

Weapons of Mass Destruction and Euro-Mediterranean Policies of Arms Control: An Israeli Perspective

MARK A. HELLER

In security affairs, as in architecture, form should follow function. If the opposite approach is adopted, if function is forced to fit the mould of existing form or structure, the result is likely to be irrelevant, at best, and perhaps even counterproductive. If this logic is correct, then even if some commonality of concerns in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) area is posited for security purposes – a position that does not easily stand up to close scrutiny – EMP policies on arms control and limitations can be fully appropriate only to security problems that are characteristic of that area but that neither impinge on nor are impinged upon by security problems of other regions. Otherwise, such policies will reflect the reverse logic: of a structure or institution in search of a function, or an actor in search of a role.

This implies a rather limited range of possibilities, since there are very few issues that fall precisely in the Euro-Mediterranean niche between truly global problems, on the one hand, and more traditional regional security complexes, on the other. That is why the major focus of security cooperation in the EMP is expected to be on what is often called 'soft security' or 'the new security agenda'. What is true with respect to 'hard security' in the conventional context is equally true in the context of weapons of mass destruction and long-range delivery systems.

The existence and possible proliferation of such weapons within the EMP are undoubtedly matters of concern, indeed, of perceived threats, for EMP states. But they are at present neither specific nor unique to this context. For one thing, no Euro-Mediterranean regime can ignore the United States, which is a non-regional power but maintains large military forces, including non-conventional weapons, in the area. For another, no Euro-Mediterranean regime can fully accommodate the entire range of members' security

concerns. As a general principle, states view arms control as an instrument of national security rather than as an ideological desideratum, and they will formulate their approach to possible EMP arms control policies through the prism of their own security concerns and threat perceptions. This is particularly evident in the case of those, like Israel, whose 'security space' extends beyond the EMP area. The purpose of this paper is to review the varieties of arms control that might be applicable to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), to provide an Israeli perspective on this issue, and to suggest some modest but potentially significant EMP contributions.

Varieties of Arms Control

The basic objective of cooperative security is to enhance security by reducing the risk of war, not in an absolute sense, but rather relative to the traditional methods of unilateral force buildups and/or alliances. As a major component of co-operative security, arms control seeks, through co-operative measures between potential adversaries, to provide a more effective and reliable alternative to 'self-help'. Other considerations, normally of an international or domestic political nature, also enter into calculations about the advisability of arms control measures. But where military threats are significant, the security factor is almost always paramount.

Of these threats, the most prominent is the possibility of *purposeful, surprise attack by an adversary force*. Ordinarily, states try to deter or defend against such possibilities by building their own forces and/or allying with other forces in such a way as to deny any initial success to a putative attacker or at least to ensure that retaliation will be so painful that it will outweigh the value of any putative gains in the mind of the adversary.

The imperfections of traditional defence posture are too well known to require much elaboration. Suffice it to say that deterrence is not always a viable response to the problem of purposeful attack, either because asymmetries in resources are too great, because the political credibility behind deterrent threats is lacking, or because the adversary's calculus is not the same as the defender's, given different sensitivities to costs or perceptions of interests, domestic political constraints or miscommunication.

And even when self-help through defense or deterrence is viable, it may introduce a second type of insecurity: *crisis instability*. In an atmosphere of rising tension due to disputes of a political or other nature, states may take certain actions (such as warnings, force buildups or new dispositions) which, though of a defensive or anticipatory character, may easily be interpreted on the other side as indicators of offensive intentions. Such actions often create pressure for anticipatory or preemptive measures. This is a generic problem of escalation dynamics, well documented in analyses of the outbreak of the

First World War, but it is exacerbated by the introduction of technologies, such as surface-to-surface missiles, that permit very little advance warning of imminent use and, as yet, virtually no effective passive defense (thereby creating very strong incentives for decision-makers, in crisis situations, to neutralize them before they can be launched).

The demonstrated inability of traditional security policies to eliminate such insecurities explains the intellectual appeal of cooperative security as well as the inclination of states to consider cooperative security, including arms control, as a possible alternative. It is because of this that they agree to explore the possibility that voluntary, agreed limitations on military capabilities may provide a more efficient and/or cost-effective means of threat reduction than can military buildups limited only by a state's demographic, economic and technological resources.

For analytical purposes, arms control measures can be divided into three categories. The first is *declaratory*. Declaratory measures involve statements of non-aggressive intent, more specifically, declarations of commitment to the non-violent resolution of disputes. Parties declare that their military forces are for defensive purposes and undertake a policy of 'no first use' of part or all of their order-of-battle. Such measures have been the focus of doctrinal debates in the past, particularly in the East-West context during the cold war, when specific attitudes were shaped by asymmetrical force structures and capabilities; the Soviet Union, which enjoyed a numerical preponderance in the conventional balance-of-power in Europe, tended to stress the notion of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons, while NATO advocated a declaratory policy of 'no first use' of any force, at all. Declaratory arms control relates to intentions, rather than to capabilities, and while declarations of intent are valuable measures of reassurance in and of themselves, they can never really reduce insecurities, since they are never completely credible. In order to inspire greater confidence, they need to be reinforced by observable behaviour that actually limits capabilities to act in ways that declarations have renounced.

This brings us to the second category – *operational* arms control. Operational arms control may be compared to the 'software' or 'operating systems' of military forces. Without actually reducing theoretical capacities, it nevertheless reduces the ability to pose certain threats to others by placing limitations on the location of forces and on how they are maintained and managed on a routine basis. Perhaps the most prominent example of operational arms control is demilitarized or limited-forces zones, which keep armed forces away from border areas and therefore reduce their capacity to launch a successful surprise attack. Other examples include limitations on the type, size and frequency of military exercises and requirements for pre-notification of authorized exercises.

The third category is *structural* arms control, which can be compared to the 'hardware' of military forces. Structural arms control places material limitations on capabilities, by constraining the amounts and/or types of forces and equipment that states maintain. In some cases, it may promote the same objective of constraining the capacity to launch a surprise attack by addressing the configuration of military forces, and particularly the internal balance between 'short-warning' capabilities (for example, standing forces) and 'long-warning' capabilities (for example, reserve forces). In extreme cases, like the 1986 Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty in Europe, arms control can even provide for the elimination of an entire class of forces or weapons systems.

Because structural arms control deals with material matters, there is a tendency to think that only it is 'real', and that the other categories fall under the less rigorous rubric of 'confidence-building measures' (CBMs) or 'confidence-and-security-building measures' (CSBMs). But the important question is not the distinction between the means, but rather the extent to which the different means are able to contribute to the common overall purpose, which is to reduce insecurities.

The theoretical advantages of cooperative security policies are not in dispute; it is the feasibility of particular measures in particular circumstances that raises serious questions. One question has to do with their credibility. How reliable are they? In both operational and structural arms control, as in declaratory arms control, the objective of reducing threats (real and perceived) can only be promoted if agreed restraints are accompanied by agreed verification and transparency measures. These enable the parties to confirm through reliable means that actions by other parties actually conform to their assumed obligations. With respect to declaratory arms control, such measures basically examine the extent to which the mass media, educational and military curricula and socialization, and training programs, doctrines and plans actually complement declarations of non-aggressive intent. In the operational and structural realms, they range from more pervasive monitoring procedures (for example, aerial reconnaissance and the posting of observers at maneuvers or in limited-forces zones) to the most intrusive on-site inspections of military and industrial facilities.

But even if the problem of verification can be satisfactorily solved, attitudes toward specific operational and structural arms control proposals, like those toward declaratory arms control, are normally conditioned by specific contextual considerations of threats and capabilities. It is rare that all the parties involved will view a particular proposal in an equally favorable light, since their own security posture is unlikely to be affected in an equal manner. In this sense, universal elimination agreements, like the INF Treaty, are exceptions in the history of arms control. The more normal pattern is for

states to stress different types of limitations in the hope of constraining adversary capabilities more than their own (such as the Western emphasis on tank armies during all the years of East-West negotiations on conventional arms limitations in Europe). And even when there are agreed global ceilings, as in the SALT-I Treaty, these often permit tradeoffs or flexible mixes within the global ceiling that address each side's particular concerns or rigidities. Such considerations also inform Israeli perspectives on arms control.

Israeli Perspectives on WMD Arms Control

Israel's approach to arms control as a vehicle for threat reduction is conditioned by its perceived threat environment, which is multi-dimensional and regional. For this reason, Israel has always been skeptical about selective arms control emphases on those asymmetries that seem to work in its favor, especially in the nuclear field; these imply a potentially detrimental impact on its overall security posture. And for this same reason, it has always had reservations about global regimes that disregard the specific regional context. A regional context such as the EMP, which partly overlaps but is not fully congruent with Israel's regional threat environment, will only go part way toward addressing the inadequacies of global limitation and verification regimes, as revealed most starkly by the Non-Proliferation Treaty/International Atomic Energy Authority (NPT/IAEA) experience in Iraq.

Israel's security posture is essentially a function of its permanent quantitative inferiority in military manpower, conventional arsenals and strategic depth *vis-à-vis* a varying array of past, current or potential adversaries. For many years, these asymmetries left it vulnerable to conventional offensives by its immediate neighbors, and particularly to surprise attacks by standing forces that might produce substantial, perhaps even crippling gains before its own largely reservist army could be mobilized. More recently, this threat has been compounded by the acquisition of ground-to-ground missiles and unconventional weapons development programs by neighbors and by more remote but hostile states such as Iraq, Iran and Libya. For the most part, Israel has responded to these threats by developing a deterrent posture based on an offensive operational doctrine grounded in escalation dominance. The threat of escalation could be horizontal (preempting or carrying the battle quickly into enemy territory) and/or vertical (compensating for numerical inferiority by applying more effective or destructive maneuver and firepower).

In either case, it depended on a qualitative advantage to achieve this capability. In neither case were WMD, including nuclear weapons, invoked as part of the deterrent and they did not, in fact, deter conventional military attacks against Israel. Instead, they hovered in a doctrine of ambiguity.

presumably as an instrument of last resort against some kind of conventional collapse or against non-conventional attack.

Concerns of the first sort have been partially alleviated by the Middle East peace process, which helps to reduce the probable extent of an Arab military coalition; the second threat is somewhat mitigated by the constraints imposed on Iraqi WMD and missile programmes since the Gulf War. But the peace process is itself both partial and incomplete – partial in the sense that important elements remain entirely outside (and, indeed, hostile to it); incomplete in the sense that even some of the existing tracks have not yet culminated in peace agreements, much less in the kind of adjustments in military posture and security relations that would eliminate Israel's need to rely on traditional elements of threat reduction. This is unlikely to happen until all major elements in the Middle East (including those outside the EMP) enter into peaceful relations with Israel, adopt some credible declaratory, operational and structural limitations on the capabilities most threatening to Israel (including in the conventional field), and begin to elaborate all-encompassing regional security structures – the Middle East does not yet have even rudimentary region-wide organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS) or the Organization of African Unity (OAU) – that entrench the notion of normal, regularized interactions. As for the second concern, it is sustained by the fact that the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspections regime has collapsed and the assumption that sanctions on Iraq will not be maintained indefinitely, perhaps not even until the regime in that country has been transformed, and by the indications of WMD and long-range missile development or procurement programs by Iran.

Israel's basic perspective with respect to WMD arms control, especially of a structural nature, can therefore be summarized as follows: Israel favors the idea of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFZ), provided that it is elaborated in the appropriate context, that is, in the relevant zone (the Middle East threat environment), in the relevant conditions (a comprehensive security regime), and in the relevant political climate (of peace).

Implications for EMP Policies

The ultimate aspiration of EMP policies, including those on WMD, should be to help replace traditional defense postures with a comprehensive regional security system within the context of stable peace. Ideally this would mean, if not the implementation of the prophetic injunction to turn swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, then at least of some approximation of what once seemed only a slightly-less utopian prospect in Western Europe: of a Belgium not living in fear of a more heavily-armed

Germany and a Germany not living in fear of a nuclear-armed France. But this aspiration cannot possibly be realized in the near term, if at all, and if major structural arms control elements of such a system are posited as near-term objectives, there is little that the EMP can realistically do to bring them about, not only because the endogenous prerequisites for such a system are lacking, but also because the construction of such a system is inconceivable without the active involvement of the United States.

However, if arms control is viewed as a part of longer-term confidence-building process, with some value in its own right, then EMP can make a modest but significant contribution to security in the Middle East and the Euro-Mediterranean region as a whole.

- (1) The first is to support the Arab-Israeli peace process, both in terms of political and material support for the existing tracks and in terms of encouragement of positive involvement by parties currently outside the process.
- (2) The second is to consider expansion of EMP so that it overlaps more fully with the Middle East threat environment. If this happens, then any regional measures on material limitations will, at least from Israel's perspective, apply to the pertinent region. In practice, this means soliciting the involvement of Libya, Iran, Iraq and the Gulf States in discussions of possible agreements on CSBM/arms control measures. This would admittedly dilute the Euro-Mediterranean character of the partnership, but the alternative is to exclude major elements from Israel's threat environment, thereby rendering the notion of self-restraint on material military capacities altogether irrelevant.
- (3) Meanwhile, EMP should encourage a variety of CSBMs of a declaratory and perhaps operational nature. The former category can include a commitment to the ultimate aim of a Euro-Mediterranean region free of weapons of mass destruction, along with elements of a 'Code of Conduct' intended to provide verbal reassurances about non-belligerent intentions – a necessary first step in advance of more ambitious measures. The main component of such a Code would be the commitment to abstain from the first use of force and to resolve conflicts by peaceful means.

Operational measures should include some practical reassurances to back up the declaratory elements, particularly by adopting practices and procedures that enhance transparency in military activities and constrain the capacity of states to launch an effective surprise attack. The following are some examples of the types of measures that should be considered:

- (a) creation of limited-forces or demilitarized zones along borders;
- (b) creation of aerial intelligence regimes involving a combination of national reconnaissance activity (with satellites and/or prenotified manned flights) and third-party overflights;
- (c) prenotification of military maneuvers and exchanges of observers;
- (d) exchanges of visits by military delegations and of curricula of military command colleges;
- (e) establishment of direct military-to-military communications links at a level (perhaps Chiefs of Operations) high enough to be of significance when ambiguity or uncertainty about operations create anxieties;
- (f) establishment of mechanisms for regular consultation about extra-regional threats or threats from non-state actors; and
- (g) publication of data about military budgets and arms transfers.

Such measures are of a general nature, and are applicable to all types of weapons systems. In addition, it is possible to envisage certain 'precursor' measures that begin to address the specific question of WMD and delivery systems. For example, the destabilizing effect of missiles, particularly in pre-crisis or crisis situations, may be somewhat mitigated by an undertaking to provide pre-notification of missile test-flights and to test them only on non-threatening trajectories.

Measures of this sort, while much more modest than sweeping structural arms control agreements, are feasible even before a comprehensive regional security is in place, precisely because they help reduce threat perceptions without actually compromising defense capabilities. Indeed, one of their attractions is that they can be initiated on a bilateral or sub-regional basis, thus laying the building blocks for future expansion to other countries, rather than having to wait for the adherence of all relevant actors. Such measures are valuable because they help to build confidence, prevent or manage crises, and create an atmosphere conducive to the consideration of more ambitious steps. While they do not constitute the wide-ranging arms control regime appropriate to a comprehensive regional security system, they can help encourage a process that may ultimately make that possible.

- (4) Additionally, the EMP can consider some EMP-specific supply-side controls, by agreeing to refrain from intra-EMP WMD and missile-technology transfers. The history of supply-side arms control is not encouraging, and many of the most important supply sources of weapons and delivery systems (especially missiles) are outside the EMP area. Nevertheless, an EMP measure of this sort might help constrain proliferation. Perhaps just as important would be tighter control on 'dual-use' technologies and components or precursors, in order to reduce the

risk that non-state actors will acquire the ability to develop or assemble WMD.

A Note on Sequencing

Some of these measures, and others, were under consideration in the context of the Middle East in the Arms Control and Regional Security multilateral working group (ACRS). ACRS, however, was suspended in 1995 and shows no signs of being reconvened. Despite the lack of congruence between the geographical focus of ACRS and EMP, EMP can partially fill the gap, while extending the effort to manage or reduce tensions to other parts of the Mediterranean. Pending the resumption of ACRS talks, the existence of some alternative forum to promote the general process of mutual familiarization and confidence-building, even if it amounts to little more than seminar diplomacy, is a matter of some urgency.

The question of the order in which these measures are adopted is less critical. All are part of the same general process of confidence-building, and the promotion of a culture of security cooperation based on greater confidence is widely acknowledged to be an essential prerequisite of more far-reaching structural arms control agreements in the future. The question of complete trust is, of course, irrelevant; if it existed, co-operative security and arms control would be possible but not necessary. What is important is to begin gradually to build trust, so that what is necessary becomes gradually more possible.

Consequently, the list of measures proposed here is not intended to imply any chronological ordering. Indeed, any rigid notions of proper sequencing are misplaced, and what should prevail instead is a pragmatic approach that essentially implies a willingness to pursue whatever CSBMs are possible, whenever possible, without making the adoption of some measures contingent on the adoption of others.

In short, it is important to recognize that the process itself is important: the promotion of greater familiarity and mutual openness and the incremental institution of modest measures can pave the way for structural arrangements that now seem visionary but may eventually become practical at some point down the road.