

How to Make the Middle East Conference Happen, Successful, and Sustainable A Conceptual Framework for a Track II Expert Group's Contribution

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In the context of the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) the international community has endorsed the objective of holding a Conference in 2012 (see Box No. 1). Its subject is the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East,¹ covering also biological and chemical weapons as well as their delivery vehicles (DVs). This gathering is to be attended by all states of the region. The envisaged zone is to be designed on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at. It would be convened by the UN Secretary-General and by the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution – the U.S., Russia, and the UK – in consultation with the Middle Eastern countries.

The Facilitator and the host government were selected in October 2011: Finnish Under-Secretary Jaakko Laajava and the government in Helsinki, respectively (see POLICY BRIEF No. 6 by Bernd W. Kubbig, Roberta Mulas, and Christian Weidlich). The Facilitator has the mandate to prepare the convening of the 2012 event and to assist in implementing the follow-up steps agreed upon by the participating regional states at the Conference. The time of preparation for the envisaged gathering is characterized by politically and socially diverse turmoil throughout the entire Middle East (metaphorically

called 'Arab Spring', 'Autumn' or even 'Winter') with uncertain foreign policy consequences for the region and beyond.

The Middle East Conference as an Opportunity

For a Track II project such as ours, the Middle East Conference is an important opportunity to provide timely ideas, concepts, and background information. This explains why the emphasis of the future activities within the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST (APOME) will be on that planned Conference.² Of course we are aware of the fact that Track II and Track I initiatives are in many respects fundamentally different, but they can at times be similar and even overlap. Our efforts consist of organizing a cycle of workshops to be held over the next years at which the "academic players" discuss relevant MEC-related topics. These discussions are the basis for the series of POLICY BRIEFS, which will be made available for the actors in the region, the United Nations, the embassies, and especially for Ambassador Laajava and his staff. Against that backdrop, this POLICY BRIEF outlines the contribution of the PEACE ORCHESTRA to making the MEC happen, successful, and sustainable. We present a conceptual framework that will guide our efforts and which at the same time is an offer to the relevant parties.

Abstract

The Middle East Conference (MEC) envisaged by the international community for 2012 is to discuss the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and of their delivery vehicles (WMD/DVs). For a classical Track II project like the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST, this is a historic opportunity to provide timely ideas, concepts, and background information for the relevant addressees in the region, the UN and the embassies, and especially for the Facilitator, Finnish Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and his staff.

The security dilemma as a starting point and the presented Cooperative Security Concept as a way of lowering this dilemma with an important role of a forum such as the MEC – these are the vital components of the entire cycle of ORCHESTRA workshops over the next years and the basis for discussion and publication of our series of POLICY BRIEFS. Three guiding questions will be addressed: first, how can the political will be created to make the MEC happen, successful, and sustainable? Second, under what circumstances can the crucial decision-makers be induced to adopt a cooperative security approach? Third, how to outline an incremental reduction path culminating in a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East? ■

Box No. 1: The Mandate for the 2012 Middle East Conference

7. *The Conference emphasizes the importance of a process leading to full implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. To that end, the Conference endorses the following practical steps:*
- (a) *The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, will convene a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region, and with the full support and engagement of the nuclear-weapon States. The 2012 Conference shall take as its terms of reference the 1995 Resolution;*
 - (b) *Appointment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, of a facilitator, with a mandate to support implementation of the 1995 Resolution by conducting consultations with the States of the region in that regard and undertaking preparations for the convening of the 2012 Conference. The facilitator will also assist in implementation of follow-on steps agreed by the participating regional States at the 2012 Conference. The facilitator will report to the 2015 Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee meetings;*
 - (c) *Designation by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, of a host Government for the 2012 Conference;*
 - (d) *Additional steps aimed at supporting the implementation of the 1995 Resolution, including that IAEA, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and other relevant international organizations be requested to prepare background documentation for the 2012 Conference regarding modalities for a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, taking into account work previously undertaken and experience gained;*
 - (e) *Consideration of all offers aimed at supporting the implementation of the 1995 Resolution, including the offer of the European Union to host a follow-on seminar to that organized in June 2008.*
8. *The Conference emphasizes the requirement of maintaining parallel progress, in substance and timing, in the process leading to achieving total and complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the region, nuclear, chemical and biological.*

Source: Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2010) Final Document, Vol. 1. Online, available at: www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20%28VOL.1%29 (November 13, 2011).

the regional actors to embark on a way towards the ultimate goal of WMD/DVs Free Zone; and outlining what a gradual path towards this goal might look like. The procedure described here is informed by our Routledge study³ on designing incremental steps towards a Missile Free Zone in the region as the major outcome of our previous Track II activities (see Box No. 4). This is followed by concretizing the mandate for the Middle East Conference and its major task of discussing and maybe at some point even negotiating a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and of their delivery vehicles. Here, two dimensions are vital conditions for success: dealing adequately with the broad range of weapons as well as embedding the Conference and its task especially into the regional context.

The Security Dilemma as the Starting Point and Challenge...

The envisaged MEC takes place against the backdrop of the region's "specifically pronounced"⁴ security dilemma. Amidst complex conflict formations and low degrees of cooperation and institutionalization, the dilemma is primarily characterized by the following: strong mutual threat perceptions, intense arms build-ups, unilateral self-help, and permanent zero-sum thinking. Two leading analysts from the region have acknowledged that this dilemma is "self-defeating".⁵ From the present perspective it is unclear how recent political events in the region will impact on this situation.

...And the Cooperative Security Concept as a Promising Answer

The challenge – and the promise – posed by the security dilemma is to design and pursue a strategy that increases each state's security by reducing and finally overcoming this predicament. We suggest that the Cooperative Security Concept, with its normative, analytical, procedural, and organizational elements, is a viable framework for addressing this problématique (see Box No. 2). In a nutshell, the CSC aims at changing the dominant mind-set towards a more cooperative one, aimed at engaging all vital actors and designing an adequate arms reduction path by using the opportunity presented by a forum such as the planned Middle East Conference.

This POLICY BRIEF begins by describing the situation in the Middle East in terms of a security dilemma and then presents the Cooperative Security Concept (CSC) including its core assumptions as a strategy for reducing this precarious situation and for finally overcoming it (see Box No. 2). In our view, three main challenges need to be addressed by this Track II initiative and even more so for the envisaged MEC with its demanding agenda for establishing a WMD/DVs Free Zone: creating the political will to convene the Conference as a possible starting point for an entire process; identifying the conditions for



Properly designed and carefully implemented, the envisaged Middle East Conference could become *the* tool for such a strategy. This approach is not entirely new to the region. A multilateral initiative in the early 1990s in the form of the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) Working Group took place as part of the Madrid process, which included four additional interrelated working groups on other issues. In addition, since 1974 there has been an ongoing discussion of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone and since 1990 a discussion of a WMD Free Zone. The ACRS talks were in turn based on the attempt to apply the principles and experience gained from the Conference on Security and Co-operation (CSCE) in Europe to the Middle East. Both the ACRS talks and the CSCE process remain vital points of reference for any effort to set up a Conference such as the MEC, which may evolve into a process. This forum and the arms reduction process towards a WMD/DVs Free Zone are not identical, but they are closely interrelated since an appropriate organizational setting is a necessary (albeit not sufficient) precondition for embarking on the path of reduction towards the ultimate declared goal.

Conceptualizing an Arms Control/Reduction Strategy

Any arms control/reduction⁶ process needs to be properly laid out – the Middle East Conference and its agenda would be no exception. As a result, it is crucial to get clear about two aspects: first, to understand and assess the relationship between arms dynamics and the regional political realities of conflict formations/alliances in the Middle East. Second, to specify why, under the Conference mandate, the weapons at issue constitute a threat that should be reduced and finally eliminated in the form of a WMD/DVs Free Zone.

Conflict Formations Are Paramount...

The central analytical assumption guiding this project is based on an essential insight and a crucial outcome of arms dynamics research. The *insight* – confirmed by recent studies – is that arms build-ups are a multi-causal (redundant or overdetermined) phenomenon. The *crucial result* is that conflict formations



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are more important for arms dynamics than the variety of related domestic factors such as industrial-military-bureaucratic interests. The overlapping areas of contention in the Middle East vary from territorial, rule- and security-related topics to hegemonic, ideological, and economic ones as well as ecological and resources-related issues. But not all conflicts are equal. Two disputes are predominant: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iran-related dispute. While the first one has been stalled, the long-standing hegemonic rivalry between Tehran and Riyadh has recently aggravated, with the atomic dispute looming large because of Iran's nuclear aspirations.

Both the insight and the crucial result inform how arms control/disarmament strategies are conceived as well as how their chances and limitations for reducing the security dilemma are assessed. Weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles do not exist in a vacuum. Despite their inherently destabilizing features, they are not a threat in themselves. Yet they become so once countries factor them into their overall

Box No. 2: The CSC

- defines the *problématique* as the effort to increase the security of each single state in the Middle East by reducing the security dilemma through a wide range of confidence- and security-building measures, arms control, reduction and disarmament initiatives in a cooperative way – they are part of the broader culture of restraint.
- includes basic principles such as: Regional security should be based on a mutual interest in avoiding a (nuclear) war, and on cooperation instead of a zero-sum game. Whenever possible, zero-sum approaches and a unilateral self-help attitude should be transformed into win-win thinking. Consensus and compromise are essential. Regional security can be best achieved in conjunction with, rather than against an adversary or enemy. It cannot be attained and sustained through military superiority or (nuclear) war-fighting doctrines. On the contrary: Fewer weapons can mean more security. Multilateral arrangements may dominate bilateral ones.
- is as inclusive as possible in scope. Related to the Middle East, Iran, Syria, and Lebanon as well as politically crucial organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah would be engaged according to the CSC.
- favors with respect to the time-frame an emphasis on short-term policy solutions; this does not exclude mid- and long-term perspectives.
- acknowledges an extended notion of security locating military and arms control-related issues in a broader context which includes environmental, resource and economic security.
- favors, regarding the procedural dimension, pragmatism and flexibility. In addition, incremental steps such as CSBMs and arms control/reduction initiatives are preferred over a sudden leap of trust which may trigger a new policy. The more cautious approach taken here to the Middle East *problématique* is based on the relatively poor record of success in this policy field.
- opts in organizational terms for sustainable processes and settings which gradually install cooperation. This may include forums (formal conferences) – such as the MEC – as part of a regional peace strategy to deal productively with the security dilemma.

Source: Slightly adapted from Bernd W. Kubbig (2012) 'Introduction: setting the stage: decreasing the security dilemma by gradual missile reductions', in: Ibid and Sven-Eric Fikenscher (eds) *Arms Control and Missile Proliferation in the Middle East*, London: Routledge, 1-23, here p. 14-15.

foreign policies, reflecting structures of conflict, alliances, as well as domestic power constellations and motivations for military activities associated with them. Addressing them constitutes the core condition of success for any arms control/reduction process.

Conflict formations and arms dynamics cannot be played off against each other, since specific weapons matter in some hostile political contexts more than others: for instance Israel is afraid of Iranian delivery vehicles that can reach its territory, especially if they were nuclear tipped. But it does not fear Tehran's weapons and missiles across the board. Conversely at this time of writing the Syrian regime, so far a pragmatic ally of Iran, would not regard Tehran's missiles

as a threat but as an asset, especially those which could reach Syria's adversary Israel.⁷ To conclude, there are solid reasons to affirm the relevant – albeit limited – role played by arms control/reductions in lowering existing tensions, increasing arms race stability and crisis stability, and as a result decreasing the likelihood of war.

Our core assumption that weapons and their regional context are not mutually exclusive but should be kept in their dialectical, yet asymmetrical relationship is by no means simply an academic exercise. On the contrary, it is of utmost practical relevance: this insight could be instrumental in overcoming the traditionally unfruitful juxtaposition of the Egyptian and Israeli views ("Nuclear Disarmament First!" vs. "Regional Peace First!"), since it provides leeway for compromise positions. At the negotiation table confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) need not strictly precede steps that tackle the armaments themselves. Thus, there is room in principle for a 'peaceful coexistence' of various measures of different range.

...But Weapons Matter, Too

As to the specifics of armaments, chemical weapons as well as various categories of delivery vehicles have been used in wars in the Middle East with lethal consequences. Some weapons/DVs are more destabilizing and lethal than others. Unlike manned aircraft, ballistic and cruise missiles, once launched, cannot be ordered back. In a crisis situation the fact that they are non-recallable can contribute enormously to instability by fuelling tensions and making accidental wars much more likely. All categories of delivery vehicles equipped with nuclear, biological, and chemical warheads would be truly devastating – and of course the use of nuclear weapons would be especially catastrophic.

The challenge therefore remains twofold: first, to find ways which allow Israel, the only de facto nuclear power in the region, to reduce and finally eliminate its weapon programs in this area; second, to slow down or even stop especially nuclear proliferation. Here Iran comes to mind. Even if one does not share the view that a nuclear Tehran would trigger a chain reaction among the Arab states



since such a position ignores specific regional and country-related dynamics:⁸ one would have to envisage measures to reduce possible nuclear aspirations of Saudi Arabia, Iran's major Arab rivalry.

In sum, the emphasis of the Cooperative Security Concept on analyzing weapons-related questions and finding joint arms control solutions does not mean dealing with weapons as an isolated phenomenon, but requires embedding them into the overall international and especially regional context. This enables us together with our insights of the Routledge study on designing gradual ways towards a Missile Free Zone to concretize our MEC-related efforts by asking three questions:

1. How can the political will be created to initiate ("to make it happen") and continue ("to make it sustainable") the MEC on the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone – and make, at some point of time, progress in discussing and preparing such a zone ("to make it successful")?
2. Under what circumstances – including the recent events in the region – can crucial decision-makers be induced to adopt a cooperative security approach towards an incremental reduction of arsenals leading to a WMD/DVs Free Zone?
3. Third, how to outline such a gradual reduction path culminating in a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East?

The task that follows from these guiding questions is twofold: on the one hand to concretize the arms control focus of the Middle East Conference and its potential agenda; and on the other hand to specify how recent developments within the overall security environment could improve or impede a successful and sustainable MEC with its demanding agenda.

Question 1) How to make the MEC happen, successful, and sustainable? Creating the political will by attracting states and by introducing ways of learning, institutionalizing, and educating

Attracting states will be vital. The crucial countries in the region are likely to join the MEC only if that is compatible with their own security interests, if they

have something to gain (e.g. prestige, legitimacy, removal of their adversaries' arsenals), if they are pressured by a major ally into participating, or if failing to attend would hurt them politically. A number of questions will have to be examined with regard to the Conference, among them the *institutional framework* (e.g. the UN), the *format* (e.g. the NPT or the regional ACRS tradition) and appropriate *procedures* (e.g. consensus-based). The Israelis, for instance, are unlikely to participate in an NPT-related framework (see for more detail POLICY BRIEF No. 2 by Bernd W. Kubbig and Christian Weidlich et al.).

Inter- and intra-regional learning requires identifying 'agents of change'. To be sure, the involvement of political elites as well as of influential civil society actors (including media representatives) will be necessary for actual progress. In order to illustrate possible learning mechanisms we focus on the admittedly modest role experts in our ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA could play. They could act as 'information vehicles' and catalysts for change from the dominant zero-sum mind-set towards a cooperative approach. Our "academic players" can illustrate the value of *inter-regional learning* especially by examining why and how Nuclear Weapon Free Zones have been established in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Central Asia as well as in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific (see POLICY BRIEF No. 5 by Roberta Mulas). It will certainly be helpful to invite 'agents of change' involved in those historical processes to our workshops and facilitate an exchange of views not only with our Track II experts from the Middle East but also with Track I decision-makers (Track 1,5). Their main messages will likely be both simple and demanding: zones free of nuclear weapons (to be extended by the prohibition of B- and C-weapons as well as of DVs) are not mere pipe dreams but have and can be established. This will be a complicated process – patience is needed. These two messages would also apply to the planned discussion on what the Middle East could learn from the experience of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe which turned out to be a success.

As far as *intra-regional learning* is concerned, our experts can draw upon lessons from the arms control/CSBMs-related achievements and failures in the

**Box No. 3: Sergio de Queiroz Duarte,
High Representative for Disarmament
Affairs of the UN Secretary-General**



»[T]he perennial question that has frustrated decades of past efforts to establish a nuclear or WMD-free zone in the Middle East—namely, which must come first, peace or disarmament?—misses the very important point that peace and disarmament are mutually reinforcing and share a common goal: enhanced security for all.◀◀

Source: Sergio Duarte, Remarks at the Task Force on the Technical Dimensions of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFFZ) in the Middle East, Landau Network-Centro Volta, Como, Italy, November 11, 2011.

Middle East – as can the participants of the planned Middle East Conference and the Facilitator Ambassador Laajava. The ACRS talks of the early 1990s have shown that limited regional participation can make it more difficult to address the security concerns of the attending countries. Also, those multilateral talks were subordinated to the more high-profile bilateral peace tracks and the ACRS talks did not receive significant high-level U.S. support. Future efforts such as the Middle East Conference would benefit from higher degrees of attention and investment in such efforts from the United States, Russia, and the European Union. On the positive side, Middle Eastern states have had practical and generally encouraging experience in implementing CSBMs. Future talks in this area do not need to start from scratch: bilateral agreements were concluded after the October War in 1973 between Israel on the one hand and Egypt and Syria on the other. What is more, the ACRS Working Group led to important CSBMs even though they were not implemented. These included agreements on prior notification of military exercises and the establishment of three Regional Security Centers (RSCs).

Institutionalizing arms control can take various forms resulting in various tasks, but it will require efforts in the short-, medium and long-term. Establishing Regional Security Centers with an emphasis on conflict prevention, mediation, and arms control as well as arms reduction concepts would make an important contribution. Specific research areas might include designs that outline the steps along the way towards a zone free of WMD/DVs in greater detail. Also, other important tasks would be to elaborate on the relationship between a WMD/DVs Free Zone and broader regional security arrangements as well as on intensifying norm-building processes in various weapon areas. Efforts to delegitimize the threat and the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons could be well combined with endeavors in the nearly norm-free area of DVs. All in all, such centers could help navigate through the MEC agenda during stagnant phases. In fact, Regional Security Centers could be considered a more modest ‘Plan B’ which could be implemented within a couple of years in case that the Middle East Conference did not succeed. The draft mandate of the

RSCs covering goals, structure, operations, immediate objectives, and division of labor among the centers would be a good starting point for discussion. Track II experts from outside the Middle East together with interested governments could facilitate the creation of the organization, conceptualization and curriculum of such institutions.

In addition, institutionalizing arms control combined with inter-regional learning can allow tailoring extra-regional nuclear safeguards systems to the situation of the Middle East. Three institutions could be of special relevance: first, the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) whose inspectors are charged with ensuring the implementation of international safeguards in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency; second, the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco to supervise the member states’ adherence to the safeguards system; third, the Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), the only binational safeguards organization in the world, which demonstrates how the requisite political will in both countries was able to bring mutual transparency to their nuclear programs. For our Track II project it will be important to explore whether these institutions could be a model for a regional verification arrangement in the Middle East. Analyzing both regional and international safeguards variants might be helpful for two reasons: the region itself is a relative ‘institution free zone’ and different preferences among major actors exist for either a regional (Israel) or international (Arab states) organizational setting for the control of nuclear materials.

Educating especially young diplomats and journalists from the Middle East on conflict prevention, mediation, and arms control as well as reduction approaches compatible with the Cooperative Security Concept is also an important task. These efforts could be coupled with the aforementioned learning activities whose focus on appropriate institutions might help to develop specific curricula for those particular target groups. Reaching out to potential ‘agents of change’ would complement badly needed efforts to enhance regional norm-building. All



these endeavors could and should start now, but they would pay off only in the mid- and long-term.

Question 2) Under what circumstances might the crucial actors be willing to embark on the gradual path towards the envisaged zone? Benefiting from the Cooperative Security Concept and from the Routledge study on a Missile Free Zone

The authors of the Routledge volume have identified the following conditions for missile reduction whose validity needs to be probed in the more complex WMD/DVs realm.

Embedding the entire spectrum of WMD into the overall situation of military asymmetries allows us to gain advantage from the extended mandate of the MEC. As already noticed, the international community has wisely placed the sensitive nuclear issue together with B- and C-weapons as well as their delivery vehicles on the agenda of the Middle East Conference. This gives room for discussing trade-offs with the other two categories of WMD thus providing leeway for both Israel and Egypt to overcome their unfruitful insistence on “Regional Peace First!” vs. “Nuclear Disarmament First!”, respectively.

Moreover, WMD must be seen and assessed in the context of the variety of delivery vehicles (missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, and aircraft). Without presuming to provide a script for experienced negotiators, we suggest adopting a strategy for coping with the danger of losing oneself in the jungle of military complexities in the manner described in our previous study. This means that WMD/DVs should not be debated as ‘objective’ data reflecting military capabilities. Instead, it might be more productive if each participating country presented its list of concerns related to specific alliances, nations, and the (threat) perceptions associated with the specific capabilities.

Positioning WMD/DVs in the overall asymmetrical military situation implies also examining the reasons why countries in the Middle East have acquired these arsenals and how their significance has changed over time. The answers will be a

necessary precondition for analyzing the central question: how should one begin the gradual process towards a WMD/DVs Free Zone?

The technical verifiability of the incremental reduction steps and of a zone free of A-, B- and C-weapons and their DVs requires exploring to what extent the criteria developed for transparent and effective/adequate verification in the missile realm can be applied to the broader WMD/DVs area.

The potentially constructive role of major extra-regional powers includes efforts not only to limit their weapon exports, but also to become energetic gavel holders for the Middle East Conference (at least initially) and possible guarantors of a WMD/DVs Free Zone.

At some point during the MEC process, the inclusion of actors like Hamas and Hezbollah will be necessary in order to address limiting their military arsenals. While conventionally tipped rockets are not weapons of mass destruction, they are clearly instruments of terror designed to demoralize Israeli citizens and disrupt their lives, as well as to kill and destroy.

As explained in greater detail below, we recommend coping constructively with negative and positive developments in the region as part of the overall conflict formations, including the associated alliances and the arms dynamics that characterize the security dilemma.

To sum up, in one way or another progress in all these areas can in principle be measured on the basis of to-be-developed yardsticks and milestones. These will enable participants and observers to assess the success achieved during the Middle East Conference.

Question 3) How can concrete steps on a path towards a WMD/DVs Free Zone look like? Designing a gradual approach with compromise-oriented trade-offs as key elements

The suggested step-by-step path is again informed by the jointly authored Routledge volume on the establishment of a Missile Free Zone. The contributors to that study have suggested three milestones. The gradual efforts

» *The assumption is that under a prospective WMD/DVs Free Zone, all parties will find their security better served as a result.* «

would start from the to-be-reformed UN Register of Conventional Arms (first milestone); they would build on the to-be-strengthened elements of the two relevant missile-related regimes, the Hague Code of Conduct Against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles and the Missile Technology Control Regime (second milestone); and they would include, also in a gradual way, reducing missiles while taking missile defense systems into account (third milestone). This cautious incremental approach reflects the security dilemma, i.e. the harsh political realities, the intense arms dynamics, and the lack of mutual trust among the parties in the Middle East.

These characteristics apply even more to the WMD area, especially to nuclear weapons.⁹ Our gradual approach to the MEC recognizes the huge gap between reality and rhetoric – the long-standing endorsement of a WMD Free Zone has thus far remained limited to the level of proposals and concepts. However, if initiated and conducted successfully, the envisaged Middle East Conference could make a difference. We suggest taking the following building-blocks into consideration: first, advancing the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which has become a symbol for serious disarmament efforts; second, enhancing the support of the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreements of the NPT members as the gold standard for accepting intrusive control of nuclear activities; third, negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) for the Middle East which would largely prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive purposes, but not affect already existing stockpiles; fourth, negotiating fuel cycle arrangements for the region, for instance in the form of an international center for the production of nuclear fuel for countries which are committed to not enriching uranium.

A good starting point both for our Track II project as well as for the participants of the Middle East Conference might be to take stock of the positions and policies of major players in the region such as Egypt, Israel, and Iran regarding nuclear weapons. Their basic attitudes on this vital issue will be decisive not only for the four mentioned building blocks, but to their positions on the B- and C-weapons as well as on their efforts to control them. The fifth building block

concerns the signing and the ratification of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

One challenge for our Track II experts is to design ways of synchronizing and to find reciprocities within these five building blocks as well as for delivery vehicles. The assumption is that under a prospective WMD/DVs Free Zone, all parties will find their security better served as a result. As one way of coping with these issues, one can imagine finding ways for Israel, Egypt, and Iran to ratify the CTBT. This would increase the security of all three countries. Israel, which has signed the treaty and has expressed no substantive reservations about it, could take the lead and gain from the ratification, since it may increase the willingness of Cairo and Teheran to follow suit. For both countries the CTBT does not include new restrictions beyond the NPT. By ratifying the CTBT Iran could demonstrate good faith in the peaceful purposes of its nuclear activities and seriously signal its long-standing support for a regional Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. Such a step would certainly need to be complemented by additional initiatives such as formally accepting the stringent safeguards of the Additional Protocol which Tehran has applied in the past.

For the time being, Iran links its refusal to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Additional Protocol to the current military doctrine of the nuclear weapon states, especially the United States, which in its view does not provide enough security guarantees from nuclear attacks. This in turn demonstrates the centrality of external actors in solving at least some stalemates in the Middle East. Such an example illustrates that small steps must be seen as part of a broader fundamental *modus vivendi* which would trade American security guarantees towards Tehran for Iranian restraint in the nuclear and foreign policy areas.

Furthermore, these important measures could lead to progress in the field of controlling biological and chemical weapons. It then seems advisable for both Egypt and Israel to ratify at least one of the relevant conventions. Also, a credible no-first-use pledge for all types of WMD could be considered. For Israel, this pledge



may be a useful precondition for addressing its nuclear arsenal in a constructive way at some point, coupled for example with a commitment to pursue negotiations on reductions towards nuclear disarmament in good faith. The Arab states should then in return recall their threat to collectively withdraw from the NPT.

Our proposals here should be regarded as work in progress that will be further advanced by our “academic players” in the future. But one thing is for sure in our view: all actors would win if the participants of the Middle East Conference together with the experienced Facilitator Ambassador Jaakko Laajava would make use of the trade-offs. The mandate allows them not only among nuclear weapons and the other two categories of weapons of mass destruction, but between these and DVs. In sum, properly crafted and managed, the building blocks could be used in the context of possible trade-offs in a compromise-oriented way to at least loosen the existing Gordian knots.

Two Major Challenges Ahead for the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST

Against the backdrop of our three guiding questions, two sets of challenges come to mind: one relates to the need to further concretize the comprehensive disarmament mandate for the MEC and the other to the new developments in the Middle East as either positive or negative conditions of success for the envisaged Middle East Conference. Both should further influence the upcoming activities of the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA, both in terms of its workshops and the POLICY BRIEFS.

Concretizing the WMD/DVs Disarmament Mandate for the Middle East Conference

Doing justice to the mandate of the international community for the Middle East Conference implies dealing extensively with the major facets of all three categories of WMD as the core problematic. Because of their most devastating role in a potential conflict, the nuclear dimension will be the centerpiece of concern, and correspondingly, of analysis – yet not in an isolated way but together with biological and chemical weapons as well as with WMD-capable delivery vehicles (missiles, UAVs, aircraft).

Although not specifically mentioned, we suggest including missile defense in the overall picture. From our perspective the possibility of nuclear, biological, and chemical terrorism must be included in any security analysis as well.

Without wanting to single out any country, Israel and Iran will probably be at the center stage of the agenda. The more comprehensive WMD approach of dealing with all categories en bloc will certainly mitigate the singling out issue. As far as Israel is concerned, its nuclear arsenal and its remaining outside the NPT put it in the spotlight of Arab criticism. Egypt in particular has been pushing for universal adherence to this treaty. This implies the demand of launching a negotiating process that should culminate in the adoption of a WMDFZ treaty text. Pending that, it seems important to assess the possibility of discussing measures such as a no-first-use pledge or caps on Israel's nuclear fissile material holdings. For our Track II initiative it would also make sense to engage in debate with Israeli strategists who question the basic premises and the presumed success of the country's nuclear policy.¹⁰

As for Iran, it is likely that major aspects of its nuclear program will be addressed at the MEC, including the NPT compliance issue. It is also likely that the Islamic Republic's role as a supplier of weapons to Syria, Hezbollah, and to Hamas will be placed on the agenda. It is uncertain whether Tehran will join the MEC and behave constructively. The MEC and its agenda to start discussing and possibly negotiating a WMD/DVs Free Zone will depend, to a considerable extent, on the willingness of Iran to undertake a more open position on its nuclear activities (see POLICY BRIEF No. 2 by Bernd W. Kubbig and Christian Weidlich et al.). With regard to Iran, we suggest that this Track II project pursues its research interest of reducing the incentives for Tehran to develop nuclear weapons in two ways:

- First, by taking stock of the P5+1 policy, especially that of the United States: have the self-set primary policy goals of the ‘Containment plus Engagement Strategy’ been reached, i.e. changing Tehran's cost-benefit calculus of giving up its nuclear-related activities by terminating its enrichment efforts as the most visible

Box No. 4: About the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST (APOME)

The ORCHESTRA is the follow-up project of the „Multilateral Study Group (MSG) on the Establishment of a Missile Free Zone in the Middle East“ which was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and the Protestant Church of Hesse and Nassau. It consisted of some 30 experts from some 16 countries. They worked together in a cycle of seven workshops from 2007 until 2011 in a strictly confidential setting. Virtually all former MSG experts are now „academic players“ of the ORCHESTRA. Also, the major goals have remained the same: To be process-oriented in terms of improving confidence-building among the experts themselves as a prerequisite to generating trust on the Track I level. APOME is also product-oriented, as its members have been „playing together“, i.e. jointly discussing and writing their POLICY BRIEFS on various issues related to the MEC. In order to facilitate networking, PRIF's Project Group has published an ATLAS on academic activities in and on the Middle East.

We have obtained a lot of insights from our contacts with similar organizations and/or in participating in their projects and meetings, and vice versa. This regards the Ditchley Foundation, the Pugwash Conferences on Sciences and World Affairs, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv/ The George Washington University, and the Monterey Institute as well as the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium.

sign of such a policy change? Have the essential *economic, political, and military tools* been effective so far in reaching those objectives, i.e. especially sanctions in different settings, extended deterrence by a fortified U.S. military presence, threats of attacks, intensified weapon exports as an expression of bonding, as well as missile defense? What should be the role of dialogue and engagement in the context of this predominantly containment strategy?

- Second, by taking Tehran's various motives to develop nuclear capabilities into account: conflict formations, domestic factors, historical experiences, and threat perceptions to Iran's security and to the stability of the regime. The mutual stigmatization that derives from traumatic events on both the Iranian and American side needs to be understood and opportunities should be identified for expanding areas of common interest and cooperation, as slight as these might be. Improving humanitarian conditions in Iraq and Afghanistan, tackling military problems in Afghanistan, and coping with the Afghan-Iranian refugee issues might be worth considering.

In order to avoid a fixation on the existing and possibly emerging nuclear weapon states – Israel and Iran, respectively – discussions of nuclear proliferation should include the sub-state level (nuclear terrorism), and also address the civilian 'nuclear renaissance'. After the Fukushima catastrophe, this amounts to assessing the regional interest in low-enriched uranium reactors as well as in sensitive enrichment facilities in Jordan and Egypt, for example. The problem associated with civilian uses of atomic energy is latent proliferation, i.e. using such sensitive technology as a cover for pursuing a nuclear weapon option. The possible nuclear aspirations of countries such as Saudi Arabia or Syria should be part of our analysis, too.

Analyzing New Developments in the Region as Conditions of Success for the Middle East Conference

The 'Arab Spring' metaphor, with its 'Autumn' and 'Winter' variants, suggests not only that the initial revolutionary optimism has passed, but that the politically and socially diverse factors have to be analyzed on a country-specific basis. In particular, the developments

in Tunisia, Libya, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Yemen are of great importance for this project. Iran had its own 'Winter' in 2009. New trends could also include Israel and the West Bank. Connecting these developments to the vital conflict formations and alliances will highlight the most important rivalries between Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as between Israel and the Arab world and in particular with the Palestinians.

Our workshops, which are the basis for this series of POLICY BRIEFS, will have to explore and to analyze whether and how these domestic developments impact on the Middle East Conference directly and indirectly, for good and for ill: will they and if so how will they influence crucial states to join the MEC, to behave constructively there, to make the Conference successful, and to keep with the process when fundamental disputes emerge?

The impact of the new regional developments may in some cases be ephemeral while in others it could be more tangible and significant. We are well advised to focus not only on well-known problems in the region but to put (potentially) positive developments on our agenda, too. This is imperative in view of the lack of regional mechanisms of cooperation and conflict mediation as well as the minimal level of institutionalization in the Middle East. The recent reconciliation efforts between Hamas and Fatah are one of these possibly positive trends. A common platform for a future Palestinian government could constitute the central measure for linking Palestinian unity and the resumption of the peace process with Israel. Progress in this area would help reduce regional tensions and therefore enhance prospects for the success of the planned Middle East Conference (see POLICY BRIEF No. 3 by Margret Johannsen et al.). In view of the acute need for cooperative solutions to Middle Eastern conflicts, positive mediation experiences are especially relevant for improving the regional context of the MEC (see POLICY BRIEF No. 4 by István Balogh et al.). Furthermore, the Arab Peace Initiative (API) is still on the table as a concrete Arab proposal for normalizing relations with Israel. From an Israeli perspective, serious discussions about a WMD/DVs Free Zone cannot proceed in the absence of fundamentally improved relations with all other

»We are well advised to focus not only on well-known problems in the region but to put (potentially) positive developments on our agenda, too.«



countries in the Middle East. Thus, the API has the potential to advance the goal of regional peace and maybe foster limited and tacit alliances ('selected cooperative security') at the Middle East Conference (see the forthcoming POLICY BRIEF by Gawdat Bahgat et al.). Other areas for examination include possible cooperative economic efforts and the extent to which developments in Tunisia could become a positive role model for other Arab states in transition.

In general these new developments might also strain the existing conflicts, alter foreign policy orientations, and decrease the chances of success for the Middle East Conference. The ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA should among other things analyze whether the demands of the protesters in Egypt for freedom and equality translate into a more compromising stance towards Israel in general and the MEC in particular. Will the (security) establishment and its traditional foreign/arms control policy be affected at all? Or will changes in the political system lead to new accents in Cairo's policies, e.g. a rapprochement with Iran? As regards Syria, the prospects of resolving the Golan Heights issue used to be a positive factor for any arms control effort. The issue stands for the fundamental 'land for peace' formula and the potential of improving the bilateral relationship between Israel and Syria. However, the brutality with which the Assad regime has been responding to domestic protests has made positive developments unlikely. At present the Syrian attitude towards the MEC is a problematic one: Who from Syria would join it, and would the representatives be welcome, behave constructively and support the conference process?

Concerning Bahrain/Saudi Arabia, Riyadh's military intervention in Manama is a special facet of the uprisings in the region, whereas Saudi Arabia's mediation activities (together with other GCC states) regarding the upheavals in Yemen may eventually be valued positively: they have complemented Riyadh's military intervention in the Houthi conflict. The Yemen issue is important because that country is not only the focal point of competing interests, but its status as a failing state in a geographically sensitive location poses fundamental challenges to regional and global security. If Yemen turns into a failed state, there is an increased danger

that terror organizations such as al-Qaeda could gain access to chemical weapons or to the means of producing them. However, the current and potentially deteriorating instability could undermine serious efforts as envisaged under the mandate of the Middle East Conference (see the forthcoming POLICY BRIEF by Lars Berger et al.).

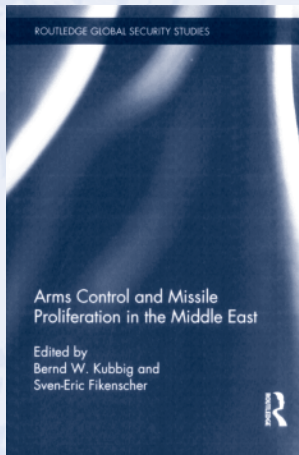
In view of the upheavals in the region, some "academic players" of the ORCHESTRA will deal with the question of how and to what extent religious fundamentalists in the region constitute a barrier for a successful and sustainable Middle East Conference. The experts will have to analyze their different ideologies, traditions, social and political contexts, organizational profiles as well as concrete demands towards the political system in their given country. This may result in

Endnotes

1. In order to avoid the cumbersome notion 'Near and Middle East/Gulf', we use the term 'Middle East' for the entire region.
2. Irrespective of a delay or a cancellation, virtually all the arms control-related problems to be analyzed in this project are "hot spots" which have to be tackled anyway. But it is the Middle East Conference in the wake of recent regional trends that make it possible to deal with all these challenges in a systematic and coherent way.
3. Bernd W. Kubbig and Sven-Eric Fikenscher (eds) (2012) *Arms Control and Missile Proliferation in the Middle East*, London: Routledge.
4. Gerald M. Steinberg (1995) 'Arms Control in the Middle East: Global Regimes vs. Regional Dynamics', in Efraim Inbar (ed.) *Regional Security Regimes: Israel and Its Neighbors*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 175-197, here p. 179.
5. Shai Feldman and Abdullah Toukan (1997) *Bridging the Gap: A Future Security Architecture for the Middle East*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 73.
6. In order to avoid the complete, yet cumbersome term 'arms control/reduction/disarmament', we usually prefer the arms control/reduction(s) combination in this POLICY BRIEF.
7. It has been argued that the weapons problem would be eventually solved, if the states became democracies or at least improved their relationship. Yet, once created, weapons can be barriers to such developments. The U.S.-Russian relationship is the case in point: "Twenty years after the end of the cold war, the United States still has about 2,500 nuclear weapons deployed and 2,600 more as backup. [...] Altogether, these and other nuclear-related programs could cost \$600 billion or more over the next decade. The United States does not need to maintain this large an arsenal." ('A Bloated Budget For Nuclear Weapons', *New York Times/Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 7, 2011).
8. See on this well argued prudent view Etel Solingen (2007) *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
9. The following outline draws heavily on Gawdat Bahgat et al. (2012) 'Advancing the control of weapons of mass destruction: An incremental approach', in Bernd W. Kubbig and Sven-Eric Fikenscher (eds) *Arms Control and Missile Proliferation in the Middle East*, London: Routledge, 106-124.
10. See the contributions by Uri Bar-Joseph as well as by Avner Cohen and Patricia Lewis (with further literature), in Bernd W. Kubbig and Sven-Eric Fikenscher (eds) (2012) *Arms Control and Missile Proliferation*, London: Routledge, pp. 89-105 and 111-114, respectively.

Further Reading

- Chen Kane (2011) 'The role of civil society in promoting a WMD/FZ in the Middle East', *Disarmament Forum*, No. 2: 51-62.
- Bernd W. Kubbig and Sven-Eric Fikenscher (eds) (2012) *Arms Control and Missile Proliferation in the Middle East*, London: Routledge.



the question how to cope with them, i.e. how to encounter their ideology and how to reduce their influence in the short-, mid- and long-term.

Providing Ideas, Concepts, and Background Information

The aforementioned challenges will be tackled at the workshops of the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST during the next years. The discussions among (regional) experts in the CHAMBER ORCHESTRA UNITS devoted to a specific topic will be the basis for most issues of our POLICY BRIEF series. These publications are the most tangible outcome of our basic effort to jointly develop solutions in an overall cooperative setting. Needless to say, it is a classical Track II task to provide academically sound and balanced results with concrete and transparent policy recommendations for decision-makers. In addition, our publishing activities aim at raising awareness on the Track I level especially in the preparatory

phase of the Middle East Conference. But we also hope that this series may create a critical mass of Track II expert/civil society groups committed to the aim of making the MEC happen, successful, and sustainable.

Conclusions

This POLICY BRIEF has outlined the main challenges for the envisaged 2012 Middle East Conference on the establishment of a WMD/DVs Free Zone. At the same time it has also sketched the proposed research activities of the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST for the next few years.

Whatever the future should bring, the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA stands ready to provide its full support as well as constructive ideas not only to the Facilitator Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and his team but also to the participating states, international organizations, and the media. ■

About the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST (APOME)

The ORCHESTRA is the follow-up project of the "Multilateral Study Group (MSG) 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 70 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 2011-2014. The main goal of this initiative is to shape the 2012 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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