

**THE**

**ARAB-ISRAELI  
SEARCH FOR  
PEACE**

**edited by Steven L. Spiegel**

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# THE ARAB-ISRAELI SEARCH FOR PEACE

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EDITED BY  
STEVEN L. SPIEGEL

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## Preface

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—S.L.S.

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that the use of force remains an ever present option in this turbulent region. Iraq's defeat by the U.S.-led UN coalition was a form of conflict resolution—albeit one that was bloody and had unforeseen ramifications, including the rebellion of the Kurds and Shiites in Iraq. Another, and more promising, form of conflict amelioration began in Madrid in October 1991, where a political negotiating process between Israel and its Arab neighbors contains the potential for producing a viable settlement. If some form of peaceful resolution is to be achieved between these longtime antagonists, it will only be as a result of continuous engagement by all sides.

There are sure to be pitfalls, controversies, and accusations in what is expected to be a prolonged negotiating process. The contributors to this book both outline the possible roadblocks to peace and suggest methods to either bypass or build bridges over them. One recurrent theme of these essays is that the threat or use of force does not solve problems and frequently exacerbates those already existing while generating new ones. The recognition that the resort to military instrument is unlikely to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict may be one of the factors that helps explain the peace process, unprecedented in scope, that began in Madrid in 1991. Equally important, however, is the end of the Cold War, itself the result of the decline and then rapid demise of the Soviet Union. The Soviet withdrawal from the region has denied radical regimes, such as Syria, their superpower patron and increased the influence of the United States. Indeed, if Saddam Hussein's statements are to be taken at face value, one of the motivations of his invasion of Kuwait was to offset the perceived development of U.S. hegemony in the region, which he feared would be used by Israel for its own purposes. Instead, the Gulf War only enhanced U.S. prestige and influence in the Middle East.

It is clear that the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to the decision of the various Arab states to participate in the peace process. This reason is emphasized by Ziad Abu-Amr, who argues in his essay that after the Cold War and especially the Gulf War, the "balance of power has further tilted in favor of Israel." M. Z. Diab's analysis of Syrian strategy suggests that the loss of Soviet support, the increased prestige of the United States, and the perception of a stronger Israel led the Arab states to believe that the changed conditions necessitated a new strategy of cooperating with Washington, in the hope that this would lead to greater distance between the United States and Israel. Such a strategy showed early signs of success in the extended debate in early 1992 over linking the \$10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel's settlement policy in the West Bank. While the U.S.-Israeli relationship was showing strains before Iraq invaded Kuwait, one of the ironies of U.S. success in the Gulf War is that it raised questions about Israel's strategic value. Thus, contrary to Saddam Hussein's fears of a closer U.S.-Israeli relationship, the end of the Cold

War may have in any case led to greater tension between Washington and Jerusalem.

Other factors contributed to the willingness of the Arab states to engage in the peace process, including severe economic problems in Jordan, Syria, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a feeling of obligation to the United States on the part of the Gulf monarchies, and the continuing fear that further conflict might directly threaten domestic stability. As several contributors note, of all the participants, the Palestinians are especially interested in the peace process, both because their straits are the most desperate and because they have the most to gain. The extensive immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel has also led many Arabs to believe that in the future Israel will be even less likely to accept territorial compromise on the West Bank and Gaza, thus increasing the pressure to negotiate now.

The end of the Cold War and the Gulf War also affected Israel in contradictory ways. On the one hand, external threats decreased due to the removal of Soviet support for Israel's most vehement opponents, especially Syria, and the destruction of much of Iraq's military capabilities. The massive immigration of Soviet Jews raised the potential of an economically and militarily more powerful Israel and was seen by some in Israel as increasing the importance of keeping the West Bank and Gaza. On the other hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union could eventually lead to decreased U.S. support for Israel, and the Scud attacks on the Tel Aviv area during the Gulf War brought home the dangers of continued conflict and the limited use of territory for defense in the age of missiles. The influx of Soviet Jews exacerbated preexisting economic problems, making Israel more susceptible to U.S. pressure, and raised questions about the wisdom of spending money on West Bank settlements given the pressing needs of absorption. Indeed, the victory of the Labor Party in the June 1992 elections can in part be explained by its call for the elimination of government subsidies to settlements and the shift of resources to immigrant absorption. In turn, Labor's victory boded well for improved relations with the United States.

The end of the Cold War and the Gulf War has encouraged participation in the peace process by the regional parties. It has also enhanced the position of the United States. With the decline of the Soviet Union, Washington is not merely the most important external actor, arguably the case since 1973, but the *only* one with the potential of exerting effective, if not determining, influence on the course of the peace process. The euphoria that followed the Gulf War, with pundits declaring the world unipolar and pronouncing a U.S. moment, made it seem inevitable that a *pax Americana* had arrived, an "American century" as Henry Luce had put it in an earlier era of hope and anticipation.



Yet, events since have tempered such expectations. Even though the United States is the only superpower, U.S. capabilities to influence events remain limited. As the American public turned inward to deal with the fallout from the end of the Cold War and the domestic recession, the willingness to attempt to exert influence in foreign affairs decreased. There was even talk of a swing of the pendulum back toward isolationism. The contrast between President Bush's 1991 and 1992 State of the Union messages perhaps demonstrates best the changing mood and direction of U.S. politics: in 1991 he was as confident and outward-looking as he was uncertain and inward-looking in 1992. Another symptom of the changing U.S. perspective was the almost complete absence of debate concerning foreign policy in the 1992 presidential primaries.

The limited withdrawal of the United States may offer opportunities for other states to play a larger role in the Mideast peace process. The fact that both European states and Japan attended the multilateral negotiations held in Moscow in January 1992 indicated the possibility of their intensified engagement. That the successor states of the former USSR cannot play a role in the peace process is obvious. Indeed, this inability was already apparent at Madrid, where President Gorbachev's opening speech skirted past the Middle East and consisted mainly of pleas for assistance for the USSR. The impression of disappearing Soviet influence was reinforced at the multilateral meetings, symbolically held in Moscow but paid for by Saudi Arabia. As to the Western European states, they are in the midst of readjusting to their new environment. Their priorities naturally emphasize the threat of destabilization and chaos among their neighbors to the immediate east. The role of Japan is potentially important, mainly as the source of inducements in the form of economic aid and investment, but Tokyo remains unsure of its place in the new world even as it has become engaged in hosting one part of the multilateral talks.

The general retrenchment of external powers is likely to greatly reduce the amount of outside influence to which the Middle East traditionally has been exposed. This may not be such a bad thing, as left to their own devices and no longer able to draw on external sources of power, the regional states may realize that continued conflict is too costly. As Secretary of State Baker has repeatedly emphasized, it is the Arabs and Israelis who will have to live together. Outside parties cannot want peace more than those who live in the region. External powers, especially the United States, still have an important role to play in creating conditions leading to a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute, but that role is limited.

The focus of the essays in this volume is the examination of the contributions that can be made by the regional parties and outside actors to create conditions favoring peace in the Middle East. The book has been divided by substantive areas, beginning with an examination of the factors

leading up to the peace process and the importance of properly structured negotiations in facilitating successful conflict resolution. The second part turns to the possible contribution of economic cooperation in sustaining a settlement. The final section explores the issue of arms control, for only when the states feel secure will there be a genuine chance of sustained accommodation. The separation is, of course, merely an analytic device; in reality, all of these factors are deeply intertwined. The role that each can play in reinforcing the others is the underlying theme of this book and one implicit in all of its chapters.

Although outsiders, primarily Americans, have contributed to the essays that follow, the unique quality of those essays can be found in the examples they offer of Arabs and Israelis struggling for means of achieving some form of accommodation in the post-Cold War era. As the reader will undoubtedly agree, the fact that all of the contributors are speaking a similar "language," in terms of concerns and suggestions, is encouraging. They all focus on political stability, economic development, and national and regional security. The reciprocal interaction among these factors has the potential of leading to a spiral upward to peace, but it can also lead downward to renewed warfare. The suggestions of the authors focus on recognizing the relationships among these factors and developing policies that will ensure progress toward conflict resolution. These recommendations are offered in the context of the post-Cold War world, which has created conditions of uncertainty and contradictory movements toward both animosity and accommodation.

## FACTORS LEADING TO THE PEACE PROCESS

The decline and demise of the Soviet Union was a historic event marking the end of an epoch. The effects of its disintegration were and are profound. They continue to reverberate throughout the international system, and their future effect is uncertain. As regards the Middle East, the immediate impact was to eliminate the patron of Arab radicalism, arguably eliminating the option of war against Israel. The demise of the Soviet Union not only increased U.S. influence in the region, but also may have made the Arab states more open to the peace process.

As an indication of the new era, in Part I Arab and Israeli analysts assess the forces that led to, and the perceptions of, the peace process. In Chapter 2, Shlomo Gazit argues that the underlying forces leading to instability in the region remain, notwithstanding the events of the past few years. The basic problems in the region have little to do with Israel, but are "directly related to the phenomenon of instability, which is characteristic of Arab countries and society." He notes that in the aftermath of the Gulf War the need to attain a balance of power in the Gulf, decrease internal threats to

various regimes, and redistribute wealth to moderate the antagonism between the “haves and have-nots” remains pressing. While the full implications of the Gulf War have yet to be worked out, Gazit points to two that operate to Israel’s advantage. First, since Iraq is no longer a threat, the Arabs have no real military option. Second, the demonstrated effectiveness of precision guided munitions (PGMs) relatively benefits Israel’s high-tech military. The Arab states have thus warily entered the peace process, fearing that one future implication of the Gulf War is intensified domestic instability and the threat of Islamic Fundamentalism.

As Ziad Abu-Amr notes, the Palestinians have entered the peace process with, if not enthusiasm, at least the recognition of their “dire need of a resolution to the conflict” in order to ameliorate their “suffering under Israeli military rule.” This imperative accounts for the Palestinians’ willingness to compromise on hitherto fundamental positions concerning the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the inclusion of Palestinians from Jerusalem and outside the occupied territories, and a halt on Israeli settlement building. Abu-Amr argues that preexisting divisions among the Palestinians have been exacerbated by these compromises and that the absence of reciprocal Israeli concessions may “undermine the legitimacy of the Palestinian negotiators” and endanger the peace process. While the peace process has the potential of generating “shifts in positions,” these can be either positive or negative. Outside mediators, especially the United States, have a responsibility to ensure success. The alternative, according to Abu-Amr, is the possibility of an “escalation of tension and violence” that would threaten “regional peace, security, and cooperation.”

It has often been said that there are many similarities between the Palestinians and Israelis, and the chapters by Shibley Telhami and Galia Golan both emphasize the current sharp divisions within Israeli politics that mirror those among the Palestinians. In the wake of numerous interviews with Israeli politicians and analysts, Telhami suggests that recent international events have reinforced extant positions and strategies. The resilience of these predispositions and divisions in the face of international changes accounts, Telhami argues, for the “political paralysis” that has characterized Israeli politics. Nevertheless, the apparent willingness of the Arabs to consider peace, the economic costs of absorbing the immigrants, the question of how these immigrants will vote in the elections, and the possibility that Israeli Arabs will play an increasing political role have all generated some fluidity, or at least uncertainty, in the direction Israel will take.

Golan also points to many of the same factors underlying the unwillingness of the Shamir government to make any decisions until forced to do so by events. As she notes, there is an increasing recognition in Israel that trade-offs will indeed have to be made between various goals. Pithily profound is her observation that “Israel was faced with the choice between

*klita* (absorption—of immigrants) or *shlita* (control—over the territories).” She also demonstrates that a paradox exists when the positions of the Likud and the public are contrasted: while the Likud is not willing to make a deal on the West Bank for ideological reasons but is open to compromise concerning the Golan Heights, the Israeli public’s concern for security leads to some willingness to compromise on the West Bank but great reluctance to give up any of the Heights. That the Labor Party seeks to gain an advantage from this paradox by taking a hard-line stance on the Heights further complicates an already complex situation.

The underlying theme of each of these chapters is that the prospects for a successful peace process are limited. As Golan makes clear, there is no real trust among the parties, limited understanding or sympathy for the “other,” and perhaps not even a “positive will” to make peace. The current peace process, she argues, is instead the “result of the exigencies of a situation in which the adversaries decide not that they do not want to continue the battle, but that they cannot continue.”

I. William Zartman is similarly cautious about the prospects of the peace process, arguing that a “ripe moment,” which includes a stalemate damaging to all sides, does not currently exist. He emphasizes the potential utility of “carrots” and “sticks” held by both regional and external actors, including Jewish, Arab, and Christian communities in the United States, in making clear the benefits of accommodation and the costs of deterioration. Regarding the West Bank, he suggests that there is a need to go beyond conventional conceptions of statehood and calls for “imaginative solutions” that involve “new and looser applications of sovereignty.”

Although the conditions for peace may not currently exist, the underlying premise of the peace process, as U.S. officials repeatedly emphasize, is that sustained negotiations will lead to changes in the perceptions, attitudes, and positions of the parties involved, both on the official level and in terms of domestic public opinion. How the process is structured is itself significant, as is emphasized by John Marks. Marks draws on the experience of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to demonstrate that the format of negotiations can affect their outcome. While recognizing the vast differences between the situation in Europe when CSCE began in the mid-1970s and that in the Middle East, Marks suggests that the CSCE’s wide scope, flexibility, provisional nature of agreements, extensive participation, and opportunity for trade-offs between issues may serve as a workable model for the Arab-Israeli peace process. He argues that the “Middle East needs and would greatly benefit from a regionwide, cooperative process—a process that makes use of innovative methodology and negotiating techniques to find fresh ways to frame issues.” Marks also emphasizes the potential for parallel unofficial interchanges to reinforce the official negotiations.

The six chapters in Part I examine the factors that have led each of the parties to appear at the first direct negotiations between Israel and each of its neighbors—no mean achievement. That there has not been immediate agreement and that recriminations continue to be traded was to be expected, but that the process continues and has become more serious and substantive is encouraging. As Marks notes, in Europe, where the divisions were not as fundamental, the negotiations continued for more than fifteen years, with successes and setbacks all along the way. A process similar to CSCE began in Moscow, where an unprecedented regionwide meeting sought to begin dealing with regional issues, including arms control, the environment, water use, and economic development. In Part II we turn to the potential for economic cooperation to reinforce both the peace process and, hopefully, peace itself.

### THE POTENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Among the many changes resulting from the demise of the Soviet Union is the increased emphasis placed on economics, both as a source of instability and as a potential realm for cooperation. There is evidence of increased cooperation—with Europe in the lead, closely followed by the U.S.-Canadian Free Trade Agreement and similar arrangements in different regions. Within the Middle East itself, discussion of the usefulness of greater economic cooperation has begun. The region is marked by different resource and factor endowments and thus has the potential for cooperation that would facilitate extensive growth and development. Cooperation would benefit all sides, but in relative terms the poorer states would benefit most. In the past, however, cooperation has been limited by political impediments, a phenomenon obvious in the hostile relationship between Israel and the Arabs, but also critical in inter-Arab relations.

The authors in Part II examine the potential benefits of intensified interchange. Patrick Clawson begins with a general overview of the economies of the Levant countries and Egypt. He argues that although there is significant room and benefits from increased cooperation, in the final analysis politics determines economics. Noting the generally disappointing level of cooperation between Israel and Egypt, he cautions that there are ideological, cultural, and bureaucratic barriers to increased trade and other forms of economic interaction even in the event of regional peace. Nevertheless, he identifies areas of potential immediate and postpeace cooperation that can be implemented to the benefit of all sides; these include water and energy, trade, and capital flows. Given the general absence of capital in the region, with the limited exception of the Gulf countries, a central point is that “the simple reality is that both a better business climate

and less perceived instability are necessary conditions for more investment; neither by itself is sufficient." He points out that the United States and the USSR's successor states have an important role to play in creating a favorable environment for economic development.

Although Gideon Fishelson notes that increased economic relations may "help the peace process along," he focuses more on the benefits of cooperation in the wake of peace, including the potential that "economic relations might make formal peace more stable." He anticipates that accommodation will provide the private sector with increased opportunities as political risks and interference decrease. The individual economies have considerable complementarity, and he argues that the expansion of markets and the resulting economic development will mean substantial benefits for all sides. The governments in the region also have an important role to play, which includes improving the area's infrastructure and developing methods of cooperatively allocating water. While noting that a relative economic downturn may occur in the immediate aftermath of a peace agreement, Fishelson argues that in the medium and long term, peace will bring substantial benefits in comparison to continued hostilities.

Jawad Anani, like Clawson, argues that while "scoring agreements on the economic side could lubricate the hard-core political negotiation," in the final analysis "agreement on political terms shall dominate the potential success on the economic front." He identifies natural resources, investment, and finance as areas of potentially beneficial cooperation. Anani also adds that the limited amount of water in the region almost compels agreements; limited investment and cooperation in tourism promises substantial benefits; and coordination in banking will assist in improving economic stability. He also suggests that establishment of international institutions, such as a "water clearinghouse" and a Middle East Bank for Reconstruction and Development, will facilitate cooperation and strengthen peace. External parties, such as the United States, Europe, and Japan, can play important roles in these institutions.

The premise underlying any discussion of economics in a region as highly politicized as the Middle East is that the benefits from cooperation will increase the stakes both in the peace process and then in peace itself; that is, the greater the benefits derived from cooperation, the greater the reluctance to forgo them by breaking the links. All of the contributors in Part II emphasize the potential benefits of nonregional involvement, both politically and economically, in developing and then sustaining these ties. But as Clawson notes, external involvement can also impede new links, as "the more aid, the easier to hide behind autarchic barriers and avoid regional cooperation." There are many barriers to coordination, including domestic interests that benefit from protectionism, bureaucracies that increase their

control through red tape, and cultural differences. Overarching all of these, however, are the effects of the continued threats of instability and war. Therefore, the possible role of arms control in the region in ameliorating these threats is the focus of Part III of this book.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ARMS CONTROL

As Gideon Fishelson argues in Chapter 9, "the Arab-Israeli conflict did not originate in recognizable economic causes," and as John Marks notes in Chapter 7, a fundamental impediment to peace in the Middle East is the continued questioning not only of borders, but also of the very right of certain states to exist. One may assume that even if a peace agreement is signed, reluctance to accept the legitimacy of the "other" will remain. Peace would thus be formal rather than normal, defined by legal treaties instead of harmonious relations—the U.S. understanding of normality in international relations. Here lies the importance of properly managed arms control, which has the potential not only of eliminating conditions of instability conducive to the use of force, but also, if stability is sustained over time, of leading to a gradual change in attitudes as well. If there is no capability, intentions may change for the better. In addition, early agreements on arms control, broadly defined, may facilitate subsequent agreement in other areas of dispute.

Mark Heller argues in Chapter 11 that the central goal of any arms control regime should be to minimize the offensive capability of the rivals, thereby reducing the threat of crisis instability generated by the perceived need to strike first. He warns that arms control must not be a "technical exercise carried out in a political vacuum" insensitive to the concerns of both sides. For Heller there are important asymmetries—related to differences in geography, economic resources, manpower capabilities, and weapons mixes—that must be taken into account, and balanced, in any attempt to engage in arms control. One of Heller's principal concerns is that a distinction be made between status quo and revisionist states, and nothing should be done that would weaken the former or strengthen the latter. Given that the vast majority of the region's arms are imported, he also argues that outside powers—first and foremost the United States and Soviet successor states, but also European and Third World suppliers—have an obligation not to disturb the regional status quo. Recognizing that selective attempts to limit arms sales may be seen as disadvantageous both to individual arms suppliers and importers, he calls for "an indiscriminate across-the-board embargo" that would give time for the political process to take root.

In Chapter 12 Alan Platt emphasizes that the problem in the Middle East is not one of arms per se but of political differences. Reinforcing Heller's concerns, Platt argues that "certain flows of arms can aggravate



tensions in the Middle East and can make conflict more likely." In reviewing the past record of arms supplies, Platt underscores the difficulties inherent in any attempt to stem the flow of weapons. Given the economic benefits of sales and the increasing number of suppliers, coordination of limitations may be increasingly difficult, and the development of indigenous manufacturing may limit the effectiveness of supplier controls. Platt is particularly concerned about the extent and apparent ease of the proliferation of unconventional weapons—chemical, biological, and nuclear—and missile delivery systems. He thus calls for enhanced enforcement of the various multilateral agreements created to stem the flow of such weapons. Platt does not, however, place sole onus on external powers and argues that regional parties not only can, but have engaged in arms control measures. Limitation-of-forces agreements similar to those contained in the first and second Egyptian-Israeli agreements on the disengagement of forces in Sinai in 1974 and 1975 and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979 should be emulated. He shows how efforts to increase transparency, i.e., the ability of each side to observe the other's military activities, would also greatly assist stability in the region.

The deep and reciprocal linkages between the political process and arms control are made succinctly in Chapter 13 by Abdel Monem Said Aly, who argues that "a political settlement guarantees a hospitable climate for deescalating the arms race, while arms control measures create mutual confidence and stabilize a very destabilized situation." Aly notes that in the past, Egypt accepted geographical limitations on its forces, reducing the possibility of surprise attack. Such agreements "established the precedent of asymmetrical balance of forces as one of the means to address Israeli insecurities in exchange for territories." He extends the principle further to include the possibility of the gradual reduction in nuclear and other unconventional weapons in exchange for military and political agreements, with the ultimate aim being the elimination of such weapons "once full normalization of relations and different types of economic and functional cooperation are installed."

By contrast, M. Z. Diab reminds us in Chapter 14 of the complex forces—historical, ideological, political, and technological—that stand in the way of arms control agreements, much less a full-scale Arab-Israeli settlement. Yet, he argues that since 1967 the Arabs have accepted Israel's reality while fearing expansionism; the central question is thus "What type of Israel?" He notes that as Syria has sought to adapt to the changing international system, in particular the loss of its Soviet patron, it has short- and long-term objectives and strategies relating to Israel and the United States. Diab outlines possible policies that will reinforce the political process by reducing the fear of attack. He also points out that the question of balancing asymmetric capabilities and concerns applies not only to the



Israeli side, but also to the Arab side. The Arabs are worried about Israeli capabilities, including nuclear, but also have security concerns regarding both Arab and non-Arab neighbors. The aim of any arms control measures, especially limitation of exports by suppliers, should be to enhance mutual deterrence and the defensive, rather than offensive, capabilities of regional states.

In Chapter 15, in examining how the lessons from Europe's experience with arms control can be applied to the Middle East, Harald Müller calls for increased transparency, including mutual inspections. Müller notes that among the factors making European arms control successful were the strong role of the United States, the severe threat of the USSR, and mutual recognition, much of which are missing in the Middle East.

The closed and secretive nature of regimes impedes arms control efforts, and thus Müller argues that arms control must be accompanied by a process of "internal democratization." Yet, even if all of these conditions may not exist in the Middle East, he claims that European states and agencies can play a positive role. They can create an environment favorable to regional arms control in a number of ways, including holding seminars attended by Arab and Israeli officials, having representatives participate in inspections, controlling arms exports, and applying pressure—economic and political—on regional parties to reach an arms control agreement. At the very least, Müller cautions that the European states should not do anything that makes the situation worse.

As Diab notes in his essay, Middle Eastern states "still regard the threat and use of force as a legitimate means to protect their vital interests." Changing this perception to one in which force is not seen as an option in settling differences will not be easy. The process of evolving new political attitudes will be prolonged and marked by successes and failures. The role of arms control should be to create an environment in which the political process of recognition, negotiation, and agreement can take place without being threatened, accidentally or intentionally, by the threat or use of force. As the authors in Part III all emphasize, arms control should be broadly defined to include confidence-building measures (CBMs), quantitative and qualitative limitations on exports and imports, multilateral negotiations, and the development of international institutions. Preferably in combination but arguably separately, limited tacit or explicit agreement on arms control, broadly defined, may contribute to peaceful relations between Arabs and Israelis.

## CONCLUSION

Both because the international system remains in a state of flux and because the peace process continues, no single book can hope to address all aspects of the events that are rapidly unfolding. While regional problems remain