under the prospective free zone. The group could also hold regional seminars and prepare joint analytical papers aimed at fostering and informing regional expertise and facilitating agreement on technical dimensions of the future zone.

- *A Middle East Regional Arrangement on Securing Radiological Agents:* Approaching the tremendous undertaking of a WMD/DVs Free Zone via a 'low hanging fruit', an issue that could be tackled at the early stages and on which agreement could be reached and therefore progress made, is considered a good way to 'get the ball rolling'. Considering the fact that radiological weapons do not exist in the Middle East, nor has any regional state shown any interest in their development (thankfully), they could represent the *lowest* hanging fruit. Radiological agents – the sources for a 'dirty bomb', the likeliest WMD choice for terrorists – are prevalent throughout the region, as they are readily found



in medicine, commerce, industry, and research facilities where they are often insufficiently safe and secure. A regional arrangement for securing radiological agents would enhance the security of all regional states and could therefore serve as a CBM and begin a process dealing with technical, legal, and political aspects related to WMD in the region.¹⁸

Designing and implementing a radiological materials-secured zone for the protection of radiological materials and the prevention of radiological terrorism on the regional level could serve as a powerful confidence-building measure. The need for protection against radiological terrorism is shared by all regional actors while none have strategic interest in developing such weapons. Therefore, the issue of radiological protection can offer a cooperative project which would not only enhance security through the prevention of radiological threats, but could also establish further channels of collaboration in the region and thus increase trust among the parties. Specific issues to be considered in the context of such a zone could include, inter alia, establishing standards for securing radioactive resources and for upgrading physical protection, developing measures to detect and secure radioactive materials, that are outside of regulatory control, to counter smuggling, formulating programs for capacity-building through public education and awareness raising, as well as formulating response strategies and designing mechanisms for regional information exchange.

- *Reviving the idea of a Regional Security Center:* During the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) talks in the 1990s (one of the multilateral working groups in the context of the Madrid Middle East Peace Process), the establishment of such a center was envisaged with the intention of enhancing security and stability in the region through a range of activities (such as seminars and trainings on arms control). Such a regional institute would promote cooperation and could later serve in a supporting role in the WMD/DVs Free Zone process. An initial set-up could present only limited general objectives for such a center, such as education, exercises, and analysis. Possible avenues for future expansion could include regional emergency preparedness and response to natural or man-made disasters, formal risk reduction and communication

capacities, as well as procedures for information exchange and consultation. The implementation of already agreed-upon confidence-building measures would be meaningful in itself.

Second Element towards Regional Security: Peace

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and its greater Arab-Israeli context, will certainly be crucial in any effort aimed at establishing a regional security architecture in the Middle East. Although there is a good reason and well-developed arguments for conceptually and practically differentiating between regional peace and arms control/disarmament,¹⁹ neither will progress in a vacuum. Thus, regional states need to jointly develop a shared vision of the future regional landscape and strengthen their efforts towards peace in the Middle East. Though various proposals, roadmaps, and initiatives have been developed over the decades, only one region-wide, solid proposal stands out: the Arab Peace Initiative (API).

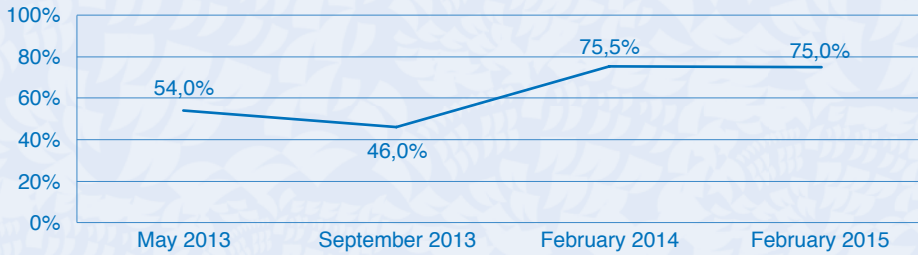
The Arab Peace Initiative and the Israeli Peace Initiative

In a historic step in 2002, and again in 2007, Arab states offered Israel the establishment of “normal relations” in exchange for a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a complete withdrawal from the occupied territories (including East Jerusalem) and a “just settlement” of the Palestinian refugee crisis. In addition to the members of the Arab League, all 57 states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, including Iran, have expressed their support for the Arab Peace Initiative at almost all of their sessions.²⁰ Although a number of Israeli officials have responded with both support and criticism, the Israeli government has rejected the API, stating it was a “non-starter.”²¹ If Israel, however, decided to accept the Arab offer, begin discussing the proposal as a basis for negotiations with Arab states and present its ideas on the points of dispute, it would send a clear signal that the country takes its own policy of ‘Peace First!’ seriously by reaching out to its Arab neighbors.

Against the obvious unwillingness of the Israeli leadership, the country’s civil society developed a proposal for an official Israeli Peace Initiative, based on the Arab Peace Initiative, outlining Israel’s “vision of the regional final-status agreements to be negotiated and signed between the Arab states, the Palestinians and Israel.”²² The group, an Israeli NGO called “Yisrael Yozemet” (“Israel takes

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Box No. 2: Israeli Polls – Support for the Arab Peace Initiative



Source: IPI Group Survey, conducted by the “New Wave” Research and Polling Group. For the February 2015 survey and an interview with a co-founder of the Israeli Peace Initiative, see ‘Latest IPI Survey: 75% of Israelis Back Israeli Peace Initiative’, *Jewish Business News*, March 11, 2015. Online, available at <http://bit.ly/1QeTCx9> (August 19, 2015).

the initiative”), launched its proposal in three languages (Arab, English, and Hebrew) on April 6, 2011. It was founded by Yuval Rabin and Koby Huberman and signed by roughly 40 people, among them former Shin Bet chiefs Yaakov Peri and Ami Ayalon, former Mossad Chief Danny Yatom and former Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, General (res.) Amram Mitzna, former Minister Moshe Shahal, and Yuval Rabin, the son of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Since then, over 900 prominent Israelis have signed the document – 50 percent with a business background, 10 percent former security personnel, 10 percent former diplomats, and 20 percent from academia, media, and social services. The campaign is comprised of members from a diverse political background and is by no means following a ‘leftist’ agenda.²³ Instead, it argues that, when properly presented as a pragmatic ‘package deal’ for ending the conflict, a majority of Israeli citizens support the Arab Peace Initiative (see Box No. 2).

The Regional Approach: Facilitating a Final Settlement

The Israeli Peace Initiative calls for convening a regional dialogue mechanism, which will evolve to a full-scale regional-international conference, as a platform; it serves both as a regional umbrella in order for the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to succeed and as an opportunity to discuss, in parallel, regional issues – starting with regional security and eventually achieving the full scale of the Madrid ‘multilateral tracks’, subject to progress and reciprocity. This process should include clear timelines, guarantees, and diplomatic incentives for all parties.

The regional approach is informed by a similar threat assessment of both Israel and a group of ‘moderate’ Arab states (Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait), which are considered ‘stabilizers’ willing to end

the Israeli-Arab conflict. A second group of actors is considered ‘destabilizers’ – with two sub-groups: the Shi’ite bloc (Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and the Yemenite Houthies) and the Sunni bloc (the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda, Jabhat Annusra, and Jihadia Salafia) – with whom a regional security pact must be negotiated prior to peace talks. Through a regional peace agreement with the moderate group, its members could form a regional security mechanism that would confront the two destabilizing blocs. In addition, the reality of millions of unemployed in the Middle East needs to be addressed by a regional economic plan. In view of the supporters of the IPI, this new comprehensive agenda requires a new Israeli regional strategy, which aims at ending the conflict rather than ‘managing it’, and looks at the long-term horizon of Israel becoming a legitimate player in the context of the newly emerging Middle East in the first half of the 21st century.

A further reason to approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a regional manner results from the fact that all core issues require Arab states’ involvement: statehood and security, Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the status of Jerusalem, the issue of refugees, and border security. Currently, the bilateral talks are stuck, and – when ignited – at risk. Therefore, Israeli and Palestinian leaders need support for a Permanent Status Agreement. The key benefits for Israel engaging in such a regional approach are obvious: an end of the Israeli-Arab conflict is only possible by engaging with its Arab neighbors and agreeing to an ‘end of claims’ would automatically translate into normal relations with the member states of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Hence, only the Arabs and Israel together can confront spoilers on the way to peace.

In parallel, the IPI Group argues that the Israeli government does not just unilaterally accept the Arab Peace Initiative as a framework for

negotiations, but also takes concrete unilateral steps to advance the negotiations and change facts on the ground without compromising on the need to negotiate a Permanent Status Agreement. These steps include the suspension of settlement activities outside settlement blocs or east of the security fence; encouraging Israeli settlers to leave settlements and return to Israel; acceleration of economic development in the West Bank and the opening of the Rawabi project; and a strengthening of President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority.

Obviously, due to the current circumstances in Syria and Lebanon, the full operationalization and implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative cannot cover Syria and Lebanon, at least initially (note that Syria was expelled from the Arab League and that Hezbollah as well as Hamas have never recognized the API). Thus, the IPI Group offered a new negotiations process and architecture based on the following elements:

1. Israel will propose a response to the Saudi Arabian initiative and will adopt it as part of the framework for negotiations, while asking to negotiate, with the Arab world, those elements of the API it considers problematic.
2. Israel will call for a mechanism for regional talks on three simultaneous tracks:
 - a) *The Regional Track* – between Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the leading Arab countries on the Arab League’s Follow-up Committee (led by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates) for implementing the Arab Peace Initiative and supporting the negotiations for the permanent arrangements.
 - b) *The Bilateral Track* – negotiations with the Palestinian government concerning the permanent status agreement and solving the core issues with the goal of reaching the end of the conflict and resolving all other claims.
 - c) *The Implementation Track* – for the rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip, for realizing the understandings that were reached and will be reached for creating real changes on the ground while strengthening the moderate Palestinian leadership, continuing to build Palestinian institutions, and rebuilding the Palestinian economy.
3. The negotiations will take place simultaneously on all three tracks with agreed-



upon timetables and progress will be made under the reciprocal principle of Israeli concessions to the Palestinians in exchange for concessions and concrete steps towards normal relations offered by the Arab world to Israel.

4. Israel will initiate regional security and economic arrangements that will be practical and reflect the reality on the ground; it will also positively influence public opinion in all the countries in the region.

The above formula or architecture has been developed in the past two years among the IPI Group, members of the Palestinian Authority, and interlocutors from a variety of regional countries.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Unilateral Action Could Enable Multilateral Compromise

In this POLICY BRIEF, we have presented and discussed several measures which can serve to build trust in the region in the context of the establishment of a regional security architecture – including those that can be pursued by Israel unilaterally or in cooperation with its regional neighbors. The first cluster concentrated on improving the conditions for serious discussion and implementation of arms control measures; the second one focused on furthering the search for a political solution towards regional peace.

Endnotes

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2. Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2015) Towards a regional dialogue in the Middle East: an Israeli perspective, NPT/CONF.2015/36.
3. In 2010, a possible participation in the expected conference was promptly excluded: “Given the distorted nature of this resolution [the 2010 NPT Final Document], Israel will not be able to take part in its implementation.” See ‘Israel rejects call to join anti-nuclear treaty’, Reuters, May 29, 2010. Online, available at <http://reut.rs/1spzAVS> (March 23, 2015).
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11. Shimon Stein and Emily Landau (2013) ‘A Chemical-Free Middle East?’, The National Interest, October 16. Online, available at <http://bit.ly/1HUNrLW> (December 10, 2014).
12. United Nations General Assembly (2014) ‘The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East’, A/RES/69/78.
13. The details of the agreed-upon inspection process itself could, for instance, be presented to other regional actors, for their satisfaction, in a mock inspection exercise (to be performed jointly with the IAEA, with either the participation or observance of other regional actors, under the auspices of an extra-regional actor at a virtual or makeshift location).
14. For the edited transcript, see Israel-Palestine Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture (2013) ‘A Historic, Unprecedented Discussion in the Knesset on the Nuclear Question – Edited transcript of a Knesset Science and Technology Committee session on nuclear weapons and security, with a discussion on a presentation by Dr. Ira Helfand, under the auspices of MK Dov Khenin and MK Tamar Zandberg’, 19(1&2): 117-133.
15. See Chen Kane and Ariane Tabatabai (forthcoming) (eds) Ensuring the Safety, Security and Peaceful Nature of Nuclear Energy in the Middle East.
16. On nonproliferation higher education, see Nilsu Goren, Aviv Melamud, Ibrahim Said Ibrahim, and Ariane Tabatabai (2013) ‘Middle East needs WMD experts to push the cause of arms control’, Global Post, November 29. Online, available at <http://bit.ly/1kvtSMc> (December 10, 2014).
17. Other examples could include the WMD disarmament process of South Africa, which is the focus of POLICY BRIEF Nos. 28/29 by R.F. ‘Pik’ Botha, Dave Steward, and Waldo Stumpf (with a Special Statement by FW de Klerk).
18. A more comprehensive description of such a possible regional regime can be found in Nilsu Gören and Aviv Melamud (2014) ‘A Middle East Regional Arrangement on Securing Radiological Agents as a CSBM: A Common Interest in Preventing Radiological Terrorism’, in Harald Müller and Daniel Müller (eds) WMD Arms Control in the Middle East: Prospects, Obstacles and Options, Aldershot: Ashgate, 129-138.
19. Peter Jones (1998/2011) Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East: Issues and Options – Report of the SIPRI Middle East Expert Group with a New Afterword by Peter Jones, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.
20. For the most recent affirmation, see ‘Kuwait Declaration, Forty-Second Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation’, May 27-28, 2015. Online, available at <http://bit.ly/1EBF7CP> (August 28, 2015).
21. BBC News (2002) ‘Arabs offer Israelis peace plan’, 28 March. Online, available at <http://bbc.in/1D20IUu> (December 22, 2014).
22. ‘The Israeli Peace Initiative (IPI) – in response to the Arab Peace Initiative (API)’, April 6, 2011. Online, available at <http://bit.ly/1Indp7Z> (April 24, 2015).
23. The initiative includes, among others, representatives of Yesh Atid, Ha’nua, Labor, Kadima, Meretz, Shas, the Green Movement, and a few Likud members.

Further Reading

- *Shai Feldman and Abdullah Toukan (1997) Bridging the Gap: A Future Security Architecture for the Middle East, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.*
- *Peter Jones (1998/2011) Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East: Issues and Options – Report of the SIPRI Middle East Expert Group with a New Afterword by Peter Jones, Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.*
- *Zeev Maoz (2009) 'The Mixed Blessing of Israel's Nuclear Policy', in ibid (ed.) Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security & Foreign Policy, Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 301-357.*
- *Chen Kane (2015) Planning Ahead: A Blueprint to Negotiate and Implement a Weapon-of-Mass-Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East, CNS Occasional Paper No. 22, Monterey, CA: James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies.*

In terms of its involvement in a regional arms control process, Israel can take unilateral steps to demonstrate its commitment to such an effort despite its reservations and concerns. In such a format, Israel can control its level of involvement and commitment while still signaling willingness to engage on these matters. Multilaterally, Israel's involvement within a regional endeavor could be meaningful in establishing contacts and building trust, but would require, first and foremost, the political agreement to officially collaborate.

In terms of strengthening efforts towards peace in the Middle East, Israel should take up the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis for negotiations combined with a new Israeli regional strategy which aims at ending the conflict with the Palestinians and the Arab world rather than 'managing' it. A mechanism needs to be established for regional talks, including reciprocal concessions, on three simultaneous tracks (regional, bilateral, and implementation).

In order to synchronize the paramount negotiation tracks, a solution must be found for a comprehensive process aimed at reaching regional peace and establishing a WMD/DVs

Free Zone – according to our framework, the two elements of a sustainable regional security architecture based on a broad understanding of security beyond the narrow focus of military security. There is no blueprint for diplomats and decision-makers but the interconnectedness of both issue areas should be taken as the point of departure without making overall developments strictly conditional on progress on each track.

These efforts will certainly not bear fruit overnight and will require many compromises by all relevant actors – especially against the backdrop of current regional realities and the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference. In the future, Israeli diplomacy may well make use of the rather pragmatic approach of its more moderate neighbors who have shown less ideological and more compromise-oriented stances on various issues. Nevertheless, Israel has to be willing to commit to far-reaching concessions and to take the lead in both the arms control/disarmament arena and with regard to regional peace. This would send an important message to the public of all Middle Eastern states that Israel is a true partner for peace, disarmament, democracy, and economic prosperity. ■

About the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST (APOME)

The ORCHESTRA is the follow-up project of the "Multilateral Study Group on the Establishment of a Missile Free Zone in the Middle East". The ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST is a classical Track II initiative: it consists of some 150 experts – mainly from the Middle East/Gulf, one of the most conflict-ridden areas of the world. The ORCHESTRA is meeting regularly in working groups (CHAMBER ORCHESTRA UNITS) on specific topics in the context of a workshop cycle from 2011-2015. The main goal of this initiative is to shape the prospective Middle East Conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles agreed upon by the international community in May 2010. For this reason, these experts develop ideas, concepts, and background information in a series of POLICY BRIEFS which are the results of intense discussions within the CHAMBER ORCHESTRA UNITS. In this framework, the broader normative Cooperative Security Concept will be further developed, embedded, and institutionalized in the region. At the same time, the ORCHESTRA meetings serve as venues for confidence building among the experts. The networking activities of PRIF's Project Group are documented by the ATLAS on Track II research activities in or about the Middle East/Gulf region.

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