Inclusive Semi-Permanent Conference for the Middle East

Strategic Foresight Group
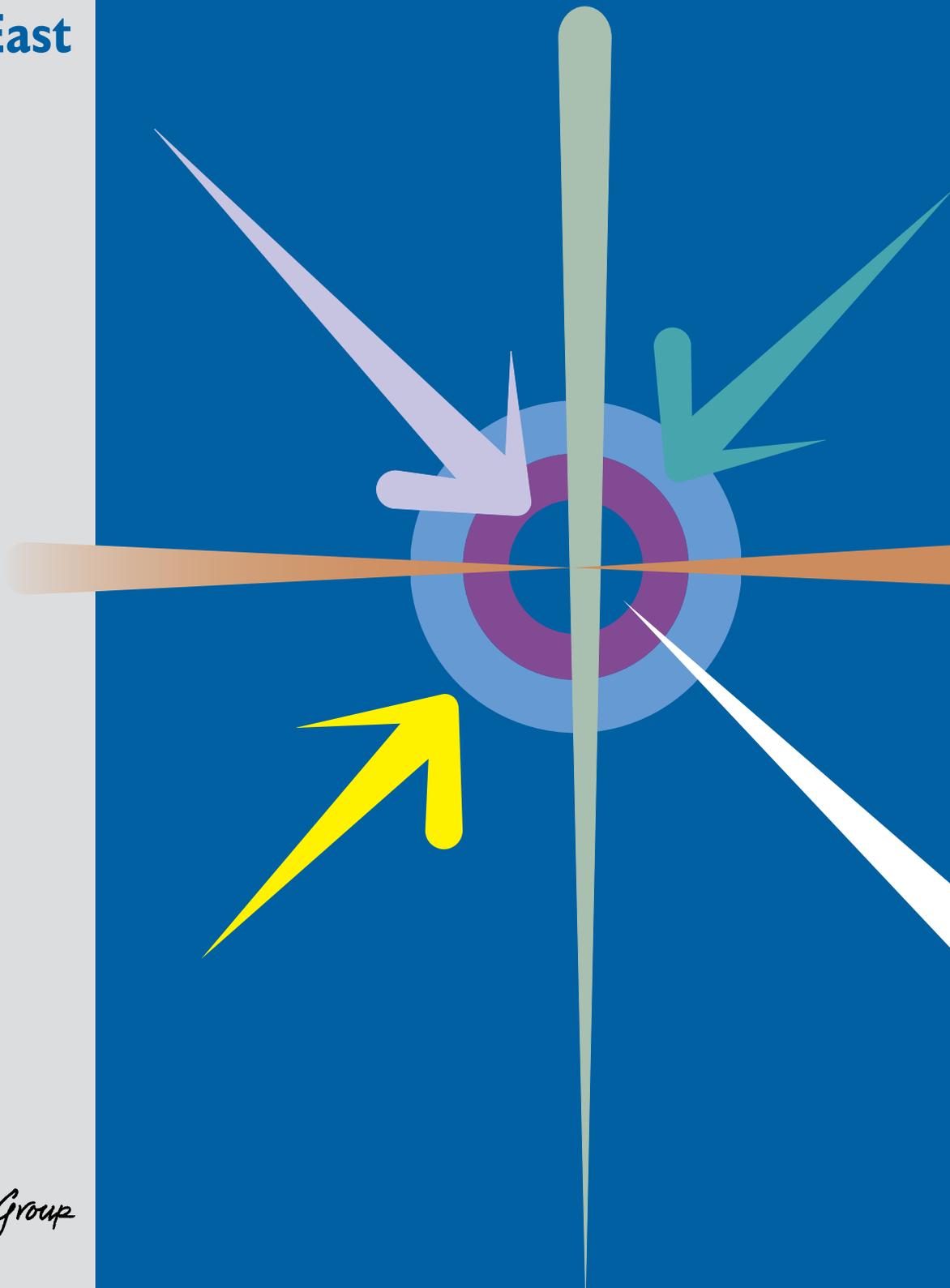
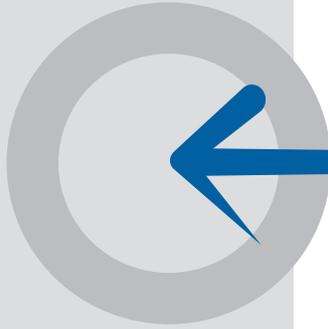**Inclusive
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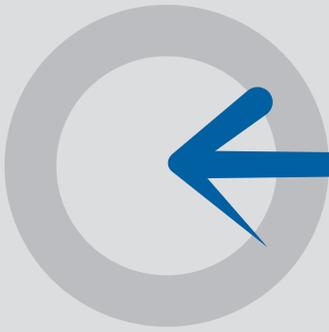Mumbai 400 053
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Preface

Since 2004, the Strategic Foresight Group, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in the European Parliament (ALDE) and the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNSt) have been collaborating on intellectual and political efforts to reduce the deficit of trust between the Western and Islamic countries. This cooperation is based on a shared belief in core human values of freedom, justice and trust. It is driven by a desire to contribute to building a world free of fear and war. Our efforts have included consultations with government leaders and members of legislatures, research to explore innovative policy options, and international roundtables of political leaders.

In the Third International Roundtable on "Constructing Peace, Deconstructing Terror", held at the European Parliament in Brussels, in November 2006, the participants recommended that the concept of an inclusive and semi-permanent mechanism for comprehensive peace in the Middle East should be studied and debated with a view to introducing fresh ideas in the public discourse in the region as well as in countries in other parts of the world with a significant interest in the Middle East. In 2007 the Strategic Foresight Group convened a meeting of its key supporters from the British Parliament, the European Parliament, the German Bundestag, the League of Arab States, and independent experts from the United States, Europe and the Arab region at the House of Lords in London, where it was decided to prepare a discussion paper on this subject.

I wish to thank The Rt. Hon. Lord Alderdice, President of Liberal International for his Foreword to this paper as well as his constant advice and detailed comments. We also gained significantly from the input and analysis provided by Dr René Klaff, Regional Director of FNSt based in New Delhi, who earlier had a long innings in the Middle East and Niccolo Rinaldi, Deputy Secretary General of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in the European Parliament. I must also place on record my gratitude to a large number of experts and friends in the Middle East who shared their perspectives in informal conversations.

I am particularly grateful to the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit for their practical and intellectual support for this project. This has only been possible because of the tremendous personal interest taken by Dr Wolfgang Gerhardt, MdB (Chairman of FNSt) and Dr Jürgen Wickert, from the Brussels office of FNSt, in our cooperation, and their sincere commitment to the cause of peace, freedom and trust. Senior officials of FNSt based in Cairo, Jerusalem, Amman and Istanbul also offered generous comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

I hope that the paper will help facilitate a fresh debate in the Middle East as well as elsewhere in the world. I will be most grateful for a candid response from our readers.

Sundeep Waslekar

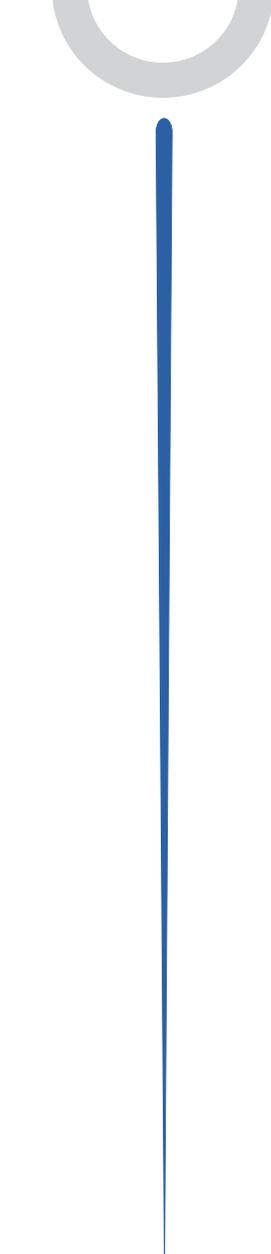Mumbai, March 2008   President, Strategic Foresight Group

One striking characteristic of long-standing and seemingly intractable disputes is the power of the emotional reactions that they induce in observers. Whilst it is unsurprising that those who are caught up in the struggle find it difficult to view the problem dispassionately, the fact that those outside the immediate context also tend to polarize sharply as partisans for one side or the other tells us that there may be more to these insoluble problems than a mere local dispute over territory and resources. It is also significant that when finally some progress is made, it is not because an extraordinary solution has been invented out of the 'blue sky' thinking of an academic political scientist, but rather it has become possible to implement a compromise arrangement that had, at least in broad terms, been around for some time, but to which the various parties could not accommodate themselves.

The implication of these observations is that long-standing feuds are not a rational outcome of problems of resource allocation (for example the 'fact' that two groups of people want to control a piece of territory) but rather a problem of the disturbed emotional relationship between the groups of people that prevents them from finding a way of living together and benefiting from their enjoyment of the territory and what it provides. Emotions are even more contagious than ideas, and those around a disturbed relationship tend to get caught up in such a way as to contribute to the worsening and widening of the violence. Once they are engaged in the maelstrom their capacity to think is used to justify their emotional commitment and their desire to 'win', rather than think reflectively about how to resolve it in everyone's best interests.

These observations are true about communities and countries, as they are about families and individuals, and they can help us to understand why short-term interventions, even when they have the 'right' answer, usually fail to make much impact on the problem. If these are indeed problems of disturbed group relationships then political or economic fixes hatched up in the hot-house atmosphere of a weekend conference will fail to make any substantial impact other than to confirm to the increasingly despairing observer the hopelessness of the situation. One is reminded of Churchill's observation about Ireland. After the catastrophe of the First World War when it seemed that almost every institution and certainty had been washed away, he remarked that the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone (the church towers of Ulster) re-emerged from the deluge with the integrity of their ancient quarrel one of the only things to survive. His despair at the intractability of the Irish Problem was understandable but as recent years have shown, even that ancient feud could find resolution not by the victory of one side, or the imposition of an external solution, but by a long process of dialogue and engagement which addressed the historic problems of all the relationships inside and outside the island as long as it was open to all those involved, even, and perhaps especially those who used violence and terrorism to prosecute their aims.

In reflecting on my experiences in the decade and more of negotiations which led to the Good Friday Agreement, and in the ten years since then when we have worked with some success towards its full implementation in Northern Ireland, I have been struck not only by what we have discovered about such processes, but also by what we have learnt

from others, especially those who participated in the South African peace process and in the post-World War II project of European integration. While these were profoundly different circumstances in terms of their history, complexity and strategic significance, there seem to be a number of common principles.

What are they? A sustainable peaceful outcome tended to be possible only when processes were elaborated and institutionalized, that gave the opportunity of participation to all parties to the conflict, especially those who were most obviously causing violence. It was also crucial that these peace processes continued over a long period of time, through and beyond the achievement of agreement, into a substantial implementation phase. The creation of such inclusive, long-term, institutionalized processes were themselves the outcome of years of quiet dialogue, diplomacy and reflective exploration, and they faced many difficulties and set-backs. Is it possible to apply what has been learnt from progress in South Africa, Ireland and post-war Europe to the problems of the Middle East, with the profound ramifications this region holds for the whole of the rest of the world?

This paper by Strategic Foresight Group is a serious attempt to examine key learning points from some of the successful peace processes of the last quarter century, as well as from the problems of previous initiatives in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It applies these lessons and experiences, to building what is necessary - an inclusive semi-permanent conference table for the Middle East. I believe that the paper itself can be a significant contribution because it sheds a spotlight on the processes necessary to move towards dealing with the destructive relationships within and towards the region, rather than simply identifying the content of any necessary agreement, ground which has already received enormous attention elsewhere. I hope that you will not only read it, but that you will understand and appreciate its central message and then work towards applying it in whatever way you can. In so doing you will be lighting a candle for peace rather than merely cursing the darkness.

The Lord Alderdice
House of Lords,
London SW1A 0PW

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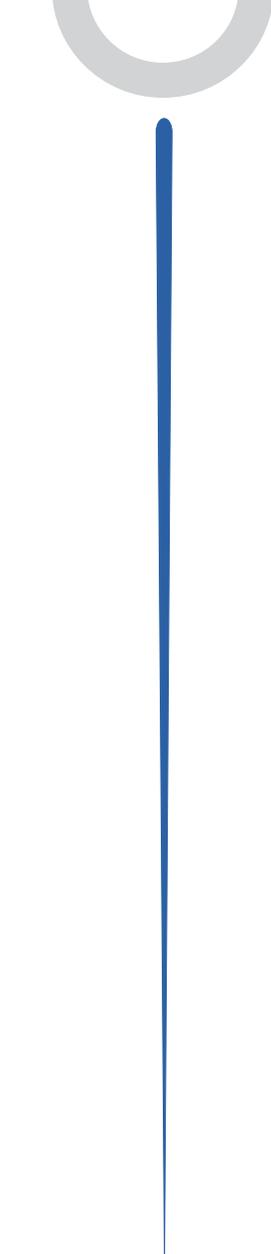
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Introduction

The launch of the Annapolis Conference process initially instilled some hope in the Middle East. However, this process is not without hurdles. Israel's Prime Minister has since publicly stated that he was not necessarily bound by the Annapolis target. Sections of the Arab media have viewed the conference with a degree of scepticism. The Annapolis Conference is a welcome initiative at a time when nothing else seems to provide hope but it is rendered ineffective since it aims to ignore, as a deliberate strategy, some of the players in the region. Such an approach does not recognise the increasingly complex character of the situation in the Middle East. Until a decade ago, the conflict in the Middle East was primarily between Israel and the Palestinians represented by PLO. This was especially true after Israel signed peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and came close to entering into a peace agreement with Syria. Since then several new dimensions have been added to the conflict, bringing in new actors. The Palestinians are now represented by Hamas, in addition to Al-Fatah. The conflict between Syria and Israel has led to a proxy war within the domestic context of Lebanon. The war in Iraq has added another element. Iran has demonstrated an inclination to create proxy wars by aiding Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria and groups in Iraq. There is a risk of the situation assuming even greater complexity in the future. Iran may directly enter the fray. For the longer term, China and Russia are already increasing their stakes in the region. The resolution of each conflict has become dependent upon the resolution of other conflicts, thus requiring an integrated and inclusive problem-solving approach that is capable of tackling multiple issues.

This paper advocates a three-phase approach aimed at creating structures for an inclusive and semi-permanent forum for regional security and cooperation, in some respects drawing lessons from the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), but specifically tailored to the context of the Middle East. It also draws lessons from the experience of the European Union and the Northern Ireland Peace Process. In the past the concept of a CSCE for the Middle East (CSCME) has been proposed several times with an aim of resolving various conflicts. In contrast, this paper proposes a phased but integrated approach, beginning with Confidence Building Measures (CBM's), followed by informal 'Talks about Talks', finally leading to the creation of an integrated negotiating mechanism. In other words, it does not foresee that a regional forum can immediately resolve all conflicts. In fact, such an exaggerated expectation would be counter-productive. It would be much better to formulate a phase by phase approach towards peace-making in the region.

This paper is presented in seven parts. The **first** part provides a cursory outline of how the conflict in the Middle East has become more complicated, and outlines trends that reveal the risk of even greater complication in the future. What is specifically examined is the interplay of the strategic and ideological stances of regional, state and non-state parties, as well as of extra-regional actors.

Moving on, the **second** part outlines the massive direct and indirect cost of conflict today as well as tomorrow. This section makes clear that a deterioration of the situation in the Middle East will have disastrous consequences not only for the region, but far beyond.

The **third** part analyses past efforts and initiatives for peace, in order to draw important lessons for future peace steps. As discussed in the **fourth** part, the two
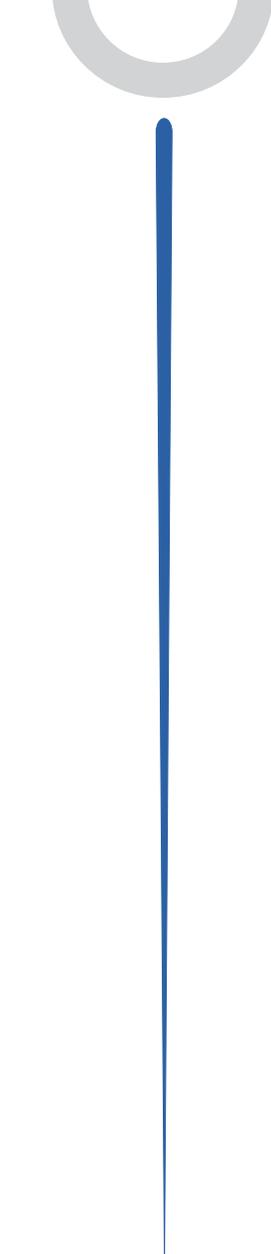
current proposals for peace in the Middle East, the Arab Peace Plan and the Middle East Conference in Annapolis, offer limited hope, but with significant hurdles ahead.

Whether within the context of the Arab League Peace Plan or the Annapolis Process or outside of them, it is necessary to conceptualise creative instruments to build peace. The **fifth** part discusses some plausible next steps. It concludes that efforts have to be extremely creative, energetic, and essentially inclusive. Under this guiding theme, this section reviews the experience of the European Union, the Northern Ireland Peace Process and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. It examines the applicability of these experiences, and particularly a CSCE-like process to the Middle East, by first looking at the overall context in which the CSCE has brought about an easing of tensions in Europe, and then comparing it with the context of the Middle East.

Finally, taking into account the relative successes and failures of past peace initiatives, the **sixth** part proposes a three-phase approach that aims to avoid failures in the past, and examines the question of local ownership of peace process in the Middle East. The **seventh** part presents our conclusions.

A Deteriorating Situation of Conflict

This part provides a cursory overview of (1) the short-term historical background and reasons behind the complex conflict in the Middle East, and (2) emerging trends.

1.1 A Short-Term Historical Perspective of Conflict in the Middle East

While there were numerous conflicts in the region before 1991 (the Israel-Palestine/Israel-Arab conflict, Iran-Iraq war, civil war in Lebanon), generally conflicts were restricted to the immediate parties to each conflict. Since the early 1990s parties in each conflict have become more diverse and less easy to identify. The 'battle grounds' are no longer restricted to specific territories under dispute; they could happen to be anywhere in the region or even beyond.

In the 1990s two contradictory developments took place. On one hand the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991 and the Oslo Process, kindled hope. On the other, the Gulf War of 1991 resulted in extensive US presence in the region, giving rise to strong anti-American sentiments in regimes in Iraq, Iran and Syria, as well as in significant segments of society within states that were otherwise viewed as 'moderate' by the West (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt). In 2000 the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian people collapsed with the onset of the second Intifada.

The rifts in the region widened with the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the US response in the form of the 'War on Terrorism', classifying many organizations that opposed American strategic interests in the Middle East as terrorist organizations. This created a vicious cycle giving birth or strength to groups that were formed not only to oppose the US, but also to every entity that could be seen as 'an occupational force' (especially Israel) or as forces tampering with traditional values of societies (a number of so-called 'moderate' governments in the region).

The Iraq War of 2003 added another complication. By bringing Sunni governance in Iraq to an end, Iran was deprived of one of its main opponents in the region (the other being Saudi Arabia). Since 2003, Iran has thus been able to wield considerable power in the region, and has added further dimensions to the conflict by supporting anti-Israel factions in the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Syria. Finally, sectarian violence, mainly between Sunnis and Shiites, has been on the increase throughout the region. In this process, the problem of finding lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinian people has been largely ignored, despite American attempts to restore peace between Israel and the Palestinian people with a regional conference in this last year of the second Bush Presidency.

1.2 Emerging Trends

Growing Influence of Iran

Iran, with some help from Syria, is set to move from an indirect to a direct role in the regional conundrum. It challenges Saudi and Egyptian leadership of the region, particularly through proxy wars in Lebanon and Iraq. In the Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia's prominent role and revered status in the Israel-Palestinian peace process is endangered by Iran's backing for Hamas. The Mecca Agreement between Hamas and

Al-Fatah, reached under Saudi sponsorship has been undermined both by Iran and the US. Iran's President has openly called for the annihilation of Israel, thus raising the pitch in the war of rhetoric.

There are fears that this situation could polarize even further with the prospect of Iran developing nuclear weapons, which it could use to dominate in the Middle East, further undermining the influence of Saudi Arabia. It is therefore likely that relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran will further chill. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is using its diplomatic capital to prevent an all-out war against Iran, which could result in adverse consequences for Riyadh.

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Syria deteriorated sharply after the assassination of the Saudi-backed Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, who was critical of Syria's meddling in Lebanon's internal affairs. However, a key reason for tension between Saudi Arabia and Syria is the latter's strategic alliance with Iran. In 2007, quarrels between the two nations escalated to the extent that the Arab League felt forced to intervene diplomatically in order to defuse the situation. Saudi Arabia has also sought the assistance of France to try to lower tensions in Lebanon. Despite tactical Saudi diplomacy to reduce the strains with Iran and Syria, long term strategic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran continues. Emboldened by the success of its proxies on the battleground, Iran may enter the fray directly at an opportune time.

Iran's role will finally be determined by its internal dynamics. Since the victory of Ayatollah Rafsanjani in the election for the chair of the Assembly of Experts (an important body under the Islamic constitution being the only one to which even the Supreme Leader is accountable) two camps have clearly emerged in Iran's clergy ranks. A victory of the moderate camp can not be ruled out. This could lead to a genuine rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia leading to Iranian cooperation in the peace process in the region. Until such a dramatic turnaround takes place, Iran can be expected to try to increase its influence in the region at the cost of other players.

Russian Diplomacy

Russia is currently pursuing a very different style of diplomacy in the Middle East than in its Soviet days. Its Middle East foreign policy at present can neither be defined as pro-Arab, nor pro-Israel. In fact, it appears to be strategically driven and is non-ideological. It is constantly trying to balance its relations with rival players, at times siding with one, and on other occasions cooperating with others. As a result, Russia has been able to restore some of its economic and strategic influence of the past. Russia under Putin (either direct or indirect Putin rule) seeks to restore some of its glory. While it may cooperate with the United States and China in certain spheres, it wants to emerge as the great power it once was.

Russia has been developing friendly relations with Israel, as well as with Arab states. While maintaining its traditional role as an arms supplier to the region, Russia has also been successful in opening new markets in the Middle East, especially in the energy sector. It has successfully signed energy deals with Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Jordan and Israel.

In recent years, Russia has been following a policy of cooperation with Israel. Direct trade between the two countries is close to US$ 1.5 billion and they are working together in sectors such as heavy industry, aviation, energy and medicine. Maximum cooperation between Russia and Israel has occurred in the field of counter-terrorism. The two nations are also jointly producing and selling military equipment. Russia has also condemned Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's statement in October 2005 that Israel should be 'wiped off the map'.

However, ties between Russia and Israel have not been able to develop to their maximum potential for a number of reasons, one of them being Russia's refusal to put Hamas and Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organizations. When Hamas was invited to Moscow in 2004, it caused tensions between the two countries. Russia also continues to support Iran's nuclear program. In exchange for cooperating with the Iranians on their nuclear program, Russian

However, ties between Russia and Israel have not been able to develop to their maximum potential for a number of reasons, one of them being Russia's refusal to put Hamas and Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organizations. When Hamas was invited to Moscow in 2004, it caused tensions between the two countries. Russia also continues to support Iran's nuclear program. In exchange for cooperating with the Iranians on their nuclear program, Russian companies are able to secure stakes in oil and gas projects in Iran. A further cause for tension is the Russian sale of arms to Syria. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was invited to Moscow in January 2005, where 73% of Syria's US$13.4 billion debt to Russia was waived. In April 2005, Russia sold missiles to Syria. In early 2007, there were also reports of Russia being in the process of building permanent naval bases in Syria, although Russia has officially denied these reports. Russia has also publicly objected to some of Israel's policies.

At the same time Russia has also tried to placate Israel by continuing bilateral cooperation. In a bid to keep good relations with Israel, Russian supplies of arms to Syria have been cut in quantity and quality in recent years. An arms deal between Syria and Russia was shelved in 2004, due to Israeli and American pressure. In addition Russia sided with the US, Europe and Israel in pressuring Syria to withdraw from Lebanon after the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

Hitherto, Russia has successfully balanced its relationships with some rival nations and interests in the Middle East. Its military ambitions in the region are also beginning to be visible. In the future, the continued success of this strategy would give Russia greater influence over the region. Russia's neutral and/or warm relations with various countries in the Middle East could be used in the future as a bargaining factor.

Chinese Engagement

With its unprecedented rise in oil consumption, China has increased trade relations and investment in the Middle East. It is estimated that China's demand for oil will reach 9 million barrels a day by 2020, and will need to satisfy 60% of its energy needs through oil imports. A good portion of this oil will come from the Middle East; hence China's partnerships with major oil producers in the region such as Saudi Arabia and Iran have increased significantly. Already, Saudi Arabia is China's biggest trade partner in West Asia and North Africa, and was China's main supplier of oil in the first half of 2007. In October 2004, China signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Iranian government for the sale of 10 million tons of Iranian oil per annum to China over the coming 25 years. Apart from Saudi Arabia and Iran, China has struck deals with a number of other states in the Gulf region, increasing the volume of oil imports and trade opportunities. These developments suggest an increasing role for China in the region.

China's relationship with the Islamic countries is not confined to oil trade. China is also wooing investments from rich Arab states, in an effort to build comprehensive business partnerships. The phrase 'the new silk route' is being revived in some circles.

There is a possibility that China's economic relations in the region will be transformed into strategic ones at some stage in the future. Already China has supported Iran and Syria diplomatically and has been supplying them with weapons. While China has argued that it is not interested in meddling in the internal affairs of its trading partners, there is a risk that these weapons might reach non-state actors such as Hezbollah and Hamas through their alliances with Iran and Syria, and may thus be used against Israel and Lebanon. Since 2006, however, China's policy shifted slightly, with the country occasionally criticizing Iran's nuclear program. In general, with much of its economy depending upon increasing energy imports, China may choose to make its presence felt in influencing the course of events in the region, in order to secure a degree of stability for its oil imports. Furthermore, a decade or so later, a stronger China may pit its own interests in the region against those of the world's largest oil importer, the US. There are already some indications of long-term Chinese aspirations in the region. While

and Shiites in Iraq and Lebanon, between Kurds and others in Iraq, and between Shiites and Christians in Lebanon could lead to mass radicalization within these countries and could instigate further violence throughout the region along sectarian lines. Friction along sectarian lines also exist in other Gulf States and Yemen (Sunni vs. Shia), in Syria (Sunni vs. Alawi vs. Durzi vs. Kurdish), in Egypt (Muslim vs. Copt), and in the Maghreb States (Arab vs. Berber tribes). If internal disparities and mistrust between communities increases, the conflict situation in the Middle East will deteriorate sharply, with possible flash-points for violence throughout the entire region.

Furthermore, the perceived success of Hezbollah in the 2006 Lebanon War and in resisting Israel's attempt to eliminate it could have serious repercussions throughout the region by encouraging more actors to take to asymmetric warfare. One example is the Mahdi Army in Iraq which has successfully expanded its support and power.

Scarcity of Water

Water is an issue of the utmost importance in an area as arid as the Middle East. The region is one of the most water scarce in the world with an average annual availability of 1200 cubic meters per person. While wars have not been directly fought over water, it would be foolish to ignore the indirect role played by water stress in past wars and perhaps more prominently in future wars. The 1967 Six Day War between Arabs and Israelis had its origins in a water dispute between Israel and Syria over access to the Jordan River. At present Israel's confiscation and domination of Palestinian water resources is a major impediment to the resolution of the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict. Israel is alleged to have diverted up to 75% of all water emanating from the Jordan River, leaving negligible amounts for Syria and Jordan, and severely cutting access to water for Palestinians. Further, by clubbing the water issue under 'Final Status Negotiations' under the Oslo II Accord - a status that has yet to be reached - Israel continues to deny Palestinians even minimum daily requirements of water. This has led to a situation in which 26% of Palestinian West Bank residents have no access to running water, and spend an estimated 40% of their household expenditure on purchasing water.

There have also been tensions between Egypt and Sudan over access to Nile water, between Iran and Iraq over access to the Shatt al Arab, as well as between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq over the use of the water of the Tigris River. In each of these conflicts, states have claimed access to water resources at the expense of other states, thus increasing the likelihood for low to medium intensity conflicts. To date these issues have not been solved, with water scarcity continuing to determine the daily lives of a large percentage of people in the region. Especially severe in this respect, is the situation in the Palestinian Territories with water accessibility of less than 320 cubic meters per person per year. The overall situation in the Middle East is projected to deteriorate even further, thus increasing the likelihood of uprisings and conflict. By 2025, 300 million people in the Arab world will be living under conditions of water scarcity with about 500 cubic meters of water per person per year. Therefore, even if states in the region and external stakeholders are able to reach an understanding on strategic issues, water scarcity could threaten stability, adding to regional complexity.

Cost of Conflict

The implications of the growing complexity of the situation in the Middle East are apparent. If there are no immediate steps towards resolving these issues in an integrated and inclusive manner, the conflict will deteriorate further, leaving less and less room for resolving it. This section outlines both the direct and indirect costs of conflict in the case of aggravation of the conflict or even maintaining the status quo.

2.1 Direct Cost of Conflict

Civilian Casualties

The various conflicts in the Middle East have already inflicted large numbers of civilian and military casualties, although precise numbers are hard to come by. With conflicts expected to become more intense and complicated throughout the region, a sharp rise in civilian casualties can be expected.

Damage to Infrastructure and, Basic Needs Amenities and Curtailed Access

An escalation in conflict almost always brings with it the destruction of infrastructure, such as strategic roads, bridges, airports, sea ports, etc. During the 2006 Lebanon conflict, wells, water mains, storage tanks, pumping stations and water treatment works were destroyed throughout South Lebanon. In Iraq, much of the infrastructure is still in disarray. It is non-existent in parts of the Palestinian Territories.

Curtailing access to infrastructure and basic needs amenities is also a method of warfare, which could be used with increasing frequency in conflicts in the Middle East. Israel has made ample use of this already by depriving Gaza of basic supplies of fuel, electricity, and other critical supplies. Filippo Grandi

of the UNRWA has warned that, due to this situation, "Gaza risks becoming a virtually 100 percent aid-dependent, closed-down and isolated community within a matter of months or even weeks. Effectively," he said, "policies such as these are bound to create hotbeds of extremism and violent retaliation, as statistics throughout the world have shown that there is a clear correlation between deprivation of basic goods/amenities and violence/insurgencies."

The Refugee Camps Tinderbox

With actual and projected conflicts severely diminishing personal security, refugee flows ensue whenever personal security (physical, economic or otherwise) is in danger. Typically, refugees find sanctuary in refugee camps in neighbouring states. These refugee camps have been sites of violence and conflict in the past.

The Lebanese Nahr al-Bared camp's deadly 15-week standoff between Fatah-al-Islam and the Lebanese army that began in May 2007 is a sign of future possibilities for violence in refugee camps. Since 1948, over 4.3 million Palestinian refugees have lived in slum-like camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These camps have been fertile recruiting grounds for militant Islamists throughout the region. Furthermore, clashes between Hamas and Fatah in the Palestinian Territories are also fought out in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, for example in Miyeh Miyeh.

Like Lebanon, Syria and Jordan fear violence with their massive refugee populations from the Palestinian Territories and Iraq, especially since they feel unable to provide even the most basic needs to the massive refugee populations within their respective countries.

Help from the international community in this respect has been meagre. The UNHCR estimates that over four million Iraqis have been displaced from their country by violence. The vast majority of them have fled to refugee camps throughout the Middle East since 2003. Estimates have also identified the Iraqi refugee crisis as the fastest growing in the world, with more than 100,000 people fleeing the country each month throughout 2006. If violence breaks out in these massive refugee populations, and hardliners mobilize factions within the groups, the consequences could be disastrous for the region, with states becoming weaker and more porous for extremists.

Knowledge Crisis and Increasing Unemployment

In circumstances of conflict, defence budgets are usually increased exponentially, mostly at the cost of education and health. Furthermore, those that are educated often tend to move abroad, in search of better employment opportunities there. The effect is a brain drain from the country which is a party to conflict. In Iraq, for example, more than 40% of the middle class is believed to have fled the country by 2006, with figures among doctors coming close to 80%. In the Palestinian Territories, expenditures for education and health constitute only 3% of the national budget, while the defence budget has shot up tremendously from 11% in 1998 to 20% in 2002. More recent unofficial figures show a further marked skewing towards defence.

Lack of education also produces huge unemployment. In the Palestinian Territories unemployment rates are a staggering 38%, with the World Bank projecting that these figures will double by the end of this decade. Unemployment in many other countries is estimated to be between 20-30%.

Being unemployed essentially leaves young people disillusioned, and may create fertile recruiting grounds for extremist groups in the region. Demographic tendencies exacerbate these developments, as countries in the Middle East are among the fastest growing and youngest populations in the world.

Disease and Lack of Access to Clean Water

Any escalation in conflict will inevitably cause outbreaks of communicable diseases and exacerbate the levels of malnutrition amongst children. In Iraq, child death rates due to lower respiratory infections and diarrhoea account for about 70% of deaths in children under five years of age. Escalating conflict also reduces people's personal security and restricts their access to food, medicines and medical supplies, sanitation, shelter, health services and not least, clean water.

With estimated water availability of just about 500 cubic meters per person per year in the region, nearly 90% of the region's population will be under water stress. This situation would be exacerbated even further in the case of increasing refugee populations and forced deprivation of water due to conflict. With scarcity of water, the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery also increases, specifically in areas riven with conflict and in refugee camps. Furthermore, less serious diseases like diarrhoea can become fatal diseases without adequate treatment, which is difficult if not impossible to provide in areas under severe water stress. Surveys indicate that in some communities in the Palestinian West Bank, infection rates from water borne diseases may be as high as 64%, with a quarter of all households suffering from diarrhoea.

2.2 Indirect Strategic and Economic Costs

Oil Supplies

The future energy mix of the global economy, especially of the US, the EU, Japan, Russia, and the growing economies of China and India will continue to be dependent on fossil fuels, including oil. OPEC member states hold an estimated 78% of verified remaining crude oil reserves. The OPEC member states of the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq and UAE account for an estimated 66% of reserves, supplies, and production. Some estimates say that by 2030, the Middle Eastern states may revert

back to the 1970s situation, in which they controlled as much as 83% of global oil reserves. This will be due in part to the quick depletion of reserves outside the Middle East.

Exploitation of strategic resources, however, demands a certain degree of stability in local economies and well as politics. Civil wars, terrorism and general instability are capable of significantly reducing the amount of oil exploited. The costs that a conflict situation imposes on oil production are listed below.

→ **Losses in Production:** Because of multi-faceted conflict, Iraq produces significantly less oil than it would could in peace-time. Paul Wolfowitz, former US Deputy Secretary of Defense had projected Iraq's oil revenues at 3 MBD (million barrels per day) in 2006-07, 6 MBD by 2010, and 7-8 MBD by 2020. At present, however, Iraq already lags behind with a produce of only 1.95 MBD in May 2007, with figures declining steadily. While it is instability that restricts the output of oil, the restricted output of oil may itself trigger further conflict as those in strategic need for oil may take destabilizing actions to satisfy their demand.

→ **Losses in Investment:** Due to instability in Iraq, a number of multinational oil companies have decided to halt operations and divert investment elsewhere to more stable energy-producing countries. But massive investment is needed to boost the devastated Iraqi economy and normalize oil production rates. It is estimated that Iraq would require at least US$ 35-40 billion over the next 10 years, in order to reach production rates of 5-6 MBD annually.

→ **Price Volatility:** Historically, spikes in oil prices have been dependent upon a complex interplay of factors. However, statistics clearly show that perceived or real threats of conflicts, including inter and intrastate wars and terrorism, have a profound effect on the oil price. The Iran-Iraq War, the 1990 Gulf War, the 2003 Iraq War, and the 2006 Lebanon War have all caused substantial increases in the oil price. The

October 2007 threat of Turkey invading Iraq pushed the oil price to an all-time high of about US$98 per barrel. It can therefore be expected that future conflict in the Middle East and the growing scarcity of oil, will increase the oil price even further. This will have devastating effects on the global economy, with an increased cost of living.

→ **Environmental Costs:** Conflict always also has intended and unintended environmental impacts if warring factions attack the oil resources of the other side. Israeli attacks on strategic fuel tanks, in 2006 resulted in the pollution of much of Lebanon's coastline. During the First Gulf War 6-11 million barrels of oil leaked into the sea, causing the largest ever oil slick and effectively eliminating marine life along 800 miles of coast between Kuwait and Iraq. While in the case of the 2006 Lebanon War countermeasures to the catastrophe were delayed due to the lack of a ceasefire between the warring sides, the clean up after the First Gulf War cost more than US$ 700 million. Of course even the most thorough clean ups are unable to restore pre-catastrophe conditions.

It can be expected that actors from within the region, as well as hegemonic actors from without, will develop ever more aggressive policies to satisfy their growing needs for oil, whatever the situation on the ground. These aggressive policies could play out in a variety of forms, which could include pitting actors from within the region of the Middle East against each other, thus spurring further conflicts or aggravating old ones.

A stable political and economic environment (where all can have a fair share of the profits) is necessary in the Middle East, if there is to be some reduction of the risk of violent conflict revolving around the actors involved in exploiting, exporting and importing oil.

Weapons Proliferation and Arms Race

With the worsening of conflicts throughout the region, the demand for weapons, including WMDs, is increasing. The US, the UK, France and Russia are
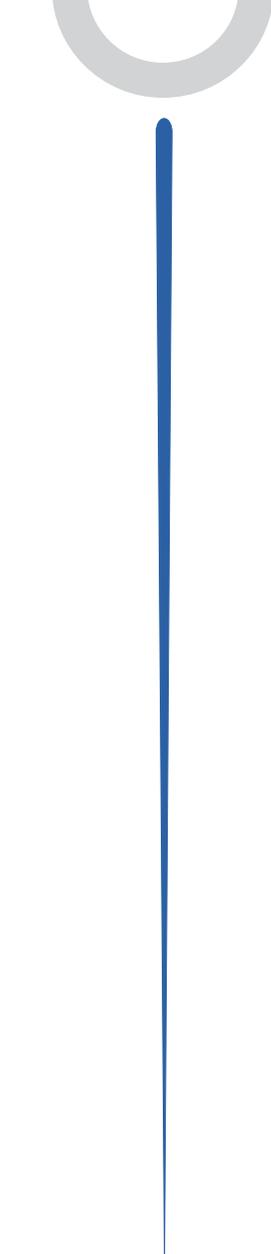
all vying to sell weapons to the Middle East, with arms deals being struck with their respective allies and business partners. The Bush administration has announced arms deals at a value of more than US$20 billion to its strategic ally Saudi Arabia and five other oil-rich countries along the Persian Gulf in the context of its 'War on Terrorism'. Furthermore, the US has struck 10-year military packages with Israel (at a value of US$30.4 billion), and Egypt (US$13 billion). Russia provides military support to a number of regimes in the Middle East, including Iran. All these weapons can easily reach extremist groups, and may empower non-state actors, militias and private armies to further destabilize the region through asymmetric warfare. They may also be used by states to propagate national interests at the expense of other states' interests in the region, thus further fuelling and complicating the situation.

Added to this, is the possible intention of Iran to produce nuclear weapons, and the likelihood of other states acting alike to maintain the balance of power in the region (i.e. Saudi Arabia) or to counter Israel's presumed nuclear strength. Egypt and GCC countries are already talking about the need to set up nuclear plants for civilian energy production. Experience shows that once a country in a troubled region acquires nuclear capacity, it is can develop military capacity. The overall complexity of the conflict situation in the Middle East, which is set to become even more fraught, might lead to the accidental and/or intentional use of nuclear weapons within the region and beyond.

Past Peace Initiatives

The local actors and the international community realise the gravity of situation in the Middle East, and so several efforts have been made to achieve peace. The reasons for failure of these initiatives are complex, and include structural and design flaws. Most initiatives in the past have contributed to raising the level of interaction between long-time rivals, however, they have not resulted in sustainable agreements as they have depended on ad hoc approaches and often excluded important stake-holders from negotiations.

This part of the paper will briefly analyze previous talks and agreements, and distil out lessons that can be drawn from the failure of past peace initiatives. While there were peace initiatives before 1991, this paper will focus on those after the First Gulf War, as from this point onward the situation in the Middle East became increasingly complex. A comprehensive list of past peace initiatives can be found in the Annex to this paper.

1991: Madrid Conference

The Madrid Conference, which was sponsored by Spain, the US and the USSR, was the first occasion on which Israel officially entered into direct, face-to-face talks with Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians – even though the Palestinian delegation was not recognised as such and was appended to the Jordanian delegation. It was essentially the first-ever attempt to commence a more or less inclusive round of negotiations towards peace in the Middle East. The immediate and more short-term objectives were to strike a peace deal between Israel and its Arab neighbours, but the talks also incorporated regional and long-term issues, namely the distribution of water, general arms control, refugees, and economic development. While the latter talks were

held mainly on the multilateral level, the negotiations for peace between Israel and its neighbours were held bilaterally (Israel negotiated with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians). The momentum of the Madrid Conference brought with it a number of remarkable successes, such as the signing of the 1994 Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty, and more indirectly the facilitation of further talks between Israel and the Palestinians, leading to the 1993 Oslo Accords. Israel and Syria also came close to a treaty though these hopes did not materialise, with significant implications for the present day. It could thus be argued that the 1991 Madrid Conference created a comprehensive base for a Middle East Peace Process.

The main flaw of the Madrid Conference was that it did not have **a follow-up mechanism on a semi-permanent basis**. The conference itself was one time event. Once it was over, the fate of Middle East Peace was left to bilateral negotiations. As mentioned above, in some cases bilateral talks were successful and in some cases they failed. Had there been a long-term mechanism guaranteed by the international community, perhaps the outcome would have been different. With the lack of further progress, the momentum of the Madrid Conference was lost by the mid-1990s.

1993: Oslo Accords

An indirect outcome of the momentum of the 1991 Madrid Conference, the Oslo Accords were the result of secret negotiations between Israel and Palestinians in 1992, under the sponsorship of Norwegian mediators. The Accords essentially enshrined the mutual agreement that each side recognizes the 'right to exist' of the other. Included in the agreement were also, inter alia, security issues,

the holding of elections in the Palestinian Territories, transfer of land, transfer of civil power from Israel to the Palestinian Authorities, trade conditions and the release of Palestinian prisoners. The Oslo Accords were hailed as a success, and their contribution to the present discourse is significant. Indeed, in the absence of the Oslo Accords, it would probably be impossible to debate a two-state solution. The Oslo Accords facilitated peace for almost a decade – the longest period of peace that Israeli-Arab relations have ever seen. They changed the dynamic of conflict significantly and made the creation of the Palestinian Authority feasible – with all its limitations and weaknesses. Two Israeli and Palestinian politicians together said to a member of our research team: "Earlier ground zero was at the lowest level. We are still at the ground zero but thanks to the Oslo Accords, the ground zero is now at a much higher altitude. For instance, you would not even have the two of us talking together with you prior to 1991."

The main positive feature of Oslo Accords ultimately turned out to be their main impediment – high-level confidential negotiations unhampered by disruptive currents. In the initial stages it probably was important the negotiations were conducted in secret in order to make them happen. However, at a later stage it was necessary to build a large coalition of stake-holders – and particularly to include extremists from all sides. In the absence of such a popular and broad coalition, the Oslo Accords only really engaged top decision-makers. In addition each accord in the 1990s was a separate event, only loosely connected with other treaties. The Oslo Accords were a major innovation in the history of peace-making. Their failure can mostly be traced to the failure to transform the spirit of Oslo into an **institutional architecture of regional importance**.

1994: Gaza-Jericho Agreement

The Gaza-Jericho Agreement contained agreement on the part of Israel to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and Jericho within a time frame of three weeks. Furthermore, this agreement contained provisions for the establishment of the Palestinian National

Authority. However, despite these seemingly major compromises on the part of Israel, the wording was too incomplete and vague, with both signatories interpreting certain passages to their advantage. There was **no dispute settlement mechanism**. Had there been an ongoing regional process, it might have been possible to address the concerns of the parties. The Oslo Accords and the Gaza-Jericho Agreement certainly lifted Ground Zero in Israeli-Palestinian relations. In 1991 there was no official Palestinian delegation at Madrid. In 2007 Prime Minister of Israel and President of the Palestinian Authority meet regularly. This represents a political and psychological breakthrough. However, had there been an ongoing institutional mechanism the breakthrough may have been converted into sustainable results.

2002: Arab Peace Initiative

The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which was adopted at the Beirut Summit of the Arab League, was initiated by Saudi Arabian Crown Prince (now King) Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz. This initiative was the Arab League's second attempt to bring about peace in the Middle East, the first being the Fahd Plan of 1982. In general the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative could be considered more advanced than the Fahd Plan as it was slightly less ambiguous in its wording, and less strict in its demands, not least since for the first time in history it explicitly offered the prospect of 'peace' to Israel, and official recognition as a legitimate member of the international community with normalization of relations with all twenty-two states of the Arab League. The rationale of, and condition for, the implementation of this peace initiative was the notion of 'land for peace', which refers to the handing back, on the part of Israel, of lands captured during the 1967 Six Day War, including the return of the Golan Heights to Syria. Furthermore, what was demanded was the recognition and establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as provisions for a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, to be agreed upon in accordance with Section 11 of UNGA Resolution 194.

Initially, the 2002 Arab Peace Plan was welcomed by all sides (including Israel) not least since this approach was the first serious attempt for peace that originated in the region. However, the momentum waned within days of its proposal, even before substantive progress could materialize. This can be ascribed to some inherent features of the Arab Peace Plan itself as well as to the wider context of the conflict situation. In terms of the latter, what proved decisive was the peak of violence by Palestinians in the wake of the Second Intifada, the climax of which was reached with the Netanya suicide attack immediately after the announcement of the Peace Plan. As a consequence, Israel became even more conscious of its immediate security situation significantly hampering efforts to negotiate peace. When Israel entered and attacked targets in Gaza and the West Bank, the Peace Plan could be considered as having failed. Finally, the war in Iraq within a year of the Arab Peace Plan threw the entire region in chaos, raising anti-US sentiment across the region and hostility towards Israel, not merely for historical reasons but because of Israel's close association with the United States.

The Peace Plan was revived in 2007 again under Saudi sponsorship. This is discussed separately elsewhere in this paper.

2003: Roadmap for Peace

The Roadmap for Peace was drawn up by the Middle East Quartet, consisting of the EU, UN, Russia and the US. The Roadmap was intended to constitute a blueprint for simultaneous actions to be taken in three stages. The main aim was a settlement of the Middle East conflict by 2005.

There was **no sound enforcement mechanism**, as the Roadmap for Peace relied upon voluntary compliance of the parties in question. However, neither side has shown significant will for compromise and compliance, and from these facts alone, the plan must be considered as having failed.

Furthermore, the Roadmap remained vague, leaving both the Palestinians and Israelis in the dark over much of the process as regards the settlement of

crucial issues such as the fate of Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem, settlement policies, border demarcations, and the distribution of water and basic facilities. These issues were to be resolved towards the very end of the process. However, as these issues constitute the very core of contentious issues, both actors were not very enthusiastic about the first part of the talks.

Finally, and probably most crucially, the Roadmap for Peace demanded asymmetric commitments from the parties in question. For example, it demanded complete cessation of terrorist activities from the Palestinians, but it did not put a demand on the Israelis with regards to indiscriminate and even brutal military activities.

Looking at the failures of past peace initiatives then, a number of contributing factors stand out:

➔ **Non-inclusivity:** None of the peace approaches was conducted with all relevant direct and indirect conflict parties at the negotiating table. Since the conflict situation in the Middle East turns ever more complex by the day, with a growing inability to solve one conflict without addressing other interrelated conflicts, there is a need for future talks to be absolutely inclusive. Boycotts of specific actors that hold the key to solving conflicts, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, are simply not viable. Such a policy of exclusion actively isolates key actors, makes them more radical and violent, and jeopardizes any possible success of talks and agreements, and their implementation. In spite of Hamas having won the 2006 Palestinian elections (almost universally accepted as having confirmed to democratic norms) much of the international community, led by Israel, the US, and the EU, refused to accept Hamas as a legitimate political actor, based on charges of terrorism. Thus, Hamas was excluded from participating in the Middle East Peace Process, and unsurprisingly Hamas responded with violence and aggression. Choosing Fatah as a substitute representative

of the Palestinian people was a defiance of democracy, as the party lost the elections. It cannot therefore lead to an outcome acceptable to the broad base of Palestinian people. The critical question is the basis on which those who engage in violence should be included – why Hamas and Hezbollah and why not Islamic Jihad? This problem can be addressed by applying the democratic principle. Hamas and Hezbollah have demonstrated that they have consent of people as reflected in elections – other groups such as Islamic Jihad have not passed this test. The question then is whether the use of violence is legitimised by including groups that may be democratically elected and yet use violent methods. Obviously the preferred option would be for all parties to give up violence and for all state parties not to resort to brutal and indiscriminate measures – military or otherwise. While the use of violence must be condemned and discouraged, it is possible to negotiate a ceasefire, a cessation of violence or a hudna in order to create a context for the participation in negotiations of all parties that have won the support of the people through some kind of a legitimate election process.

→ **Initiatives from actors outside the region:** The type and status of initiators and facilitators has a great bearing on the outcome and implementation of peace conferences. In this sense it can be seen that, with the exception of the Arab Peace Plans, all the major approaches were initiated and sustained by actors from outside the Middle East, mainly the US. These actors have a multitude of interests that do not necessarily coincide with interests of some of the people in the Middle East – for example the powerful promotion of the rights and privileges of Israel. Whether it was the Oslo Accords, the Wye River Memorandum or the Camp David Accords, the stance of outside actors has often brought active pressure

on one side to compromise on major issues. Any future approach needs to be owned by all the significant players in the region, as well as those outside. Considering the complications in the region, it would only be realistic to expect external parties to initiate or facilitate discussion and processes for peace, however, the parties within the region must be deeply involved and finally determine a substantive solution acceptable to them.

→ **Differing interpretations of agreements:** Vague wordings in agreements have caused differing interpretations of the same phrases by rival sides to the conflict. Rather than building trust, such divergences have led to distrust. Participants to future peace initiatives will need to make sure that the wording of agreements is, as far as possible, clear and unambiguous. It could also help if agreements contain specific arbitration, enforcement and control mechanisms, overseen by an impartial monitoring body.

→ **No provisions for sanctions in case of violations:** Most previous agreements did not mention mechanisms for remedying problems in the case of violations of the agreement. This has led to misconduct and has increased distrust between the conflict parties. Any future agreement will work best if it provides for effective incentives and remedies in cases of violation of the agreement.

Given the desolate state of the region of the Middle East, what is least needed is another failure of peace talks, as this would only aggravate the conflict situation. Consequently, it is necessary to avoid non-inclusiveness, external imposition of ideas and short term and ad hoc approaches. Finally, if peace initiatives move as far as the production of final documents, it is essential to avoid, so far as is possible, vague and ambiguous wording, and to introduce provisions for monitoring, arbitration and remedies in the case of violations.

What is on the Table Now?

4.1 Renewed Efforts from the Region: The 2007 Arab Peace Plan

In March 2007, at the Riyadh Summit, the Arab League offered a renewed effort to revive the Arab Peace Plan. This 2007 Peace Plan is almost identical in wording to the 2002 Arab Peace Plan. First reactions from Israel were positive. Prime Minister Olmert explicitly welcomed it as an important step to reanimate peace efforts for the region. However, at the same time Israel stressed that this peace initiative could only be seen as a starting point for future negotiations about its contents. Israel has extended invitations to Arab leaders to discuss the general content and wording of the 2007 Arab Peace Initiative. In response, the foreign ministers of Egypt (Ahmed Abul Gheit) and Jordan (Abdul-Ilah Chatib) paid an official visit to Israel, representing the Arab League. The Palestinians participated in the Riyadh Summit and viewed the proposal in good faith, with Hamas refraining from rejecting it.

At the Madrid +15 Conference in early 2007 the Arab delegates assured Israel that they were open to any negotiated solution to the problem of refugees, including a nominal return and financial compensation for the rest. There was also a feeling that the collective authority of the Arab states might be able to persuade political actors such as Hamas to endorse the plan. However, Hamas no longer draws strength from Arab support alone. Hamas as well as Hezbollah have developed strong relations with Iran.

Furthermore, while the Arab League again insists that the broad content that is included in its peace proposal is not negotiable, Israel on its part insists that there should be no fixed positions on the part of the Arab League, as this would otherwise render negotiations meaningless. In particular, it is clear that Israel still opposes conflict resolution efforts that are based on a full withdrawal from the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the return of refugees to their original homes in Israel. It does not help either that Israel continues to develop settlements in the Palestinian Territories.

It has seemed increasingly unlikely that the 2007 Arab Peace Plan would yield results, and the Plan has effectively vanished from news reports. In October 2007, a conference organized by the German Friedrich Naumann Foundation, discussed the Arab Peace Plan. Hisham Youssef, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, hailed the efforts of the international community to keep the Peace Plan on the agenda, but also remarked that the European Union should have done more. Since November 2007, the Annapolis conference brokered by the United States has moved to the centre-stage instead of the Arab League plan.

4.2 The November 2007 Annapolis Conference

The much-awaited and debated Annapolis Conference held on November 27, 2007 ended with Israeli and Palestinian leaders pledging to begin negotiations for a possible peace agreement that would resolve all outstanding issues. Meetings of a top-level steering committee were to be held once every two weeks, and both sides vowed to seek a final deal by the end of 2008. However, Israeli Prime Minister soon clarified that he was not bound by such a deadline.

The fact that the conference took place is itself significant. The fact that it attracted the participation of more than 40 countries, including important Arab states and the Arab League added to its value.

Under the deal reached at Annapolis, the two sides in effect agreed to begin once again implementing some elements of the Road Map, and, as in 2003, the United States agreed to monitor it. Such a deal raised hope that Israel would end the expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, while the Palestinian security forces would contain militant groups that attacked Israel. Both sides also agreed to begin negotiating a final peace deal, which previously had been reserved for the last phase of the Road Map. U.S. officials hoped that as the final agreement became clearer both sides would be inspired to make more rapid progress on the ground-level details that had previously stalled the Road Map.

But one must remember the reasons why the 'Road Map' had stalled in 2003. Its agreements were flawed and the Palestinians and Israelis had made promises they were both unwilling and unable to deliver.

The presence of important Arab figures, including Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal, signalled a very positive turn in the long history of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and showed a huge Arab willingness to give the US peace effort a chance. The summit also gave Israeli leader Ehud Olmert an excellent opportunity to directly address about 16 representatives of the twenty-two member Arab League, among them the Foreign Minister of Syria.

According to one school of thought, Saudi Arabia attended Annapolis more because of dislike for Iran and the latter's growing influence in the region, than to normalize relations with Israel. After falling out with Hezbollah in Lebanon, Riyadh was leading the Arab side at Annapolis and therefore suffered heavy criticism from Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The Saudis may have achieved what they asked for - a schedule for talks on a peace agreement - but there is little chance of seeing such a deal signed by Israel and the Palestinian

Authority on the White House lawn before the end of President Bush's term.

The participation of Syria was confirmed one day before the conference on the condition that the Golan Heights would be discussed at the conference. The demand was met by Washington, though it accuses Damascus of supporting militant Palestinian and Lebanese groups. At the venue, Syria made its position clear that negotiations can continue and normalization can be achieved only when there is total Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 Arab land. Talks between Israel and Syria collapsed in 2000 after Damascus declined an Israeli offer to withdraw from the Golan Heights, which it captured in the 1967 Six Day War, saying that the Israeli offer did not encompass the full territory. Some circumstances might have changed in the past seven years, but opinions within the respective countries have not changed so much, and the future will tell whether the Golan conflict will see an end some time soon.

Another implication of Syria's participation could also be the possibility of cooling of relations between Syria and Iran.

Arab media sources throughout the region pointed to one major glitch that could undermine the effort to obtain peace in the Middle East- the absence of representatives from Iran and Hamas, the militant group that won Palestinian legislative elections and now controls the Gaza Strip (effectively half the population of any future Palestinian state). Neither was invited, and both condemned the conference as a waste of time. According to an Iranian newspaper, the participation of the Palestinian delegation seemed futile without the support of its people, since the resistance movements had boycotted the conference. The Annapolis Process in its present form therefore offers only limited hope with several difficulties on the way.

Lessons from Other Experiences

Both the 2007 Arab Peace Plan and the 2007 Middle East Peace Conference in Annapolis are positive efforts but both have a limited approach focussed on states, at a time when non-state actors have assumed importance at the ground level. These initiatives also treat the Palestinian conflict as thought it was independent of the conflicts in Iraq and Lebanon. While such efforts may ignore the growing complexity of the situation, realities on the ground move apace. It is necessary to develop as many creative options as possible, which can be taken up either in the context of the Annapolis Process or outside it.

However, due to the peculiar conflict setting in the Middle East, there are few, if any examples that could provide lessons for conflict situation in the region. Considering the broad contours of the regional dynamic, where one conflict cannot be solved without the resolution of other, at times latent, conflicts in the region, it is essential for all stakeholders in the region to talk to each other in a structured way. Ideally, a semi-permanent and institutionalized forum for all concerned parties should be established. However, it is not politically possible to establish such a broad forum at this point. What is necessary initially is to conduct extensive confidence building measures (CBM's) in order to eventually reach the point where such institutionalized dialogue is possible. Commonalities between all concerned parties need to be found, which could form the foundation for talks and negotiations about more critical issues.

What is thus needed in the long-term is the establishment of a regional security and cooperation organization to function as a forum to alleviate conflict. Regional security organizations have been hailed in Chapter VI, Art. 33 (I) of the UN Charter, which

explicitly stresses the importance of institutionalized regional arrangements to sustain peace. Such regional frameworks nowadays exist in almost all regions in the world. Some have been broadly modelled after the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)-process, which essentially was a prolonged CBM to help ease the relationship between the two rival power blocs, and which has contributed to the reduction of hostilities between the two power blocs during the Cold War - the US and the Soviet Union. The Middle East, however, hosts no such security and cooperation arrangement, and hostilities focus on differences rather than commonalities between the parties concerned.

Given the immense value which a regional security and cooperation framework, based on trust and common values, rather than prejudice and difference, could entail for the Middle East, it is appropriate to examine the applicability of a CSCE-like process for the Middle East. It is clear that the context in the Middle East is very different from the context in which the CSCE took place, and so it is necessary to draw lessons from the code of conduct and the context in which the CSCE took place.

The CSCE as a Model for the Middle East

The concept of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) has been a subject of debate among politicians, analysts, and academics for more than a decade. The rationale behind this discourse is the belief that through cooperation and confidence building, in the form of semi-permanent conferences on a high level, mutual trust can be gained by conflict parties and, on a long-term basis, sustainable peace in the Middle East can be achieved.

This part of the paper will elaborate the lessons that should be borne in mind when attempting to apply this concept to the Middle East. This will be done by–

(1) looking at the broad context in which the CSCE-process was initiated in Europe

(2) considering what efforts have been undertaken to apply such a process to the region of the Middle East

(3) examining the lessons to be learnt from both (1) and (2) with regard to the differing context of the Middle East, and finally

(4) assessing from the material in (1) - (3) the conditions - derived from the lessons learnt from the CSCE process - in which a Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCME) could take place.

What Made the CSCE-Process Possible?

The CSCE-process took place in a context which was determined by two main variables that at first glance appear contradictory - a novel policy of détente on the one hand, and the unchanged policy of confrontation between the power blocs on the other. While the former was based on an increasing level of cooperation between the two power blocs, the latter at the same time hinted at a certain mutual anxiety and distrust, resulting in a relative instability of relationship between the power blocs. Thus, signposts for both power blocs' anxiety in maintaining their respective status quo or increasing their influence included, on the part of the Eastern bloc, the violent suppression of the Prague Spring, and for the US the invasion of the Dominican Republic. But, with the realization of both power blocs that such policies were unsustainable in the long run, especially after the experience of the near-catastrophic Cuban missile crisis in 1963, both power blocs aimed at a policy of détente through Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and other measures.

Efforts such as these culminated in 1973 in the USSR proposal for a CSCE that aimed to maintain the status quo between the power blocs, so that no boundaries could be shifted by means of the use of force. After a number of rounds, the Helsinki Final Act was signed. It emphasised "better relations among themselves" (Helsinki Final Act 1975), and acknowledgement of the "need to exert efforts to make détente both a continuing and an increasingly viable and comprehensive process, universal in scope" (ibid), thus expressing the unanimous will of all participants to further make efforts towards normalization of the conduct of international relations. Significant also is that participating states were "mindful of their common history and recognizing that the existence of elements common to their traditions and values can assist them in developing their relations".

The substantive part of the agreement, however, consisted of three baskets that were concerned with (1) principles of the conduct of international relations (2) cooperation in economic, scientific, technical, environmental and security issues in Europe, and (3) principles of cooperation on matters concerning human rights issues. By far the most attention at that time was given to the first basket, the agreed principles of which were mainly statements on the concept of the inviolability of frontiers, state sovereignty and non-intervention in internal affairs. While most of these principles were already enshrined and agreed when the participating states signed the Charter of the United Nations, they fulfilled the major goal of containing the anxiety of the USSR about losing spheres of influence, as it was accepted that all boundaries which separated the Warsaw Pact countries from the West were now in principle not to be changed by the means of use of force.

In return, the USSR made certain concessions regarding the general protection of human rights and liberties. The second basket was mainly sought by the Member Countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), as a means of increasing exports. This was mainly a one-way route as imports were in principle discouraged by the socialist countries, which were proud of relying on their own 'flourishing industries'. While the COMECON countries were - due to the concessions made to their demand for improved economic relations and the enshrinement of their territorial status quo - at

that time frequently seen as the main victors of the agreement, this assessment was reversed after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. As it appeared, what was completely underestimated by these countries was the third basket of the agreement, which was mainly concerned with human rights within and among countries. Those provisions were taken as a source of inspiration for many of the dissident movements, and some would argue contributed to the demise of the Warsaw Pact.

It should be noted that even though the CSCE-process contributed significantly to the easing of relations between the East and the West, this process was not a markedly stable one and was, inter alia, highly dependent upon leadership issues.

While it was generally perceived to be a positive sign that the CSCE conferences were continued at all, the 'Helsinki spirit' of mutual goodwill was not transferred to and continued in the follow-up conferences in Belgrade (1977/78) and Madrid (1980/83). What became evident were diverging interpretations as to what the Helsinki Accords actually meant. For example, in the Concluding Document of the Belgrade CSCE Conference it was stated that "it was recognized that the exchange of views constitutes in itself a valuable contribution towards the achievement of the aims set by the CSCE, although different views were expressed as to the degree of implementation of the Final Act reached so far" and, plainly, that "consensus was not reached on a number of proposals submitted to the meeting".

That there were no signals for mutual agreement on many issues was commented on by many observers as evidence of a lack of will to accept rival interpretations. Self-determination of peoples, for example, was interpreted by Khrushchev as the "self-determination of the peoples of the Soviet Union", while Tito termed it the "self-determination of the peoples of Yugoslavia" – it did not mean the self-determination of certain 'fractions' of the population, such as the Ukrainians, Belo-Russians etc. Even more so, the CSCE meeting in Madrid was overshadowed by a deterioration of international relations, as the Reagan administration drove resurgence of hostilities between the power

blocs, setting back the successes previously made. Again, increased military spending, interventions and war rhetoric determined international relations between East and West.

In the concluding document of the Madrid Conference, it is said that participating states were "deploring the deterioration of the international situation since the Belgrade Meeting 1977". However, while implicitly acknowledging the lack of sincerity between both sides, they also stressed that "renewed efforts should be made to give full effect to the Final Act through concrete actions, unilateral, bilateral and multilateral, in order to restore trust and confidence between the participating States", thus hinting at a new chapter of multilateralism between the power blocs. Indeed, the CSCE-rounds showed more positive results after the Madrid Conference, which was not least reflected in the Concluding Document of the Vienna Conference (1986-1989). For example, it read that "the participating States welcomed the favourable developments in the international situation since the conclusion of the Madrid Meeting in 1983 and expressed their satisfaction that the CSCE process has contributed to these developments".

The above outlined background of the CSCE allows for the following observations that refer to the general context in which the Talks were held, and the code of conduct that was employed:

➔ a **general climate of easing of tensions** between the power blocs, and the expressed will for continuation of this trend, culminated in the CSCE-process - it was not the CSCE process itself which set into motion this trend, although the process accelerated it;

➔ **both the East and the West had a pronounced interest in cooperation**, albeit both had differing visions of what should be the outcome; in the end it was a reconciliation of interests, which was **tailored to the specific, prevailing context**;

➔ a **simple system of international relations** prevailed, to be divided into the East, the West, and non-aligned countries;

→ all international actors, and parties to the conflict, were **states**;

→ there was clear leadership in both power blocs, and thus clear **negotiating partners**;

→ the **CSCE process was not a stable one**, with significant drawbacks as exemplified in the outcomes of Belgrade and Madrid meetings. This was due to a resurgence of the Cold War, under which the Helsinki Accord was frequently violated by both parties;

→ both parties agreed to cooperate only because they reserved for themselves **mutually exclusive interpretations** of the Helsinki Accord;

→ it is often claimed that the CSCE process accelerated or even **brought about the demise of the Warsaw Pact**, although it is hard to provide evidence for this. The exact role and extent in which the CSCE-process contributed to normalizing the relations is not known;

→ the Helsinki process was **owned by all actors within**.

Applicability of a CSCE-Process in the Middle East

Comparing the context in which the CSCE process took place, it is clear that a CSCME would need to be tailored so as to suit the very different context of the Middle East. There are significant differences between the circumstances in which the CSCE took place, and the present dynamics in the Middle East.

The first important lesson to be drawn from the CSCE Process is that it did not take place at the height of tensions between the two power blocs. Rather, important CBM's for the security of sea waters preceded the talks. In essence, the parties built on a momentum of trust. Even though a CSCME would be a CBM itself, it needs to build upon some advances, which ultimately must work to bring together the various actors. However, such a

thawing of relations can currently hardly be seen throughout the Middle East. It appears that for the foreseeable future, the region will remain a hotbed of tensions, defined not by commonalities but by differences that are growing rather than diminishing – unless sustainable and effective measures are taken.

Second, while both power blocs had cautious but sincere interests in conducting the Helsinki process, **not all actors in the Middle East are eager to communicate**, or make peace with each other. An obvious example is the extremely hostile relationship between Iran and Israel, and hostilities between Hamas and Hezbollah with Israel. It is not possible to find sustained peace without positive engagement of key actors that have a stake in the region, however extreme their views might be.

Third, **the simple bi-polar system of international relations that existed during the Cold War does not exist today**. With the rise of China, Russia, and other new major poles, the situation will become even more complex in the future. It is important to note that the Middle East itself is highly fractured in terms of political ideologies, sectarian and ethnic affiliations, and subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) competition between Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria. These differences are reflected in external alignments - the US has good relations with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq; the European Union with Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey – further complicating the ever-changing mosaic of alliances. With the relative decline of US power due to the rise of Russia and China, the context of international relations will become more complex. With the Middle East holding the vast majority of global crude oil resources, it is likely that global rivalries will be played out in the region. Taken the exponential rate at which the situation in the Middle East is likely to get more complex, this is another call for an immediate commencement of CBM's to work towards institutionalized regional cooperation. Failure to do so could result in a steadily decreasing prospect for such talks coming into being at all, as the numbers

of regional and global actors to be included would rise quickly.

Fourth, the drive for commencing **the CSCE Process came from within** (i.e. from those actors that were in conflict). While Israel's Peace Agreement with Jordan and Egypt had similar characteristics, other processes seem to be driven more from outside than within. It is essential for the initiative for an inclusive dialogue to emanate from within the region. Furthermore, it is critical for all actors to develop a common language.

Fifth, **the claim of some Western scholars that the CSCE Process brought about the demise of the former Soviet Union** may undermine participation in a similar process in the Middle East. The key question that many state actors in the Middle East ask is, "If the CSCE Process brought about the demise of states like the Soviet Union, will there be similar collapse of large Arab states?" Therefore, instead of a simple imitation of CSCE, it is important to stress that regional security and cooperation needs to be formed by consensus, using the language that is acceptable to all actors.

Sixth, **while the Helsinki Process concentrated on the relations between states, such an approach is not feasible in the Middle East, where many non-state actors have strong popular base**. Many processes have already failed due to the exclusion of Hezbollah and Hamas, the groups that enjoy a popular base among Arab youth but which are not acceptable to Israel and the US due to their use of violence. It is essential to emphasise that without the inclusion of groups with a popular base and adequate political capital to secure significant representation through elections, there will be no peace in the Middle East. It is critical to design a regime of incentives so that these groups rely less on violence and more on dialogue.

Finally, the main interest of both power blocs was to normalize their relations and to settle the status quo. While **most actors in the Middle East also aim at normalizing mutual relations, what is envisaged is *change***. This is specifically

true for non-state actors. An inclusive process must therefore first and foremost aim to define and frame the demands of each participant and then negotiate a just settlement. This will be a difficult process. In the case of the Helsinki Accords, this process was quickly settled as the boundaries 'as-they-were' were agreed to constitute legal boundaries. Boundary disputes however are a central part of the conflict in the Middle East. Without a settlement of these issues, peace will not come to the region. This implies that an inclusive dialogue is dependent upon extensive negotiations that should be carried out as CBM's.

Past Proposals for a CSCME

Already in the early 1990s, the idea for a CSCME was voiced by countries such as Spain and Italy. In 1991, when the conflict situation in the Middle East was much less complex, the idea of a CSCME was also voiced in the British House of Commons, where Atkinson MP argued that "the CSCE process offers to the Middle East a practical blueprint based on territorial integrity and the inviolability of frontiers". In the 1994 Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty, Article 4 set out that both parties "recognize the achievements of the European Committee and the European Union in the development of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and commit themselves to the creation, in the Middle East, of a CSCME […]. This commitment entails the adoption of regional models of security successfully implemented in the post World War era (along the lines of the Helsinki process) culminating in a regional zone of security and stability". Not long after, Turkey, too, endorsed a CSCME. However, the lack of action on behalf of all these actors suggests that Article 4 of the Peace Treaty constitutes a mere lip-service.

In 2000, MPs of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) submitted a motion for a CSCME to the German Bundestag, which was rejected. In 2002 former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Germany, Klaus Kinkel, published an article entitled CSCE for the Middle East, arguing that "the Middle East crisis is not only a conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It is also an array of regional disputes over water, crude oil, economies, and unstable societies in a

jumble of interests involving multiple players and issues, both inside and beyond the region". It is this rationale which made Kinkel, with the support of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), call for an inclusive dialogue in the Middle East to solve these issues on a multilateral level. Participants, in his opinion should be Israel, the Palestinian Authorities, the US, the EU, Russia, the UN, neighbouring Arab states, Turkey, the Arab League and the GCC states. Due to the complexity of the situation at hand, Kinkel argued that the issue be tackled in 'baskets', like in the Helsinki Accords in 1975.

In 2006 the German Bundestag submitted a motion for such a conference process (16/3816). The rationale for this motion was that an inclusive dialogue is the essential precondition for peace and stability in the Middle East. It was argued that previous efforts in this direction, the conference of Madrid (1991), the Oslo Accords (1993), the Camp David negotiations (2000 and 2002), and the Road Map (2002) all have failed in their endeavours to bring peace. While some of these processes dealt exclusively with the Israel/Palestine issue, any peace process should be embedded into a regional approach, as all conflict issues in the region are seen as interrelated. Thus, it was argued that apart from Israel and the Palestinian Authority, participants in an inclusive process must be Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. The practical approach is that the Middle East Quartet (EU, UN, US and Russia) should facilitate and enable a suitable UNSC Resolution, and use their good offices to convince regional players, on a bilateral as well as multilateral level, of the importance of such a process.

In January 2007 at Madrid + 15 Conference, Gabrielle Rifkind of the Oxford Research Group presented a paper on a CSCE-type inclusive and semi-permanent mechanism for peace in the Middle East. However, her proposal was mostly aimed at engaging NGOs in early warning and rapid response initiatives as well as pre-negotiation.

In late October 2007, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNSt) organized a conference entitled "Sub-regional or Multilateral? New Approaches to Conflict-Management in the Middle East under Scrutiny", in which, apart from the 2007 Arab Peace Plan, the applicability of a CSCME was discussed. Feedback was mixed with regard to the direct applicability of a CSCE-like process to the Middle East, as it was deemed that too many crucial questions remained unaddressed. Rainer Stinner, MP of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), argued that the party had already made three attempts to formally introduce a motion for a CSCME, but failed in all instances. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, also FDP and former Foreign Minister, argued for a CSCME, as he saw great value in the way in which the CSCE has brought about advances in the East West conflict. Marc Otte, EU Special Envoy to the Middle East, found that a CSCME could well find widespread support throughout the EU. Most, however, argued that a CSCME could only be a mechanism to facilitate more cooperation after the conflicts have been resolved. However, a new approach by German academic Berthold Meyer received significant attention, in which it was argued that specific conflicts would need to be addressed one by one (in 'tents', instead of 'baskets' that merely address topics instead of conflicts) before a CSCME was proposed at the regional level. Thus, a CSCME was perceived more as an institution promoting cooperation once conflicts were resolved than a conflict-resolution forum.

Lessons from the Northern Ireland process

Another example of a peace process that can provide some inspiration, if not lessons, is Northern Ireland, most dramatically symbolised by the power-sharing government installed in Stormont in May 2007. It took ten years after the Good Friday Agreement (agreed in April 1998) for this day to arrive. The violent conflict in Northern Ireland had stretched back so long that nobody believed it could ever be resolved. Similarly, the conflict in the Middle East has outlasted numerous unsuccessful peace processes and threatens to get even more complicated with time. The situation in the Middle East is of course much more complicated as the number of actors, states and interests are more numerous and intertwined, yet there are some features of the Northern Ireland process that are

worth reviewing in the context of a future process in the Middle East, fully bearing in mind that each situation is different and there is no universal formula of conflict resolution.

Inclusivity: The Northern Ireland Peace Process is an example of the success of the principle of inclusivity in a peace building processes. Leaving out parties associated with paramilitary groups (e.g. Sinn Fein and the PUP) could have rendered the peace process useless and led to an increase in violence. The failure to include key stakeholders in any conflict isolates and alienates them and induces them to resort to violence even more than earlier. The recent Annapolis Conference on the Middle East failed to include Hezbollah, Hamas and Iran – three parties that have demonstrated their popular base through electoral processes and otherwise. The failure to include them can doom a process such as Annapolis, even though in the short run it may be projected as a victory for moderates. The question is whether the process should be about long-lasting peace through inclusivity or whether it should be about encouraging rivalry between moderates and conservatives.

Reconciliation: The Northern Ireland Peace Process was an idea built around principles of truth, mercy, justice and peace. Many local community groups in Northern Ireland were helpful in promoting reconciliation by bringing together enemy factions to work for peace, often with practical external assistance and funding. This work acted as a confidence building measure that went some way to challenge sectarianism and violence. There are local community groups and non-governmental organizations in the Middle East that attempt to bring together rival constituencies to work at building trust within communities.

Patience: Peace processes are never successful in a hurry - they require patience. In Northern Ireland, though the Sunningdale Agreement was signed in 1973, the situation actually got much worse for years until the 1985 signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement between the British and Irish Governments. With the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (itself the result of many years of painstaking week by week negotiation),

it still took another 10 years for the Northern Ireland peace process to reach full implementation in the power-sharing government at Stormont in 2007. In the case of the Middle East, the Madrid agreement of 1991 and the Oslo Accords might have led to some immediate hope and then disappointment, but they do represent building blocks at the foundation level of a process, which could take years to reach its completion. However long-term peace building does not mean inertia and no improvements. A sustained process provides a place where all issues to the conflict can be discussed and step by step, small milestones can be achieved that all contribute towards the resolution of the conflict. The success of any peace process requires patience for a comprehensive long-term incremental approach.

Facilitation: The Northern Ireland Peace Process beginning with the Anglo-Irish summit in 1980 involved both the British and Irish governments. Over the next fifteen years, through numerous joint agreements, declarations and initiatives, the Irish and British officials set up a structure of negotiations and identified fundamental principles upon which a political resolution to the conflict could be based. The Irish and the British governments treated the Northern Ireland conflict as a problem of disturbed and damaged relationships among all the communities, rather than a dispute between two states. When the Good Friday Agreement seemed shaky, the Irish and British governments got together and rescued it. The IRA ceasefire of 1994, encouraged by the Clinton administration, marked a turnaround in the Northern Ireland conflict. This was the first time that the Republican paramilitaries showed willingness for dialogue. The US, at that point of time, encouraged Sinn Fein into the political mainstream and their ultimate participation in the peace process. The British and the Irish governments also requested international mediation to facilitate the negotiations. The involvement of external powers in a conflict and their commitment to its long-term resolution lends credibility and objectivity to the peace process and builds international pressure for the early resolution. In the Northern Ireland peace process, parts of the

process were internationalized. For example, the decommissioning of illegal weapons was managed by an Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) under General John de Chastelain (Canada), Andy Sens (USA) and Tauno Niemenen (Finland). Cyril Ramaphosa of the African National Congress (ANC) and Marrti Ahtisaari (Finland) were also involved in the decommissioning of the weapons, and Nelson Mandela himself played a role in encouraging the pre-talks process. President Bill Clinton and Senator George Mitchell (USA) had a huge commitment to, and involvement in the Talks Process. Former Finnish Prime Minister Harri Holkieri was a joint chairman of the Talks Process, Richard Kerr (USA) former Deputy Director of the CIA joined Commissioners from the UK and Ireland on the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) and Judge Cory (Canada) led enquiries into disputed killings. These international figures with experience and credibility from other international conflicts encouraged the key figures in Northern Ireland.

In the Middle East too, the potential for success of a peace process would be magnified if international influence were put to constructive use. However, external facilitation will only work if the external facilitators have a sincere, long-term and unselfish interest in the stability of the region, overriding short-term strategic and economic interests.

Pre-negotiation: An important feature of the Northern Ireland process was reaching agreement on a set of principles (The Mitchell Principles) that set down the ground rules. There was also negotiated agreement on the details of the process. In other words, substantive talks were preceded by and benefited from 'Talks about Talks'. The Mitchell Principles were used as a basis of the last phase of negotiations in Northern Ireland from 1996 to 1998 when the Good Friday Agreement was finally achieved. These principles focus on peaceful means for resolving conflicts, decommissioning of weapons by paramilitary groups like the IRA, renunciation of force and negotiated settlement. In the Middle East, if adversarial groups and governments agree to similar principles, then long-term peace is possible.

Openness: When parties involved in negotiations convene openly to discuss issues to the conflict, it lends the process credibility and hope and also shows mutual respect and recognition. In the Northern Ireland Peace Process, along with the Irish and British government representatives, members of the key Northern Ireland political parties and nationalist groups met openly. This contributed significantly to building an atmosphere of trust and recognition in the communities. In the Middle East, this lesson takes on more significance as efforts on the part of external powers to resolve conflicts individually with nations has, at times, taken the form of secret talks. The Oslo Process needed to be secret in its initial phase considering the peculiar realities of relations between Israeli and Palestinian people. However, it remained a secret process between the elite for too long, unlike the Northern Ireland process which emphasised openness and confidence-building of populations at large. A copy of the Good Friday Agreement was delivered to every home in Northern Ireland before the referendum on its endorsement. In the Middle East, this has not been made possible until now. As a result of openness, the news media played a relatively positive role in the peace process in Northern Ireland, as opposed to the Israeli and Arab playing a negative role in the Oslo Process. The Northern Ireland process involved building a large degree of popular consensus in support of the Good Friday Agreement, with the news media acting at times as a tool for promoting peace.

Stalemate: It was only after years of conflict that it was realized that neither the Provisional IRA nor British armed forces were ever going to surrender. This realization alone did not end violence. It did lead to introspection, primarily amongst imprisoned activists. People began to think along the lines of what was realistically possible - in short, they began to realize that there was no military solution to this political problem, and to think about compromise in order to end the stalemate. This led to dialogue across different groups. In some respects, it is necessary to understand that there is a stalemate that needs to be broken in a creative way. The parties then have only two options: either to build a shared future in

a compromised win for both sides or to promote a death culture where young warriors from both sides die in the name of justice with futile unending loss for both sides.

Innovation: The Northern Ireland peace process was successful because it introduced innovative concepts like 'parallel consent'. It also borrowed and adapted the concept of 'sufficient consensus' and many other concepts and processes developed during the South African negotiations. For the Middle East, newer tools could be conceptualized and customized to the unique problems of the region.

Several leaders, notably including Tony Blair, who was a key player in the later part of the Northern Ireland Peace Process and is now the Quartet Envoy to the Middle East, have publicly spoken of the utility of drawing ideas and inspiration from Northern Ireland for a successful process in the Middle East.

Lessons from the European Union

The present day situation in the Middle East is in some respects comparable to the war-ravaged Europe in 1945. Constant conflict over decades has managed to curtail growth rate, infrastructure development and foreign investments, except in the oil-rich Gulf States. Governments are so busy trying to build up weapon systems or stack up the defence budgets, that issues like poverty, illiteracy, hygiene and sanitation, and employment get relegated to the backbenches. It is difficult to remember the degree of hostility between EU member states in the 1940s, and for decades and centuries prior to it. Some lessons from the EU experience can have an inspirational value in the present day Middle East.

➜ The appreciation in the aftermath of the Second World War that a new architecture of relations was necessary

➜ The use of economic cooperation as an instrument of neighbourly co-existence and co-prosperity. In 1950, Robert Schumann, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs came up with the idea of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), since pooling coal and steel industries in Europe would prevent wars between neighbours. It was based on supra-national principles and it created a common market for coal and steel for its founding nations. In 1951, ECSC was founded by Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Luxemburg and the Netherlands and it became the first supranational authority in Europe.

➜ The developmental nature of the Union – from ECSC to Common Market to EEC to EC to EU – and all on the basis of long term, negotiated, unanimous agreements.

➜ The openness (in principle at least) to all states in the region, and the respect accorded to all states, big and small, which adhered (all represented at the table and at Commissioner level).

➜ The setting of standards of democracy and the rule of law for full membership, as reflected in the well-known Copenhagen Principles, thus creating a shared value premise for neighbourly relations.

The Solution: Working Towards an Inclusive and Semi-Permanent Conference

As the previous sections have shown, the current conflict situation is not ready for installing a CSCME immediately. All earlier efforts to propose and establish a CSCME have failed. What is needed, rather, is a phased approach, drawing lessons from the Northern Ireland process with (1) extensive Confidence Building Measures on a case by case basis with regard to issues that are identified as the driving forces of the conflict situation in the Middle East; followed by a gradual movement towards an integrated regional security and cooperation network, (2) informal, non-committing, but inclusive Talks ('Talks about Talks') in order to define issues relevant for establishing a regional security and cooperation framework, to agree on issues of membership and rules of procedure; and (3) the establishment of an inclusive and formal semi-permanent conference, through which issues of contention may be deliberated upon in a peaceful manner, without resorting to the use of force. Given the complexity of the conflict situation in the Middle East, it is clear that this will be a long-term process. However, it is crucial that it is commenced as quickly as possible, due to the quick pace at which the conflict situation in the region is deteriorating.

6.1 Confidence Building Measures (CBM's)

The first phase consists of extensive Confidence Building Measures (CBM's), which would serve as the basis of inclusive and extensive future deliberations on resolving conflicts throughout the region in all their complexity. In this sense, CBM's could be seen as a process leading towards, or creating the environment for, initial agreements that give assurances of good-will to the opposing parties. Once the conflicting parties are assured of some good-will from the opposing party, it will be easier to work towards

peaceful negotiations over the conflicts. In this sense, it is important that CBM's address, first and foremost, aspects the immediate security concerns of the states and non-state actors in question. Some possible CBM's are outlined below.

➔ Shared appreciation of cost of conflict, particularly in the long run, by all parties in the region. If the parties cannot agree on a solution, they can at least share a broad framework of loss in human security, which can help generate the political will for peace.

➔ Removal of legal or effective bans on engagement or discussion with the parties that are considered 'enemies' and 'terrorists', as well as the removal of travel restrictions.

➔ Visits by special envoys, senior diplomats, editors of local language media, and civil society leaders from Israel to Arab countries and vice versa. (Dalia Rabin offered at the Madrid +15 Conference to host a public discussion on the Arab League Peace Plan in Israel – with Arab and Israeli participants.)

➔ Unity talks for ending the factional conflicts within Palestinian ranks.

➔ Talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran as well as Shia and Sunni leaders and preachers to help reduce the deficit of trust between sects and communities in the region.

➔ Israel's adoption of a humane and fair approach towards people in Gaza, ending blockades and barriers and stopping further settlements in the West Bank, accompanied by a Palestinian ceasefire (hudna) ensuring the stoppage of all missile attacks and other acts of violence against Israel's people.

→ Affirmation of commitment by the United States to develop viable options for its phased withdrawal from Iraq to generate confidence in the region.

→ Initiatives by academics, civil society groups and business groups to promote peace, examining ways to the reduce costs of conflict and promote economic inward investment, regeneration and cooperation.

The above list is illustrative and not exhaustive. It may be argued that some of the ideas outlined here would rather result from confidence than serve as instruments to build it. Our objective here is merely to highlight the need for CBM's. Several actors in the region as well as external facilitators will be in a better position to construct the most effective CBM's through a process of pre-negotiation.

It is a bit of a cliché to emphasise the importance of people-to-people contact. There are many groups in the Middle East – particularly in Israeli and Palestinian civil society – that are engaged in intensive bridge-building exercises. The failure of peace in the region underlies the importance of multiplying these efforts on a substantial scale. In the end, the future of the Middle East is about the future of people in the region and it is the people who have to take collaborative initiatives to shape it, with enabling measures by authorities and support from the international community. At present the effects of the 'War on Terror' actually disrupt many attempts to achieve this progress because of a short-term and limited view of what contributes to human security.

6.2 Talks about Talks

As the CBM's deliver results, it is necessary to **conduct preparatory talks for negotiations** among **all relevant actors**, in a multilateral environment. Such preparatory talks were held in a number of successful cases of formations of regional security cooperation structures including the CSCE and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It is essential to have a **clear policy objective** in mind, namely to pave the way for a CSCME or an inclusive and semi-permanent

conference for comprehensive peace, as 'Talks about Talks', for their own sake, will not lead to progress. These 'Talks about Talks' could broadly be conducted in two stages:

1. **Exchanging official views** at the level of senior officials and foreign ministers of all relevant entities in the region, including non-state actors, on what each actor perceives to be the key issues at stake with regard to security and cooperation in the region. At this stage it is not necessary to negotiate any of these views. However, it is important that the views be thought through by each relevant actor, before expressing them, as these will greatly affect the pace and possibly the outcome of the entire undertaking.

2. Based on the views put forward in the first step, the creation of working groups and committees to make recommendations for items to be put on the **agenda** of a CSCME (the equivalent of baskets in the CSCE). At this stage minor or pre-negotiations can help. An important part of this approach could be to introduce Mitchell-type pre-negotiations on principles, procedures and agenda. Recent work with Iraqi representative Sunni and Shia parliamentarians by South African and Northern Ireland negotiators led to just such a preliminary agreement on Mitchell-type Principles.

Considering divisions in the Middle East, it may furthermore be advisable to apply a phased approach even within the 'Talks about Talks' stage. For example, a first round of talks could be held without Iran. However, it would be helpful if Iran is able to be involved in some way before too long. Iran, albeit a difficult actor to integrate in such talks, is a crucial actor with a stake in most conflict settings in the Middle East. The findings of the US intelligence community that Iran actually stopped developing a nuclear weapon in 2003, and the victory of progressive forces in the election for the leadership of the Assembly of Experts in 2007, if followed by more such developments, may pave way for engagement with Iran.

Extra-regional actors, both with and without a stake in the region, may be able to assist these preparatory talks as the primary participants wish, be it as donors, auspices, mediators, or in other capacities.

6.3 The Long-Term View: Conducting the CSCME or an Inclusive and Semi-Permanent Conference for Comprehensive Peace

The preparatory talks can then slowly lead to a semi-permanent conference that itself eventually evolves into a formalized and institutionalized security and cooperation framework for the region (similar perhaps to CSCE, but with elements of the Common Market/EEC and tailored to the context of the Middle East).

Proposed Participants in Preparatory Talk

It is essential that the process is inclusive including not just states from the region and external powers with clear stakes in the region, but also actors with a strong and significant popular base and electoral mandate, even though they may be controversial for their reliance on violence,. At the beginning of 2008 Iran's influence in the Middle East is indirect and through proxies. It might be therefore possible to postpone immediate inclusion of Iran from a regional peace-making process, if the Arab states can mobilise collective political capital to include parties that are closely associated with Iran – mainly Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah. In fact, the main interest for Israel and the United States to support a regional approach to peace in the Middle East will be the hope to finalise long term arrangements without granting a veto over them to Iran.

The short-term approach of not involving Iran would however need to be altered in two circumstances. If Israel and the United States oppose the inclusion of Hamas and Hezbollah, these organisations will enhance their dependence on Iran to the extent that at some stage direct primary engagement with Iran will be essential. Israel and the United States have lost ground in the last ten years due to their failure to conclude a lasting settlement with PLO, which has enabled the rise of Hamas and Hezbollah. Any further dithering will bring Iran from periphery to the centre of the arena.

Also, if the US troops stay in Iraq is prolonged, or if the United States militarily attacks any other countries in the region, such acts will increase anti-American sentiment in the region and conversely increase Iran's popularity among youth. On the other hand, if moderate factions take power in Iran, the West (and Israel) might be willing to welcome Iran to the process. Moreover, since it has been found that Iran has not been developing nuclear weapons, one of the major reasons for antipathy towards Iran is removed, though suspicion remains strong in some policy circles. In early 2008, The Economist newspaper, known for its conservative views, support for the Iraq war and criticism of Iran, called for a grand bargain between the United States and Iran in an unusual editorial. Whether such an idea is merely academic or whether it represents 'smoke from the fire beneath' for The Economist to stake its prestige behind such thoughts is a matter of speculation. However, if and when such a grand bargain takes place, Iran would obviously find a place at the Middle East table. Until then, the best hope for Iran's rivals – including Israel, the United States and some of the Arab states – is to initiate a regional peace-making process earnestly and on the most urgent basis.

Critics might argue that if some of the CBM's outlined above were feasible, the states and societies in the region would already be living in peace and there would be no particular need for a regional security and cooperation institution. It must therefore be clarified that the CBM's are only proposed to de-escalate tensions and provide a relatively peaceful context to build a framework for negotiations. In the context of Israel-Arab conflict, they are not expected to result in agreement on contentious issues such as borders, the status of East Jerusalem and refugees, or the Golan Heights. They are also not expected to result in agreement on issues such as terrorist attacks on external stakeholders and use of force by external powers against states in the region. Talks about Talks are expected to set the terms for discussion on substantive issues. The third phase of a semi-permanent conference is the place where one can expect to find solutions to the contentious issues. However, it has to be clear from the first stage that the intention is to reach a full and final settlement that is acceptable to all parties.

Our intention here is only to propose a process and a possible structure that will enable parties to negotiate mutually acceptable solutions. It is not our intention to propose substantive solutions. The parties know their interests and limits and if they have the political will, they can agree on peaceful solutions. Our objective is to propose a process that can mobilise the necessary political will.

It is clear that the process proposed here – beginning with very difficult CBM's – appears to be politically impossible. But we believe that there has no viable alternative. If it is rejected, more and more parties will enter the dynamic of conflict as discussed at the beginning of this paper. As Alastair Crooke argues: "When all parties begin to see conflict as inevitable, then the 'inevitable' becomes self-fulfilling. Americans are fond of comparing the situation in the region to the 1930s and the rise of totalitarianism; but perhaps Europe in 1914 is a better metaphor. The situation is such that some small, unexpected autonomous event might trigger a sequence of events that even the great powers of the region could find it beyond their ability to control. In the past, after all, a car accident (in the case of the first Intifada) and a cinema fire (triggering the Iranian revolution) have unleashed consequences that no-one could have foreseen."

Unless the current parties realise dangers of the tinder-box that the Middle East presently is and hence the urgency of a comprehensive and inclusive process, they could lose ground to new entrants and suffer economic and social erosion. If we do not want an unexpected event to ignite total destruction, there is no alternative to a comprehensive approach to peace-making. The question is whether the most powerful parties at this point in history will only see the value of such an approach in a few decades from now when they are pushed into a corner and have lost ground, or whether they see the value of a regional approach today. At least today they understand each others languages – Arabic, Hebrew and English. If they wait for a decade or two, they may have to negotiate in Russian, Persian and Chinese. It is for the parties in the region and their main external supporters to decide their own destiny.

Annexure: Past Peace Initiatives in the Middle East

Classi-fication	Name & Place	Parties Involved	Auspices	Date	Outcome	Comments
Regional	Madrid Conference, Madrid, Spain	Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestinian Authority	Spain (Host), USA, USSR	Oct 30, 1991 to Nov 1, 1991	Brought together Israeli negotiators with those mandated by the PLO	Conference acted as the starting point for the Middle East peace process
Regional	Arab Peace Initiative, Beirut, Lebanon	Arab League	Saudi Arabia	March 28 2002	Required Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights and their return to Syria. US and Israel were nenthusiastic about its plementation	The plan was proposed by Saudi Arabia
Regional	Roadmap for Peace	Israel, Palestinian Authority	Middle East Quartet: United Nations, European Union, Russia and USA	April 30 2003	End to Palestinian violence initially, Palestinian PM Abbas appointed, led to the Red Sea Summit later in the year, violence erupted between the Israelis and Palestinians blocking the roadmap; some aspects of the different phases outlined in the Roadmap have been achieved.	The roadmap could not achieve the final settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict by 2005 as envisaged at the start.
Regional	Red Sea Summit, Aqaba, Jordan	Israel, Jordan, Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain	USA	June 3, 2003 to June 4, 2003	Despite the pledges of both sides, there was little progress in implementing the Roadmap, as violence continued to rage	
Regional	Arab League Summit, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Arab League	Saudi Arabia (Host), Norway	March 28 2007	Arab leaders urged Israel to accept the Arab peace initiative proposed in 2002	After the summit in Riyadh, Israeli PM Olmert and PA President Abbas agreed to have biweekly meetings
Israel/Arab	Israel-Jordan Common Agenda,	Israel, Jordan			Acted as a prelude to the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan	Signed after almost 2 years of Madrid Conference-inspired bilateral talks
Israel/Arab	Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace,	Israel, Jordan		Oct 26 1994	Israel and Jordan opened their borders as borders of peace. Several border-crossings were erected across the border, agreed upon water usage from shared bodies of water; allowed for freedom of movement between the two countries as well as access to religious sites within Jerusalem	Normalized relations between Israel and Jordan; resolved territorial disputes
Israel/Arab	Israel-Syria Discussions, Wye River, USA	Israel, Syria	USA	1996	Talks failed on Dec 15, 1999	These were direct, face-to-face talks. On Dec 15, 1999, US announced that Syria had agreed to resume peace negotiations
Israel/Arab	Israel-Syria Draft Peace Agreement	Israel-Syria	USA	2000 January	Israel PM Barak agreed to withdraw from Syrian territory occupied since June 1967; Syria agreed to give security guarantees, normalization of relations, demilitarization of Golan Heights, cessation of support for radical anti-Israel groups. Talks froze on Jan 17, 2000	Also known as 'Clinton Plan'. In 2003, Syrian President Bashar Al Assad offered to resume peace negotiations, but Israel, backed by the US, refused.
Israel/Palestine	Oslo Accords, Oslo, Norway	Israel, Palestinian Authority	Norway, USA	1993 August	Advance agreements on security issues, Palestinian elections, transfer of land, transfer of civil power from Israel to the PA, trade conditions and release of Palestinian prisoners	Also known as "The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government arrangements". Main architects of the plan were the then Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Jorgen Holst, Terje Rod-Larsen and Mona Juul.
Israel/Palestine	Gaza-Jericho Agreement Cairo, Egypt,	Israel, Palestinian Authority	Egypt	May 4 1994	Provided for an Israeli veto over proposed Palestinian legislation	Also known as "Cairo Plan"

Classi-fication	Name & Place	Parties Involved	Auspices	Date	Outcome	Comments
Israel/ Palestine	Hebron Protocol,	Israel, Palestinian Authority	USA	Jan 17 1997	Israeli troop withdrawals from 80% of Hebron, the last West Bank city under Israeli occupation	Culmination of intensive efforts, led by the US, to save the Oslo accords, and more generally the Middle East peace process, threatened since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin
Israel/ Palestine	Wye River Memorandum,	Israel, Palestinian Authority	USA	Oct 23 1998	Israel agreed: withdrawal from a further 13% of occupied territory, in exchange for a commitment by the PNA to suppress terror and eliminate weapons stockpiles and act against anti-Israel incitement. At the end, nothing was undertaken.	With the 2000 Al Aqsa Intifada and IDF counter-attacks, the understandings of this memorandum remain unimplemented
Israel/ Palestine	Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt	Israel, Palestinian Authority	Egypt, Jordan	Sept 4 1999	Israel accepted the remaining 11% redeployment agreed upon at Wye, and Arafat compromised by accepting the release of 350 prisoners, rather than the 400 the Palestinians had requested	Madeline Albright, Bill Clinton and the EU made significant contributions to the same. This is the memorandum that implemented the Wye River memorandum of 1998
Israel/ Palestine	Camp David Summit, Frederick County, Maryland, USA	Israel, Palestinian Authority	USA	2000 July	Unable to agree on a formula to share Jerusalem or on one to address the rights of the Palestinian refugees, the summit failed	Ultimately unsuccessful
Israel/ Palestine	Taba Summit, Taba, Egypt	Israel, Palestinian Authority	Egypt	2001 January 21-27	Came closer to agreeing on terms for a final settlement than any previous summits. Ariel Sharon made clear that the final-status talks that had begun at Camp David were now moot.	It put the Oslo peace process, from the time of Madrid Conference of 1991 on indefinite hold. The breakdown is often attributed to the political circumstances posed by Israeli elections and changeover in leadership in the United States
Israel/ Palestine	Sharm el-Sheikh Summit, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt	Israel, Palestinian Authority	Egypt, Jordan	2000 October 17	Israel and the PA agreed to resume bilateral security cooperation, with Israel agreeing to ease restrictions on Palestinian life	It brought within reach an end to 4 and a half years of bloodshed and destruction. USA, France, England, Spain, Germany and Egypt helped smoothen the whole process
Israel/ Palestine	Sharm el-Sheikh Summit, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt	Israel, Palestine, Jordan	Egypt	February 8 2005	Sharon and Abbas agreed to a ceasefire, although Palestinian armed groups of all factions immediately made clear that they were not bound by Abbas's undertakings. Abbas later negotiated a truce with Hamas and other militant groups	Goal was to end the Intifada. Abbas later negotiated a truce with Hamas and other militant groups, although it has periodically been disrupted by bouts of violence
Israel/ Palestine	1993 Agreement	Israel, Lebanon	US	1993	Ceasefire was an oral agreement; Israel agreed to end its attack against Lebanese civilians; Hezbollah agreed to limit its military operations against Israeli occupation in Lebanon	Ceasefire brought an end to the 7 Day War or Operation Accountability
Israel/ Palestine	Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire Understanding	Israel, Hezbollah	US	April 26 1996	Israel and Hezbollah agreed to end cross-border attacks on civilian targets, as well refrain from using civilian villages to launch attacks	Also known as "Grapes of Wrath Understandings"
Inter/Intra Arab	US-Iran Talks, Baghdad, Iraq	US, Iraq, Iran		2007 July	No detailed exchanges took place, and no criticisms of the other were addressed	First official meeting between the two states in 27 years
Inter/Intra Arab	Treaty of Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia, Yemen		2000	Resolved border dispute between Saudi Arabia and Yemen	This border dispute had raged for over 60 years
Inter/Intra Arab	Mecca Accord for Palestinian national unity government, Mecca, Saudi Arabia	Hamas, Fatah	US, Israel	Feb 8 2007	Leaders of Hamas and Fatah signed an agreement to form a national unity government	Brought the Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table for peace talks in 6 years
Inter/Intra Arab	France Talks, La Celle-Saint Cloud, France	Lebanon's govt, Hezbollah	France	2007 July	Failed to produce any breakthrough in the deadlock between the west-backed govt and Hezbollah led opposition backed by Syria and Iran	
Inter/Intra Arab	Fatah al-Islam	Fatah al-Islam, Lebanese govt.		July 18 2007	Even after Fatah al-Islam agreed to resume talks to end fighting, the fighting continued	
Iraq	Iraq-Iran Ceasefire	Iraq, Iran	United Nations	Aug 20 1988	Ended the Iraq-Iran War that began in 1980	
Iraq	Memorandum of Understanding between UN and Iraq	United Nations, Iraq		Feb 23 1998	Iraq pledged to accept all relevant Security Council resolutions and cooperate with UNSCOM and the IAEA	
Iraq	International Compact on Iraq, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt	Iraq, Iran, Syria	US	May 3 2007	Iraq agreed to carry out a comprehensive programme of reform and investment over the next 5 years, supported by the international community. Statements of international support included pledges of over US$35 billion in reconstruction assistance and debt forgiveness	

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STRATEGIC FORESIGHT GROUP

Strategic Foresight Group was established in 2002 to create new forms of intellectual capital. In merely half a decade, it has demonstrated that it has conviction and competence to develop an alternative worldview in a constructive way. We have also created intellectual and political assets to draw input from all continents and deliver output to decision makers anywhere in the world.

We have advised governments around the world and produced scenarios and innovative policy concepts that have been discussed in august bodies including the Indian Parliament, the European Parliament, Oxford University, UK House of Commons, World Bank, the League of Arab States, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, World Economic Forum, Swedish Defence Commission, Global Futures Forum, Geneva Security Forum and others. Our research findings and views have been covered by the world media including BBC World Television, CNN, International Herald Tribune, Financial Times, New York Times, The Straits Times, Gulf News, Khaleej Times, Asahi Shimbun and almost all major newspapers in India and Pakistan.

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SFG launches initiatives for dialogue and policy change to address a specific problem. The initiatives are backed by innovative research and engage senior level policy makers who are most relevant to bring about a change. These may include cabinet ministers, members of legislature, advisers to Heads of Government, leaders of multilateral organisations, and leaders of business groups. SFG also engages in direct consultation with Heads of Government.

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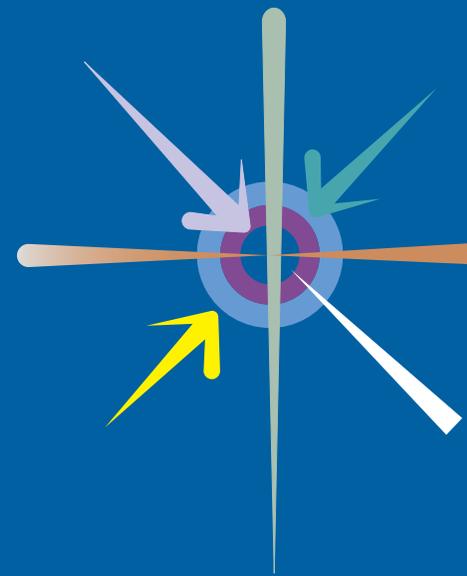
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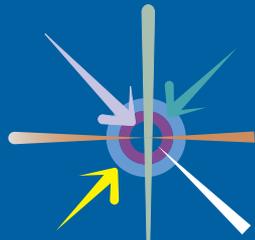
"Strategic Foresight Group and Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit look back on several years of fruitful cooperation in our endeavours to formulate and present viable strategies for conflict prevention. As liberals, both our organisations share the belief in freedom as the core value of mankind. Freedom is inextricably intertwined with peace, development and well-being of the people anywhere on the globe. History shows: Without the respect and protection of freedom of all parties involved, conflicts cannot be settled peacefully. And history also shows: Without peace, freedom cannot flourish. In the contemporary world, in our age of globalization, bloodshed and violence in the so called "conflict regions" of this world, always have international or even global ramifications. This is especially true for the Middle East. It is, therefore, in the interest of all of us to engage in a political process of conflict resolution in the Middle East that is viable and sustainable. This process needs to be inclusive, i.e. it needs to respect the aspirations and visions of all sides concerned. This is the only way to reach the ultimate goal: To improve the chances for peace and freedom in the Middle East and beyond. I value our cooperation with the Strategic Foresight Group to contribute to this decisive goal. I recommend this paper to all those who yearn for freedom and peace."

Dr Wolfgang Gerhardt, MdB, Chairman,
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Strategic Foresight Group