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THE REGIONAL SECURITY DIALOGUE: SECURITY CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

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ACRONYMS

•	Permanent Status Agreement	PSA
•	Arab Peace Initiative	API
•	Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe	OSCE
•	The Anti Money Laundering	AML
•	Countering Financing of Terrorism	CFT
•	Ballistic Missile Defense System	BMDS
•	Jordanian Israeli-Palestinian early warning center	JIPEWC
•	Security Operation Center	SOC
•	Security Information & Event Management	SIEM

PREFACE

This document is the product of a joint Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian-Emirati project, wherein a group of security experts from a range of fields met regularly over two years, and held a series of collaborative workshops where regional security issues were analyzed using a variety of techniques. The paper before you is a summarizing document written by professional working groups of experts with specific knowledge and experience in the individual areas of research.

The Regional Security Dialogue: Security Challenges and Solutions, commenced in 2018 with the aim of charting a path toward modeling a regional security framework that can promote long-term regional security and ensure the viability and sustainability of a Permanent Status Agreement between Israel and Palestine, while also suggesting ways to advance comprehensive regional peace on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative. Bringing together esteemed security experts from Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, the quadrilateral group focused on analyzing shared interests and borderless threats in an increasingly complex regional security environment facing multifaceted security challenges. The experts' vast experience accrued during their time serving as high-ranking officials in security-related positions in their respective states, contributed to the formation of sound and realistic policy recommendations, increasing the likelihood that formal governments in the region will proceed according to them.

Although the quadrilateral group was closely aligned in their views on the region's strategic interests and threats, as well as on the basic definition of cooperative security, major challenges remained nonetheless; the group lacked consensus on determining which issues should be given priority, and grappled with the question of how inclusive the framework would be given the current political leadership. Ultimately, the group concluded that a tailor-made model – similar to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with its broad vision of security – offers a good model for the region if envisioned alongside a supportive international implementation and monitoring mechanism.

Accordingly, the group outlined five areas of joint regional security interests that are necessary for laying the groundwork for a future cooperative security framework:

- Regional security networking
- Regional alliance against destabilization efforts
- Regional freedom of movement and access (land, sea, and air)
- Regional ballistic missile defense
- Regional cybersecurity

The outcome of the work – “the suggested framework” – has been presented to various target audiences (including relevant decision-makers, policymakers, security officials, opinion shapers, and other key stakeholders) through the distribution of a ‘non-paper.’ This document was written by Jordanian, Israeli, Palestinian, and Emirati security experts in their respective fields, and the partners believe that this document can serve the states in the region by articulating the benefits of a regional security mechanism that can expand their individual capacities to face current and future security challenges. Moreover, the suggested regional framework is of significant current relevance as the Biden administration prioritizes pursuing a return to the nuclear deal with Iran to limit its nuclear program. Indeed, regardless of the outcome of negotiations, if they are not accompanied by a comprehensive security dialogue undertaken within a regional forum, the prospects for pacifying the region and achieving long term regional security remain low.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region of the world, which has long been a focus for international coalitions seeking to enhance global stability, has for many years struggled to advance regional security stability, principally due to the region's complex geopolitical dynamics and a dearth of effective regional institutions and frameworks. Given this reality, the Economic Cooperation Foundation (ECF, Israel), the Amman Center for Peace and Development (ACPD, Jordan), and the International Peace and Cooperation Center (IPCC, Palestine), assembled a team of leading security experts and former security officials from Israel, Jordan, Palestine, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) within the framework of a Regional Strategic Dialogue (RSD) to analyze the many security threats facing the region as a whole and each country individually, and to develop security mechanisms to mitigate and address those threats and advance security stability in the region. The overall aim of the dialogue was the designing of a comprehensive regional security mechanism to promote the conditions necessary for an Israeli-Palestinian two-state solution through the enhancement of strategic cross-border cooperation, mutual understanding, confidence, and trust. The dialogue – conducted over the past three years – was broken down into five subgroups, each of which focused on a specific subject affecting regional security stability. The subjects that the subgroups focused on were regional cooperation and networking, regional alliance against destabilization efforts, regional cooperation on border security and freedom of movement, regional ballistic missile defense, and regional cybersecurity.

The dialogue was conducted according to several core underlying assumptions that reflect the geopolitical reality in the region and the resulting political and security dynamics. The main underlying assumption was that the regional security cooperation envisioned and outlined by the dialogue can only be fully realized after an Israeli-Palestinian permanent status agreement (PSA) is reached. All of the parties and participants in the dialogue understand that the ongoing political impasse between Israel and Palestine is an impediment to realizing the full potential of the regional security mechanisms proposed, however, they also are of the belief that the latent Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic process should not prevent likeminded stakeholders from relevant countries in the region from coming together to delineate strategies to promote a stable and secure region in the future. An additional underlying assumption relates to the leading threats to regional stability, namely that Iran, Iranian-backed proxies, and other radical groups pose the greatest threat to regional stability at present, and this is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future. Finally, the paper assumes that demonstrating the security advantages of regional cooperation to all sides will promote positive movement in the direction of the concessions required to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian PSA.

In addition to these core underlying assumptions, several additional salient points were demonstrated and articulated over the course of the dialogue. First, the unique advantages of conducting a track-II dialogue were readily and consistently apparent throughout the project; an unofficial forum of this type is the only way for experts in the region to come together and discuss joint

security interests and develop strategies for addressing joint security challenges with minimal political constraints. Second, the methodology of the dialogue called for an initial analysis of security threats followed by the identification of joint security interests stemming from those threats. Accordingly, there are differences in the extent of the benefits that each individual party stands to enjoy from the proposed regional cooperation, however, this did not prevent the forum from fulfilling its commitment to identifying the associated advantages for each individual party alongside the focus on examining the potential benefits for the region as a single entity. Third, the participants were cognizant of the fact that regional security apparatuses are underdeveloped for cultural, historical, and political reasons. In the past, Israel has not been viewed as a relevant participant in regional cooperation mechanisms, but the paradigm has started to shift following the normalization agreements recently signed between Israel and regional Arab states, which have opened the door for greater cooperation and more comprehensive regional integration subject to the eventual resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this vein, the paper stresses the significance of the gradual development of structural, multilateral cooperation in the region, which is substantially more important than ad hoc cooperation between individual states.

The final RSD paper is broken up according to the five subgroups, each of which focused on a specific subject related to regional security cooperation. The first subgroup focused on developing a plan to enhance regional cooperation and networking, and its recommendation is to establish a regional structure similar to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with three areas of focus: political/security, environmental/economic, and human rights. Ensuring the success of the proposed apparatus will require that it be inclusive and open, have a transregional geographic scope covering the entire Middle East, adhere to and promote the international rules-based order, synergize with transnational challenges (i.e., extremism, terrorism, cyber threats, climate change, pandemics), capitalize on the individual strengths of each country, and establish linkage between security and economics. This subgroup also outlined recommendations related to regional cooperation on the pandemic, including the establishment and promotion of joint health initiatives, regional economic cooperation initiatives, transnational transportation infrastructure, water allocation solutions, marketplace innovation solutions, tourism initiatives, energy solutions, and regional market integration initiatives.

The second subgroup focused on developing a plan to enhance regional cooperation against destabilization efforts, and its recommendation is likewise to establish a regional structure similar to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with three areas of focus: political/security, environmental/economic, and human rights. Within this framework, cooperation mechanisms will be established to spearhead regional cooperation efforts in areas with destabilizing potential:

The first cooperation mechanism will focus on democracy and human rights and will promote efforts to advance legislation to protect the rights of minorities, eliminate discriminatory laws, encourage the sharing of best practices, support relevant civil society organizations, concentrate

regional attention on basic human rights, monitor hate crimes and hate speech, and prevent human trafficking and torture.

The second cooperation mechanism will focus on economic policy and will support participating states in enacting sound economic policies, including in the areas of good governance and anti-corruption; anti-money laundering and countering the funding of terrorism (AML/CFT); transport, trade, and border crossing facilitation; and labor migration. Efforts to this end may include assisting national economic reform processes, improving conditions for economic development and investment, training civil society organizations on economic rights and planning, ensuring sustainable development and good governance, promoting economic security, incentivizing cross-border trade and free trade zones, and improving investment climates.

The third cooperation mechanism will support participating states in strengthening cooperation on environmental issues through efforts that may include enhancing capacities for addressing environmental challenges, promoting transboundary environmental cooperation, building regional capacity for sustainable energy, supporting disaster preparedness, preventing environmental crimes, and empowering civil society to play a more active role on environmental issues.

The fourth cooperation mechanism will focus on counterterrorism, and efforts may include promoting a cooperative and coordinated approach, countering violent extremism and radicalization, preventing and suppressing the financing of terrorism, promoting dialogue and cooperation on counterterrorism issues, intensifying national efforts to implement United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms within the context of counterterrorism measures.

The fifth cooperation mechanism will focus on border management and security, and efforts may include supporting cooperation and rapid information sharing, and training, holding workshops, and raising awareness of relevant procedures, techniques, and protocols, as well as providing technical advice and assistance for preventing and responding to border incidents.

In addition to the five cooperation mechanisms, there will be an additional regional cooperation mechanism whose role will be to coordinate the mutual activities of the involved parties. This mechanism will include an intelligence team, a planning team, and an operational team, and will collectively focus on shaping joint responses to Iranian aggression. The subgroup has also outlined roles for global actors such as the US, Russia, China, and the EU, in establishing the proposed cooperation mechanism.

Ensuring the success of the proposed apparatus will require that it be inclusive and open, have a transregional geographic scope covering the entire Middle East, adhere to and promote the international rules-based order, be held together through partnership as opposed to through a formal alliance, synergize with transnational challenges (i.e., extremism, terrorism, cyber threats, climate

change, pandemics), capitalize on the individual strengths of each country, and establish linkage between security and economics. The establishment of a Palestinian state in a fair and equitable manner is likewise a requirement for achieving sustainable security in the region.

The third subgroup focused on developing a plan to enhance regional cooperation on border security and freedom of movement, and provided three parallel options for a suggested structure and mechanism. The first is a high-level approach that calls for regional cooperation on border security to flow downwards from top-level decisionmakers. The second is a phased approach with four phases: pre-consultation coordination, consultation visits, development of a regional action plan, and implementation. This option calls for the establishment of two regional focus teams, which will concentrate respectively on border security and management, and on economic and environmental issues. The border security and management team will focus on transportation, migration, combatting terrorism, establishing counterterrorism terms of reference, exchanging military information, establishing a code of conduct on military aspects of border security, and non-proliferation and arms control. The economic and environmental issues team will focus on economics, science, and technology cooperation, protection of critical energy infrastructure, cooperation on water management, and combatting climate change. The third option is a national-level approach for individuals, which calls for enhanced coordination between nations to enable individuals to travel across the region freely without jeopardizing border security. The overall recommendation of the subgroup is the adoption of an OSCE-style model with adjustments to make it viable in the Middle East. This will require the integration of border management strategy across the region on the basis of common regional standards for border crossings, as well as the integration of information and communications networks to monitor the transit of individuals and goods across regional borders. Achieving this will require signing a regional agreement on visas, border control, asylum, refugees, and migration; establishing regional standards for border control; standardizing legislation and regulations on a regional level in the areas of biometrics, counterterrorism, vulnerable individuals, and irregular migration; and establishing regular training and education processes for member states.

The fourth subgroup focused on developing a plan to enhance regional cooperation on ballistic missile defense, and its primary recommendation is the establishment of a regional command, control, and communications (C3) center for a regional ballistic missile defense system (BMDS). The proposed apparatus will integrate the capabilities of individual parties and optimize potential responses to ballistic missile attacks. The suggested structure and mechanism call for a focus on threat detection, emphasis on American involvement, the establishment of a regional security regime with regional and American representatives from the relevant commands, the integration of interests (reciprocity, common threat definition, integrated situational awareness, warning for populated areas), passive/civil defense, a joint civil defense early warning center, and civil defense training exercises. The establishment of a joint, Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian early warning center (JIPEWC) is central to the proposed regional civil defense protection mechanism and will improve coordination between civil defense authorities.

The fifth subgroup focused on developing a plan to enhance regional cooperation against the threat of hostile cyber activity by state and non-state actors, including the use of the internet by terrorist groups; and it recommended a suggested structure and mechanism in the form of a joint, multinational cybersecurity center. This center will be comprised of a security operations center (SOC) and a research and development (R&D) center. The SOC will focus on monitoring, incident response, security information and event management (SIEM), threat intelligence, cyber analytics, governance (including mechanisms for information sharing), compliance solutions, and operations. The R&D center will focus on platform building, development, and educational activities. Additionally, the subgroup proposed next steps that include continued joint discussion of threats and areas for collaboration, delineating common ground, discussing the possibility of cooperation with international bodies, and the formulation of recommendations for a cooperation mechanism that will include ongoing information sharing.

REGIONAL SECURITY DIALOGUE: SECURITY CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

PROMOTING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND NETWORKING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

1. EXISTING REGIONAL COOPERATION STRUCTURES

Although there have been myriad formal cooperation structures in the region since the mid-1940s, the level of integration across MENA has always been low. Below are examples of several current formal structures and the main driver for their establishment.

<i>Organization/Structure</i>	<i>Driver</i>
<i>League of Arab States</i>	Ethno-linguistic Arabism
<i>Organization of Islamic Cooperation</i>	Pan-Islamism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)</i> • <i>Arab Maghreb Union</i> • <i>Treaty of Saadabad</i> – Non-aggression pact designed to boost the security and stability of its signatories: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan 	Sub-regional identities
<i>Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)</i> – A multilateral body that includes all EU member states, the EU Commission, and 15 Mediterranean countries. The UfM is, to date, one of the few multilateral forums with both Israeli and Palestinian Authority representatives.	Geographic juxtaposition
	<i>Joint Threats</i>
<i>“Resistance Axis”</i> – Includes Iran, Syria (under Assad regime), various Palestinian/partly Islamist factions (e.g., Hamas, and Lebanon’s Hezbollah).	Western influence/dominance in region
<i>International Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State (ISIS)</i> ¹ – Although Israel is not part of the coalition, it provides intelligence against ISIS. The coalition is committed to “dismantle the group’s networks and counter its global ambitions. Beyond the military campaign in Iraq and Syria, the Coalition is committed to: tackling ISIS’s financing and economic infrastructure; preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders; supporting stabilization and the restoration of essential public services to areas liberated from ISIS; and countering the group’s propaganda.”	Islamic State (ISIS)

¹ The coalition included 81 partners of those there are 15 Middle Eastern country (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya) and the Arab League <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/partners/>

<p>Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition² – A coalition committed to “coordinate and unite [member states’] efforts in the ideology, communications, counter terrorism financing, and military domains, in order to fight all forms of terrorism and extremism and to effectively join other international security and peacekeeping efforts.”</p>	Terrorism and extremism
<p>Arab Coalition³ to Fight Houthi Rebels in Yemen – Receives intelligence and logistical support from the United States</p>	Houthi rebels
<p>Maritime Coalition⁴ for Protecting Gulf Shipping Waters – Aims to ward off the perceived threat to the world’s oil supply by providing escorts to commercial vessels passing through the Gulf waters, the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman, and the Bab El-Mandab Strait in the Red Sea</p>	Oil supply security
<p>Turkish-Libyan Alliance – Both countries signed an MOU in security, military and the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean Sea.</p>	Eastern Mediterranean region security
<p>Israel, Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt Alliance for Energy – Formed to protect and develop the eastern Mediterranean energy fields</p>	Energy security

There is also a chain of bilateral cooperation structures between several countries that, in turn, creates an infrastructure for multilateral cooperation. Examples include security-strategic cooperation ties between Jordan-Israel, Jordan-Egypt, and Jordan-Palestinian Authority (PA); between Israel-PA and Israel-Egypt; and between Egypt-PA and Egypt-Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

These narrow, single-issue alliances are driven by continuously changing perceptions of threats in the region, which explains why they dominate the nature of cooperation. Such non-robust “liquid alliances” create a sense of unreliability among allies. Therefore, it is crucial to create formalized alliances to strengthen political and economic development, implement critical infrastructures, and protect demographic cohesion, leading to a more stable region.

² The coalition included 41 partners of those there are 19 Middle Eastern country (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti. <https://www.imctc.org/English>

³ The coalition includes 12 partners of those there are 11 Middle Eastern countries (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti.

⁴ The coalition includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, USA, Australia, Britain and Israel.

2. THREAT ANALYSIS

a) Economic and Societal Instability

Egypt

Egypt is being weakened by deep economic despair, unresolved political tensions, and security threats in the Sinai.

GCC countries

These countries are being challenged by a national/non-national demographic imbalance⁵. Though this concept is open to criticism for potentially stirring up “anti-foreign sentiments,”⁶ issues related to low levels of productivity,⁷ infrastructure costs, remittance outflows,⁸ and self-defined notions of “national identity” and “cultural values” are considered to be more threatening.

MENA

All MENA economies are not creating jobs fast enough to accommodate youth demands. Unemployment in the region, officially at 12%, is the highest of any region worldwide, while youth unemployment is around 30%⁹.

b) Iranian Strategic and Tactical Threats

Attempting to shift the balance of power and aspiring to create a new world order, Iran poses several strategic and tactical threats to the region.

- Nuclear – A nuclear Iran not only can lead to a regional arms race and further dissemination of its proxies, but also poses an existential threat to Israel and potential perilous effects on Saudi Arabia.
- Regional hegemony – by exporting the revolution and replacing regimes.
- Instability – leading to greater influence.
- Regional subversion – Shi’ite expansion, ecological integration.

⁵ For more about the issue see <http://www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/publications/other/DemographicImbalanceinGCC.pdf> and <http://www.mecp.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/gccs-demographic-imbalance-perceptions-realities-and-policy-options>

⁶ Spiess, “Demographic Transitions and Imbalances in the GCC.”

⁷ The region’s two largest economies, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have less productive labor forces today than they did in 1990⁴⁹

⁸ Steffen Hertog, “A Comparative Assessment of Labor-Market Nationalization Policies in the GCC,” In *Labor Market, Unemployment, and Migration in the GCC*, ed. Steffen Hertog (Gulf Research Center, 2011).

⁹ http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/04/09/000456286_20150409170931/Rendere d/PDF/956500PUB0REV1020150391416B00QU0090.pdf

- Proxy warfare – Through funding, sectarian cleavages and the spread of anti-West ideology, Iran leverages the use of local proxies to entice infighting and threaten adversaries.
- Missile proliferation.
- Maritime.
- Cyberattacks.

c) Other State-Specific Threats

Israeli-Palestinian

The absence of an inclusive Israeli-Palestinian political settlement concerns Jordan, which wants to help the parties secure a lasting end to the conflict.

Failed states

Civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen have their own unique dynamics, but also are part of a larger “Middle East Cold War” in which regional powers like Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and even Qatar are trying to advance their interests and temper their regional rivals.

d) Cross-Border Threats

In today’s era of globalization, threats are not contained within national borders but significantly impact neighboring states. The members of a regional cooperation will work together on the following cross-border issues:

- Terror (local, regional, international) – The spread of terrorism is enabled by international action: online recruitment of operatives by members overseas; fundraising through international companies and non-profits; training of fighters on foreign soil. Multilateral security coordination and intelligence sharing are required to halt the spread and eradicate terrorism.
- Illicit movements – Arms, money and drug smuggling as well as human trafficking are destabilizing factors that help terrorist, organized crime and other illegal groups garner power and funding.
- Subversion and external intervention – Spoilers are not limited to terror; they often use other means to force their agenda such as technological methods (e.g. fake news campaigns to sway public opinion) and sponsoring of proxies.

- Weapons proliferation – In addition to igniting a regional nuclear arms race, nuclear weapon proliferation poses a particularly serious threat due to the prevalence of maligned non-state actors and the vulnerability of ruling regimes.
- Crime – High crime rates indicate the lack of law enforcement capacity and challenge the ability of local regimes to reign. Law enforcement training cooperation can increase effectiveness and improve practices.
- Migration, displacement, and refugees – These global trends affect the economies and social texture of receiving countries, often leading to economic distress and social unrest. Emphasizing their continued commitment to the principles of the 1951 Refugee Convention, regional cooperation members should work together to prevent mass migration scenarios.
- Disease, pollution/environmental impact, natural disasters – In accordance with the principles of the Paris Agreement (to which all regional cooperation members are signatories) and in recognition of the potential disastrous and destabilizing effects of force majeure, regional cooperation members will work collaboratively to prevent and address such occurrences.
- Cyber attacks and cyber crime - Cross-border by nature, hostile cyber activities that are perpetrated in the region are increasing in intensity, impact, and financial cost. For financial institutions and other critical infrastructures, especially, the damages caused can be significant. There are regional interdependencies of systems (water, energy, transportation) that rely upon computerized interfaces that are in need of robust cybersecurity, which includes cyber information sharing and built-in resilience. Regional cooperation on cybercrime includes common approaches to this issue based on, for example, the Arab League's Convention on Combating Information Technology Offences (to which most of the states of the region are signatories) and the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (to which Morocco and Israel are signatories).

The foundation for successful cooperation goes hand-in-hand with open channels of communication, copious sharing of knowledge, and a fruitful exchange of ideas.

3. REGIONAL COOPERATION CONSIDERATIONS

a) Benefits

As the region undergoes continuous turmoil with the spillover of terrorism and Iranian efforts to achieve regional hegemony through a Shi'ite axis of influence, cooperation among partnering states is the main vehicle for ensuring stability and countering dangerous global trends.

Regional cooperation can contribute to:

- Preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear threshold state – Iranian progress on this issue will reignite the regional arms race and lead to further proliferation in an already volatile area.
- Countering Iranian regional intervention – Iranian success in entrenching itself via proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen threatens pragmatic states.
- Hampering consolidation of a radical Shi'ite axis – Under Iran's wing and leadership, radical Shi'ite groups are playing an active role as spoilers and destabilizers.
- Countering Salafi-Jihadi ideology – Groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State are responsible for thousands of deaths regionally and worldwide and are attempting to undermine already feeble governments by spreading fear and chaos.
- Creating regional stability and prosperity – Economic prosperity is a powerful key for stability, especially in a region characterized by sectarian, ethnic and religious schisms.
- Maintaining the nation-state order
- Preserving US alliances – As Russia tightens its grip in Syria and gives Iran more operational leeway, maintaining alliances with the US acts as a stabilizing factor.
- Avoiding a resource crisis – Depletion of natural resources such as water and oil often leads to national confrontation over rights of usage and royalties, prompting conflicts and domestic disturbances. Proper management, investment in infrastructure, and coordination can prevent such scenarios.
- Strengthening the region's "axis of moderation" – Boosting moderate elements including the Arab Quartet (Egypt, Jordan, UAE, Saudi Arabia) will help counter the Iranian-led radical axis and the recently formed axis led by Turkey alongside "non-state" actors. The axis of moderation tends to pay more attention to negotiation and direct dialogue, while the Iranian-led axis tends to rely on radical mechanisms, including violent proxies.



b) Challenges

Domestic and global trends

A number of domestic and global trends wedged between the partnering states can create adversity and competition, as well as threaten regional cooperation:

- Divergent attitudes on global or local issues, such as global warming, desertification, rising sea levels, and food scarcity, which can lead to pressures that resonate beyond national borders
- Ethnic, religious and sectarian considerations that continuously challenge the regional state order. Erosion of the current nation-state structure can have a destabilizing effect on domestic and external fronts and impedes successful cooperation.
- Destabilization of domestic issues such as: lack of internal cohesion and intensified adherence to identity politics; fundamental distrust between groups; economic distress that prompts protest; leadership legitimacy crises; soaring unemployment; allegations of corruption; full sovereignty for all member states; the influence of disruptive technologies.
- Areas that potentially lack public support. With Arab governments facing serious internal challenges, public support matters – even among the most authoritarian regimes. Therefore, Arab countries will hesitate to invest heavily in any alliance or networking schemes that do not meet a minimum level of public support.
 - The idea of Palestinian solidarity widely resonates with the Jordanian and Arab public.
 - Institutionalized relations between Israel and a growing number of Arab states that do not share its boundaries could point to a change of the regional order. Popular support for the Palestinians, however, has continued despite shifting regional alignments at the state level.
 - The severe humanitarian crisis in Yemen created by the Saudi-led coalition against the Iranian-supported Houthi rebels has generated an extremely negative perception among Arabs toward efforts countering Iranian hegemony.
 - Any intended coalition will expand arms sales in the Middle East. Arms exports to the region accounted for 49% of all US arms exports between 2013 and 2017. This will increase the reliance of Arab countries on US platforms, munitions, and logistical and technical support for a long time.
- Global rise in extremism and violence and export of terrorism overseas

- Semi-state and non-state actors acting as spoilers to the peace process, as well as other spoilers that oppose regional cooperation
- Arab rivalry over leadership – Although all Arab countries are allies, they are regional competitors as well, with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar struggling over leadership in the Arab world. An efficient alliance would give them a strong incentive to transcend such rivalries.
- Lack of prioritization and agreements over the nature of regional threats:
 - Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE view Iran as a threat. In contrast, Kuwait and Oman have historically enjoyed peace and periods of cooperation with Iran.
 - Jordan views Israel's policies in the West Bank and the fading of a two-state solution as a critical issue that supersedes the Iranian threat.
 - Egypt views the Sinai Peninsula, Renaissance Dam and Libyan arena as being of central importance.

Other factors:

Several other factors can endanger regional cooperation by driving a wedge between member states or preventing them to manage threats in real time. Devising strategies to limit their impact or prevent their occurrence altogether can help ensure continuous regional cooperation during volatile periods. These factors include:

- Interference with strategic lines of communication.
- Disruption in infrastructure – Interruption in the supply of energy, food, water, and other critical infrastructures pushes actors into survival mode and often propels animosity rather than cooperation.
- Lack of governance and life support systems.
- Humanitarian crises.
- Hostile cyberattacks on critical systems.
- Political system changes and cognitive warfare – Significant changes in the political system and the rise of anti-cooperation actors can lead a state to withdraw from agreements and pose a threat to other member states.
- Incitement to violence and extremism

c) Objectives

Security

Focusing on intelligence, security and missile/air defense cooperation, participating states will create an initial framework that leads to the following objectives:

- strong military coalition
- qualitative military edge over, and neutralization of, radical and jihadist rogue elements
- strong and stable regional peace and cooperation
- dismantling of terrorist infrastructures and finance
- nuclear non-proliferation
- resolution of wider crises, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

While the Arab public will not fully support an anti-Iranian alliance that includes Israel if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains unresolved, it could promote broader security objectives.

Security Cooperation Pillars



- * **Deterrence**
- * **Intelligence cooperation**
- * **Shared early warning systems**
- * **Regional BMD**
- * **Controlling regional arms races**
- * **Cyber security**
- * **A framework for cooperation with the US, NATO, and international community**

Political economy

More dealings between political units in each region means more opportunity for building confidence between political, economic and social elites (formal and non-formal) and for defining common interests among the elites, particularly in the area of political economy.

Economic, technological, and societal

Successful regional cooperation in other areas such as business, health, science, environment, and agriculture can advance:

- system of stable, accountable, and effectively governed states.
- peaceful architecture.
- economic cooperation, including tourism and job creation.
- energy sector.
- safe and free transportation by land, air and sea
- water security
- health and science
- interpersonal relations, as well as mutual trust, respect, integrity and interests
- migration
- international law compliance – States participating in a regional cooperation structure will be interested in setting up clear rules of conduct based on international law and the UN Charter.

d) Conditions for establishing regional cooperation

Consensus issues

To facilitate cooperation, participating states must reach a consensus on several core issues:

- The previously mentioned strategic changes generate opportunities for new alliances and cooperation for maintaining and improving the balance of power, as well as for reducing the likelihood of a regional arms race.
- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a central obstacle in Israeli-Arab normalization. While a final-status agreement seems unrealistic in the near future, an agreement over the framework of a two-state-solution with a sovereign Palestinian state supported by relevant actions can lead to new collaborations.
- The scope of the cooperation is region-wide, focusing on extended national security challenges as well as common threats, common efforts, and common benefits.

- Peace relations are the cornerstone for cooperation and are focused on Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, and the Gulf states.

Conditions for Israel

Due to the domestic sensitivities of Arab states, it is a prerequisite that Israel commits to the following principles:

- The regional route is not a substitute for, and cannot exist without, the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian route. It will be hard for Arab states to support an Israeli move that bypasses a Palestinian state.
- The following elements are essential in order to obtain guarantees from pragmatic Arab states: (a) credible Israeli commitment to a two-state solution, (b) positive Israeli approach to an Arab peace Initiative, (c) real progress in a dialogue with the Palestinian leadership.

Means for cooperation

Cooperation between partnering states will lead to stability and solve conflicts in a shorter timeframe based on:

- Intelligence cooperation (gathering, sharing)
- Shared, ongoing situation assessment
- Identification of common challenges
- Sharing of security and military experience
- Formulation of joint response plans
- Joint and coordinated execution
- Real-time response to threats
- Defining of ways to deal with potential “spoilers”
- Development of a common strategic assessment for future challenges

Principles for cooperation

Regional challenges should be met by creating an ongoing security dialogue and a cooperative system between partnering states and extra-regional states that also wish to contribute to the aims

of this process. The partners will identify ways to collaborate and share resources to meet these challenges based on the following principles:

- Strong collaboration between founding partners can make an immense impression on collective security, stability, and prosperity.
- Core state members are the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Additional multi-national members include rule-based supporters of the Arab Peace Initiative.
- There is consensus over the guiding principle that each state has full control over the use and distribution of arms (one law, one arm, one government).
- Bilateral and multilateral channels are integrated.
- Gaps and disagreements are addressed directly and not disregarded or shied away.
- Cooperation is maintained on strategic, economic, security and legal issues.
- Tailored joint mechanisms can consolidate stability by increasing government efficiency.

4. Suggested Structure and Mechanism

Our suggested structure is based on the [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe](#) (OSCE) and comprises three baskets – political/security, environmental/economic, and human rights.

Required elements

The following elements are required to ensure a successful structure:

- Inclusive and open.
- Trans-regional geographical scope covering the wider Middle East [, including Iran and Israel,] and other countries that have expressed interest in joining the alliance
- Adherence to, and promotion of, international rules-based order – This reinforces productive cooperation, stability, good governance, and collective security. Everyone benefits from the regulation and coordination resulting from such a contract between states.
- Link to transnational challenges such as extremism, terrorism, cyber threats, climate change, diseases, and regional competition.
- Capitalization on each country's strengths – Knowing what each country is good at and delivering targeted cooperation that plays to those strengths. For example, Jordan can provide training and share the lessons it learned from other armed forces due to its expertise in peacekeeping, disaster relief, fighting terrorism, and intelligence.

- Link between security pillar and economic pillar – For example, the Gulf countries have oil fields stretching across Iran and Iraq and around the Persian Gulf that comprise the world’s largest-known petroleum deposits – some two-thirds of the free world’s oil reserves. In addition, nearly every Arab country enjoys extensive sunshine and wind power. Coordinating regional economic development with integration of the energy sector will strengthen security in the area.
- Leverage of existing regional organizations and initiatives, such as those referred to above, as relevant. Such mutual reinforcement of approaches to issues can serve to bolster both general understandings and specific undertakings in fields of common interest.

Learning from past models

A Helsinki-like process or OSCE-like organization in the Middle East could be a good model for creating a regional structure. Despite much deeper ideological divisions, ethnic tensions, and territorial disputes across Europe during the first half of the 20th century, Europeans successfully created a security organization that included former rivals such as France-Germany and the Soviet Union-United States. The issues that had to be overcome to bring these countries together under one umbrella was as challenging as any set of security, religious, ethnic, and ideological differences currently dividing the Middle East.

The OSCE-like model should include Arab countries, Israel, Iran, and Turkey. It is unclear whether Iran is interested in participating in such a structure, even though the country is at the crux of many issues confronting the region including its connection to Hamas and Hezbollah. However, given Iran’s stature in the region and its ambition to acquire nuclear weapons, Iranian participation appears to be an imperative. In fact, an OSCE-type model might be a good tool to enforce Iran’s commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

External actors must also be included in this structure. Many Arab states and Israel will want US participation, since it has been a key player in Middle East agreements. However, US participation comes with a high price, since the Arab world rejects unconditional American support of Israel. Therefore, active Russian participation in a regional structure is important as a counterbalance.

As was the case with the OSCE, the starting point for a regional cooperation structure should be a Middle East security conference in which participating countries develop an agenda for each summit. This should be followed by institutionalized meetings and the creation of a permanent multilateral security organization based on these foundations.

Decision-making bodies

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The OSCE PA is made up of more than 300 parliamentarians from the OSCE's 57 participating States. It provides a forum for parliamentary dialogue, leads election observation missions, engages in parliamentary diplomacy and strengthens international co-operation on OSCE-related issues.

Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office

The Personal Representatives are tasked by the Chair to work on preventing and managing conflicts in the OSCE region, to ensure co-ordination in specific areas like gender and youth issues, and to promote tolerance and non-discrimination.

Summit

Meetings of heads of state or government of OSCE participating States set priorities, take decisions and provide orientation at the highest political level. The last OSCE Summit took place in Kazakhstan in 2010.

Ministerial Council

Annual meetings of the foreign ministers of OSCE participating States constitute the central decision-making and governing body of the OSCE.

Permanent Council

The Permanent Council is the OSCE's regular body for political dialogue and decision-making, in which the permanent representatives of the participating States meet weekly in Vienna.

Forum for Security Co-operation

The Forum is an autonomous decision-making body in which representatives of participating States meet weekly to consult on military stability and security.

Chairperson-in-Office / OSCE Chair

A different participating State chairs the OSCE each year, with that country's foreign minister acting as Chairperson-in-Office. The OSCE Chair co-ordinates decision-making and sets the OSCE's priorities during its year in office.

Troika

The Troika consists of representatives of the current, preceding and future OSCE Chairs.

Executive structures

Secretary General / Secretariat, Vienna

The Secretary General heads the OSCE Secretariat, acting under the guidance of the Chairperson-in-Office. The Secretariat, which includes the Conflict Prevention Centre, assists the OSCE Chair in its activities, provides operational and administrative support to field operations and, as appropriate, to other institutions.

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Warsaw

ODIHR promotes democratic elections, respect for human rights, the rule of law, tolerance and non-discrimination, and the rights of Roma and Sinti communities.

Representative on Freedom of the Media, Vienna

The Representative observes media developments in all 57 OSCE participating States and provides early warning on violations of free expression and media freedom.

High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague

The High Commissioner's role is to provide early warning and take appropriate early action to prevent ethnic tensions from developing into conflict.

OSCE in the field

The OSCE's field operations support host countries in implementing their OSCE commitments and fostering local capacities through concrete projects that respond to their needs. The field operations enable the OSCE to tackle crises as they arise and support post-conflict rehabilitation.

South-Eastern Europe

- Presence in Albania
- Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mission in Kosovo
- Mission to Montenegro
- Mission to Serbia
- Mission to Skopje

Eastern Europe

- Mission to Moldova
- Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine
- Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine
- Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk

South Caucasus

- Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference

Central Asia

- Centre in Ashgabat
- Programme Office in Nur-Sultan
- Programme Office in Bishkek
- Programme Office in Dushanbe
- Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan



5. *Appendix: Consequences of the Coronavirus – Opportunities to Reshape the Middle East*

The emergence of the Coronavirus in a volatile Middle East involves many risks, but also presents opportunities for potential collaboration among non-traditional partners. We would like to further explore these opportunities and draft a feasible plan that can be shared with regional decision makers. We believe that in light of this common enemy – a pandemic that threatens the region regardless of faith and denomination – various players can find common ground that can be increased in the future.

a) Regional trends affected by the virus

While the virus is primarily a medical crisis with public health implications, it has created new challenges and intensified existing ones in areas such as the economy, governance, security and civil rights.

Economic crisis: The virus has impacted five main sources of income that have individually or collectively benefited every country in the region: oil and natural gas, tourism, transit fees, services, and remittances from foreign workers, primarily in oil producing countries. World Bank and IMF economists forecast negative 3.5-4 percent economic growth in the region in 2020, valued at some \$400 billion in lost GDP. As for 2021, they predict 3.9 percent growth in the overall region and 4.7 percent growth in oil-producing countries. This forecast, however, depends on several factors not under the control of regional governments and economies – primarily the recovery of world-leading economies in the United States, the European Union, and East Asia. Countries in these regions have invested trillions of dollars for immediate domestic aid plans (including \$2.2 trillion in the US), and they will find it difficult to raise resources on the scale required to rescue the Middle East from the cumulative effect of the coronavirus crisis. Furthermore, the flow of direct foreign investments to Middle East economies is expected to slow down as a result of the economic uncertainty in the region.

Domestic civil unrest: As unemployment rates spike and many regional actors find it difficult to recover their local economies, the political stability of some regimes may be jeopardized. Enacting emergency legislation to grant these regimes more authority, such as enlisting their armies to implement certain measures – particularly preventing public assembly – will sharpen public discourse, even if cautiously, over the long-term impact on the status of the law and the democratic process. As of now, political forces that criticized these regimes, whether conservative-clerical on the one hand or liberal on the other, have had to accept measures taken to ensure basic public needs and welfare in light

of the pandemic. With that said, religious institutions throughout the region expressed dissatisfaction with the closing of mosques and prohibition of public prayer throughout the pandemic, especially during the month of Ramadan. The longer it takes for economic recovery in the Middle East, the more public criticism of central governments, economic measures, and civil restrictions will be expressed. The economic crisis caused by the virus may strengthen elements of political Islam, since they feature an infrastructure of Dawah – access and assistance to the lower classes.

De-escalation of hostilities: Currently, it appears that the risk of regional escalation has declined, since all regional actors are focused on combating the spread of the virus and mitigating its financial impact. The region could be fertile ground for serious health damage due to overcrowding in some cities and the presence of millions of refugees and displaced persons. The virus also has the potential to create a widespread humanitarian crisis and exacerbate fundamental problems that threaten the stability of many regimes. These threats will likely have a restraining effect on the region, shifting the national focus inward to domestic policies – primarily fixing the economy.

Regional opportunities for cooperation

While the future spread of the virus is still unknown, countries can focus on the following to improve regional cooperation in vital issues:

- Health initiatives – As the pandemic continues to spread and take a toll on human life, improving regional cooperation in the healthcare sector can benefit all actors who share an interest in reducing contagion rates and increasing patient survival rates. Examples of collaboration that can mitigate the virus' impact include implementing inter-country knowledge-sharing mechanisms regarding best practices and treatment protocols, boosting professional competency of medical staffs, and presenting innovative ideas and technologies for treatment.
- Regional economic cooperation initiatives – The most pressing issue alongside the health crisis is the economic crisis, mainly the rapid increase in unemployment and negative growth rates. As all regional actors are on the precipice of a recession, there is an opportunity to revamp regional development efforts – mainly between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority – to create jobs and improve infrastructure. Introducing Greece and Cyprus into such initiatives could facilitate trade between the region and Europe.
- Transnational transportation infrastructure – A significant impact of the pandemic is the reduction of flights due to the global closed-border policy. While this policy enables governments to better control the contagion within their borders, it slows down transnational trade that has relied on inexpensive aviation solutions till now. Realizing the potential for future aviation industry crises can open up the possibility for better terrestrial solutions such as transnational highways and railroads spreading across the Middle East.
- Water – Due to the arid climate of the Middle East, water solutions are a matter of national security that also impact regime stability. Although this issue is not unique to the coronavirus crisis, clean potable water plays a crucial role in proper sanitation and contagion prevention. This can create an opportunity to reconsider projects like the Northern Carrier – a collaborative project between

Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority for transferring desalinated water from Israel's northern coast to Jordan and the PA.

- Innovation of the work market – Manual laborers and workers in industries requiring in-person encounters have incurred large income losses due to physical contact restrictions. However, the high-tech industry and other industries enabling remote work have stayed afloat, and many companies have adapted to new work habits. This presents regional actors with an opportunity to form creative hubs and accelerators that bring together the best minds from each country to re-imagine work procedures and introduce innovative ways to increase employment under the threat of the virus. This process can help promote development, modernization and connectivity among member states of a regional cooperation mechanism.
- Tourism – Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Israel have experienced devastating blows to their economies due to the paralysis of the tourism sector and related services. With commercial flights not expecting to be resume soon, the recovery period for this sector is projected to be among the longest. This can open up an opportunity to strengthen inland regional tourism, which would also improve cultural appreciation and understanding among neighboring countries.
- Energy – The volatility and uncertainty in energy markets cultivate an opportunity to redefine regional energy security in a fluctuating yet increasingly connected world. Crises can encourage cooperation, as well as streamline an array of increasingly connected energy markets with redundancies in supply lines, which in turn, can contribute to a more stable future.
- Regional market – We have learned that the global economy cannot be relied upon in times of crisis, as all countries have withdrawn internally to cope with the virus and supply essential needs to their population. This supports the need to create a regional common market in which each member state can contribute for the benefit of all countries, while receiving the goods, services and products required from the market.

b) Reshaping the region

While the coronavirus is challenging regimes and economies, it also provides a unique opportunity for cooperation based on mutual interest. Our group wishes to further explore the opportunities presented above, identify feasible solutions, and draft policy recommendations for decision makers in the region. This endeavor will be pursued with the help of experts from partnering organizations, bringing together knowledge from governments and the private sector.

REGIONAL SECURITY DIALOGUE: SECURITY CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

REGIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST DESTABILIZATION EFFORTS

1. EXISTING REGIONAL COOPERATION STRUCTURES

Although there have been myriad formal cooperation structures in the region since the mid-1940s, the level of integration across MENA has always been low. Below are examples of several current formal structures and the main driver for their establishment.

<i>Organization/Structure</i>	<i>Driver</i>
<i>League of Arab States</i>	Ethno-linguistic Arabism
<i>Organization of Islamic Cooperation</i>	Pan-Islamism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)</i> • <i>Arab Maghreb Union</i> • <i>Treaty of Saadabad</i> – Non-aggression pact designed to boost the security and stability of its signatories: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. 	Sub-regional identities
<i>Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)</i> – A multilateral body that includes all EU member states, the EU Commission, and 15 Mediterranean countries. The UfM is, to date, one of the few multilateral forums with both Israeli and Palestinian Authority representatives.	Geographic juxtaposition
	<i>Joint Threats</i>
<i>“Resistance Axis”</i> – Includes Iran, Syria (under Assad regime), various Palestinian/partly Islamist factions (e.g. Hamas), and Lebanon’s Hezbollah.	Western influence/dominance in region
<i>International Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State (ISIS)</i> ¹⁰ – Although Israel is not part of the coalition, it provides intelligence against ISIS. The coalition is committed to “dismantle the group’s networks and counter its global ambitions. Beyond the military campaign in Iraq and Syria, the Coalition is committed to: tackling ISIS’s financing and economic infrastructure; preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders; supporting stabilization and the restoration of essential public services to areas liberated from ISIS; and countering the group’s propaganda.”	Islamic State (ISIS)

¹⁰ The coalition included 81 partners of those there are 15 Middle Eastern country (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya) and the Arab League <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/partners/>

Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition ¹¹ – A coalition committed to “coordinate and unite [member states’] efforts in the ideology, communications, counter terrorism financing, and military domains, in order to fight all forms of terrorism and extremism and to effectively join other international security and peacekeeping efforts.”	Terrorism and extremism
Arab Coalition ¹² to Fight Houthi Rebels in Yemen – Receives intelligence and logistical support from the United States	Houthi rebels
Maritime Coalition ¹³ for Protecting Gulf Shipping Waters – Aims to ward off the perceived threat to the world’s oil supply by providing escorts to commercial vessels passing through the Gulf waters, the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman, and the Bab El-Mandab Strait in the Red Sea.	Oil supply security
Turkish-Libyan Alliance – Both countries signed an MOU in security, military and the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean Sea.	Eastern Mediterranean region security
Israel, Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt Alliance for Energy – Formed to protect and develop the eastern Mediterranean energy fields.	Energy security

These narrow, single-issue alliances are driven by continuously changing perceptions of threats in the region, which explains why they dominate the nature of cooperation. Such non-robust “liquid alliances” create a sense of unreliability among allies. Therefore, it is crucial to create formalized alliances in order to strengthen political and economic development, implement critical infrastructures, and protect demographic cohesion, leading to a more stable region.

2. THREAT ANALYSIS

Jordanian approach to threat

¹¹ The coalition included 41 partners of those there are 19 Middle Eastern country (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti. <https://www.imctc.org/English>

¹² The coalition includes 12 partners of those there are 11 Middle Eastern countries (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti.

¹³ The coalition includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, USA, Australia, Britain and Israel.

Jordan's plan to deal with internal threats and refugees is included in its [2020 national strategy](#), while its approach to sustainable development can be found [here](#).

The country plans to deal with terrorist groups by implementing a joint project based on a memorandum of understanding¹⁴ signed by NATO and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). The plan is entitled "Enhancing capabilities to prepare for and respond to a terrorist attack in Jordan featuring the use of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons."

The project will build upon an existing NATO project with Jordan to enhance its national crisis management capabilities within the National Center for Security and Crisis Management, which was launched in February 2018. It is funded by four allies via the NATO Defense Capacity Building Trust Fund. The project will include development of a national crisis plan for dealing with threats posed by CBRN weapons as well as a field exercise with a virtual reality component.

3. *Regional Cooperation Considerations*

Former US president Donald Trump presented the most recent proposed regional cooperation, which envisioned creating a new security alliance comprising six Gulf Arab states – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain – as well as Egypt and Jordan. It would be unofficially known as the "Arab NATO" and dubbed the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA). The alliance's objectives reportedly would be to serve as a "bulwark against Iranian aggression, terrorism, extremism and will bring stability to the Middle East¹⁵."

For Jordan, positive and constructive regional security architecture is important. As a small country, Jordan is a great supporter of multilateral and cooperative solutions addressing regional security challenges. The value of being part of a regional security architecture framework is very important if it promotes dialog and cooperation in a region that lacks cooperative organizations and mechanisms.

This proposed alliance offers several advantages and disadvantages that require close examination.

a) Advantages

A structured regional cooperation offers the following advantages:

- Resolution of the wider regional crisis, especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

¹⁴ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164200.htm

¹⁵ [Trump seeks to revive 'Arab NATO' to confront Iran | Reuters](#)

- Nuclear non-proliferation in the region
- Reduction of a regional arms race
- Enhancement of existing intelligence bilateral cooperation and creation of new ones.
- Increased stability within partner countries and an alleviated security fear among them.
- Deterrence of extremist elements that affect peace and stability and the dismantling of their current structure.
- Creation of an early-warning missile system to reduce potential threat level
- Elimination of international law violations. States in a regional cooperation structure will be interested in setting up clear rules of conduct based on international law and the UN Charter. This includes concerted attempts to strengthen international law, including, among others, the prompt interpretation of UN mandates for operations in conflict zones, legal limitations on external interventions in civil wars, and calling into account parties – including states – that fund or provide direct or indirect support to terrorists.
- Creation of a common vision for partners of a regional cooperation alliance.
- Building of trust and establishment of credibility among members of regional cooperation alliance.
- Promotion of development, especially economic, within partner countries.
- Tool for leveraging further cooperation and mutual understanding.

b) Disadvantages

It is true that all Arab countries are allies, but they are also regional competitors; each wants to be recognized as the main player in the region and its center of gravity. The US is the leading power in NATO, and the former Soviet Union is the leading power in the Warsaw Pact. In the case of the Arab world, the struggle over leadership will be among Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and possible other wannabes. The competitive spirit among Arab countries will limit the ability of any state to exercise influence over its neighbors.

Any alliance that will not provide a strong incentive that transcends Arab rivalry will be doomed to failure.

Determining the priorities of their enemies, agreeing on the nature of threats:

From Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's point of view, Iran is a threat, while Kuwait and Oman have historically enjoyed peace and periods of close cooperation with Iran. It is unlikely that Oman

will agree to forego its policy of neutrality toward Iran, especially since it has already refused to participate in the Arab alliance to support legitimacy in Yemen. On the other hand, Jordan is concerned about a more critical issue: the Israeli occupation and fading of a two-state solution. In other words, Jordan's threat perception has little to do with Iran and everything to do with Israel's rejection of allowing the Palestinians to establish their own state. Meanwhile, Egypt sees the Sinai Peninsula and the Libyan arena as more important than the Yemeni or Syrian arena, where Iranian hegemony is in play.

How will any regional structure be perceived by non-members?

Iran will perceive MESA as a direct confrontation, which will encourage Tehran to enhance its missile capabilities and reconsider its nuclear program. Iran has a good reason to fear the US and its Arab allies; Washington staged a coup against Iran's elected government in 1953 and backed Saddam Hussein's Iraq when it waged a war of aggression on Iran. That war was highlighted by the use of chemical weapons and remains a major source of anger for Iran. More recently, the US imposed harsh economic sanctions on Iran and heavily armed Saudi Arabia. As such, Tehran would have little choice but to look for ways to improve its deterrence against attacks, including obtaining nuclear weapons.

Building a formal alliance to push back only Iran would fuel vicious sectarian hatred between and within the region's countries. The majority of Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain's populations, and large minorities in Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf countries are Shia. A structure excluding Iran would further polarize the region along religious lines, pushing countries that have safe relations with Tehran to act like enemies, while shoving Iraq in the direction of its larger majority Shia neighbor. Egypt and Jordan would also be dragged into the confrontation and be expected to take on an aggressive, anti-Iran agenda.

Lack of public support

The growing disconnects between Arab regimes and their populations – a widening of the “regime-people divide” – was identified by some scholars over a decade ago (Lynch 2006). In these critical times when Arab governments are facing serious internal challenges, public support matters even among the most authoritarian regimes. Therefore, Arab countries will be hesitant to invest heavily in any alliance or networking plan that does not meet a minimum level of public support.

In the suggested architecture for cooperation that includes Israel, the Palestinian issue should be dealt with initially to guarantee a minimum level of public support, since the idea of Palestinian solidarity widely resonates with the Jordanian and Arab public. The strong reactions of Arab populations to Israel's war on the Lebanese Hezbollah in 2006 and on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip in 2008-2009 is evidence of this (Valbjørn and Bank 2012). Even the shifting positions of a number of Arab states regarding relations with Israel and the institutionalized relations between Israel and a

growing number of Arab states did not secure popular support. The societal and cultural interconnectedness of Arab populations, which seems to have only increased after the Arab spring, have created an Arab echo chamber: Arab solidarity and the Palestinian cause still matter a great deal to the extent that they start to condition the foreign policy of Arab countries.

Another point worth considering is that Palestinian solidarity impacted regional politics as it witnessed the (re)configuration of state and non-state actors defining themselves as part of the “resistance axis” against Israel’s persistent rule over the Palestinians. However, the popular appeal of the axis has been weakened, mainly because of the involvement of Hezbollah in the Syrian civil war and the brutality of the Assad regime toward civilians. This shift of public perception of the axis should be used wisely to introduce future arrangements that include Israel. But it won’t be an easy task. The severe humanitarian crisis in Yemen created by the Saudi-led coalition against the Iranian-supported Houthi rebels generated an extremely negative perception among the Arab population in countering Iranian hegemony. And this card might be played by the axis to undermine future alliances that include Israel.

Finally, the public will perceive any intended coalitions in the same way it did for the Trump plan to expand arms sale in the Middle East. In fact, between 2013 and 2017, arms exports to the Middle East accounted for 49% of total US arms exports, making Arab countries reliant on US platforms, munitions, logistical and technical support for a long time.

The bottom line is that any future alliance, arrangement or structure that includes Israel while the occupation persists and only aims at Iran will not be supported by the Arab public. It is an issue that should be viewed through an internal stability lens.

Other disadvantages

- Failure to respect the sovereignty of any partner in the coalition
- Disclosure of secrets or sensitive information to a third party beyond the alliance (confidence building measures are needed)
- Possibility of resorting to force and violence in resolving disputes between allied countries (conflict resolution mechanism should be established)
- Reduction of the fiscal deficit, building of desalination plants, and lowering of transportation prices
- Exchange of experiences on migration issues
- Prevention of mass displacement of people
- Natural integration of Israel in the region

c) *Shared Interests*

The Sunni countries and Israel share the same interest: to block Iran's expansion in the Middle East and minimize its involvement in other areas. All countries sharing this interest must fully cooperate with one another in order to ensure success in this mission. Such cooperation includes a combination of components:

- Share an intelligence picture on Iran's activities in various countries and its intentions
- Design a strategy on how to block Iran's expansion and reduce its influence in the region
- Turn the strategy into an operational mode – to initiate and launch focused operations that will serve the strategic goal, while cooperating in certain activities

Other areas of cooperation and shared interest include:

- Security (shipping, aviation, energy, cybersecurity, borders, infrastructure, anti-terrorism, finance)
- Organized crime, smuggling prevention
- Missile defense and air defense
- Agriculture and water
- Health and science
- Economics and business, tourism, and job creation
- Energy

5. *Suggested Structure and Mechanism*

a) *OSCE-based structure*

Our suggested structure is based on the [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe](#) (OSCE) and comprises three baskets – political/security, environmental/economic, and human rights.

The participating states must first agree to the proposed structure. It is important to note that this is an initial attempt to lay on the table and hopefully build upon in the future. The structure may end up not being applicable to the Middle East and may require more details, but some aspects can certainly be applied. The structure is intended to serve the participating states. A special committee will oversee the structure, assess its feasibility, and respond accordingly. If the structure works, then

it can move ahead. If not, the structure will be reshaped to suit the participating states and remain in accordance with their priorities and needs. Once the structure is in place, the committee should meet annually to discuss its efficiency and make any necessary adjustments, which would ultimately serve the security of participating states.

Here are the various positions, groups and activities of the proposed structure.

Chairperson-in-Office (CIO): A one-year position to be filled by a foreign minister of one of the participating states.

Chairperson-in-Office representatives: Personal representatives from each participating state who are appointed by the CIO with a clear and precise mandate outlining the tasks expected to be undertaken.

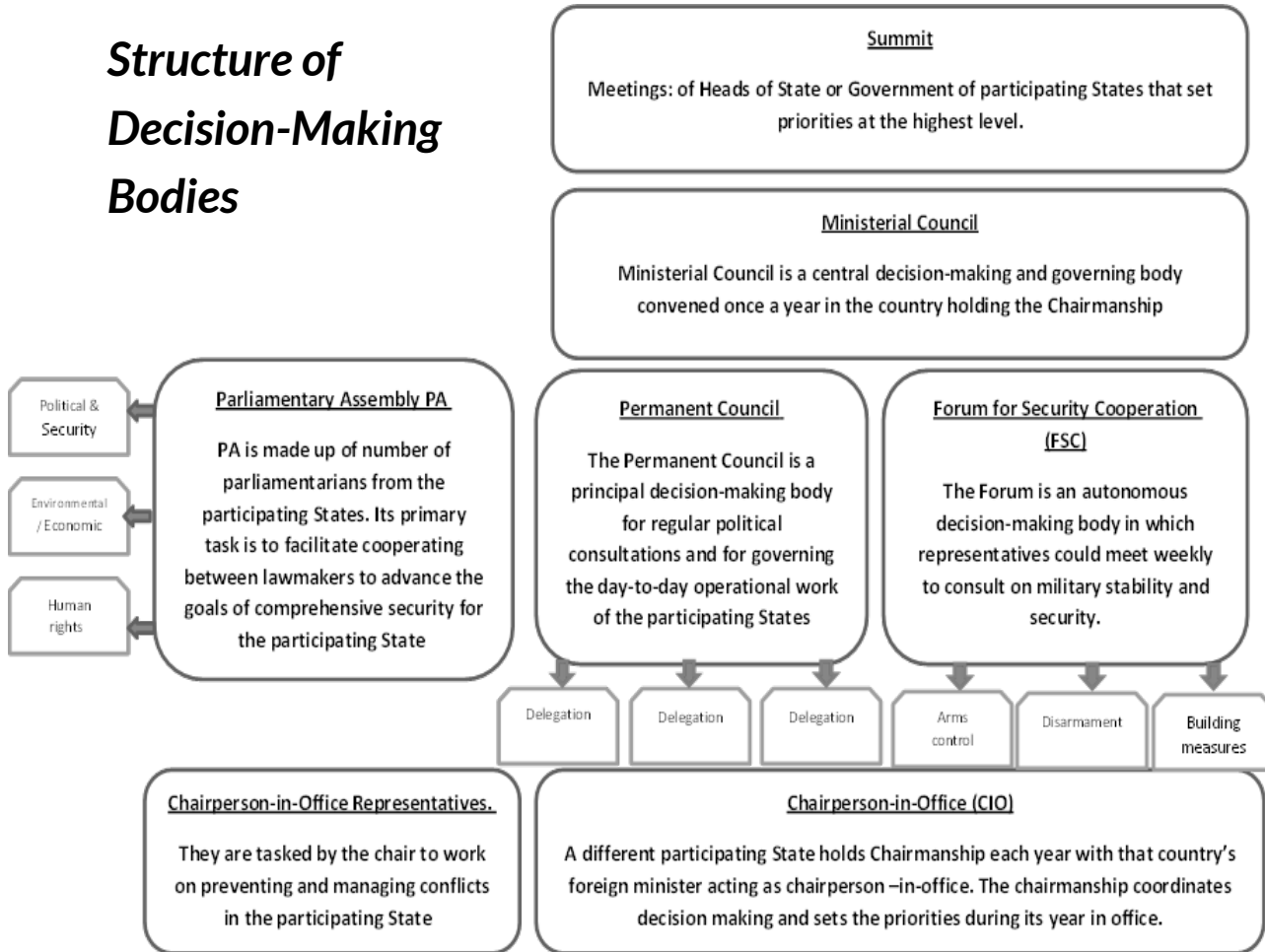
Summits: Periodic meetings of heads of government of participating states that set priorities at the highest political level.

Ministerial Council: The central decision-making and governing body comprising foreign ministers of participating states, which convenes annually in the country holding the Chairmanship.

Permanent Council: Comprising delegates of the participating states, the Permanent Council is the principal decision-making body for regular political consultations and governing of day-to-day operational work of the states. The Permanent Council will implement, within its area of competence, the tasks defined and decisions taken by the summits and the Ministerial Council. Meetings could take place on a weekly basis, and would be convened and chaired by the CIO or his/her representative.

Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC): A platform that supports arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures. It enables participating states to cooperate with greater openness and transparency in order to consult on and increase military security and stability. The FSC is an autonomous decision-making body in which representatives could meet weekly.

Structure of Decision-Making Bodies



b) Cooperation mechanisms

Democratic and Human Rights

This mechanism provides support, assistance, and expertise to participating states and civil society to promote democracy, rule of law, human rights and tolerance, and non-discrimination. In addition, it could observe elections, review legislation, and advise governments on how to develop and sustain democratic institutions. It could also conduct training programs for government and law-enforcement officials, as well as for non-governmental organizations, on how to uphold, promote and monitor human rights. The mechanism could also combat human trafficking through prevention, prosecution, protection and partnerships based on a human-rights approach given that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are keys to a comprehensive security concept.

Efforts may include:

- Supporting implementation of legislation to protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities
- Working to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices
- Sharing best practices and supporting efforts to ensure that international human rights standards are met
- Supporting civil society organizations working on human rights
- Focusing attention on the rights of communities, languages, education, returnees and repatriated persons, and refugees and vulnerable persons
- Monitoring hate crimes and hate speech
- Preventing human trafficking and torture

Economic

This mechanism supports participating states in implementing their commitments in the economic sphere and translating them into national policies across four main areas:

- **Good governance and anti-corruption:** preventing corruption and conflicts of interest; improving national anti-corruption regulatory frameworks; introducing fair and transparent public procurement procedures
- **Anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT):** exchanging information to more effectively identify, trace, and suppress money laundering and the financing of terrorism; strengthening cooperation and financial investigation techniques; conducting national risk assessments and supporting the implementation of international standards
- **Transport, trade and border crossing facilitation:** providing support for the development of regional and international transport and logistics networks connecting the region with Europe and Asia; disseminating best practices and standards in the transport field; combating corruption in customs and border services; facilitating public-private partnerships
- **Labor migration:** supporting the development of and strengthening comprehensive and effective labor migration management policies as an important contributing factor to security, stability, and growth

Efforts may include:

- Assisting national economic reform processes.
- Improving conditions for investment and economic development.

- Training civil society organizations on economic rights and planning.
- Ensuring sustainable development and good governance.
- Promoting economic security.
- Supporting cross-border trade and free economic zone.
- Improving investment climates.

Environmental

This mechanism supports participating states in strengthening cooperation on environmental issues as part of a broader effort to promote good neighborly relations, build mutual confidence, and prevent conflict. It supports projects and activities to ensure sustainable management of natural resources, particularly water, within and between countries, to reduce risks of disasters, to address climate change challenges, and to manage hazardous waste safely. It also works in partnership with international organizations, national governments, and civil society to raise environmental awareness, promote public participation in environmental decision-making, and facilitate access to justice in environmental matters.

Efforts may include:

- Strengthening local, national, and regional capacities for addressing environmental challenges that might impact security
- Promoting trans-boundary cooperation on environmental challenges
- Building regional capacity and raising awareness in the field of sustainable energy and its importance as an alternative to oil
- Supporting disaster preparedness, prevention, response and recovery at community level, as well as at national and trans-boundary levels
- Strengthening capacities for detection and prevention of environmental crimes, including at borders
- Strengthening the capacities of civil society to address environment and security challenges

Countering terrorism

Middle Eastern participating states agree that terrorism is one of the most significant threats to peace, security, and stability, and to the enjoyment of human rights and social and economic development both in the region's area and beyond. Participating states should unequivocally reject the association of terrorism with any race, nationality or religion. Therefore, participating states

should be resolute in implementing effective measures to prevent and combat terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, as a serious crime that has no justification, regardless of motivation or origin.

Efforts may include:

- Promoting a cooperative and coordinated approach to countering terrorism at all levels, including coordination among national authorities and cooperation among states
- Countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism by following a multidimensional approach
- Preventing and suppressing the financing of terrorism
- Promoting dialog and cooperation on counter-terrorism issues, in particular, through public-private partnerships between state authorities and the private sector (business community, industry), as well as civil society and the media
- Strengthening national efforts to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- Strengthening travel document security
- Promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of counter-terrorism measures

Border management and security

Borders can be both open and secure: open to enable the cross-border flow of legitimate trade and commerce, and secure to protect the national security interests of states. The regional cooperation mechanism should show a commitment to achieving a balance between the need to maintain security against cross-border threats and the freedom of movement for persons, goods, services, and commerce.

Efforts may include:

- Supporting cooperation and rapid information sharing between border police and neighboring country counterparts
- Training, holding workshops, and raising awareness for navy and border security officers, customs personnel, and aviation and airport security staff for:
 - patrolling procedures, surveillance techniques, maritime security protocols, airport safety management, countering drug trafficking, strengthening travel document security, international profiling techniques, combating transnational organized crime, illegal trafficking chemical materials

- providing technical advice and assistance for preventing and responding to border incidents

c) Proposed regional cooperation mechanism

This mechanism's role is to coordinate the mutual activities of all involved players. The mechanism will include three main components:

- Intelligence team – the main way for an exchange of intelligence and for ensuring that all players share the same intelligence picture and assessments regarding Iran's intentions
- Planning team – the main tool for designing a strategy on how to compete with Iran. In this axis, senior representatives from each player will "join hands" and design the strategic plan on competing with Iran, mark the advantages of each one of the participating players, and show how they may assist in implementing the strategic plan.
- Operational team – responsible for turning the strategic plan into a set of operations that will serve the strategic goal. Part of the operations may be done in a cooperative fashion as decided by the relevant players.

After an operation or set of operations is implemented, the intelligence team will have to renew its assessments regarding:

- Effect on Iran's activity
- How Iran is going to respond
- Recommended way to proceed

The updated unified assessment generated by the intelligence team will be delivered to the planning team and operational team so they can update their plans accordingly.

Each team will regularly work in its home country, and there is a need to define the frequency of an exchange of information and ideas in face-to-face meetings or other means (e.g. videoconference).

When an attack occurs, the participants will gather within 24-36 hours at an agreed-upon location, present the unified intelligence picture, and decide how to respond.

Each participant will appoint a POC for each of the three committees (i.e. Intelligence, Planning, Operations). Every committee will nominate a chairman who will hold the position for an agreed-upon period, after which another member will replace him/her. The chairman's role is to initiate mutual activities, coordinate the committee's meetings, and carry out similar functions.

d) Mechanism during routine situations and attacks

During routine periods, summits could be held periodically by the head of the state or governments as needed. The Ministerial Council could be held annually to implement the head of states' decisions. Between the annual Ministerial Council meetings, the Permanent Council will provide consultations for governing the day-to-day operational work of participating states. The Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), in which representatives could meet weekly, will cover military aspects and be responsible for stability and security. The Parliamentary Assembly (PA) will facilitate cooperation between lawmakers to advance the goals of comprehensive security for the participating state.

Attacks and emergencies are not always military in nature. A wide range of crises can pose a security threat to the territory and populations of participating states. These include large-scale terrorist attacks (e.g. the 9/11 Al-Qaeda terrorist attack on the US), natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and environmental wildfires, and cyberattacks. In addition, humanitarian/political crises can arise as a result of technological disruptions. The participating states (i.e. alliance) could apply, on a case-by-case basis or by consensus, the appropriate mix of political and military tools to manage crises in today's increasingly complex security environment.

The states could agree on a proposed strategic concept to address the framework within which members can work and train together in order to plan and conduct multinational crisis management operations, often at short notice. It could use military and non-military measures depending on the crisis' nature, scale and seriousness.

In any case, the military alone cannot resolve a crisis or conflict, and lessons learned from previous situations make it clear that a comprehensive political, civilian, and military approach is necessary for effective crisis management.

e) Participating states' role

The primary role and responsibility of participating states is to protect and defend their territory and population against attacks or crises. This role can be achieved through readiness, planning, preparation, and conducting of exercises for possible contingencies. The participating states will reach an agreement by which each country will take any necessary action to assist a threatened or attacked member state.

f) Global players' role

Global players will be crucial in helping participating states succeed in building a regional security model that can serve as a comprehensive approach encompassing political-military, economic, and environmental and human aspects. Accordingly, the participating states could address a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence- and security-

building measures, human rights, democratization, counterterrorism, and economic and environmental activities.

US: The United States' support for this structure and the establishment of an alliance or regional cooperation is a role that is in the interest of current and future US administration strategy. Taking on this role in this context will reduce the security and financial burdens on Washington toward its allies. It will also push the allies to play a greater role in confronting threats to their security and facing threatening regional powers that seek to achieve regional hegemony. The US used to be the de facto guarantor of the international order, despite former president Trump's questioning the value of international institutions and withdrawing from multilateral agreements and organizations.

Russia: Russia considers the Middle East as a region adjacent to its borders, and is trying to implement a long-term strategy in an effort to restore the strong position and influence it had during the Cold War. Russia is now playing the role of exploiting the vacuum left by the weak and confused US position in the Middle East given former US president Trump's insistence on withdrawing from regional issues. Moscow helped the Syrian regime remain in power after nearly 9 years of civil war, and even Israel, Washington's greatest ally in the region, is courting Russia as a regional actor. Russia is also playing an important role in Libya and in cooperating militarily with Iran. The US administration and Russian government could search for opportunities of cooperation in which there is an agreement of mutual interest. It is no secret that the Middle East can serve as a strategic channel for sharing the burden with other external powers such as Russia and China, thus relieving the political, financial and military pressure on the United States.

China: China measures its influence and presence in the Middle East mainly in terms of securing energy supplies, trade ties, and business benefits. Beijing is comfortable with its current policy of avoiding political involvement in the region's disputes. Likewise, China steers clear of taking sides in the Iran-Saudi Arabia showdown or in intra-Arab disputes such as the Qatar embargo, preferring to deal with the Arab League as the main address for dialog.

EU: The European Union plays a key role in the Middle East peace process and diplomacy with Iran, and provides emergency relief in the aftermath of disasters. The EU still lacks a coherent, detailed and realistic regional strategy, and has to look beyond its relations with Iran and address wider regional security challenges. The US' incipient retreat as a security guarantor and Russia's increased interest in the region make it necessary for Europe to engage beyond its borders. The UK, France and Germany are making every effort to stick to the agreement made with Iran in 2015.

The participating players will apply to one of the global players for assistance when all participants agree that it is necessary.

g) *Global players' role vis-à-vis Iran*

Here is the position of the global players with regard to Iran.

US: The US is applying economical pressure on Iran and is engaged with Iran on the military side (mainly "concealed" activities), but its influence is quite low.

Russia: Russia is very dominant in Syria, cooperates with Iran in Syria, and may be able to influence the Iranian regime.

China: Iran has become profoundly, disproportionately, and perhaps irretrievably dependent on China, despite Tehran's revolutionary opposition to reliance on foreign powers. While diplomatic and economic sanctions have fallen short, COVID-19 has succeeded in isolating Iran like never before, compelling it to keep its borders to China open.

EU: The EU is making efforts to assist Iran economically in order to prevent it from pulling out of previous agreements, which may give European countries some influence over Tehran.

h) *Role of other regional players*

Instability is likely to continue in the Middle East as long as internal conflicts continue to flare up. Building trust between Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey appears difficult, if not impossible, at present. However, pushing regional and international players to make specific arrangements in order to better manage these conflicts and reduce the potential for conflict escalation appears to be the goal that is closest to being achieved. Should that be the case, we are sure that no party will benefit, at least at present. Establishing sharing information mechanisms can mitigate the potential for miscalculation and provide other ways to reduce the severity of crises when they arise.

i) *Required elements*

The following elements are required to ensure a successful structure:

- Inclusive and open
- Trans-regional geographical scope covering the wider Middle East [, including Iran and Israel,] and other countries that have expressed interest in joining the alliance

- Adherence to, and promotion of, international rules-based order – This reinforces productive cooperation, stability, good governance and collective security. Everyone benefits from the regulation and coordination resulting from such a contract between states.
- Security architecture that is held together by partnership, not only by a formal alliance system
- Link to transnational challenges such as extremism, terrorism, cyber threats, climate change, diseases and regional competition
- Establishment of a Palestinian state in a fair and equitable manner in order to achieve sustainable security. Afterward, development must play a full role in establishing security in the region.
- Capitalization on each country's strengths – Knowing what each country is good at and delivering targeted cooperation that plays to those strengths. For example, Jordan can provide training and share the lessons it learned from other armed forces due to its expertise in peacekeeping, disaster relief, fighting terrorism, and intelligence.
- Link between security pillar and economic pillar – For example, the Gulf countries have oil fields stretching across Iran and Iraq and around the Persian Gulf comprising the world's largest-known petroleum deposits – some two-thirds of the free world's oil reserves. In addition, nearly every Arab country enjoys extensive sunshine and wind power. Coordinating regional economic development with integration of the energy sector will strengthen security in the area.

j) Learning from past models

A Helsinki-like process or OSCE-like organization in the Middle East could be a good model for creating a regional structure. Despite much deeper ideological divisions, ethnic tensions, and territorial disputes across Europe during the first half of the 20th century, Europeans successfully created a security organization that included former rivals such as France-Germany and the Soviet Union-United States. The issues that had to be overcome to bring these countries together under one umbrella was as challenging as any set of security, religious, ethnic, and ideological differences currently dividing the Middle East.

The model should include Arab countries, Israel, Iran and Turkey. It is unclear whether Iran is interested in participating in such a structure, even though the country is at the crux of many issues confronting the region, including its connection to Hamas and Hezbollah. However, given Iran's stature in the region and its ambition to acquire nuclear weapons, Iranian participation appears to be

an imperative. In fact, such a model might be a good tool to enforce Iran's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

External actors must also be included in this structure. Many Arab states and Israel will want US participation, since it has been a key player in Middle East agreements. However, US participation comes with a high price, since the Arab world rejects unconditional American support of Israel. Therefore, active Russian participation in a regional structure is important as a counterbalance.

As was the case with the OSCE, the starting point for a regional cooperation structure should be a Middle East security conference in which participating countries develop an agenda for each summit. This should be followed by institutionalized meetings and the creation of a permanent multilateral security organization based on these foundations. This organization would provide a meeting forum for countries without developed bilateral relations, such as Iran and Israel, since interacting initially in a multilateral setting may be easier than in a bilateral one.

The original Helsinki Accords covered security, territorial integrity, border recognition, and human rights fostering. The human rights basket within a Helsinki-like process would legitimize and institutionalize the human rights issue within international engagement. Such a process could be of particularly great value and impact for Israel when placed alongside the security basket.

The Helsinki model, however, was not a complete success. During the Cold War, the conflict in Europe had a structure defined by a bipolar international system with a clear ideological outline that was dominated by the leading powers of the two major blocs – the US and the USSR. Europe's major political disputes were settled via several treaties, and the status quo between competing political systems was accepted. Strategic stability was achieved due to the threat of mutually assured destruction. Finally, and most importantly, the relevant actors were all states and alliances of states.

In sharp contrast, the Middle East conflict is fragmented and multipolar. Various states are competing for hegemony, and the US does not act as the leader of a bloc but merely as the external "supervisor." The region's borders are either being disputed or awaiting recognition under international law, while the development of WMD arms races and asymmetrical warfare are hard to control. Finally, and most importantly, the key actors in the Middle East include not only nation states, but also stateless people. This is not to say that a Helsinki-like model will not succeed, but rather that these issues should be considered when creating an enhanced holistic model.

6. Conclusion

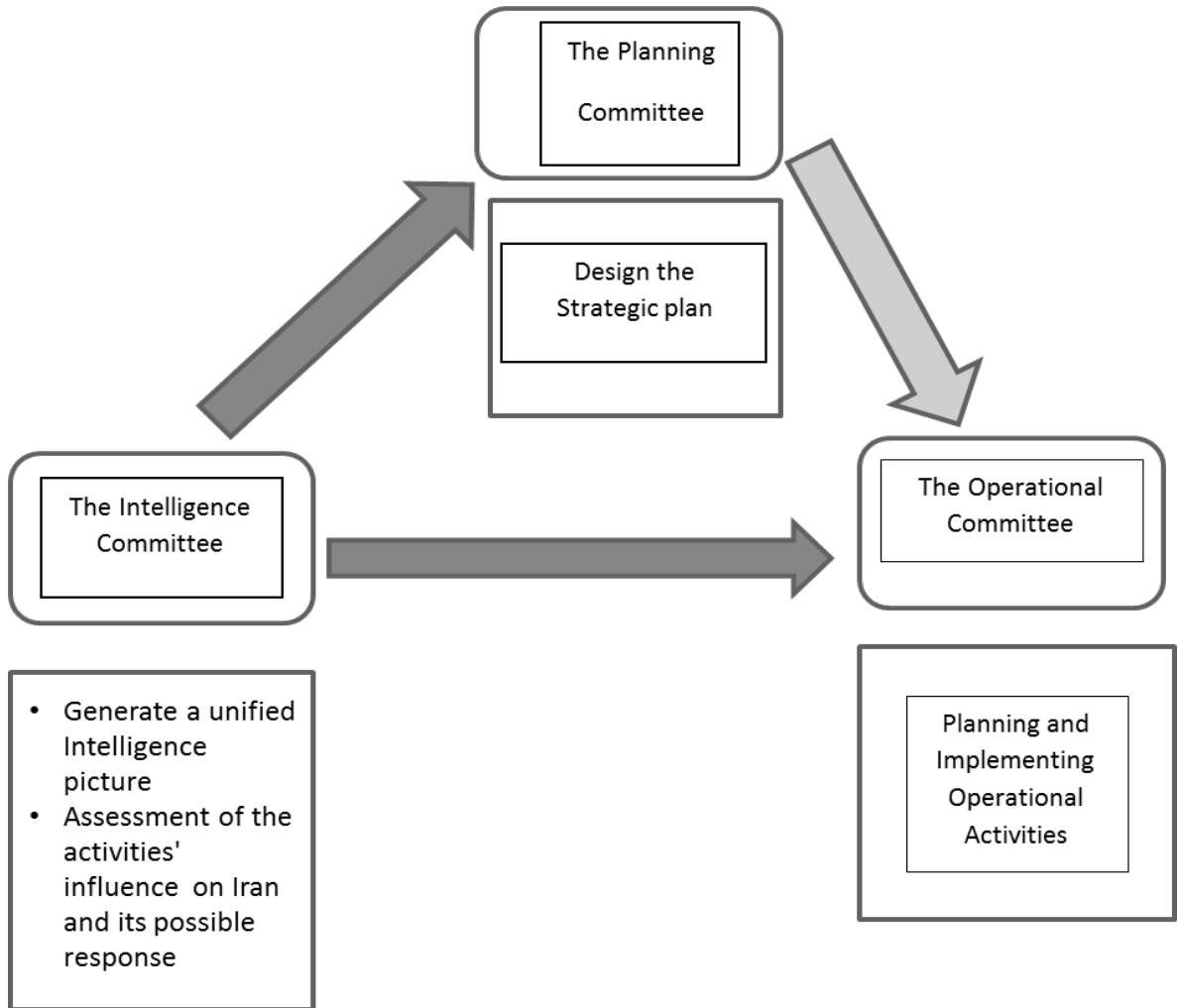
Iran poses a regional threat to the Middle East across several dimensions:

- Its support of terror organizations are destabilizing the region and are a threat that should be addressed.
- Its efforts to generate a solid "Shi'ite axis" comprising Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Gaza, and potentially the Palestinian Authority areas via Hamas pose a threat to all Sunni countries. The main goal of the alliance's mutual action would be to block expansion of the axis and to minimize its impact.
- It poses a threat via its nuclear capabilities. When the agreement between Iran and western countries was signed in 2015, Tehran agreed to suspend nuclear activity, but was not forced to dismantle its nuclear facilities, all of which are in good condition except from the Arak nuclear plant. Over the last few months, Iran violated the agreement and launched activities enabling it to develop a nuclear device in a short period of time, thereby indicating it has yet to give up its desire to create such capabilities.

The only way to stop Iran's growing influence in the region is by regional cooperation, in some cases with the assistance of global powers. In order to launch the proposed plan presented in this paper, there is a need to:

- Agree on the proposed concept
- Design a more detailed plan regarding the structure of the mechanism, its role, and how it is going to work

After these two initial steps are completed, it will be possible to begin implementing the plan.



REGIONAL SECURITY DIALOGUE: SECURITY CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

REGIONAL COOPERATION ON BORDER SECURITY AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

1. Introduction: Description of Threats and their Regional Implications

The array of border security threats is relatively wide and involves both the civilian and military spheres. In describing these threats and the ways to overcome them, this paper will focus on "hard" security, economics/trade, pilgrimage, refugees, and migration as they relate to safe and secure cross-border access and movement required for regional cooperation.

Regional partners have agreed that the threats include terrorist and criminal groups, Islamist elements, Iranian proxies, drug and weapon smugglers, and human traffickers. These threats can cause harm and destabilization to each country and border regime. When it comes to pilgrimage access, a border threat can lead to a terrorist attack in a house of worship or disturb ritual routine. When it comes to criminal elements, a border threat can lead to product smuggling, route disruption, or a hostile takeover of trade routes on land, sea or air.

When designing a response to these threats, two issues require special consideration. One is the threat of rockets (on land, sea and air routes) by terrorist/proxy elements and the cooperation required to challenge it. The second is cyber threats to the border regime's communications/technological infrastructure and the cyber defense capacity required to combat them.

Current security instability in the Middle East affects the integrity of many territorial borders in the region. This leads to more penetrable borders and easier entry and movement of political and economic migrants, trafficked goods, armed fighters, and even diseases like Ebola.

Extreme and criminal groups, in particular, have exploited the legitimacy "deficit" of regimes in many regional states plagued by civil wars and the failure to exert central authority over their territory. These states have been unable to remove the presence of such groups, which are expanding operations into previously inaccessible areas. At the same time, we have witnessed neighboring states meddling into each other's domestic affairs, along with increased militarization and a rising arms race.

The region's arms race has led to an increase in public expenditures on defense and border security. This has been at the expense of health, education and economic development policy choices, which drove Arab masses to the streets in the first place. As such, the Middle East lacks unity or an effective regional organization, is the world's most militarized region, and hosts the largest refugee population worldwide. Meanwhile, its economies are not growing fast enough to accommodate the demands of its population.

The vicious cycle of severe imbalance between economic and defense expenses alongside a lack of democracy and good governance will continue to drive regional populations to the streets and deepen instability in these states. This will force populations to seek refuge in neighboring countries and even in neighboring regions. Today's refugee flows are unprecedented and lead to significant security challenges highlighting the need to establish effective border management systems and processes and to initiate a favorable trade investment climate to help mitigate the impact of instability in the region.

2. Existing Regional Cooperation Structures

a) Bilateral Cooperation

Jordan-Israel

Jordan and Israel enjoy effective and stable cooperation regarding border security, from which all sides can learn. The two countries coordinate the entry and exit of goods and people, monitor commodities, and implement shared security standards while using various technologies at every level.

Palestinian Authority-Israel

Border security attacks can be prevented by early intelligence, which requires close coordination. A good example from which all sides can learn is cooperation between the Palestinian Authority's preventive security apparatus and Israel. By leveraging early intelligence, the PA has successfully prevented terrorist attacks at the border and beyond.

On the other hand, the lack of oversight on trade routes is predominant in relations between Palestinians and Israeli settlers. The sides have often maintained non-formalized trade relations, while evading oversight, tolls, VAT, and taxes. This has led to a criminal market, the disruption of supervision, and local-level bribery, which must be taken into account in any future cooperative mechanism.

Egypt-Israel

There is excellent cooperation on the Egyptian-Israeli border regime (which also includes the handling of Gaza's borders). However, past weapons smuggling between the Sinai and Gaza offers a negative experience from which the sides can learn. It is also possible to learn from the Israeli-Syrian border regime, where there was active transfer of goods prior to the Syrian civil war despite a lack of coordination between the two countries.

b) Multilateral Cooperation

Although there have been myriad formal cooperation structures in the region since the mid-1940s, the level of integration across MENA has always been low. Below are examples of several current formal structures and the main driver for their establishment.

Organization/Structure	Driver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • League of Arab States • Pan-Arab Free Trade Agreement (PAFTA) 	Ethno-linguistic Arabism
Organization of Islamic Cooperation	Pan-Islamism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) • Arab Maghreb Union • Agadir Agreement • North African Union • Treaty of Saadabad – Non-aggression pact designed to boost the security and stability of its signatories: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan 	Sub-regional identities
<p>Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) – A multilateral body that includes all EU member states, the EU Commission, and 15 Mediterranean countries. The UfM is, to date, one of the few multilateral forums with both Israeli and Palestinian Authority representatives.</p>	Geographic juxtaposition
	Joint Threats
<p>“Resistance Axis” – Includes Iran, Syria (under Assad regime), various Palestinian/partly Islamist factions (e.g. Hamas), and Lebanon’s Hezbollah</p>	Western influence/dominance in region
<p>International Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State (ISIS)¹⁶ – Although Israel is not part of the coalition, it provides intelligence against ISIS. The coalition is committed to “dismantle the group’s networks and counter its global ambitions. Beyond the military campaign in Iraq and Syria, the Coalition is committed to: tackling ISIS’s financing and economic infrastructure; preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders; supporting stabilization and the restoration of essential public services to areas liberated from ISIS; and countering the group’s propaganda.”</p>	Islamic State (ISIS)
<p>Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition¹⁷ – A coalition committed to “coordinate and unite [member states’] efforts in the ideology, communications, counter terrorism financing, and military domains, in order to fight all forms of terrorism and extremism and to effectively join other international security and peacekeeping efforts.”</p>	Terrorism and extremism

Arab Coalition¹⁸ to Fight Houthi Rebels in Yemen – Receives intelligence and logistical support from the United States	Houthi rebels
Maritime Coalition¹⁹ for Protecting Gulf Shipping Waters – Aims to ward off the perceived threat to the world’s oil supply by providing escorts to commercial vessels passing through the Gulf waters, the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman, and the Bab El-Mandab Strait in the Red Sea. Israel is also a part of the coalition.	Oil supply security
Turkish-Libyan Alliance – Both countries signed an MOU in security, military and the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean Sea.	Eastern Mediterranean region security
Israel, Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt Alliance for Energy Security – Formed to protect and develop the eastern Mediterranean energy fields	Energy security

As shown above, the basis of cooperation changes constantly and is limited to a single issue, which leads these structures to be labeled as “liquid alliances.” We can also see that economic integration does not serve as a basis for broader regional cooperation, but rather is limited to sub-regional efforts such as the GCC or bilateral economic relationships. The lack of broader regional economic cooperation is particularly problematic for a couple of reasons.

First, the Middle East’s population is doubling every 25 years, making it the region with the world’s largest percentage of people under-30. As a result, youth employment is one of the area’s most critical issues, highlighting the need for economic development and integration at a regional level.

Second, the region features many transnational movements resulting from massive refugee situations that started as far back as the early 20th century. These include the forced exile of Palestinians and Middle Eastern Jews following the establishment of Israel in 1948, of Lebanese between 1975 and 1990, of Iraqis since the early 1980s, and of Syrians since 2011. These massive movements of young refugees continue to create economic challenges in host countries, which fuel domestic conflict that can easily spread beyond national boundaries. They also contribute to regional

¹⁶ The coalition included 81 partners of those there are 15 Middle Eastern country (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya) and the Arab League <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/partners/>

¹⁷ The coalition included 41 partners of those there are 19 Middle Eastern country (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti. <https://www.imctc.org/English>

¹⁸ The coalition includes 12 partners of those there are 11 Middle Eastern countries (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti.

¹⁹ The coalition includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, USA, Australia, Britain and Israel.

insecurity, particularly given that most host countries in the Middle East are not signatories to the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees²⁰.

The lack of broader regional economic cooperation is a huge challenge that should be addressed immediately through the establishment of effective institutions transcending the sub-regional level.

3. Threat Analysis

a) State-Specific Threats

Israel

Lebanese border: Israel's main threat on the Lebanese border is Hezbollah. In essence, Hezbollah, not the Lebanese Army, controls the area, and its rocket arsenal threatens the entire country. Northern border communities, security infrastructure and personnel are at particular risk due to their exposure to attack tunnels, attacks on farmland, smuggling, reduced economic and tourist activity in times of conflict, and even sniper shooting. Israel has built a preventive smart fence to counter these threats.

Syrian border: The country's main threat on the Syrian border since the beginning of the civil war is from sniper fire, missile rockets, and other attacks by non-state actors. After centuries of relative quiet in the Syrian Golan Heights, extremists have taken over that territory.

Jordanian border: As previously mentioned, Jordan and Israel maintain a joint mechanism of control and supervision. The main border threat is drug smuggling in the Dead Sea area and Arava, but the border is generally quiet.

Egyptian border: Close cooperation between Egypt and Israel has resulted in a stable border regime and quiet border, thereby preventing hostile elements from taking over nearby areas. The establishment of a smart fence has greatly contributed to this stability. Prior to collaboration between the two sides, there was routine smuggling of drugs and individuals.

Jordan

Western border (Israeli-Palestinian conflict): Over the past few years, Israel's right-wing government has started to reconsider the Jordanian option as a means to avoid the demographic dilemma of producing a bi-national state. This is a fundamental change since the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, when Jordan allegedly closed the door once and for all to the extreme right's claim that

²⁰ There is no specific asylum legislation or clear distinction between migration policy and asylum policy. It is the UNHCR that establishes asylum procedures in cooperation with host governments through a Memorandum of Understanding that specifies the mandate of the international organization from which Palestinians are excluded as they are recognized as refugees in the state where they have their permanent residency and registration at the UNRWA.

Jordan is Palestine. Jordanians are concerned about Israeli attempts to implement a transfer that would compromise its sovereignty and turn the country into an alternative Palestinian homeland.

Northern and eastern border (terrorist groups): Middle Eastern countries have been challenged to counter terrorist groups, which are always adapting themselves in their armed conflicts against regional states. These groups have exploited the new situation to impose their presence and expand their operations into areas not previously accessible to them. They have managed to militarize their uprisings and create a security vacuum. In Jordan, terrorist groups occasionally succeed in launching attacks, smuggling drugs and weapons into the country, as well as in reviving dormant cells and recruiting sympathizers.

All borders (closed and untapped trade routes): Jordan's chronic economic crisis since the 1990s was exacerbated with the halt of its trade partnerships with Syria and Iraq. Prior to the outbreak of Syria's civil war, the northern Nasib Border Crossing facilitated trade between Syria, Turkey and Lebanon to the north and Egypt and the Gulf states to the south. Nearly 17% of Jordan's total exports, around \$270 million, passed through the border crossing before 2011. The border crossing's Free Trade Zone (FTZ), which was established in the mid-1970s to facilitate interstate commerce and investments, processed up to \$1.5 billion worth of transit goods each year and employed approximately 4,000 Syrians and Jordanians. The Al Mafraq Governorate, where the border crossing area is located, has been struggling since its closure. The area's unemployment rate has reached 21.7%, and Syrian refugees now constitute 88% of the local population.

At the same time, trade via Jordan's western border is untapped²¹ despite its relatively secure status; Israel's current share of Jordan's foreign trade is insignificant. Imports of goods from Israel have declined in recent years, reaching as little as \$30 million in 2016, which represents 0.2% of all Jordanian imports, according to Jordanian external trade statistics.

The share of Jordanian exports to Israel is higher, although still insignificant. Jordanian exports to Israel were \$114 million in 2016, representing 1.5% of all exports. However, most registered exports to Israel are, in fact, re-exports from GCC countries.

Domestic Jordanian exports to Israel totaled only \$69 million, or 1% of its exports. Israel's share of Jordanian re-exports – goods imported to Jordan and re-exported to third countries – are considerably larger at 3.5% of all registered re-exports, or \$45 million of \$1.4 billion. Moreover, Israeli statistics indicate that approximately an additional \$200 million worth of goods from GCC countries are imported in transit via Jordan to Israel.

Jordanian-Israeli trade in services is also insignificant. Israel's share of Jordanian exports of goods and services is slightly more than 1%, and its share of imports is a mere 0.3%.

²¹ Retrieved from <https://institute.global/insight/middle-east/assessing-israels-trade-its-arab-neighbours>

b) State-by-State Approach to Threats

Jordan

Jordan's border with Iraq is 185km long, while its border with Syria spans 339km on land and 39km along the Yarmouk River. The country operates various types of border security forces – air and marine wings, artillery regiments, and commando units – supported by combat aircraft and vehicles. Jordan's Border Security Program²² features passive barrier fencing, sensors, cameras, and a command-and-control system, as well as mobile and fixed surveillance towers that use various commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) sensors.

Trade Opportunities

- The reopening of the Nasib Border Crossing in 2018 offers an opportunity to invest in a targeted initiative that can help address the pressing political, economic and humanitarian challenges that Jordan is confronting.
- Another opportunity is reviving the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ), Jordan's free-trade areas established in collaboration with Israel. Taking advantage of free-trade agreements between the US and Israel, the QIZ intended to pave the way to a series of international trade agreements to help Jordan accelerate export-driven economic growth. The QIZ arrangement was somewhat successful until 2005, but has since been hampered by a deteriorating political climate.

4. Regional Cooperation Considerations

a) Approaches

Two types of approaches for regional cooperation are implemented in other regions worldwide:

- **Top-down approach:** This is carried out through policies and incentives targeting border areas as in the EU. In this case, macro-regionalism leads to greater “trust” among parties on both sides of the borders so that cross-border cooperation addressing common policy challenges or managing shared resources is more likely. In other words, macro-regionalism leads to micro-regionalism (cross-border cooperation).
- **Bottom-up approach:** This is conducted through complementarity, intense de facto cross-border interaction that calls for a regulatory framework, and therefore, induces a

²² <https://www.defenceprocurementinternational.com/features/land/middle-east-countries-use-blimps-and-sensors-to-beef-up-border-security>

demand for macro-regional institutions, as in the case of ASEAN. In other words, micro-regionalism leads to macro-regionalism.

Deciding the correct approach for the Middle East is based on factors such as:

- unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict
- public support
- disparity between countries rich and not rich in resources
- opposing political agenda and interests of regional states
- declining importance of the Middle East in US foreign policy
- willingness of regional leaders to surrender power over the national economy to a larger, regional economic community such as the EU
- status of consolidated democracies in the region and its effect on the legitimacy and public support of economic approach initiatives

Based on an examination of these factors, it appears that a top-down approach is more suitable. However, it is important to learn lessons from the past and avoid repeating the same mistakes.

b) Benefits/Advantages

- **Entrepreneurial:** Young entrepreneurs from different countries throughout the region can connect with each via a common platform for start-up initiatives.
- **Industrial:** Developing and producing technology (e.g. solar energy) to overcome resource deficiencies will help develop the industrial and manufacturing sectors.

c) State interests

Israel

- Prevent terrorist attacks and hostile activities (including crime and smuggling by land, sea and air) through joint, targeted and mission-oriented security activities. Wider economic relations in the region can contribute to these security activities.
- Create a structure of coordination among all project partners to promote and develop the region. This includes timely or ad hoc coordination for urgent events, which can be conducted via a hot line or shared command centers.
- Establish coordinated and shared supervisory and work procedures

- Maintain stability
- Maintain security (including over holy sites)
- Maintain commerce
- Coordinate a joint response to the common Iranian/jihadi threats posed via land, sea and air
- Promote understanding and peace

To achieve these goals, there is a need for the following requirements:

- Shared understanding of the threat
- Joint training
- Joint coordination with the border mechanism
- Common intelligence system
- Specialized forum on the issue of holy sites
- Collaboration with business and industry professionals to understand relevant needs and markets

Jordan

- Protect the sovereignty of Jordan and its border integrity
- Prevent mass movement of refugees to the country
- Enhance the movement of goods and secure trading routes

5. Suggested Structure and Mechanism

a) High-level approach

Regional cooperation on border security will go into action only after the highest levels of government and the security apparatus take a decision, which will then be transmitted unilaterally to lower levels.

First, military and intelligence heads will receive intelligence, and then decide what should be exposed to the lower levels. The relevant intelligence and orders will then be transferred on the ground to officers at joint regional command centers in all partner countries. There will be a hot line between all ranks and levels and between all countries. The command center locations will take into account strategic security, economic and religious sensitivities. Personnel at these command centers will have

the knowledge and authority to make immediate decisions regarding on-the-ground military action. Local forces will operate under routine or emergency procedures and examine every case to determine whether it requires joint or unilateral personnel.

When an event is defined as an emergency, there will be several hot lines and additional forces on alert. The joint command centers will need to agree on emergency procedure and orders such as: Who takes command? Who has the authority to change procedures and close borders? Which side operates each of the areas?

Every level of command should have access to foreign forces and representatives (e.g. US, EU, Quartet) for receiving knowledge (intelligence), training (forces), and financial support, and of course, for arbitration assistance, if needed.

All of the partner countries will take part in each decision-making junction at every level and in every field in order not to undermine the principle of cooperation. The same principle will apply when new partners are integrated into the model.

b) Phased approach

Another approach to regional cooperation on border security, economic development and freedom of movement is a four-phased approach.

- ***Phase 1 – Pre-consultation coordination***

Initially, a coordinating committee will be formed to gather information from governmental and non-governmental experts. The committee will then hold information-sharing and planning sessions for partner country teams in order to develop a shared understanding of the interests at stake, discuss country-specific situations, and identify priorities and potential areas for engagement.

- ***Phase 2 – Consultation visits***

The coordinating committee will meet with government representatives, non-governmental stakeholders (especially in border area communities), independent think tanks, and potential international donors. Together they will identify challenges and opportunities in order to support the regional cooperation efforts of each partner country.

- ***Phase 3 – Regional action plan development***

Once the regional country teams agree on priorities and focus areas, the coordinating committee will develop a regional action plan defining the parameters of cooperation and analyze the challenges and opportunities. The coordinating and regional teams will then articulate the goals for each focus area and recommend activities, required steps, and milestones for achieving the desired outcome.

- ***Phase 4 – Implementation***

The regional focus area teams will design and implement programs to reach the goals through a variety of engagements. Steering committees will convene periodically to review progress, modify goals as necessary, and agree on next steps.

The teams will focus on the following areas:

1. *Border Security and Management*

- Transportation
- Migration
- Combating terrorism
- Establishing terms of reference regarding counter-terrorism cooperation
- Early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management
- Exchanging military information
- Establishing a code of conduct on military aspects of border security
- Non-proliferation and arms control

2. *Economic and Environmental Issues*

- Economics, science and technology cooperation (e.g. QIZ)
- Critical energy infrastructure protection
- Water management cooperation
- Combating climate change

While the motivation to create such regional structures must come from within the region, entities outside of the region, including the US, the EU, and even perhaps Russia, Canada, and China should support the initiative.

c) *National level approach for individuals*

Initially, partner countries should start a conversation and build trust. Then they can begin exploring various issues, work out the mechanism's details, and engage politicians and security officials. Promoting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process can, of course, advance the entire project.

There should also be a mechanism at the national level for treating individuals that complements the joint regional model. Take, for example, an Israeli Arab who wants to make the Hajj and procures a Jordanian passport for a week. What should be done at the national level to properly document that individual so that the model works? How can the person travel in the most secure and efficient way?

Based on previous research and experience with current border security regimes, we recommend the following means for monitoring regional border security.

- List all persons authorized to enter a country. This requires that every country independently establishes a system of profiling potential criminals/terrorists and shares it with all partners.
- Create an intranet system that manages the transit of manufactured goods, raw materials, workers and traders online.
- Establish a security video surveillance center that enables the security authorities of all partner countries to monitor local security checking at border crossings.
- Develop a liaison operational unit that meets at least once a week to improve the operational management of border crossings and coordination mechanisms.

The region is becoming so global and complex and there are so many common interests that it is clear that we must cooperate to face new challenges. This coordination will be critical to enable transparency and predictability, and in turn, confidence between all partner countries.

d) Learning from past models

A Helsinki-like process or OSCE-like organization in the Middle East could be a good model for creating a regional structure. Despite much deeper ideological divisions, ethnic tensions, and territorial disputes across Europe during the first half of the 20th century, Europeans successfully created a security organization that included former rivals such as France-Germany and the Soviet Union-United States. The issues that had to be overcome to bring these countries together under one umbrella was as challenging as any set of security, religious, ethnic, and ideological differences currently dividing the Middle East.

The model should include Arab countries, Israel, Iran, and Turkey. It is unclear whether Iran is interested in participating in such a structure, even though the country is at the crux of many issues confronting the region, including its connection to Hamas and Hezbollah. However, given Iran's stature in the region and its ambition to acquire nuclear weapons, Iranian participation appears to be an

imperative. In fact, such a model might be a good tool to enforce Iran's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

External actors must also be included in this structure. Many Arab states and Israel will want US participation, since it has been a key player in Middle East agreements. However, US participation comes with a high price, since the Arab world rejects unconditional American support of Israel. Therefore, active Russian participation in a regional structure is important as a counterbalance.

As was the case with the OSCE, the starting point for a regional cooperation structure should be a Middle East security conference in which participating countries develop an agenda for each summit. This should be followed by institutionalized meetings and the creation of a permanent multilateral security organization based on these foundations. This organization would provide a meeting forum for countries without developed bilateral relations, such as Iran and Israel, since interacting initially in a multilateral setting may be easier than in a bilateral one.

The original Helsinki accord covered security, territorial integrity, border recognition, and human rights fostering. The human rights basket within a Helsinki-like process would legitimize and institutionalize the human rights issue within international engagement. Such a process could be of particularly great value and impact for Israel when placed alongside the security basket.

The Helsinki model, however, was not a complete success. During the Cold War, the conflict in Europe had a structure defined by a bipolar international system with a clear ideological outline that was dominated by the leading powers of the two major blocs – the US and the USSR. Europe's major political disputes were settled via several treaties, and the status quo between competing political systems was accepted. Strategic stability was achieved due to the threat of mutually assured destruction. Finally, and most importantly, the relevant actors were all states and alliances of states.

In sharp contrast, the Middle East conflict is fragmented and multipolar. Various states are competing for hegemony, and the US does not act as the leader of a bloc but merely as the external "supervisor." The region's borders are either being disputed or awaiting recognition under international law, while the development of WMD arms races and asymmetrical warfare are hard to control. Finally, and most importantly, the key actors in the Middle East include not only nation states, but also stateless people. This is not to say that a Helsinki-like model will not succeed, but rather that these issues should be considered when creating an enhanced holistic model.

The security and border management in such a model should involve two aspects:

- Integrated border management strategy aimed at establishing an efficient border regime based on common regional standards for border crossings

- Integrated Information and communications network for controlling individuals and goods at the border crossings, and a database available to all authorities responsible for border control in order to create effective alert mechanisms

In order to achieve this, the following is required:

- Signing a regional agreement on visas, border control, asylum and migration
- Establishing regional standards for border control
- Changing and harmonizing legislation and regulations from a national to a regional level. The changes will involve enhancements in the following areas:
 - Biometrics: palm prints, fingerprints, facial images and DNA regarding, for example, missing persons in order to confirm their identity
 - Counter-terrorism: More information should be shared regarding people and objects involved in terrorism-related activities so that authorities of member states can better pursue and prevent serious crimes and terrorism.
 - Vulnerable individuals: Competent authorities should be able to add preventive alerts to the system to protect certain vulnerable groups (e.g. missing persons, children at risk of abduction, potential victims of human being trafficking or gender-based violence)
 - Irregular migration: Return decisions and entry bans should be part of the information shared in the system to increase enforcement effectiveness.
- Establishing a regular training and education process for members

6. Conclusion

The biggest security problems such as terrorism, arms control, and drug and human trafficking are simply beyond the capacity of individual countries to resolve unilaterally. Therefore, it is preferable to approach these threats, as well as other issues like free trade agreements and visa regulations, on a multilateral rather than bilateral basis. In addition, regular governmental contact can help keep systems updated and suitable for this purpose. The success of implementing regional cooperation in the Middle East is largely contingent on creating strong incentives for cooperation, securing public support, establishing good governance, and consolidating legitimacy.

REGIONAL SECURITY DIALOGUE: SECURITY CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE

1. Introduction: Description of Threats and their Regional Implications

The Middle East and Arabian Gulf are among the most heavily threatened areas in the world, facing a full spectrum of threats – from rockets and ballistic missiles to drones, UCAVs, and cruise missiles. The regions not only are the scene for potential attacks by numerous aggressors, but also have been subject to attacks on their civilian population, national infrastructure, and other targets over the years.

Some of the region's countries possess a large quantity of air-to-ground delivery weapons ranging from missiles to rockets, cruise missiles and drones. Iran maintains the largest and most diverse missile arsenal, with thousands of ballistic and cruise missiles, some with a range of over 2,000km. Over the past decade, Iran has invested significantly in these weapons to improve their precision and lethality. As a result, Iran's missile forces are a potent tool for its power projection and represent a credible threat to the region. And the country continues to develop longer range missile technology under the auspices of its space-launch program.

Iran is also a major hub for weapons proliferation, supplying partner and proxy groups such as [Hezbollah](#) with a steady supply of missiles and rockets as well as local production capabilities. Since 2015, Iran has provided Yemen's [Houthi movement](#) with increasingly advanced ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as long-range unmanned aerial vehicles. And most recently, Iran has equipped [Shi'ite militia groups](#) in Iraq with rockets and other small projectiles for use against Iraqi and US military and diplomatic facilities.

Before dealing with credible and grave threats, there is a need to understand and address their technical aspects as well as develop active defense systems. In addition, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the other side of the equation – sanctions, embargoes, arms traffic limitations (e.g. ITAR, MTCR, other regimes) – is an ineffective, non-viable option to eliminate such threats. The September 14, 2019, attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities, for example, served as a reality check for countries struggling to define the threat level posed by drone swarms and low-altitude cruise missiles.

The threats addressed in this paper are divided into several categories. And while the list is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive, since new threats are emerging and improvised weapons are being developed continuously. It is worth noting that the threats presented here do not reflect when they arrived on the scene, but the more important systems are described in greater detail.

Some lessons learned from past operational attacks in the region are included in the analysis. And it is clear that the ever-growing threat of drones, UCAVs and ballistic missiles merits the full and immediate attention of the international community.

2. Existing Regional Cooperation Structures

There is no current regional air and missile defense (AMD) cooperation; each country maintains individual cooperation with the US. Additionally, there are no current plans to provide an integrated regional missile defense system due to deep divisions between the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.

3. Threat Analysis

a) Current Threat Types

Drones

Drones refers to a wide variety of technologies, ranges, operational capabilities, lethality, and impact. The drone is an unmanned aerial vehicle that can be operated either as a “man in the loop,” or as a remotely piloted mode. Some are used for reconnaissance, while others are used to attack targets either as a “suicide drone” or as a platform from which the user launches munitions of various types (e.g. bomblets, bombs, air-to-ground missiles).

The threat of drones is diverse – some are small, commercial off-the-shelf quadcopters, others feature an indigenous design and are crudely built, while still others are developed, manufactured and proliferated by countries with advanced weapon R&D capabilities. In the Middle East, a growing number of state and non-state actors have rapidly moved from the development and acquisition of armed drones to the regular deployment of such weapons for lethal effects.

Here is a list of various types of drones.

Quadcopters

ISIS and other militias use quadcopters to conduct surveillance and to drop explosives. They have modified commercial drones to drop 40mm rifle grenades. One such example involves an operator flying drones over Iraqi troops and dropping a grenade by electronic command. More recently, these militias have also started to manufacture small bomblets, with some parts printed in 3D.

Scratch-built drones

All ISIS drones appear to have been built from scratch. They are crude and of low quality, but some incorporate advanced equipment (e.g. gyroscope sold by the Turkish company Bomec Robot Teknolojileri for the domestic market). Operational use of scratch-built drones has not been limited to Iraq; there were several such attacks on a Russian air base in Syria that caused limited damage to military aircraft.

Suicide drones

On January 10, 2019, a drone targeted a Yemeni government base during a military parade, allegedly killing six people and wounding many others, including several senior officers. An analysis of the attack indicates that a variant of an Iranian Ababil-T drone, referred to as Qasef-1 by Houthi forces, was used in the attack.

Low RCS drones

Iran used a “stealth” drone against Israel in 2018. The drone was launched from Syria, and was tracked by Israel throughout its path. It was shot down by an attack helicopter well within Israel’s borders. The drone had a flying-wing configuration, and efforts were made to maintain a low radar cross section. Iran’s IRGC, the group responsible for drone development in the country, claims to have drawn technical know-how from a US RQ-170 strategic reconnaissance drone that fell in Iran.

Houthi drones

The Houthis in Yemen are using a large array of drones and UAVs, supposedly of indigenous design. However, many types look like Iranian products. Based on the US Navy’s frequent capture of missiles and equipment on the way to Yemen, there is no doubt that Iran is supplying Yemen with a vast array of military equipment.

Active counter-drone defense

The evolving threat of a wide array of drones has led to the development of various countermeasures. While this is not the focus of the report, here is a brief review of the common technologies of counter drones.

Three types of measures are used against drones – physical destruction, neutralization, and control – and can be achieved through a variety of actions:

- 1) Detecting (i.e. radar, acoustic, visual including IR), classifying/identifying, locating/tracking, alerting
- 2) Communication jamming – RF analyzers are used to determine the drone’s communication frequency.
- 3) GNSS jamming – A new signal is sent to the drone, and its navigation communication system is replaced by GPS satellites. This “spoofs” the drone into thinking it is

somewhere else. By dynamically altering the GPS coordinates in real time, the spoofer can control the drone's position, and, for example, direct it to a safe zone.

- 4) Laser interception – A high-powered optical device produces an extremely focused beam of light, or laser beam, which defeats the drone by destroying its structure and/or electronics.
- 5) **High-power microwave (HPM) devices** – HPM devices generate an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that interferes with radio links and disrupts or even destroys the drone's electronic circuitry.

Rockets

Improvised rockets

Various states and non-state actors have widely used unguided, improvised rockets for years. The lethality and range of these homemade rockets have improved, reaching dozens of kilometers (e.g. Hamas rockets fired at Israel). However, since they are unguided, they have a low level of accuracy.

Since these rockets are fueled by easily-made propellants (e.g. sugar combined with fertilizer), it is difficult to control their proliferation. For example, several improvised super-heavy rockets were used in Syria over the last decade.

Standard, military-grade rockets

For decades, the military industries of several countries have manufactured rockets used in conflict zones all over the world. Many rockets have a small-medium caliber, such as 107mm and 122mm rockets (e.g. the 122mm Grad). Non-state actors possess large quantities of rockets possibly reaching thousands, if not more. The range of these rockets varies dramatically, but their accuracy and reliability are higher than homemade rockets.

Accurate rockets

Technological improvements and cost reductions in GPS technology have enabled unguided rockets to achieve much greater accuracy. Although it is not a missile per se, the accurate rocket is a step in that direction. Several countries produce guidance kits for turning an unguided rocket into a new entity – with a circular error probably (CEP) of around 10 meters – making it suitable for pinpoint hits on high-value targets. The proliferation of this technology is evident, with accurate rockets having appeared in Yemen in late 2018 and in Lebanon.

Cruise missiles

Cruise missiles are not a theoretical threat but rather an integral part of aggressor attacks in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Iran has supplied Yemen with this type of missile, which was used in several attacks against Saudi Arabia and at least once against the UAE.

Iran used the smuggled, former Soviet Kh-55 cruise missile as a model for several cruise missiles – the Soumar, the Hovezyeh, and a unique exported version shipped to the Houthis in Yemen – and quickly placed the weapon into operational service. As in many other cases, the capture of cruise missiles on their way to Yemen proves that sanctions have failed to eliminate illegal trafficking of weapons; the missiles not only were exported by Iran, but also their jet engines were copied from European engines.

Ballistic missiles

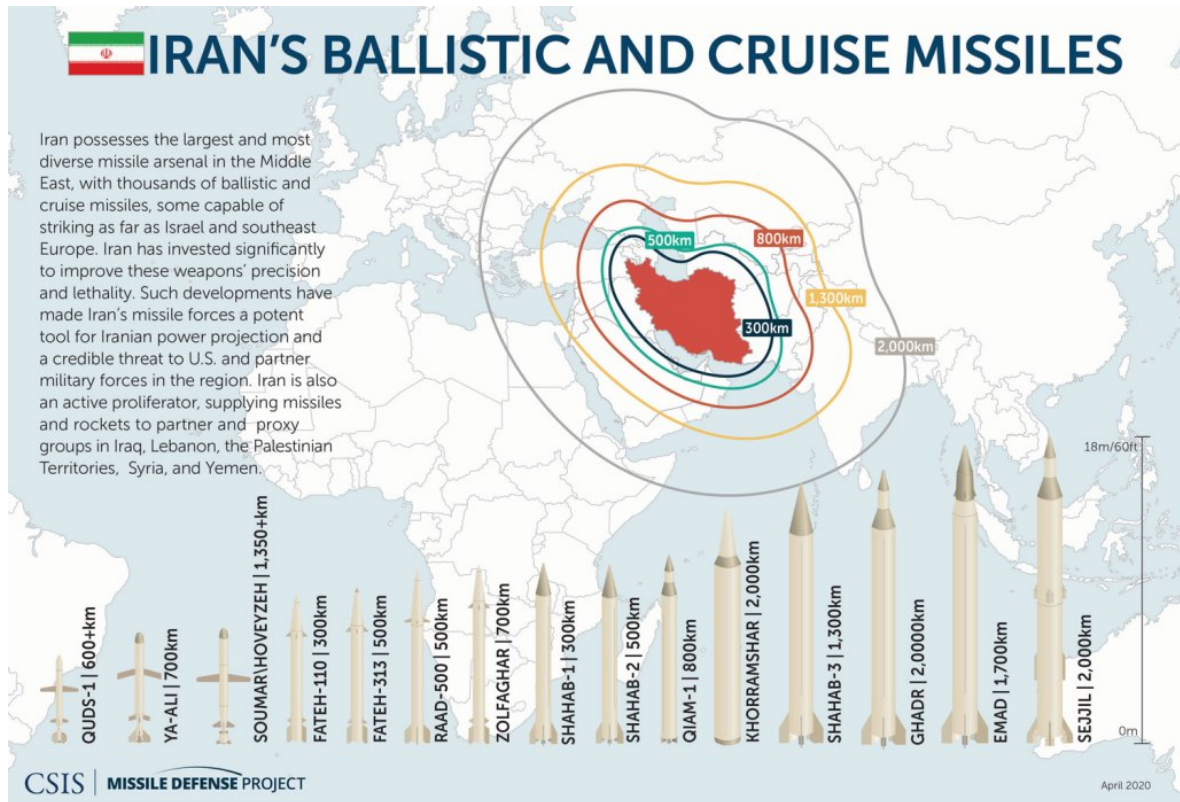
Several types of ballistic missiles (BM) varying in size, range, propulsion (solid or liquid propelled), and accuracy have appeared in many countries in the region. The former-Soviet Scud missile is the basis of development for many such missiles, which can be found in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Iraq and Iran.

Short-range ballistic missiles include the Iranian Fateh-110 missile family, with more than 10 known variants including radar and IR-seeker guided missiles, anti-ship BM (e.g. Khalij Fars), and anti-radiation missiles (e.g. Hormuz).

Ballistic missiles were used operationally in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, the 1991 Gulf War, Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia, and Iranian attacks against targets in Syria and Iraq, including the most recent 2020 attack against an American air base.

Analyzing the widespread use of ballistic missiles, their proliferation routes, their implemented technologies, and the active defenses deployed against them is a daunting task and goes beyond the framework of this report. With that said, this paper describes in brief some noteworthy missiles and their operational use.

The following chart illustrates Iran's missile arsenal.



Active counter-missile defense

The following counter-missile capabilities are available in the region:

- Israeli developed anti-missile defense systems
 - Iron Dome
 - David's Sling
 - Arrow 2
 - Arrow 3
- Hawk batteries – Jordan, Egypt, Israel, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE
- Patriot anti-missile batteries – Israel, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar
- [Terminal High Altitude Area Defense](#) (THAAD) batteries – UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar

b) *Future and Emerging Threats*

Analysts monitoring future trends in offensive systems and decision makers responsible for active missile defense are interested in several new technologies and former exotic technologies that are now more achievable and common:

- Hypersonic weapons
- Drone swarms
- Low RCS materials
- Navigation, guidance and control enhancements for drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles
- Combined drone and ballistic missile attack capabilities
- Ballistic missile and drone targeting of missile defense systems
- Dual use technologies for space launchers and ballistic missiles

4. *Existing Air Defense Systems*

Israel has developed effective layered missile and rocket defenses. The defenses of other regional partners are primarily Hawk and Patriot missile battery air defense systems that have limited coverage and surface-to-air missiles that provide some coverage against cruise missiles and drones.

The US has deployed Aegis cruisers in the past on a contingency basis, and has now deployed THAAD missile defenses to the region. Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also bought THAAD systems. There are no clear plans, however, to provide an integrated regional missile defense system due to deep divisions between the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.

Israel

Israel faces several air threats, including ballistic missiles, rockets, cruise missiles, and drones. The country maintains a three-pronged defense approach – active defense, passive defense, and early warning – and its defense architecture consists of four layers:

- Iron Dome – medium-to-short-range rockets, UAVs
- David's Sling and Patriot – short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, medium- and long-range rockets and cruise missiles
- Arrow 2 – medium- and long-range BMs
- Arrow 3 – long-range BMs

In addition to the Patriot, Israel deploys two other American wartime systems – THAAD and Aegis.

The entire Israeli missile defense program is part of joint programs with the US. Co-funding and co-management are provided by the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), and co-development and co-production are provided by US industries.

A major part of Israel's defense is based on interoperability with US ballistic missile defense systems. This cooperation includes:

- Operational capabilities and concept of operation
- Coordinated joint development
- Joint exercises
- Joint flight tests

Israel is also used as a test bed, and the Israeli Test Bed (ITB) is a major part of US-Israel cooperation and collaboration in missile defense. Joint exercises, CONOPs validation and training, and work with a systems engineering preliminary architecture design tool are conducted for the benefit of both sides.

Jordan

While the threat of a direct missile attack against Jordan is low, the country is concerned with missile fallout on major populated areas as well as rocket and drone attacks launched by non-state actors and terrorists.

Jordan's defense is based on active defense, passive defense, and early warning radar systems. Its main active defense against air threats includes:

- Hawk air defense batteries – The Hawk is a medium-altitude ground-to-air missile system. Its maximum range is 35km and maximum altitude is 11,000m.
- Mobile air defense SAM batteries

Jordan also deployed US Patriot batteries in the north to counter the Syrian missile threat in 2013, and it can deploy the system during times of regional threat.

The Directory of Civil Defense in Jordan is responsible for passive defense, including protecting citizens during times of peace, and defending them from rockets and missile attacks in times of war. It is

also responsible for saving lives during attacks, and for issuing early warnings and alerts to citizens to ensure as much of a routine as possible.

Palestinian Authority (PA)

The PA has no air defense system. Since Israel is an occupier state, it is obliged to provide this capability.

Gulf states

The Gulf states, where most of the world's fuel is produced and shipped from, are in the range of Iranian missiles. The 2019 cruise missile attack on a Saudi oil facility underscores how it can disrupt the oil flow to the world.

The Gulf states' missile defense assets include:

- THAAD system in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar
- Patriot in Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar

Attack on Saudi Arabia oil facilities: The Sept. 14, 2019, attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities was a reality check for countries struggling to define the threat level posed by drone swarms and low-altitude cruise missiles. According to the Saudi Defense Ministry, 18 drones and seven cruise missiles were fired at the kingdom in the early hours of the day. The Abqaiq facility's air defenses reportedly included the American-made Patriot system, Oerlikon GDF 35mm cannons equipped with the Sky guard radar, and a version of France's Crotale called Shahine. Satellite images posted by the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies showed the following setup: the Saudi air defense was impeded by radar ranges and the facility itself, as well as by the speed and angle of the drones and missiles, which is apparently why it failed to engage the drones.

Facing an escalating Iranian nuclear and missile program, the UAE applied in 2011 to be the first foreign country to acquire the THAAD system. The 2016 deployment of THAAD systems enables the UAE to target incoming short-to-intermediate-range ballistic missiles.

The US State Department in October 2017 released information regarding a foreign military sale to the Saudi Arabian government for [THAAD](#) and related support, equipment and services valued at an estimated \$15 billion.

THAAD is an American anti-ballistic missile defense system designed to destroy short-, medium-, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Its missiles have an estimated range of 200km and can reach an altitude of 150km. A THAAD battery consists of at least six launchers, each equipped with eight missiles with two mobile tactical operations centers (TOCs) and the AN/TPY-2 ground-based radar (GBR).

Since the US invasion of Iraq, more missile defense systems have been procured by, or deployed in, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar. Each of those countries has made bulk purchases of Patriot systems. The US has [also deployed](#) Patriot systems in Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the UAE.

US-manned

The US Navy's Aegis missile system is a critical system enabling a mobile, flexible and persistent presence in deterring and defending against ballistic missile attacks in worst-case scenarios. The US Navy has proved that the system works and can dramatically shorten the time to respond to ballistic missile attacks via flexible, on-station positioning and deployment of Aegis cruisers and destroyers in the sea.

The US can provide forward-deployed layered missile defense to both Jordan and Israel and its NATO allies in Europe via the Fifth Fleet and Sixth Fleet areas of responsibility (AORs).

In addition, the covert and persistent presence of the US Navy's attack submarines (SSNs) and cruise missile submarines (SSGNs) enables the firing of tactical Tomahawks against land-based missile targets. This is a formidable deterrent against aggressors whose missile locations – whether fixed, underground or mobile – can be targeted in time increments that make preemption by an aggressor a very foolish strategic act.

The US can provide in the eastern Mediterranean two critical layers of defense – the first and last layers – while Jordan and Israel can provide defensive systems in between such layers. If the three countries can reach an accord, then the tripartite can move toward the next stage of creating an integrated joint common missile defense system.

5. Regional Cooperation Considerations

A reliable system such as a missile defense dome is needed to counter missiles, remote-controlled vehicles, and other projectiles before they reach economic or civilian populated areas. The region must also have an early-warning and anti-missile defense network that provides maximum protection for its population and preserves peace and development.

To offer the best level of defense, regional states must establish a command, control and communications (C3) center for a ballistic missile defense system (BMDS) that integrates data from multiple sensors and fire control units in the region. This integration will help build a common picture of the battlespace for operators across the region, and enable the C3 center to select optimal firing solutions based on BMDS status, system coverage, and ballistic missile tracks. It also will allow combatant commands to plan engagements, particularly for missions requiring coordination between the regional or subregional states' defense command posts.

6. Suggested Structure and Mechanism

a) Threat Detection

The focus for any structure should be on threat detection, which is a prerequisite for threat interception. Based on what was learned from the attack on the Saudi's oil field, this is a significant challenge. Cooperation and sensor interoperability can greatly contribute to early detection and enable the establishment of a regional early warning center.

b) American Involvement

As mentioned previously, the US is the major actor in the region, and many countries maintain individual cooperation with it. Since all of Israel's defense programs are carried out in collaboration with the US, any future regional cooperation will have to include American involvement and approval.

c) Regional Security Regime

A security regime should be established with the participation of all professional elements in the region and US representatives in order to determine the region's defense structure and means of warning. The US divides the world into 10 Unified Combatant Commands (COCOMS). Since Israel belongs to EUCOM and Jordan belongs to CENTCOM, representatives from both commands will have to participate in the talks.

The agreement should include joint exercises in a test bed (combat lab) or war games. The exercises can take place anywhere, but should maintain a low profile. They will reveal the advantages of regional defense and prepare each country's forces for combat situations. After their conclusion, a debriefing will be conducted and all lessons learned will be implemented.

d) Integration of Interests

- Reciprocity – every country contributes what it can
- Common definition of the threat
- Integrated situation awareness display
- Warning for population areas

e) Passive/Civil Defense

Identifying threats and protecting the lives of the entire community is at the core of civil defense. However, civil defense differs depending on the situation. During peace time, it may focus on managing crises and training manpower for future crises. In war time, it may involve rescuing people from conflict.

Civil defense aims to protect the citizens and property of a state under all circumstances during war, and defends them from rockets and missiles attack at all times. Civil defense can come up with new concepts based on principles of emergency operations – primarily emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.

Civil defense is also involved with building shelters for civilian populations, saving lives during attacks, and providing early warning to ensure routine life as much as possible.

f) Joint Civil Defense Early Warning Center

Some countries in the region including Israel and Jordan have developed near real-time alert systems for their civil protection, while the Palestinian Authority lacks any such system. Israel has also developed an advanced radar system that is capable of intercepting missiles and accurately estimating missile trajectory and its fallout. The three states can cooperate by using what is currently available and getting better equipped to create joint early warning communications. The joint project will be used for not only addressing military threats, but also alerting member countries about natural hazards and man-made disasters.

The three states can establish a joint early warning center called the Jordan Israel Palestinian Early Warning Center (JIPEWC), which can be at the heart of a regional civil defense protection mechanism. It will coordinate information gathered by an early warning military center, such as missile or rocket impact areas and missile fallout areas, and distribute it to member countries. The 24/7 center will ensure rapid warning of threats, and act as a coordination hub between the tripartite. The center

could open membership to other regional states, and extend its role to man-made disasters and natural hazards.

Israel and Jordan can share knowledge and experience and help the PA and other countries in the region build a similar passive protection mechanism for themselves.

Why is it necessary?

A well-coordinated response to military threats and man-made and natural disasters at a regional level will help member countries with limited capabilities to detect threats and save citizens from disasters. It can avoid duplication of relief efforts, and ensure that assistance is tailored to the needs of the affected areas. To lighten the burden on member states, the JIPEWC can liaise directly with the national civil defense authorities of each affected country in order to direct resources efficiently.

How would it work?

The center would be located in Jordan or Israel, while representatives from the two countries and the PA would run it and pursue its objectives. The center must maintain direct communications with each civil defense authority, a direct link to early warning sensors, and early warning facilities in participating states. The center will also connect to a direct voice and siren warning system to alert the public of a threat or hazard in the affected region.

The JIPEWC must also maintain a fully staffed and trained duty system. Around-the-clock presence will ensure real-time monitoring and immediate response, whether in the day or at night. Member states and international bodies will help develop and finance the early warning and monitoring hardware systems.

Advantages

The center will improve coordination between civil defense authorities in the region. It will maintain a direct link to civil protection authorities in member states, thereby enabling real-time exchange of information. It also will ensure the deployment of coordination and assessment teams composed of humanitarian aid and civil protection experts for conducting joint need assessments in light of emergency situations.

g) Civil Defense Training Exercises

Civil defense protection exercises provide valuable learning opportunities for member states. Full-scale exercises will be conducted to broaden knowledge, improve preparedness, and check the warning network.

The [exercises](#) will be organized by the center and authorities of member countries and will be co-financed by international bodies, while enhancing collaboration among members of the civil defense authorities and teams.

These exercises also offer opportunities to test specific response capacities and the self-sufficiency, interoperability, coordination, and procedures of response teams and equipment. Table-top exercises, in turn, will focus on in-depth training of key personnel.

Contingency planning, decision-making procedures, and provisioning information to the public and the media are examples of other areas that can be tested during the exercises. Moreover, they can help supervisors identify further training needs for staffers involved in operations, while parallel workshops on lessons learned can serve as a forum to identify how responses can be improved.

9. Conclusion

Terrorism and enemy threats can hit anytime, anywhere. However, proper planning, monitoring and early warning can mitigate the damage caused by missiles, cruise missile rockets, and drones, and sometimes even prevent them from turning into civil catastrophes.

Iran and other state and non-state actors possess an arsenal of missiles and rockets that represents a great threat to civilian populations. There are a number of counter-missile systems such as the Patriot and THAAD in the region, but there is no cooperation between states.

To counter such threats, Jordan, Israel and the PA can create a joint early warning center that links to each state's civil defense establishment. Manned by representatives from the three states, the center would coordinate and transmit early warning of approaching threat or hazards.

REGIONAL SECURITY DIALOGUE: SECURITY CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

REGIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST THREAT OF HOSTILE CYBER ACTIVITIES

1. Introduction: Description of Threats and their Regional Implications

Cyberspace has been expanding in recent years, occupying a central place in our lives at the state and individual level, as well as in the business sector. It is a complex and dynamic space. As its use increases, threats to its ongoing stability intensify, and its exploitation by various players – from countries, organizations and criminal entities to violent non-state actors – expands. There is an ongoing need to develop a coordinated response to cyberthreats.²³

Despite high awareness of growing cybersecurity threats to the security of states worldwide, interstate cooperation on cyber protection is still in its infancy. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) brings together 193 member states, including Israel and 22 Arab states, to provide a unique, trusted and global multi-stakeholder platform for public- and private-sector partners to address major information and communications technology (ICT) issues. Other organizations, as well, provide important platforms for cooperation at the global and regional levels, but not specifically for all Middle East stakeholders.

But that does not mean there is no need for such a platform. The region's instability with respect to violent state and non-state terrorist attacks is reflected as well in cyberspace, where hostile activities, including use of the internet by terrorist and extremist groups, are increasing.

Those involved in EU-sponsored regional dialog meetings held so far have agreed, for the benefit of all participating countries, to try cooperating on cyber protection in response to hostile cyber threats in civilian spaces. This paper focuses on the status of cyber defense in Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority (PA), as well as initial findings of joint work on the subject by representatives of the three entities (from March 18, 2020 and November 18, 2020).

It is important to note that this is the first attempt to promote dialog between the PA, Jordan, Israel and their Middle East neighbors on cybersecurity in the civilian sphere. As such, it is essential to initially create a common language. Here is a definition of several terms discussed thus far:

- **Cyber defense** – Protection against, detection of, and response to cyberspace threats to computers and Internet-connected systems, including hardware, software and the information stored on computers and transmitted between them.
- **Cybersecurity** – Preventive methods and responses to protect information stored in computers and transmitted through interconnected systems (whether via the internet or otherwise)– including hardware, software and other data – from being stolen, compromised or attacked. This requires an robust understanding of potential information threats such as viruses and other malicious code. Cybersecurity

²³ <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/cyber-attacks-worldwide-2006-2020/>

strategies include identity management, risk management, information sharing, and incident management.

- ***Use of the internet by terrorist groups in civilian cyberspace, including attacks on critical infrastructure***²⁴ – Actions that harm the normal functioning of the state’s institutional system, its critical infrastructure, and all related systems, as well as civil systems that are highly important to national security (e.g. hospitals, transportation systems, financial institutes). These actions are detrimental to the functional continuity of the state and its citizens. Such critical infrastructure attacks are often initiated by criminal actors, ideologically-motivated groups and hostile nation-states.

Cross-Border Cooperation

Currently, cybersecurity cooperation is growing rapidly among states worldwide. Many examples of cybersecurity standards, measures, norms, and have come to the fore both globally and regionally in recent years – again, with a lack in Middle East regional efforts that include all relevant stakeholders. One example is the dual process moving ahead under the auspices of the UN, with the OEWG and GGE working groups. Moreover, cybersecurity cooperation is developing in specific sectors, as seen in the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC, which discussed the importance of knowledge and capacity sharing in protecting nuclear material and nuclear technology from cyberattack threats.

While cooperation across the Middle East has been limited till now, it could be facilitated under the auspices of a variety of international organizations and platforms, including UN agencies, the EU’s ENISA, and Arab regional organizations.

2. Threat Analysis

a) Current Threat Types

With the development of humanity’s use of cyberspace and its deepening connection to a state’s physical space, countries, groups and individuals are becoming increasingly dependent on this environment. As such, hostile entities are better positioned to harm not only the private sector and private citizens, but also state systems. This poses a risk to national security overall, since damage to government systems and national infrastructure (e.g. electricity, water) can disrupt a state’s ability to provide essential services to its citizens.

Cyber threats are unique in that they are often anonymous or disguised, making it difficult to credibly identify those responsible for attacks. Moreover, a cyberattack leverages asymmetry

²⁴ <https://www.ictcp.org/>

between the attacker – who only needs to be right once – and the targeted organization – which needs to cyber-defend constantly. A single, remotely-located hostile actor, whether cybercriminal or terrorist, can by easily accessible and inexpensive means such as a computer and an Internet network, cause damage to inadequately protected computerized government systems and digitally linked physical infrastructure. Cyberspace is a convenient and proven platform for causing harm to governmental institutions on which civilians depend for their most basic needs.

Cyberspace enables communication and coordination between distant parties, which eases criminal activities, as well as terrorist activities such as recruitment, non-cyberterrorist activity promotion (e.g. transfer of instructions, training), propaganda, incitement, and identity theft. Social media platforms, in particular, generate many and varied options for spreading hostile propaganda, fake news, incitement, and the encouragement of violent acts. State-run computer systems and infrastructure can be damaged by introducing – through hackers – viruses and trojans into government systems, and by secretly sabotaging information in order to harm the state's interests.

b) State-by-State Approach to Threat

Jordan

Jordan has been struggling to become the Middle East's IT hub since 2000. Industry experts say it still has a long way to go before becoming a regional center for IT and innovative technologies. The government tried to develop cybersecurity by publishing the National Information Assurance and Cyber Security Strategy (NIACSS) in 2012 and creating computer emergency readiness teams. Due to complex legal and regulatory frameworks, Jordan has encountered challenges in carrying out this mission. However, given current information security challenges and threats, the government reviewed its strategy in 2019, and is working on establishing a national organization that implements its National Cybersecurity Strategy and related projects.

Based on this renewed “strategic approach to protecting national digital assets and infrastructure,” Jordan intends to:

- establish a central national cybersecurity body
- define a national cybersecurity strategy
- establish a national dialog
- build preventive national cybersecurity capabilities
- build reactive national cybersecurity capabilities

- define a national talent strategy

Israel

Israel is a global high-tech power, and has a well-developed and dynamic cybersecurity sector for both products and services. Many Israeli companies have been developing cyber-protection software and solutions since as far back as the 1980-90s. Indeed, Israel was among the first countries in the world to recognize the importance of protecting essential computer systems that support national infrastructures.

Israel has been targeted by hostile cyber activity on the part of both state and non-state actors since these threats first appeared. On the one hand, the country faces conventional threats from both terrorist organizations (e.g. Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip, ISIS in the Sinai) and states, particularly Iran. At the same time, Israel continuously faces cyberattacks, with indications pointing to Hamas and Iran, as well as ideological groups such as Anonymous.

Given the growing presence of cyber technologies and corresponding threats, Israel recognized that it could not solely rely on its private and business sectors to protect the country's cyberspace. So, it decided to establish a centralized government entity responsible for protecting computer systems in the civilian sphere: the National Cyber Directorate

Below are the milestones in Israel's creation of a cyber defense entity:

- In 2002, the government formed a state committee to discuss the establishment of a body that would concentrate on protecting critical computerized infrastructure.
- In 2011, it established the National Cyber Bureau, reported directly to the Prime Minister. The body was tasked to formulate a national strategy for regulating cyber protection in order to determine the policy and steps required to develop national capabilities in the area.
- In 2013, it established the national Cyber Emergency Response Team (CERT-IL), which was tasked with addressing cyber threats and immediate cyber events.
- In 2015, it adopted a strategy developed at the National Cyber Bureau that led to the 2016 establishment of the National Cyber Defense Authority, an operative body responsible for all cyber space defense operations.
- In 2018, Israel's parliament passed an amendment law giving statutory basis to unify the National Cyber Bureau and National Cyber Defense Authority into the Israel National Cyber Directorate (INCD), which operates directly under the Pprime

minister.²⁵ All cyber defense organizations in the civil sphere are now coordinated under the INCD, which is responsible for policy, planning and operational aspects, using a sectoral model that leverages the regulatory authorities of existing government ministries.

- In recent years, Israel's cybersecurity regulation has made strong steps forward. The sectors that already have in place concrete and binding guidelines include banking, financial companies, health, transportation, and communications. Additional sectoral regulation is anticipated. These sectoral regulations focus on boosting cybersecurity and preparedness, as well as requiring notifications to regulators when hostile cyber events occur.
- In addition, Israel's data Privacy Protection Authority²⁶ is actively engaged with the protection of personal data, often a chief target of hostile cyber operations.
- Israel has also established the Cybernet for information sharing among governmental and private sector organizations.²⁷

Palestinian Authority

According to the Palestinian Information Technology Association (PITA), there are 400,000 fixed-line subscribers, 100 radio and television stations, and 17 telecommunication and Internet companies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.²⁸ In 2017, there were over 3 million internet users (60.5 percent of the population) in the area (excluding East Jerusalem), with 1.4 million of these users accessing the Internet by mobile phone.

Since Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, the country took over complete control of the ICT sector and infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza. It impeded development and the establishment of an independent network, making Palestinians depend entirely on Israeli authorities.

As a result of the 1995 Oslo Accords, an interim agreement between Israeli and Palestinian representatives, Israel transferred some control of the ICT sector to the PA in the West Bank, but

²⁵ (Law for the Regulation of Security in Public Bodies (Temporary Provision) (Amendment), 5779 2018), SEFER HAHUKIM 5779 (SH, BOOK OF LAWS, official gazette) No. 2766 p. 86 (the Amendment Law), Reshumot website (in Hebrew)

²⁶ https://www.gov.il/en/departments/the_privacy_protection_authority/govil-landing-page

²⁷ https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/global_cybernet

²⁸ Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency, "ICT," available at: <https://goo.gl/LTq8Z8>

not in East Jerusalem or the Gaza Strip.²⁹ However, Israel still controls critical aspects of the sector, making it impossible for Palestinians to develop an independent network and enjoy a greater, safer flow of information.

The legal framework governing the ICT sector in the West Bank and Gaza Strip includes international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international treaties on the telecommunication sector, and the Oslo Accords. In addition, Palestinian telecommunication laws and regulations are applicable to Palestinian companies operating in the West Bank and Gaza. Although Israel applies its civil law concerning the ICT sector in East Jerusalem, international law of belligerent occupation prohibits it from extending its civil law to an occupied territory.

The Palestinian public and private sector have experienced cyberattacks and attacks on its ICT infrastructure from both Israel and the Gaza Strip. In 2011, the Bank of Palestine was attacked by Israel in response to attacks by a Saudi hacker with an account at the bank. As a result of the server attack, the bank's entire web infrastructure stopped functioning and millions of civilian users were impacted. In 2014, various Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip – in response to continuous Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel's home front – led to appalling human losses and damages to Palestinian infrastructure. This included the bombing of 14 stations belonging to the PalTel group, resulting in an estimated loss of \$32.6 million in revenue and damaged networks.³⁰

The Gaza Hackers Team group, also known as the Gaza Cybergang, has been responsible for several attacks against the Palestinian Authority and Israel.³¹ In 2017, the group, which has been linked to Hamas by the cybersecurity firm Clear Sky, attacked the PA police. The gang utilized a spear-phishing technique, sending malicious emails to infect the police with Micropsia info stealer, a Delphi-based malware with many strings that reference characters from "The Big Bang Theory" and "Game of Thrones." In 2018, the group used a new and improved backdoor to infect victims. It first gathered a fingerprint of the user's workstation, and then collected a list of .doc, .odt, .xls, .ppt, and .pdf files and sent it to the victim's server. The spear-phishing emails contained monthly press reports appearing to have originated from the Palestinian Political and National Guidance Commission, and were sent to individuals connected with the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas has also been accused of running a sophisticated spyware operation in 2018 designed to trick Israeli Defense Forces soldiers into downloading malicious apps. In Operation Broken Heart, dating applications loaded with trojan malware were sent to IDF soldiers via social media. The malware was capable of switching on a mobile phone's microphone and camera, accessing photos, phone numbers and email addresses of soldiers operating near the Palestinian border, and even

²⁹ Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements ("Oslo Agreement"), 13 September 1993, Annex III, Article 36(B)(1), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3de5e96e4.html>

³⁰ Alphamena Corporate Services, "PalTel Telecoms/ Palestine," (6 June 2018), available at: <https://goo.gl/sQWHjF>

³¹ Checkpoint, "APT Attack in the Middle East: The Big Bang". (July 2018) Accessed at: <https://research.checkpoint.com/apt-attack-middle-east-big-bang/>

gathering information on military bases.³² As a result, the IDF's IT security department updated its guidelines regarding opening links received from strangers.

3. Regional Cooperation Considerations

a) Benefits

As mentioned, the current effort to promote regional cyber defense cooperation against hostile cyber activity, including terrorist use of the internet, is a first. While there is collaboration between some Middle Eastern countries in fighting terrorist activity in traditional, physical spaces, these efforts are not comprehensive and all-inclusive.

Promoting inter-country cyber defense cooperation against clearly benefits all partners. Countries participating in the dialog have a common interest to prevent hostile activities in civilian cyberspace, whether by cybercriminals, nation-states or terrorist groups, in order to: ensure regional stability, maintain internal stability and normal functioning, particularly vis-à-vis economic systems, and prevent the external influence and strengthening of hostile actors, who wish to undermine existing stability and order.

b) Challenges

This type of collaboration presents the following challenges that cannot be ignored:

- Since there is a gap in the utilization of cyberspace among countries, the nature and intensity of the threat differs in each case.
- Some of the stakeholders are relatively advanced in cyberspace and cyber protection, others less so. This means that countries also have different levels of vulnerability to cyber threats.
- The need to preserve confidential relations between countries.

c) Objectives

At the group's second meeting in Jordan in March 2019, representatives of the participating parties agreed to the following:

³² The Guardian, "Israel: Hamas created fake dating apps to hack Israeli soldiers' accounts." (July 2018). Accessed at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/03/israel-hamas-created-fake-dating-apps-to-hack-soldiers-phones>

- **Central conclusion** – The most vulnerable sector is critical civilian infrastructure: energy, water, financial sector, transportation (air, sea, land), and health. Therefore, the dialog should focus on ways to promote cooperation in these areas.
- **Shared vision** – The need to minimize the impact of hostile cyber activities on the region's infrastructures.
- **Goals**
 - Establishing a common mechanism for managing cooperation in the area
 - Conducting a joint activity for cyber protection training and education, as well as for the circulation of lessons learned based on each country's experience
 - Carrying out ongoing information exchange on threats, capacity building and cyber defense

d) Areas for Cooperation

Thus far, participants have discussed the following potential areas for cooperation:

- Academic-level dialog in order to understand the issue and national security threats that regional states are facing in cyberspace.
- Exchange of opinions and knowledge based on each country's experience in cyber protection. For example, this could include establishing a strategic dialog between responsible parties across participating countries, as well as relevant student and professional training programs.
- Sharing information on existing threats. This entails a strategic dialog for exchanging insights into the nature and scale of terrorist threats in the Middle East, and could evolve into intelligence cooperation for taking action against immediate threats.
- Establishing an aid mechanism in the event of a cyberattack on one of the countries in order to repair systems and resume normal functioning as soon as possible.

4. Suggested Structure and Mechanism

We propose development of a joint, multinational cyber center of excellence comprising:

- Security operations center (SOC)

- Monitoring security management and incident response services for member nations
- SOC tools, including security information and event management (SIEM), threat intelligence, cyber analytics, and governance and compliance solutions
- SOC operations team
- Research and development (R&D) center
 - Building a platform for connecting various industries/technologies, academia and government to better understand the needs due to localized/international cyber risks
 - Continuous development by employing student and faculty member research projects
 - Portal for conducting annual regional cyber challenge competitions, for publishing completed papers and research, and for offering an opportunity to watch or participate in an annual cyber range (live competition simulating a real-life, multi-stage evasive attack)

In addition to the cyber center of excellence, here are some ideas for cooperation based on the “Cybersecurity in the Middle East and North Africa”³³ report published in July 2019 by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

- Creating and supporting excellence centers, such as NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence (CCD COE), and exchanging expertise between them to ensure regional preparedness.
- Orienting MENA countries toward several existing conventions including the Budapest Convention of Cybercrime, which aims to address cybercrime by harmonizing national laws and increasing international cooperation.
- Signing the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace. Currently, only four countries in the region – Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar and the UAE – are signatories to the call.
- Developing solid and sustainable national digital security strategies, including national computer emergency readiness teams. This would involve:

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<https://www.kas.de/documents/284382/284431/Policy+Paper+on+Cybersecurity+in+the+Middle+East+and+North+Africa.pdf/50199440-b10e-3dea-52ca-c0e3714ebc75?version=1.0&t=1564581818218>

- Creating a legal and/or policy framework tailored to stakeholders' needs
- Establishing cooperative relations between the government and private sector
- Investing in critical infrastructure
- Developing training programs to help overcome the digital divide
- Prioritizing ICT security awareness and capacity building in national plans and budgets

Here are additional ideas for cooperation based on the “Cybersecurity Challenges in the Middle East” study³⁴ published by the Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations (GSD).

- Promoting cybersecurity competence-building at universities
 - Creating government-supported university programs
 - Certifying study programs
 - Reaping the economic potential of investments in education
- Promoting competence-building through professional training
 - Carrying out state personnel training
 - Collaborating with professional certification bodies
 - Improving competence of the private sector
 - Conducting training at the managerial and decision-making levels
 - Developing knowledge frameworks, job descriptions and cybersecurity professionalization

Procedures should be created to ensure mutual assistance in response to incidents in which state actors are the victims of cyberattacks. They should be able to obtain assistance from regional and international agencies that are both qualified and prepared to take rapid action in order to resolve cybersecurity crises or confront threats.

³⁴ <https://genevadiplomacy.ch/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/GP-2-S.-ABOUL-ENEIN-Cybersecurity-ELECTRONIC.pdf>

5. Next Steps

Given common interest and opportunities for cooperation between participating countries, here are proposed next steps based on summaries completed thus far:

- **Joint discussion:** Examining regional threats, presenting the current situation in each state, mapping the assets, gaps, and needs of each entity, and identifying areas for collaboration.
- **Common ground:** Determining a common language, setting a common goal, and agreeing on topics to be dealt with in the dialog.
- **International body participation:** The group will discuss the possibility of international involvement in the dialog. Is it needed, and if so, in what format? The group will look beyond funding assistance and develop a joint position on the issue.
- **Cooperation mechanism:** The group will formulate recommendations for a mechanism to coordinate collaboration such as structure, methodology, execution of the summaries on joint activities, and monitoring of progress.

