Arms Control and Cooperative Security: A Regional Perspective

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The purpose of this paper is to address the feasibility of arms control and cooperative security at a regional level. In order to address these topics, I chose two specific regions to focus on including individual powers within those regions along with regional organisations. The paper begins with definitions for clarification and general conditions, leading into regional sections with subcategories within the sections. The regional subcategories include case studies of Southeast/East Asia and the Middle East with discussion on how the conditions I set out apply to the region through analyses on structures and institutions that already exist, along with what needs to be done.

Definitions

According to the director of research at the NATO College of Defence in Rome, Jeffrey Larsen, arms control "can be defined as any agreement among states to regulate some aspect of their military capabilities or potential" and "may apply to the location, amount, readiness, or types of military forces, weapons, or facilities."[1] Arms control can be performed unilaterally, bilaterally, or multilaterally and can either be implicit or explicit.[2] Arms control is distinct from disarmament because it does not necessarily advocating the reduction of arms—in fact, some cases require an increase in arms for one party to achieve balance—rather, the main purpose is to stabilise existing conditions.[3] It is also important to note that the mere possession of weapons does not cause security issues; instead, it is the perceived threat of how the states may use those weapons that allows for security dilemmas and escalations. Arms control should be viewed as a process that needs constant maintenance and updates with evolving interstate relations rather than something to be dealt with and moved on from. It should also be viewed as a means to an end–namely, cooperative security–rather than an end goal in itself.

Larsen and Wirtz use a common definition of cooperative security from Carter, Perry, and Steinbruner of the Brookings Institute. They define cooperative security as "a commitment to regulate the size, technical composition, investment patterns, and operational practices of all military forces by mutual consent for mutual benefit."[4] Cooperative security is different from, and should not be used interchangeably with collective security, collective defence, or disarmament. Janne Nolan, the director of the Eisenhower Institute in Washington D.C. and an expert on American security, defines cooperative engagement as a strategic principle that seeks to accomplish its goals through institutionalised consent rather than through threats of material or physical coercion.[5]

The goal of cooperative engagement is to create a situation in which states would not feel threatened enough by a perceived threat to make counter preparations and thus exacerbating the security dilemma. Nolan makes clear that disputes are still expected to occur in this system, but are also expected to be resolved without recourse to mass violence. She warns that in an increasingly interconnected society, mass destruction would be self-destructive. Many scholars and political leaders would agree that mutually assured destruction and/or catalysing a third world war is not a popular goal, so steps to put that worry at bay is beneficial to everyone and is therefore a security issue and framework worth pursuing.

Another important term that frequents discussions about international relations studies and state security issues specifically is "security dilemma." Security dilemmas are also known as the spiral model and unsurprisingly refer to

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the situation when one party takes measures to heighten their security (whether it's adding to their military capabilities, forging alliances, etc.) and it is interpreted as a threat by another party who then takes measures to strengthen their own security and the back-and-forth trend escalates tensions.

Conditions

After examining cooperative security progress in a number of regions, I was able to draw connections in approaches, procedure, and successes/failures. Some measures worked better than others and many were context-driven. Nevertheless, I accumulated a list of general conditions in order for regional arms control and cooperative security to form. Those are as follows:

1. major regional conflicts must to be addressed and all relevant actors must participate
2. determine whether the security dilemma between the concerned parties are intentional or unintentional
3. establish unofficial, relaxed, non-binding channels of diplomacy and communication (perhaps by non-governmental organizations) to complement official talks–concept known as Track II diplomacy
4. negotiate Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) as a component of tension reduction
5. form arms control measures that recognize the threat is not inherent in the weapons themselves, but in the perceived threatening postures of the parties involved
6. establish regular and frequent procedures for verification and dialogue between concerned parties (perhaps also involving assistance from external actors)
7. institutionalize procedures and establish cooperative security treaties; thereby increasing the cost of defection

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In today's globalized world, regional cooperative security remains relevant and advantageous, especially if employed correctly. Firstly, cooperative security is not to be confused with collective security embodied by the United Nations (UN) or collective defense embodied by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or complete disarmament. The difficult part is to have an established open communication and trust between the two parties so that the increase of one party's arms is not perceived as a threat to the second party and therefore spiraling into an escalating security dilemma.

The purpose of regional cooperative security arrangements, particularly in the area of arms control, is simple yet often neglected because the positive results are not necessarily instantaneous for participating parties. Of course, it is fair to say some parties may have more to gain from cooperative security arrangements that may level the playing field in relation to more powerful states. Nonetheless, in the long run it can be highly beneficial for all parties involved. Some reasons for engaging in regional cooperative security arrangements include: the fact that major powers share a mutual interest in avoiding the costs accrued from war, damages (physically, economically, and socially), and it can provide a feasible arena of dialogue to balance out the influence of global players such as the United States (US) in the case of European Union (EU), or an arena to counter major regional powers such as China in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum's (ARF) case and Russia in Europe's case.[6]

Regional cooperation can also reduce the need for states to feel threatened enough to make their own counter-preparations—and thereby intensifying the security dilemma—by eliminating or controlling the means of immediate threats. Regional cooperation may be a better option compared to bilateralism which sometimes runs the risk of "negative externalities" for those excluded from the relationship that might lead to resentment and reduction of the overall regional interstate trust.[7] Lastly, resolving smaller crises before they reach global levels could mean less damages, less global resources used, and more global focus and attention can be afforded to other issues. Still, it is important to note that arms control and cooperative security should complement, rather than substitute for diplomatic, economic, and coercive military actions at both regional and global levels.[8]

The conditions under which regional cooperative security can be possible are straightforward but easier said than done. All conditions must also be flexible and adaptive to the political realities they are used in. Preceding any action,

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the parties involved in the region must have somewhat compatible security objectives or at least a strong inclination toward cooperative security as a priority and benefit to all participants. For example, states must be able to agree on the benefits of cooperative security and confidence-building in order for the measures implemented to be sustained through time.[9] Otherwise, any progress made to solidify a lasting organisation could easily disappear if a security dilemma built up. This is also a decent beginning point for informal communication and interaction to take place between states via trade, social issues, etc. If states can find areas or topics that they can agree on and/or work on together, they would be able to better understand each other's way of decision-making and thereby, foster trust or at least ease some mistrust.

Next, CSBMs would be set in place. The point of CSBMs is to increase transparency regarding the other side's intentions and establish measures to de-securitise weapons systems so they pose a less immediate threat. They exist to "make the conduct of countries more calculable and predictable, so that states can have certain expectations with regard to the behaviour of other states" according to a research analyst for the Institute for Science and International Security.[10] These can include lighter measures such as regional leaders meeting frequently to more concrete measures such as joint military exercises to allow parties to access and assess other participants' resources and capabilities. Many scholars would agree that CSBMs should be versatile enough to be applied to multiple regions, yet specific to the context in the actual implementation.

Another significant aspect contributing to the delicate conditions for regional cooperative security to work is the persuasion and encouragement of help from further-progressed organisations and/or actors. A caveat is appropriate here to state that not all solutions from great powers or successfully instituted organisations can or will apply for any/every specific cooperative security effort. Contrary to the modernisation theory that calls for underdeveloped/developing states to simply follow the historical trajectory of global powers in order to become developed and modernised, it is clear that approaches that work for one region may not work for another because of contextual and historical differences. In addition, powerful players may also have ulterior motives for involving themselves in regional security issues, so precaution must be taken to gain from those players' experience, but not create a dependent relationship. Nevertheless, the experience and study of stabilised cooperative security efforts and institutions can offer expertise and Larsen calls for great powers to be the "guardians of the arms control process…as they are the ones who can offer concrete security assurances to regional actors, including their closest allies, and constrain arms sales to the region."

Certain ARF members have been pushing for defence diplomacy involving helping partners downsize armed forces and establishing democratic, civilian control of militaries.[11] This topic is especially relevant in light of Thailand's coup in 2006 that could have destabilised other Southeast Asian Countries and trigger coups in the Philippines and Indonesia which is one of many examples demonstrating the significance of working within the context. Of course, goals related to military control must address civil-military relations in each individual country, but that is a separate discussion from the purpose of this paper. Communication is a major part of the entire cooperative security effort, but is especially significant in this step because miscommunication can occur easily and could destroy all cooperative sentiments up to that point. The subsequent step would be to create and implement verification and safeguard measures similar to ones that are currently employed by the UN in the form of nuclear materials inspections. From there, the regional organisations should continue to build on its foundations and further institutionalise the organisation so that it is less susceptible to collapse and more equipped to adapt to changing times and new challenges.

The concept of regional cooperative security is certainly not a new phenomenon which means there are already some arrangements in place, making process toward regional cooperation and stability. It is important to note these accomplishments because they can be used as models for others to replicate and/or learn from, as well as providing a framework to capitalise on their success. Dr. Mohammad El-Sayed Selim, a political science professor at Cairo University, named this idea as trans-regional learning in which
inferences can be drawn from one region and applied to others but with heavy references to the particular context.[12] One example is the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) signed toward the end of the Cold War in which limits were placed on conventional military equipment in Europe and instructions were set forth for excess weapons to be destroyed. Regional cooperative security has also been raised in informal talks too, such as a

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NATO mandate in 1987 calling for the elimination of the ability for surprise attacks, large-scale offensive operations, and establishing a verification system between the NATO nations and Warsaw Pact nations.

As mentioned previously, the ASEAN created the ARF in 1994 in order to open a space for regional security discussion. According to Jürgen Haacke and Noel Morada's *Cooperative Security in the Asia- Pacific: The ASEAN Regional Forum*, the ARF possesses some unique qualities such as: 1) it does not have its own secretariat and participants still rely on ASEAN for active administrative support, 2) it is the only regional forum that brings together all of the world's key players including the United States (US), China, Russia, Japan, India, and the EU, 3) it is the only regional security dialogue that is at least nominally led by a group of small/middle powers rather than being dominated by major powers and thus allowing the smaller powers an avenue to engage with larger powers in the region and beyond, and 4) its primary interest is to promote the 'ASEAN way' in dealing with regional security issues by employing Asian norms and principles to solve Asian problems. For example, the ARF can provide a space to facilitate informal communication on the sidelines that may not be possible in formal bilateral settings.[13]

One other specific example of promising regional cooperative security involves Russia's expression of interest in using the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) "to promote Europe-wide cooperation on 'new threats' such as terrorism, drugs and environmental disasters, and to develop a new generation of pan-European commitments on non-aggression, arms control, export control and counter-proliferation".[14] In addition, CSBMs are a noteworthy step in every regional cooperative security process because it is a rational beginning point and so far has a positive track record of leading to the signing of cooperative treaties and nuclear weapon-free zones.

Challenges in creating and sustaining regional cooperative security organisations are sometimes region-specific but not always. In many cases, complications resonate region to region which means the cooperation of regions with one another can be extremely efficient and could result in other constructive rewards such as closer working relations economically. One major obstacle hindering regional cooperative security efforts commonly found in all regions includes the fear of sovereignty loss in which states recognise that they have to relinquish some control of power but that decision will be seen as an exploitable weakness. However, states may find out that the benefits of cooperative security could far outweigh the small amount of power relinquished. Although the EU is already considerably integrated, military and security integration is lacking because of the sovereignty loss issue; this trend is also seen in East Asia and is especially vivid in the Middle East.

Another common difficulty is addressing uneven military capabilities within a region. In the European theatre, Britain and France are declared Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) so this poses questions such as: should those weapons be accessible to non-nuclear states and/or should these Non-NWSs have any sort of control over those weapons? In the Middle East, Israel is not a declared NWS but is widely known to possess weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), so in order to solve the complex and timeworn problems in the region, it is impossible to ignore the military imbalance in relation to both nuclear and conventional weapons especially since Israel is militarily superior even without the nuclear weapons. Two regions will be discussed in supplementary details in the following sections in order to provide a closer look at what needs to be done in order to establish a regional cooperative security organisations and what actions can be taken to advance those goals.

Southeast and East Asia

The "Asian Way" is often used to describe the distinctive lens regional actors in this area like to use in regards to security issues. ASEAN puts emphasis on open coordination, loose organization with decentralized leadership, and consultation rather than coalition building–unique from Western Europe's OSCE's use of more centralized and rigid structures and procedures.[15] This is a prime example of how although Western Europe can still be a great contributor of expertise to the ASEAN in a variety of ways, the ASEAN does not necessarily have to follow the OSCE's structure in order to be successful in cooperative security.

The ARF allows major regional powers "an opportunity to exercise various kinds of informal regional leadership but without incurring the considerable cost of openly exercising regional hegemony" as displayed by the China-ASEAN

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Special Relationship.[16] At the same time, it allows smaller countries an arena to engage major powers on more equal footing. Paradoxically, this could be viewed negatively by major powers who want to establish/maintain hegemony in the region and will therefore only engage in regional cooperative security if they believe they have something significant to gain from it.

Condition 1 states that all relevant actors must participate; although ASEAN does technically have a Southeast Asia focus, its offshoots such as the East Asian Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), etc. extend to East Asia and other relevant parts of the region. The APT includes China, Japan, and South Korea but its powers/contributions are limited by the presence of rival institutional frameworks like the EAS. Along with that, the APT is dominated by a rising China, so the declining Japan prefers the EAS because it can weld more power by teaming up with India, Australia, and New Zealand to "counterbalance the risk of Chinese hegemony".[17]

In Western Europe, it is demonstrated that the existence of multiple regional organisations is not a problem in itself unless the institutions are working against each other or just duplicating procedures. In the case of ASEAN and its offshoots, perhaps the EAS and APT could work together to distinguish their responsibilities, purpose, and structure so that they could complement rather than compete with each other. In addition, steps to level the playing field in both organisations would allow for more efficiency since the focus can be concentrated on debating and resolving security issues rather than on who is dominating the group. The resolution of major regional conflicts part of *Condition 1* is still largely unfulfilled as ASEAN has failed to defuse or resolve interstate conflicts such as those concerning North Korea. In terms of major regional conflicts being resolved, there is obviously much work to be done. Here, conditions within the states matter just as much as the interstate relationships; for example, Taiwan and to some extent Hong Kong's relationship with mainland China can impact the direction of peace talks—especially since China is such a major player in the region.

Despite a colourful spectrum of opinions on China's rise to the global stage, there is a consensus that it is happening and the implications of it continue to unfold. Its territorial disputes and escalating tensions vis-a-vis Japan among others, indicate a significant power shift in the region that resonates beyond the region to involve US relations with concerned countries. China's assertiveness in regards to territorial claims (to the Diaoyudao/Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands among many others) and the air defence identification zone (ADIZ) over the East China overlapping with neighbouring countries' ADIZ zones in 2013, military modernisation programs, the review of national defence legal frameworks to incorporate bolder policies, and the establishment of centralised security councils by China and Japan make evident the instability and security dilemmas developing in the region. In regards to *Condition 2,* it would seem that China is using its power status to remain assertive in its risky decisions to change the status quo which indicates that it is intentionally adding to security dilemma developments. If this is the case, it will be all the more challenging to implement effective regional cooperative security when a major power becomes hegemonic and/or is unwilling to compromise. In this situation, it is perhaps worthwhile to focus on other areas/topics that the regional players are less hostile about such as trade, allowing the East Asian Economic Caucus or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation to play an active role in cooperation and trust building to a certain extent that will be discussed later. Strengthening economic ties and increasing positive contact can set a precedent for tackling more controversial problems later.

Fortunately, *Condition 3*'s Track II diplomacy can be illustrated by the existence of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) because of their non-binding nature's compatibility with the 'Asian Way' negotiation culture, providing security recommendations to the ARF for over 20 years.[18] Other unofficial diplomatic measures may involve students studying abroad gaining diverse perspectives or personal networks that create an atmosphere of mutual understanding, especially considering the East Asian cultural emphasis on social networks (*guanxi* in Mandarin*)*. Related to this is "Track 1.5 Diplomacy", which involves informal and somewhat formal settings of interaction and discussion, manifested in the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) and the Shangri-La Dialogue organised by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). This type of diplomacy provides an informal environment for key leaders to discuss CSBMs and decrease the possibilities of misunderstandings and unintentional tensions.[19] In line with *Condition 4,* ASEAN does have a positive track record when it comes to confidence building and maintaining interstate trust, but has a hard time institutionalising and moving beyond CSBMs.

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Although the existence of the ARF allows smaller states to engage with China, the effectiveness and results of the communication is unclear. The ARF has not adequately addressed the shifts in the regional balance of power in regards to China's rapid rise. There are difficulties in moving the ARF's focus beyond confidence building to preventative diplomacy (PD) because of the previously mentioned sovereignty loss fear, among other concerns. Because of its inability to move past CSBMs, there is a perceived irrelevance of the ARF and many dismiss it as a "talk shop", paralysed by its incapacity to engage in conflict and crisis management. Although it cannot be denied that the fact of the forum's existence represents a significant amount of progress already and it is considered the "premier security forum in the Asia-Pacific", there are many interstate security issues that are managed outside of the ARF—such as North Korea's nuclear threat and territory disputes in the region, to name a few. This trend could result in countries more in favour of forging bilateral agreements rather than going through the ARF.[20] There are also sentiments that the forum is still dominated in many ways by the US whose actions/interests are not viewed equally favourable in the region which could act as a wedge in formal and informal engagements within the ARF.

Neoliberalism scholars would argue that economic cooperation and integration will eventually allow states in the region to resolve their differences. Although economic development has certainly provided incentives for political leaders to engage each other via bilateral relationships or regional organisations such as ASEAN and APEC, it is not enough on its own. Mel Gurtov states that some scholars see economic cooperation as a kind of CSBM "or a step toward developing a 'common political language'" involving political steps like creating a positive atmosphere and establishing diplomatic ties. However, he states that economic ties could actually contribute to political tensions between states and thereby create or add to regional *in*security.[21] Heightened economic cooperation has not succeeded in conflict prevention; for example, Taiwan and China are trade and investment partners, but military buildups are still happening on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.[22] The same could be said for Hong Kong and mainland China.

Condition 5 calls for arms control measures that focus on perceived threat postures rather than the weapons themselves. However, the constant concern, stressed by observers and the media, is about East Asia's arms buildup and how it affects regional security and the West. Contrarily, Bjorn Moller argues that 1) the general level of armament in Asia is still far below that of Europe and the US, 2) not all European countries have disarmed since the end of the Cold War while some Asian countries that have disarmed significantly go unnoticed, 3) arms expenditures by Asian countries have not risen in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) percentage.[23] This does not mean that arms buildups do not cause or are unrelated to security dilemmas in the region, but more attention and concern should be spent elsewhere–perhaps working on resolving major regional conflicts and assessing threat postures and intentions. There are four acknowledged or alleged NWS in the region (China, North Korea, India, and Pakistan). Non-nuclear countries in the region would gain by focusing on assessing the threat level from those nuclear states rather than focusing on achieving the same level of nuclear capabilities to compete or assuming the nuclear states are an automatic threat simply by possessing nuclear capabilities. Non-nuclear states could also focus on how to use cooperative security measures and organisations to restrict WMD usage as an immediate threat which may be a more plausible feat than attempting to get the NWSs to destroy or give up their weapons.

Nuclear weapons and arms control remain sensitive subjects and it continues to cause tension and stall negotiations. In 2003, former US President George W. Bush initiated a multilateral Six Party Talks as a result of North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The talks originally involved South Korea, North Korea, China, Japan, US and Russia. However, it was suspended in 2009 due to outside circumstances, namely North Korea's satellite launch that was believed to be a cover-up for its Taepodong-2 inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) testing. After failed attempts to persuade the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to cancel the launch, the UN Security Council unanimously agreed upon a resolution to condemn the DPRK and expand sanctions. There were roumors about the resumption of the talks in 2012 to no avail. In early 2014, there was again chatter about the resumption of talks reported by China's state-run news media. The resumption and success of the Six Party Talks could contribute positively to the region by deescalating tensions between major players.

In keeping with *Condition 6,* the US' role in East Asian affairs must also be reoriented to promote regional security; perhaps by focusing less on conventional bilateral engagements in favour of regional/multilateral relationships. Beyond that, the US could also assist regional cooperation efforts in logistical and advisory terms. The US should

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have an interest in playing a role in the context of the territory disputes because a peaceful mediation of those disputes would decrease strains on US-Japan and US-China relations. According to Eva Pejsova of the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the EU also plays an increasingly involved role in East Asia demonstrated by its strategic partnerships with major regional actors, its adherence to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), its joining into the ARF in 2012, and its joining into the CSCAP in 2013. Thus far, the EU appears to be largely neutral toward the territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas and has experience with regional cooperative security so it may be a helpful actor in East Asia as long as its own member states remain cohesive.[24]

The challenge will be figuring out how to establish the right comfort level among participating countries to address the above criticisms. There are some available actions that can be taken to rectify some of these challenges. Haacke and Morada suggest launching a regional risk reduction centre and adopting a statement of principles obliging participants to use this mechanism to act in potential conflicts. Another solution is diluting and compromising on the conceptualisation of PD so that participants will be more likely to promote practical PD activities.[25] Of course, this walks a fine line because too many compromises could lead to continued non-action and render any resulting policy moot. In accordance with *Condition 7*, further efforts to institutionalise the ARF would create a more solid foundation and basis for members to act on. Security cooperation in East Asia remain mostly bilateral, especially concerning major actors (i.e. US-Japan via the San Francisco System named after the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty) while smaller actors are more willing to work with regional security. Some scholars believe it may take an urgent situation that affects the common interests (perhaps, economical interests or an escalation in tension concerning territorial disputes) of all the relevant actors in the region in order to reinvigorate the regional cooperative security processes.

The Middle East

In continuation, the Middle East should be closely examined because its benefit potential in achieving some sort of regional cooperative security arrangement could be very high and be a model to other regions with multifaceted instability similar to that of the Middle East. Because of the intricate situation in the Middle East, there are several specific issues that need to be addressed ahead of or simultaneously with consideration of regional cooperative security; for example, the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Israeli-Arab countries' security dilemma. Corresponding with *Condition 1*, structural restraints such as the multiplicity of conflicts, varying categories of weapons possession and overall military superiority of Israel, and the lack of participation by relevant actors added to the limited success of the working group for Arms Control and Regional Security in the Middle East (ACRS) and cooperative security as a whole. The ACRS was established in 1991 to accompany negotiations between thirteen Arab states, Israel, a Palestinian delegate, and other relevant entities.[26] Although the ACRS sessions started on the right note with the early sessions focusing on educating regional participants about CSBMs and arms control, its momentum quickly stalled.[27] The ACRS's breakdown was attributed to Egypt and Israel's disagreement over the agenda, with Israel pushing for CSBMs and Egypt demand Israel sign various non-proliferation treaties and agreeing to safeguards and inspections.

There is also a lack of controls on transfers of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) ingredients along with controls on local production of these materials but this area may not be addressed until the trust deficit between the states are addressed.[28] A lack of cultural affinity in the region is not necessarily a detriment to regional cooperative security but it is an imperative factor in regional cohesion which means if there can at least be a higher tolerance of differences in cultures, the Middle East would stand a better chance at cooperation. The intentional/unintentional condition mentioned in *Condition 2* applies heavily to the Middle East in the sense of the perceived status quo of Israel versus the rest of the Middle East. Even if Israel and Egypt decided to pursue cooperative security measures, for example, there would have to be analyses determining whether each party is cooperating for the sake of achieving long-term peace in the region or for ulterior motives. Beyond that, the problem of negative externalities is extremely relevant to the Middle East because shifting alliances and distrust from one county to the next allows a wide range of space for miscommunication and misunderstandings of threat postures.

Condition 3 and 6 both refer to the role of outside governments, non-governmental organisations (NGO), and anyone else with a vested interested in a regional security in the Middle East that could assist this process by providing advice or attaching conditionality, such as financial transparency and accountability from the states in the region, in

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exchange for support and assistance. Previously, during the ACRS's active period, Track II diplomacy set out by NGOs, like the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and Search for Common Ground, helped established nonofficial dialogue between Middle Eastern states to advance understanding of the intricacy of arms control, regional security, and how it can be applied to the Middle East.[29]

The US's role in the process has involved instilling the win-win benefits of cooperative security, but the US's own interpretations of arms control is often "ambiguous or even contradictory"; for example, the US holds nuclear proliferations to be a major danger but turns a blind eye to Israel's assumed nuclear capability.[30] Despite many high profile American diplomats trying to forge peace in the Middle East, disputes and deep rooted issues remain unresolved; perhaps, it is due to the complexity of issues exacerbated by the interconnection of so many issues that there is not a single answer. However, besides the problem that some Middle Easterners view American mediation as a scheme to control the Middle East for its own interests without regard to or understanding of indigenous sentiments, some argue that efforts should be focused on fostering and encouraging dialogue and processes of reconciliation rather than focusing solely on "economic and political enticements, coercion or purely strategic considerations."[31] Another important group of actors is non-state actors that are wielding an increasing amount of power and influence, especially in weaker states. For example, if a prominent terrorist group such as al Qaeda decides that an American-forged peace treaty does not satisfy them, they have significant power to derail peace talks and cooperation.

CSBMs would be a significant benefit to the Middle East if executed properly because it could result in arms control agreements which would play a substantial role in de-escalating the tensions in the region. The ACRS working group established to reach agreements in the Middle East among fourteen regional participants concurred on the value of cooperative regional security but it did not "reach a stage of institutionalisation or multilateralism in any meaningful sense due to the discontinuation of the talks."[32] The aforementioned CSBMs can include negotiations to produce conceptual and operational foundations and lessons learned from the failed 1991 Madrid Conference. In accordance with *Condition 4,* the ACRS group did help produce some agreement on CSBM measures regarding maritime issues such as "pre-notification of military exercises and military information exchange, a regional communications network, the setting up of three Regional Security Centres (RSC)", and a proposal to create a Middle East Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (MENWFZ).[33]

The MENWFZ proposal was originally proposed by Egypt who pointed out that Israel stood in the way of creating a MENWFZ by not ascending to the NPT. Israel responded, saying that the MENWFZ can only be established in the context of comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbours. This situation clearly illustrates the importance of *Condition 5* in which the perceived threat postures are more of a threat than the weapons themselves. Again, referring back to *Condition 2*'s question of intentionality, Israel believes Egypt and the Arab League are only interested in Israel's ascendance to the NPT and adherence to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards so that it will be weakened and vulnerable to attack. This belief is not without weight, as entities regularly issue existential threats to Israel and reject its legitimacy.[34] The conversation should focus on whether the relevant actors are actually trying to establish peace and then from there, gradual arms control and CSBM measures should form with transparency and equal efforts put forth by all involved parties, not just one party singling out another party. It is important to consider the context and intentionality of actors when forming CSBMs if they are expected to last.[35] Unfortunately, later complications put the multilateral talks on hold indefinitely with many agreed measures never implemented.

According to John Steinbruner's "Making War Difficult: Cooperative Security in the Middle East", the premier step toward substantial cooperative effort is to accept the principle of cooperative security and then work to design it along the way rather than waiting for a framework everyone agrees on first. In addressing Israel's military superiority, a possible solution may be to envelope Israel with limits/regulations so that it would be difficult for them to act unilaterally and neutralise the nuclear weapons from being an immediate factor in any potential conflicts.[36] Major weapons suppliers may have to work together to create a more transparent process (which may have to be monitored or facilitated by a regional or global independent entity). In terms of nuclear weapons, the IAEA may be able to play a role by implementing safeguard and verification measures such as environmental sampling and routine inspections.[37]

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Furthermore, a minimal level of cognitive convergence may be built to break down walls of stereotype and demonisation by expanding consultation mechanisms and intensifying diplomatic/unofficial contacts to help build a broader sense of common humanity.[38] To further complicate matters, outside involvement (the Western approach in particular) also means that there will be cultural differences and ethnocentric assumptions brought in, consciously or not. Therefore, outside involvement, although certainly offers valuable inputs, should also be careful to take into account the socio-cultural context.[39] Mark Heller also talks about a sequencing problem in which Israel and Egypt cannot seem to agree on whether security-building is a prerequisite for peace or the other way around. Egypt was also trying to build and consolidate a regional leadership role in which Israel would be integrated into the Middle East under Egyptian leadership, but two problems—opposition to Israel and its embodiment of the West as a norm in Arabism and Israel's superiority on military, economic, and technological terms—stand in the way.[40] Again, this is a good example to point out where the determination of states' intentions matter a great deal in cooperative security possibilities. Heller argues that security-building and peace-building should be mutually reinforcing and simultaneous. Until other significant conditions are met, *Condition 7*'s institutionalisation of cooperative security procedures cannot occur.

One example suggested by Emily Landau, the director of the Arms Control and Regional Security Program at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, focuses on the establishment of a chemical-weapon-free zone. Additionally, Landau states that the process cannot begin until Syria's chemical weapons capability is irreversibly destroyed (*Condition 1's* mutual participation). Landau offers a scenario from Israel's point of view that encompasses a combination of the conditions I have listed, working together. If Israel enters a chemical weapons agreement, it would represent a major concession on their part because it would clarify whether the other states are interested in long-lasting cooperative security or just taking away Israel's nuclear insurance policy (*Condition 2's* intentionality). These discussions could provide more frequent and open dialogue between states to foster trust (*Conditions 4, 5, and 6*). Finally, Landau suggests the management of the discussion be integrated into the agenda of a Middle East Regional Security Dialogue Forum (*Condition 7's* institutionalising procedures).[41] Of course, all of these suggestions are dependent on outside influences and the most current circumstances, but it shows that regional cooperation and arms control is possible in the Middle East despite a number of unresolved conflicts and failed attempts toward peace.

Some speculate that Middle Eastern states will not act to revive regional security activities until they are forced to address a major situation.[42] However, perhaps by stating some possible steps that can be taken, there will be more inquiries into these topics and more effort put into taking action. There will almost always be room for improvement, but not having a full vision of how to execute the concept of regional cooperative security should not mean not doing anything at all. Each region will have unique and overlapping challenges which mean some solutions can apply to one region or several. For example, if more than one organisation already exists in a region, it may be wise to maintain all the effective ones rather than consolidating them into one organisation because 1) each one might have distinctive skill sets/expertise, 2) some states might be more willing to work with one organisation over another and 3) it would make use of what already exists rather than building from scratch and letting resources go to waste or risk duplications of structures. This situation applies to Europe in which NATO assets could be provided to the Western European Union as necessarily to field a European Security and Defence Identity force under the Combined Joint Task Force concept.[43] Whereas in the Middle East where no such organisations exist, starting from scratch may be the only option but it can certainly learn from the European region in analysing their successes and failures.

The motivation for change in the war-torn region is evident, as demonstrated by the Arab Spring uprising. As non-state actors such as terrorist groups expand their control and chaos is a part of the everyday reality, prospects of regional cooperative security may seem unlikely. However, it can be argued that it is precisely this time that provides an opportunity for regional cooperative security to work when more physically aggressive options have failed to bring stability, let alone peace.

Conclusion

On a regional level, cooperative security was researched in case studies involving Southeast/East Asia and the

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Middle East in which a set of conditions were constructed after examining existing literature and then applied to the respective regions. The latter region unsurprisingly has more obstacles preventing cooperative security measures to move beyond conceptual frameworks, but it should be pursued nonetheless for the sake of long-term regional stability and peaceful conflict resolution. East Asia's power shift will provide new challenges and perhaps new invigoration to address regional cooperative security. Both regions seem to be hesitant to address regional security for varying reasons, leading scholars to argue that it may take the appearance of new pressing circumstances to force regional players to pursue regional cooperative security. Of course, all solutions and courses of action mentioned above are easier said than done and are dependent on various factors that can change a situation instantaneously.

It is necessary to state that the conditions listed above are not mutually exclusive or only meant to be followed in one specific order. Regional cooperative security, as with many complex concepts, are not meant to be linear trajectories but a dynamic process determined by varied forces and challenges. Overall, regional cooperative security is indeed viable, but the journey to becoming a tangible norm, rather than just a conceptual framework, will take time and fortitude with varying progress in different regions. It is also relevant to note that regional security organisations should promote global goals rather than interfere with them.

Cooperative security is a feasible concept in a regional and even a global context, but its success rate is in varying degrees of progress and is still in ambiguous standing. The challenges range from not having enough incentive to pursue a long-term goal of regional security to complex and numerous outside circumstances such as non-state actors preventing its establishment. Time and evolving situations will dictate the future of cooperative security and the role of arms control within that framework.

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