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I want to thank Congressman Smith and other members of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe for offering me this opportunity to discuss the Helsinki Process and Reforms in the Middle East. The issue of reform and security cooperation in the region is an important subject that merits constant support, debate, and a full airing of views of how to extend such support. With your permission, I will offer some brief observations on earlier efforts and six suggestions on how to support change in the Middle East today, and submit a written statement elaborating on these points.

For more than a decade, I have been involved at the government-to-government and civil society levels in the promotion of regional security cooperation and dialogues on creating regional security frameworks in the Middle East. I have had the privilege of being a member of the U.S. delegation to the Middle East Peace Process (specifically the multilateral Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group), serving as the State Department coordinator for the on-going U.S. Government-sponsored Middle East Regional Security Track Two program, and now the Academic Dean and Professor of National Security Affairs at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at National Defense University. As such, it is important to state at the outset that what follows are my personal views and not necessarily those of the United States Government, the Department of Defense, Department of State, National Defense University or the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies.

My intention today is to provide some observations on approaches for assisting the Middle East to bring about change in the interest of individual freedom, modernization, prosperity and enhanced security. Change is definitely on the minds of many in the Middle East and outside the region. There are a host of proposals on the table, introduced in many international meetings, summits, academic symposium, joint studies, and workshops. These proposals include, inter alia, establishing a regional security and cooperation forum for the Middle East; a dialogue forum for strengthening relations between the Arab World and the outside world; expanding the mission of institutions like the OSCE to encompass the wider Middle East from Morocco to the Gulf; broadening the focus of enhanced security to address both hard security issues (i.e., wars between states and peoples) and soft security issues (i.e., economic development, social improvement and political freedom) that often lead to civil unrest, terrorism, arms races, and wars; and a charter of principles governing intra-regional relations and internal government-civil society relations. The trick with most of these proposals is to establish mechanisms for implementing them, and then implementing them in such as way as to achieve positive benefits for the people of the Middle East without provoking instability and

extremism.

This hearing is emblematic of a larger movement that began in 2001 when individuals and governments in the Middle East, Europe, the United States, and elsewhere started to examine in earnest how they could cooperate to put an end to terrorism and extremism that threaten them while promoting human dignity, economic development and enhanced security. The three "western-oriented" summits being held this month in the United States, Ireland and Turkey - the G-8, US-EU, NATO - are a culmination of a many working sessions that have been held since 2003 on this topic. Central to the agendas of the June summits are the reform initiatives now falling under the moniker 'Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa.'

Rather than critique the current crop of proposals and agreements, I want to offer some broad insights from previous attempts to bring about change in the region so that future initiatives might avoid the pitfalls that dogged those earlier efforts. Taking this critique a step further, I intend to provide concrete, and hopefully, useful advice on measures the Commission might want to consider as it proceeds with promoting reform, cooperation and security in the Middle East.

Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group

Efforts to promote security, reform, cooperation and dialogues on democracy and human rights in the Middle East have a long history. The 'modern phase' of this effort can be traced to the Madrid Middle East Peace Process, established in the aftermath of the first Gulf War in October 1991. The main objective of this process was to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict through a series of bilateral negotiations. To support these negotiations, regional parties agreed to participate in a broader, multilateral process involving Israel, 13 Arab states and the Palestinians (Iran, Iraq and Libya were excluded and Syria and Lebanon refused to participate). Five working groups were set up to deal with functional issues regarded as vital to long-term security, prosperity and stability in the region: Economic Development, Water, Environment, Refugees and the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS).

ACRS met in four plenary sessions and 31 expert-level meetings between January 1992 and September 1995. During that time the group negotiated many of the same issues that Europe addressed in the CSCE/OSCE process two decades earlier. Indeed, input from OSCE representatives was invaluable to the ACRS process. ACRS began by reviewing a list of OSCE confidence and security building measures and selecting several areas on which to focus initially: communications, maritime cooperation, military information exchange, and a conflict prevention center. Human rights and other human dimensions of the security equation were not accorded prominence at the outset as the process began with small, less controversial steps. It was noted in several declaratory measures, however, that respecting human rights would be critical to enhancing security and peace. Much attention was given to the idea of broadening the "culture of peace" in the region needed to provide the under girding for a comprehensive peace settlement.

The working group produced a declaratory statement on norms, principles, intentions and steps

to enhance regional security. After long hours of negotiations, agreements or significant progress were made on several key topics; a major achievement given that many of the states were, and continue to be, in a formal state a war with each other and most do not recognize the state of Israel.

The last ACRS meeting in September 1995 concluded negotiations on a draft mandate to establish a regional security center in Amman, Jordan, with associated centers in Tunisia and Qatar. This mandate provided both an institutional base for region-wide dialogues on security and cooperation and established the norms, principles and framework guiding the work of the center. It was a uniquely Middle East mandate, borrowing and rejecting ideas from other regional organizations. Some states favored modeling the mandate after the OSCE. Indeed, creating a "Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East, based largely on OSCE principles, was already enshrined in Article IV of the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaty. But many states rejected this approach.

Before the regional security center mandate and other agreements could be fully adopted or implemented, ACRS ended abruptly in the autumn of 1995. Failure to make progress in the two principal pan-regional issues, the Arab-Israeli conflict and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, converged to freeze activities within ACRS and later the other multilateral working groups too. Essentially, the bilateral peace and end-of-conflict negotiations between Israel and its neighbors set the pace for the amount of progress achievable on all region-wide initiatives.

Regional Security Track Two Programs: Studies, Workshops, Charters

To keep regional parties engaged in dialogue on hard and soft security issues, the U.S. began sponsoring in 1996 a "Middle East Regional Security Track Two Program." This program was funded initially by the Department of State, and now Congress funds it through the Department of Defense. Several European governments contribute too. The program sponsors workshops, task forces, on-line discussion groups, training courses, and studies that collectively have brought together more than 1200 officials and non-official security experts from Middle East, U.S., Europe, and Asia. It is not a substitute for the formal ACRS process, although it continues to address many of the same issues raised in ACRS.

Some fascinating studies have emerged from the Track Two process, many of which have direct bearing on the subject of today's hearing. These include proceedings of workshops focusing on lessons learned and potentially applied to the Middle East from security and cooperation regimes in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America. It includes reports from working groups on promoting democracy, investment and economic development, Gulf security and Mediterranean security. It also includes semi-annual workshops bringing together senior military leaders. And it produced a joint study by Israeli and Jordanian experts on how to "bridge the gap" and construct a Middle East Cooperative Security Framework.

One notable 'experts group' in which I was fortunate enough to participate in drafting a report on the issues and options of creating a Middle East regional security regime in its fullest dimension. Dr. Peter Jones was the director of that 1998 study. The study led to the formation

in 2002 of a new academic group with participants from most Middle East countries, again under the auspices of the Track Two program, who reviewed efforts for implementing the proposals presented in the 1998 study. The principal idea is to create a permanent dialogue mechanism within the region on economical, social and security related issues.

The working group developed a model "Charter" of general principles based on the UN charter (peaceful co-existence, respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, respect for human rights, etc.). The Charter should be seen as a template to be adapted by the regional governments to fit their needs, not as something to be swallowed whole. Mostly, the charter provides a tool for handling development and change by setting norms, standards and a code of conduct for relations between countries in the region and their populations and between extra-regional parties and those from Middle East. Advancing the charter to the point that regional parties feel that it is their own initiative will take a long time. But, as we have seen in Europe and elsewhere, establishing new norms, standards and codes of conduct are worthy initiatives that should be pursued with incessant commitment with the long-term in mind. The road will be bumpy, full of setbacks, and detours.

Applying the Lessons from Previous Efforts to Current Initiatives:

I provide this brief background, first, in order to highlight that many people have been thinking about and trying to implement dialogues and programs promoting region-wide security and cooperation in the Middle East for a long time. The OSCE model has been well studied and many parts of it have been rejected by those in the Middle East. Second, this context is useful for understanding my critique of previous efforts and for discerning lessons from those efforts that might apply to current initiatives underway or being contemplated.

1. Minimize pan-regional initiatives, charters, and forums

Cooperative pan-regional approaches - involving all parties from Morocco to Iran - do not work in the Middle East. Treating the region as a common entity has proven to be a mirage for every initiative seeking greater interaction and cooperation throughout the region. This is one of the dangers when using phrases such as the "Wider Middle East," the "Broader Middle East," and the "Greater Middle East." It is perceived negatively by many Arabs as a label imposed on the region, conjured up by outsiders who view the Middle East as a unified area with all parties loyal to the region. The lack of pan-regional organizations in the Middle East is emblematic of the lack of political, social and economic cohesiveness in the region. And what few exclusive regional organizations that do exist are notable for their ineffectiveness and orientation towards maintaining the status quo. Given all this, I would counsel against forming broad institutions such as the proposed 78-member "Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East" as a means to create greater unity and cohesion.

The Middle East is a very diverse grouping of states, tribes, nations, religions, sects, and civilizations and as such should not be treated as a single geographic block. Its people have multiple and competing identities and loyalties, and those identities are under constant change. There are fewer bonds holding the region together than those in Europe with its legalistic and

commercial traditions. Only four percent of all trade by Arab states is with other Arab states. Even the Arab League, an exclusive pan-national grouping of what seemingly is like-minded states with a common language, has proven to be relatively ineffective and fraught with internal disputes that prevent realization of unified actions. High profile issues cannot generate unity in the League. The Arab states, for example, were unable to hold together as a block when declaring that their adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention would depend on Israel's adherence to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. During the last few months we witnessed the trouble the Arab League faced in arriving at a common position on reform in the region. Expanding this grouping to include non-Arab League states in some new forum is a recipe for inaction.

During the last four decades the U.S. and Western nations have tended to view the Middle East as a common area, with a large, relatively homogenous Arab population mixed with two non-Arab states, namely Israel and Iran. By looking at the Middle East through such a prism the key to enhanced security and progress in the region has been relegated to the resolution of the single issue that resonates throughout the region, namely the Arab-Israeli conflict. This issue dominates the hard and soft security agenda, and the Levant has become the primary focus of policy especially in the diplomatic arena. There are and have been other major issues of concern, of course, such as oil, states with hegemonic designs, WMD proliferation, water resources, civil wars, and extremism. But these issues have been largely compartmentalized to minimize their impact on promoting peace in the Levant.

One of the negative consequences of pursuing the pan-regional approach exclusively is that it hijacks the political agenda so that the peace process becomes the primary issue of concern. Diplomatic attention to other problems in the region are shunted to the side or relegated to the military to handle. Some justified this approach by accepting the proposition that most problems could be better managed only after a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Too frequently outrage about gross human rights violations and infractions are subordinated to the politics of promoting the peace process between Israel and its neighbors. States in the region also tend to promote the peace process as a top priority when dealing with the West, and often use it as a reason or excuse for delaying the implementation of political, social and economic reforms at home.

Another consequence is that when the peace process becomes stagnated or experiences set backs it tends to undermine regional cooperation initiatives. This was the fate of the Madrid multilaterals. ACRS ended just as it appeared to be taking on a life of its own, apart from the bilateral peace negotiations. Indeed, ACRS's growing independence from the peace process was one of the reasons for its demise. It was reaching agreements on pan-regional declarations, confidence-building measures, and institutions in spite of events at the bilateral negotiating tables. Ultimately, unhappiness with the state of the bilateral negotiations manifested itself in the multilaterals. Rather than the multilaterals supporting the bilaterals as originally intended, the bilaterals held the multilaterals hostage.

I fear that some of the newly proposed pan-regional initiatives, such as creating formal institutions on security and democracy dialogues and regional charters laying out codes of conduct, norms for peaceful inter-state inactions, principles governing internal affairs, and so

on, will also suffer the fate of the Madrid multilaterals, the Arab League, and the Barcelona Process. It is not hard to imagine what would happen at the opening meetings of a new, fully-inclusive region-wide organization, such as the proposed "Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East" if there is not an active peace process. As the only venue in which Arabs and Israelis are meeting, the agenda will quickly narrow to focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, Arab leaders might be considered politically inept by their populations should they miss such an opportunity on the world stage to raise the issue. Other controversial issues unrelated to economic and political reforms will also hijack the agenda, including Israeli adherence to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), Iranian non-compliance with its NPT obligations, and Iraq.

This suggestion of minimizing pan-regional approaches is not an argument for ignoring those issues with pan-regional implications. Indeed, the process of encouraging change, reform, and security cooperation throughout the region must include a forthright effort to deal with the two security issues that have regional overtones, namely the Arab-Israeli conflict and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Addressing these issues in a forthright manner is important for creating a security environment conducive to states to implement reforms and cooperation. I will elaborate on this point later.

2. Emphasize "sub-regional" or 3 zonal approaches for security cooperation

Most of the hard and soft security problems facing the states in the Middle East are best addressed at the sub-regional level. New security and cooperation initiatives should be based on taking action in small groupings with common cultural values, interests, history and security issues of highest concern to specific geographic areas define the sub-regions. Using this formula, the Middle East can be divided into nearly three distinct sub-regions: Western Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean, and the Gulf. It is important to note that these sub-regions do not necessarily fit squarely inside the present configuration of what is generally regarded as the Middle East.

The "Western Mediterranean sub-region" encompasses Southwest Europe, North Africa and to some degree Sub-Sahara. The "Eastern Mediterranean sub-region" covers the Levant and Southeast Europe. The "Gulf sub-region" or "Southwest Asia sub-region" includes the six Gulf Cooperation Council states, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and possibly Pakistan.

Essentially, this approach advocates moving beyond the traditional connotation of what constitutes the Middle East, and somewhat that of Europe. Indeed, it might even be better to think about cooperative interactions as occurring in "security zones" rather than the confines of continental groupings or sub-regions. Programs, dialogues, and new institutions created based on this novel delineation should be more cohesive than broader organizations where solutions to problems tend to be reduced to the common denominator in order to accommodate all views. This does not negate that countries may have simultaneous allegiance to both sub-regional and pan-regional issues and interactions, or that some issues need to be dealt with mainly at the pan-regional level. It simply argues that most dialogues and issues are better dealt with in smaller sub-groupings.

A workable approach to sub-regional security zones is to deal with the problems of most interest to those states affected by those problems. The Western Mediterranean sub-region is mainly concerned about soft security issues such as immigration, drugs, environmental degradation of the Mediterranean, and crime. The Levant is caught up with the hard security problems related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Other hard security issues are of note such as the Cyprus issue and the PKK and Turkey. The Gulf is focused on both hard and soft security issues, including political aspirations of Iran, instability in Iraq, religion-motivated terrorism, drug smuggling, immigration, and light arms smuggling.

Each sub-region should approach its security situation according the functional nature of the problems they face, and reflect their own common values, cultures and history. One can imagine creating new security forums for the Gulf and Western Mediterranean in the near term. Underpinning Gulf security is a balance of power system mixed with bilateral security arrangements with the United States. This is an area where a new forum on security cooperation and dialogue could prove most beneficial. The Western Mediterranean does not have such quasi-alliance arrangements. The Levant will have a mixture of security relationships, but the main focus for advancing security, cooperation and reform will take place in concerted peace negotiations.

In most cases, progress in addressing specific issues in one sub-region will not hinge on the status of problems in the other sub-regions. A corollary of this approach means that lack of progress on the Arab-Israeli in the Levant will have a bearing throughout the Middle East but it is less likely to hold back progress in addressing problems in the Gulf and Western Mediterranean sub-regions.

There is evidence that these sub-regional zones are already forming. The U.S. and Europe are beginning to view security in Northwest Africa as part of the broader pan-Sahel area. Some participants in the Barcelona Process are considering the advantages of breaking their work into two zones, Western Mediterranean and Eastern Mediterranean as it has been ineffective in being a forum for all states bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Even in the ACRS process back in 1995, we witnessed the initial idea of a single regional center in Jordan (Levant), being rejected by the regional parties in favor of two additional sub-regional centers in Tunisia (Western Mediterranean) and Qatar (the Gulf).

3. Actualize bilateral programs for assisting economic, social and political change

It has often been said, including most recently by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, that in the Middle East area 'one size does not fit all.' I would argue that in the Middle East most successful reform initiatives need to be tailored for each country. Reforms being adopted throughout the Middle East vary greatly from country to country and from sub-region to sub-region. Most of the hard work of reform and change will be experienced within individual states, sometimes in concert with a few of their neighbors. As such, outside programs dealing with change and reforms should occur directly between states of the Middle East and outside states and organizations.

Many of the most promising ideas coming out of the June summits are focused on bilateral

programs, rather than multilateral initiatives. This is the best approach, especially as bilateral programs tend to be less divisive and more politically palatable. Receiver states generally feel like partners and in control. Giver states can moderate assistance and provide measures of effective to ascertain if the program should continue receiving support. Where cooperation between regional or zonal states is necessary, this should occur bilaterally or within sub-regional forums; not at the pan-regional level.

4. Recognize the need for a comprehensive strategy as a prerequisite for change

The problems facing the Middle East are daunting and fraught with trouble. Compartmentalizing the problems into sub-regional groupings helps to make those problems more manageable. But it is important to recognize that pan-regional issues need to be addressed at the same time. The Arab-Israeli conflict has a bearing on the success of initiatives promoting cooperation and reforms throughout the Middle East.

The plight of the Palestinians and uncertain status of Jerusalem resonate throughout the Arab world. When progress towards ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict looked most promising during the 1992-1996 period, regional cooperative initiatives flourished. Failure at Camp David in 2000 and the new intifada sent despair throughout the region. Ultimately, it led to Arabs protesting on the street, not for domestic reforms but for action to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. And this occurred in places far from the Levant, in Rabat, Muscat, and Sana'a, streets where protest is generally unheard of.

What is needed is a comprehensive strategy that deals with all the problems facing the region and in the right settings, be it at the bilateral, sub-regional and the pan-regional levels. Presently, there are three issues with pan-regional implications: Arab-Israeli conflict (especially between Israel and Palestinians), weapons of mass destruction proliferation, and Iraq. It has been argued that failure to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict is used by Arab governments as an "excuse" for not enacting much needed reforms. On one level this is true. But given the urgent need for reforms, it is important not to let this argument become an excuse for less than forthright effort in the peace process.

5. Maximize Middle East ownership of the security and development process

Ideas for developing cooperative regional security regimes, dialogue forums, or code of conduct charters must belong to those in the region if they are to succeed. One of the reasons the Madrid process made as much progress when it did was because the regional parties believed they were all equal partners to the process, able to shape the agenda and have their security concerns addressed. Indeed, when I first joined the ACRS working group in 1993, a year after it began, many of the regional parties, the United States and other extra-regional parties claimed that the idea for the multilateral was their own. When the regional parties began to feel that the process was not addressing their security concerns adequately, the process became an orphan and ultimately failed.

It is equally important to appreciate that Middle East parties – both officials and non-officials - reject modeling Middle East regional security structures after those established in Europe,

Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa. They see their own situations as unique. They are willing to learn from other regions and borrow ideas accordingly, but they want their own specialize systems appropriate to their circumstance, history, needs, and cultures. That said, they are more inclined to look favorably at the ASEAN Regional Forum as a model than the OSCE, largely because the ARF appears to emphasize less internal security matters. We saw this sentiment manifest itself repeatedly in the ACRS process and in many Track Two workshops.

Likewise, it can be expected that Middle East parties will reject the idea of joining Western organizations that expand their membership or dialogues to include the Middle East. There is deep suspicion that these organizations are pursuing their initiatives only for the purpose of benefiting the West. For example, many regional parties view the Barcelona Process as something concocted by the European Union to keep North Africans out of Europe. North Africans want the aid that the Europeans proffer, but resent the linkages often tied to it.

Most of the initiatives coming out of the June summits face becoming, not orphans, but the sole custody of "Western-parents-without-Middle East-partners." Despite the lofty titles assigned to the various initiatives emphasizing partnerships and text in communiqués referencing various statements and declarations from Middle East organizations favoring change, including the Tunis Arab League Summit, the initiatives are viewed by many Arabs as something being imposed on the Middle East from outside. Indeed, there has been expression that these efforts are meant mostly to stop the export of terrorism from the Middle East rather than for the benefit Middle Easterners.

On the other hand, programs such as Track Two dialogues, which are organized by U.S. and European NGO's, are flourishing because the Middle East parties see their thumbprints on the agenda and welcome the opportunity to engage in dialogue and joint work as equal parties. Moreover, they reach out to people beyond the elite political sphere and concentrate on civil society interactions. They also tend to be more inclusive, inviting all parties with interest in security, cooperation and reform, including from Syria and Iran. These are the types of programs that should be encouraged and financed permanently and effusively by all OSCE governments.

6. Multiply types and layers of interactions between governments and civil societies

There are many ways to assist states in the Middle East to provide for enhanced security and progress. Most of the current effort is being oriented towards state-to-state interactions. Some are already occurring at the sub-regional level, such as the GCC, 5+5 talks, the NATO Mediterranean Partnership, and the OSCE Cooperative Partnership. The Arab League is trying to promote a unified position on reform. Three new initiatives are being introduced this month in various summits: the G-8's 'Partnership for Progress and the Common Future in the Broader Middle East and North Africa,' the European Council's 'Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East,' and NATO's 'Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.' Most of the programs under these initiatives are being oriented towards bilateral programs between individual states.

I believe that the OSCE has a strong role to play. It should not seek, however, to set up another mass forum for dialogue or to duplicate other initiatives. Instead, the OSCE should seek to fill the biggest gap in the programs of the other initiatives, namely supporting societal interactions. In particular, OSCE should seek to provide financial and organizational support to on-going and future Middle East Track Two programs. Such programs are always in need of funding in order to ensure that regional parties have at least some venues where they can meet regularly. Track Two provides both a safety net in case the government initiatives fail and can serve as an incubator for reformist and security ideas that can be fed into governments. No Track Two program for the Middle East to date has financial security to be assured that it will be in operation from one year to the next. The OSCE can help by providing such assurance.

The Commission has an important role to play too. It should continue sponsoring forums on ways the OSCE can maintain political and moral support for groups and organizations seeking to bring about change based on the Helsinki principles.

Conclusion

Change is coming to the Middle East no matter what cooperative or reform initiatives are pursued. The impetus for this change is coming from multiple and competing sources, including demographic surges, political succession, conflicts between modernizers and reformers and traditionalists and obstructionists, technological change, water shortages, drug abuse, economic stagnation, economic growth, satellite television, internet, educated and non-educated. But change, especially rapid change and the process of establishing democracy, can be by its very nature unstable and lead to violence, displacement and greater tyranny. States in the region and outsiders should work together in appropriate forums to create a calm and stable security environment in the Middle East so that reforms can grab hold and not be swept away by political uncertainties and those opposed to change. Thank you.