

**From Europe's Past to the Middle East's Future:
The Constitutive Purpose of Forward Analogies in International Security***

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Abstract

Why do international security experts and policymakers draw analogies between various contexts? Do they use analogies to help them better predict the future consequences of their actions? Or do they employ analogies for other purposes? This paper analyzes how policymakers and experts draw on “forward analogies” (i.e. analogies between observed causal relations and expected causal relations) to produce predictions about the future in the field of arms control and nuclear disarmament. More precisely, it shows how forward analogies between past and present situations in one context (Europe) and present and future situations in another context (the Middle East) are used to advance diplomatic negotiations in a particularly hard context: the deliberations of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Free Zone in the Middle East. In situations in which diplomacy is blocked by the unwillingness of parties to start negotiations, this paper claims that such use of forward analogies can serve not only a predictive purpose (to the extent that these analogies produce causal predictions), but also a constitutive purpose: analogies help “constitute” the reality of regional orders (such as the “Middle East”) when their ontological status as objects of deliberation and intervention is problematic. In doing so, this paper prolongs the burgeoning literature in anthropology and sociology, which focuses on future-oriented practices in international relations.

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“We live in an age when many of the world’s regions, once ravaged by war, are now coming together. We see this above all in Europe... The results are obvious: peace and security, prosperity, better quality of life. Increasingly, the Middle East stands out, but not in the way that should make any of us proud. Our challenge – our opportunity – is to begin the process of making the Middle East a region, not just in the geographic sense, but in the political, economic and indeed, the human sense as well.”

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, III, January 28, 1992.¹

It is quite common for policymakers to present the accomplishments of others as models that their fellow citizens should emulate, especially when their own nation is embroiled in a dramatic and hopeless situation. Before the crisis of the Euro-zone, “Europe” offered to other regions a model of regional order that they could imitate. In the mid-1990s, James Baker told the participants in the Arab-Israeli peace process (or “Madrid process,” as it started in Madrid) that they should emulate a process that started in Europe in the mid-1970s which forced the military powers in Eastern and Western Europe to reduce their weapons systems in a coordinated and verifiable fashion – the so-called “Helsinki process,” which led from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) held in 1973 in Helsinki to the adoption of arms reduction and peace treaties in Europe in 1990 (when the Cold War ended).² For peace to happen in the Middle East, Baker and others believed that policymakers of the region needed to use their knowledge of the foreign European past to break away from their own history and invent a future for themselves.

This reference to Europe’s past to map out a brighter future for the Middle East is not exceptional within security communities. Over the last five years, I have participated in various track-2 (semi-official) and track-1.5 meetings which have tried to revive the idea of constructing a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Free Zone in the Middle East (hereafter, the Zone). When participating and organizing such events, I was struck to see that the use of such analogies between Europe’s past and the Middle East’s future still elicited a very positive response from the participants and fueled constructive dialogue among invitees from the Middle East. During these meetings, the analogy that I (and others) have used was not that between the “Helsinki process” and the Middle East’s future Zone, but between the latter and the European Community of Atomic Energy (Euratom). This analogy may have seemed quite inappropriate to some, as Euratom initially served to pool Western Europe’s nuclear technologies for both military and peaceful purposes (Mallard, 2008), but Euratom did put in place the first (and only) existing regional system of control of nuclear activities, which could inspire the Middle East.

Even though this analogy makes sense, in some limited fashion, the positive reaction from Middle Eastern policymakers was originally puzzling to me. As a reader of post-colonial scholarship (Said, 1979), I was expecting that references to Europe’s past would be

¹ Cited in Feldman and Toukan (1997:101).

² Diplomats had in mind the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty (Feldman and Toukan, 1997:82).

taken to reflect long-held (and misplaced) Euro-centric beliefs about the central importance of Europe in world history, and I was careful not to say that policymakers should copy and paste Europe's past to sketch the Middle East's future. Still, by presenting Europe as a possible template, my efforts could be interpreted as implying that the knowledge of Europe's past could be heuristically superior to that of other regions. This implied superiority of Europe over other regions (like Asia, or Latin America) disturbed me, but the deep interest I sensed from participants of the region encouraged me to continue building on this analogy.

Still, the question remained why participants to these meetings seemed interested in learning more about Europe's past. One obvious answer is that participants were in fact not "learning" anything –or that the cognitive payoffs were not what mattered to them –, but that they in fact were interested in traveling to nice locations, or in accumulating social capital and new connections, which helped them strengthen their position within their domestic field of power (Bourdieu, 1988). The connections which the participants in the track-2 meetings organized on the Zone in the 1990s made with U.S. political and academic elites during these meetings have certainly benefitted their careers – in manners similar to the positive influence of transnational connections made by the "*compradores*" of Latin America as described by Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth (2002).

To take just one example, one could mention the career of Nabil Fahmy, the newly appointed Egyptian Foreign Minister, who in the 1990s, participated in the meetings that James Baker helped organize on the relevance of the Helsinki process for the Middle East. The many contacts that Egyptian participants such as Fahmy made with U.S. policymakers and scholars (like those working in the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies) certainly served to boost his career, both as an academic (as he became a faculty member and the first dean of the school of public affairs at the American University in Cairo), and as a diplomat, as Fahmy later went on to serve as the Egyptian ambassador to Washington from 1999 to 2008. One could be critical of these "double games" (Dezalay and Garth, 2002) that diplomats/legal scholars play in both the academic and the political fields. Or one could denounce the fact that such careers of the "*grands juristes*" and diplomats are open mostly to the heirs (Bourdieu, 1988; Dezalay and Garth, 2002) of successful diplomats/legal scholars who have gained the necessary social capital through family ties.³ Or one could applaud these successful people for brilliantly conducting two careers, as well as using the knowledge that academia has to offer in the policymaking world, depending on one's political views.

The problem with this purely sociological answer to my initial puzzle is that it posits that the analogies between Europe's past and non-European futures do not serve any cognitive purposes, an assumption that contradicted my first-hand experience, as many participants to the seminars I organized emphasized their cognitive payoffs. For instance, I witnessed that from one meeting to the next, participants from the Middle East changed the papers they presented as they incorporated (selectively) some of the observations from Euratom's past that they considered relevant to their vision of the future Zone in the Middle East. Thus, I decided to analyze those cognitive payoffs the use of such analogies could bring, even though I did not base my analysis on the description of the meetings I witnessed,⁴

³ For instance, to go back to our example, we are not surprised to learn that Nabil Fahmy, born in NY, was the son of a very successful career diplomat who became Anwar Sadat's foreign minister from 1973 to 1977.

⁴ Doing so would have breached many formal and informal rules of interactions. For instance, participation in these discussions prohibits mention of exchanges and their indexation to participants (according to the Chatham House rules), which would have been impossible had I traced the changes in some papers published by

but on the first-hand and second-hand accounts of the discussions of the Zone in the Middle East conducted by diplomats/scholars in the 1990s – some of whom still met in track-2 discussions of the Zone, in which I took part in the late 2000s and 2010s.

By focusing on analogies, this paper thus seeks to respond to the following questions: For what purposes do foreign policy practitioners use analogies between their region and others? Do they try to extract predictions by applying knowledge of a foreign past to their own case? Do they copy and paste the experience of others to their own case? Or do forward analogies serve other purposes?

The most common argument in defense of the idea that Middle Eastern policymaker should learn from Europe's past consists in emphasizing the predictive lessons that one can draw from history: by observing Europe's mistakes as well as its successes, Middle Eastern policymakers may fine-tune their predictions about the likelihood that the same actions would lead to the same outcomes. In other words, they would transform uncertainties into calculable risks. This predictive use of history has been emphasized time and again in the literature on "learning from history" (Jervis, 1976; Khong, 1992:6; Levy, 1994; Treverton, 1993; Garofano, 2004; Pelopidas, 2011), although many of these authors have cautioned that policymakers often draw the "wrong" predictions from the observation of the past (Neustadt, 1973; Jervis, 1976; Kohng, 1992). Indeed, these scholars posit that there is a positive historical truth, which historians may know but which policymakers often miss when they draw historical analogies,⁵ or rather, when they use analogies as "metaphors" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), in the sense that they overemphasize the common points and are usually blind to historical differences.

In contrast to previous authors, I will argue that analogies are not used primarily for a "predictive" purpose, but rather for a "constitutive" purpose (Mallard and Lakoff, 2011:340), in the sense that analogies can turn an ontologically uncertain future into an object of knowledge and intervention. Building upon the dramaturgical tradition (Goffman, 1959), and the recent interest in anticipatory practices in international relations (Lakoff, 2007; Aradau and Van Munster, 2011), this paper shows how analogical reasoning is used to "constitute" objects of comparison (here, regional orders) into stable objects of deliberation and intervention. Here, I apply this dramaturgic approach to show that the analogy drawn between the "Helsinki process" in Europe and the (interrupted) Arab-Israeli peace process in the 1990s was used to *constitute* a peaceful and nuclear-free "Middle East" as a legitimate object of deliberation and intervention, at a time when the very possibility of holding such talks and envisioning such a future was highly polemical. I will show that when they did so, they did not use analogs as metaphors, and did not "blackbox" (Latour 1987) all the differences between Europe and the Middle East – although they avoid mentioning some important differences.

In the rest of the paper, I will first discuss how analogies – in particular, "forward analogies" – differ from other techniques that foreign policymakers use to think about the future, namely, metaphors and simulations. In this first section, I will therefore define the

participants. Besides, revealing at the beginning of a meeting that I may use some material for publication could have destroyed the trust (even if I guaranteed anonymity, diplomats are cautious, and identities may be guessed by people knowledgeable of the field, despite a sociologist's best efforts to conceal them). My own participation in track-2 discussions thus allowed me to generate ideas and hypotheses, but not to validate my claims.

⁵ Some, however, argue that historical references just serve ex-post window-dressing purposes and have little influence on the decision-making process (Jervis 1976).

specificity of what I call “forward analogies” compared to other techniques described by scholars of anticipatory knowledge practices (Aradau and Van Munster, 2011). Second, I will describe how analogies between Europe and the Middle East were used during the “Madrid process” to solve a specific diplomatic conundrum (a classical chicken-and-egg problem), which plagued Arab-Israeli deliberations about “their” region: although the definition of a future regional order in which each party found an acceptable role for itself was key to the normalization of their relationship (Barnett, 1998), the latter was necessary before they could engage in the process of shaping that regional order. In doing so, they established the commonality between “Europe” and the “Middle East” (the fact that both ontologies could be seen as regions), as well as they emphasized the differences between their “Middle East” and their construction of Europe’s past. Third, and last, I will show that the forward analogy allowed experts to carefully avoid challenging the taboo prohibition on the production of discourse about Israel’s nuclear weapons program. Although differences between the Middle East and Europe were generally highlighted, the story of both regions’ nuclear history remained concealed in a black box, as a condition for talks to continue. Indeed, as soon as the nuclear specificities of the Middle East were underlined, and the use of such an analogy stopped being just a scenario-making exercise, then, the analogy lost its constitutive power and the talks ended.

Forward Analogies, Metaphors and Simulations

Prudential and Conjectural Forms of Reasoning

A burgeoning scholarship has been recently developed that focuses on the instruments by which anticipatory knowledge is produced within international security communities of experts (Lakoff, 2007; Gibson, 2011; Guilhot, 2011), as well as on the different “styles of reasoning” (Aradau and Van Munster, 2011) that these experts use to produce forecasts and scenarios about the future. By doing so, scholars of knowledge practices have distanced themselves from other sociologists of expert communities inspired by Pierre Bourdieu (Dezalay and Garth, 2002; Pouliot, 2008; Bigo, 2005; Stampnitzky, 2013), as the latter focus more on processes of institutionalization, social capital transmission and transnational network formation rather than on cognitive processes and styles of reasoning.

This new literature is deeply rooted in the works of constructivist scholars of knowledge formation who have insisted that a variety of “epistemic cultures” (Knorr Cetina, 1999; Hacking, 2004) can be found across and within scientific communities. The attention paid to various styles of reasoning allowed these scholars to move beyond the Foucaultian studies of “governmentality,” (Foucault, 2009) which have tended to focus on one specific style of reasoning about the future. This style of reasoning, which Aradau and van Munster (2011:14, 31) call the “prudential” scientific style of reasoning, posits the existence of general categories by which events are classified and their occurrence quantified. This prudential style of reasoning has been particularly prevalent within professions that have generated new predictive models to compute probabilities of risky events (Beck, 1992; Porter, 1995), for instance in the fields of insurance and finance.

Evidently, the use of analogies such as those between Europe and the Middle East does not fall within the “prudential” style of reasoning, as analogies build relations between only two cases. Thus, their use in policymaking worlds cannot be associated with the increasing importance of the “large numbers” (Desrosières 1993). The use of analogies rather

falls within the realm of what Ginzburg (1979) as well as Aradau and van Munster (2011:14, 31) call “conjectural” knowledge practices. These conjectural modes of reasoning typically consist in gathering a wide range of disparate evidence, which are analyzed for their incongruence and singularity, and which are always placed within a context that is assumed to be historically specific. An analogy respects the irreducibility of each context. Each of the two cases that form the analogy is analyzed as a whole, and in ways that are very similar to what political scientists have called the “holistic approach” to the practice of paired comparison (Ragin, 1989). In this conjectural style of reasoning, neither of the two cases can be reduced to the illustration of a general (and transhistorical) category, in contra-distinction with the prudential mode of reasoning already mentioned.

Insert Figure 1: Historical and Forward Analogies

In fact, the analogy is a relation of similitude drawn between a set of relations within two cases, not between two cases (as a metaphor is). For instance, as is illustrated in the graphic above (figure 1), a “historical analogy” relates four different observable (hence past) moments in two different contexts. The analogy makes a claim about the *observed* similitude between the cases based on the similarity of the relations between the two moments within each case. Similarly, what I call a “forward analogy” underlines the *assumed* relation of similitude between two cases in different temporalities (in one case, the two moments are in the past; in the other case, one moment is past/present and the other is located in the future).

Analogies and Metaphors

Analogies differ from metaphors, and their purpose also differs. Historical metaphors have been quite commonly used in the field of international security, especially for their predictive purposes. For instance, scholars have established that the reference to “Munich” (e.g. the rather mild Western reaction to the invasion of Austria by Hitler in 1938) has been one of the most common sources for the production of predictions by U.S. policymakers (May, 1973; Neustadt and May, 1986; Khong, 1992): most of the time, the reference to Munich served to justify military action rather than diplomatic (in)action, as the lesson that U.S. policymakers have drawn from Munich was that Hitler could have been stopped if the British and French had reacted to the Anschluss by using military force.⁶

Still, it is far from certain that the use of metaphors produces good predictions. For instance, U.S. policymakers are generally deeply convinced that a metaphor like “Munich” can adequately capture the historical truth of the new situation they have to deal with (the Cuban Missile Crisis, or the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein’s troops in August 1990, etc.), and that the two terms of the metaphor were almost perfect substitutes, leading to increased favoring of military action in each new case. As George Lakoff and Clark Johnson (1980: 13) note, in practice, the metaphor has a tendency to substitute itself for the object it is supposed to represent, although, as they write, the metaphorical substitution is “partial, not total: if it were total, one concept would actually be the other, not merely understood in terms of it.” As a result, those who use metaphors for predictive purposes have a tendency to over-estimate the likelihood that certain chains of actions will repeat themselves over time.

In contrast, like any “conjectural” style of reasoning, an analogical reasoning is not predictive in essence. Rather than looking (predictively) for the probable causes of an

⁶ The same has been true of Israeli policymakers (Heller, 1994:100).

unlikely event, “conjectural” reasoning seeks to make sense of the reality of a new event. As Aradau and van Munster (2011:2) write, in the conjectural style of reasoning, “the cause of the event often remains unknown and unknowable,” as well as the probability of its occurrence. What matters is not to find out the probability of its occurrence, or the complete chain of events that may lead to it, but rather, to imagine the world created by a major change, by drawing on the similarities and differences between the envisioned world and a similar case.

In fact, those who use analogies often do so because they are unsure whether the case they have to evaluate is akin to the historical case that they use in their analogy. Thus, what Annelise Riles writes about the use of “placeholders” may be also true about the use of analogies by foreign policymakers: drawing on Hans Vaihinger’s essays on the philosophy of the “*As If*,” Riles (2010: 802) claims that market actors do not believe in the veracity of their fictions, and in a similar way, we can anticipate that those policymakers who draw on analogies (rather than metaphors) between Europe’s past and the possible futures of the Middle East do not really know how similar the “placeholder” (here, Europe’s past) or different is from the reality for which it substitutes (the Middle East’s futures). For them, the analogy between the Middle East and Europe is just a way to see how similar and how different the two cases are. The explication of such differences is precisely what allows the talks to go on. Pragmatic efficiency rather than historical accuracy or predictive capacity, is thus the criterion that one uses to evaluate the worth of analogies.

Forward Analogies as a Specific Type of Scenario-Making Exercise

From this observation, one can conclude that the use of the analogy is purely performative: it serves the purpose of giving an (ephemeral) existence to an ontology that, if not discussed within the context of a fictional game, or a scenario-making exercise, would otherwise not occur. To this extent, forward analogies do not work as “working hypotheses” but as “fictions,” as “a fiction differs from a hypothesis because the latter is directed toward reality and demands verification, whereas the fiction induces only an illusion of understanding,” (Riles 2010: 802) and the preservation of that illusion is what can sometimes keep a dialogue moving forward.

The corollary to that assumption is that as soon as the analogy moves to official diplomatic forums, the veracity and plausibility of the assumed relation of similitude between two sets of relations (within the past of Europe and within the future history of the Middle East), which we find at the very core of the forward analogy, will be officially questioned, tested, and criticized. Within real-life negotiations, the fiction may not be able to resist the test of historical accuracy, and the analogy might lose its performative effects.

If what I have just said is verified in practice, the use of forward analogies thus comes close to what scholars of anticipatory knowledge practices call “scenario-making exercises.”⁷ Unlike most scenario-making exercises, however, its purpose is not to turn a highly uncertain event into a calculable risk by assigning a quantified probability to its occurrence, but rather to crystalize very different visions of the future around a common map of the future, and the method used to achieve that objective consists in focusing the discussion on a historical (foreign) past that participants to the scenario-making exercise are asked to comment upon.

⁷ Scenario-making exercises constitute a “mode of knowledge deployed to capture the non-calculable” (Aradau and van Munster 2011:29), to make its manifestation visible in the realm of experience, rather than to reduce it to the residual unknown of a statistical predictive model.

More specifically, a forward analogy is the exact contrary of the worst-case scenario-making exercises: in most exercises carried out by present-day preparedness experts, the future that participants play is a never-experienced (hence, non-historical) future, which is highly implausible as it represents the worst-case scenario, like the explosion of a dirty bomb in New York or a small pox attack on U.S. territory (Lakoff 2007; Mallard and Lakoff 2011). During the Cold War, the games of nuclear warfare performed by Herman Kahn (1962) also required that participants would always envision a future that had never been experienced by anybody (like a nuclear war): Kahn compared these non-historical implausible cases (nuclear wars) with more plausible and stronger ontologies (real wars or everyday crises). In these games, participants were asked to draw an analogy between a fictive implausible future and a more plausible nearer future, and to pay attention to both similarities and differences between their worst-case scenario and the more plausible immediate threats with which their fellow citizens were faced (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2000; Aradau and van Munster 2011:22, 75).⁸

In the analogy between Europe and the Middle East under study, what I call the “ontological valence” of the terms of the analogy is reversed if compared to these worst-case scenarios: here, the future to be envisioned by the participants is the historically existing case (Europe’s past), which is ontologically stronger than the “reality” that they are asked to compare it with (e.g. an implausible Middle East slowly moving toward peace). As I will claim, this unequal ontological balance between the two cases of the forward analogy explains why the negotiators in informal meetings often use them. During my participation in track-2 conferences, I observed that especially after moments of uneasiness (for instance, when some participants put the very legitimacy of deliberations into question), panel chairs typically focus the discussion back on a real legal precedent (for instance, the Euratom treaty under consideration), which can be thoroughly documented, discussed, rejected, criticized, etc. Not only do forward analogies allow participants to focus on something “real,” but they also draw their attention away from the dark realities of their region, and thus help negotiators avoid the many taboos (like the existence of Israeli nuclear weapons), which plague strategic talks in the Middle East. Focusing the discussion of new futures on historical pasts gives participants a strong sense of reality, whereas the talks about one’s vision for the future of the Middle East remain highly subjective.

To Talk or Not To Talk? How Diplomats Can Do Both

Just a Scenario-Making Exercise

After the first Iraq war that followed the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein in 1990, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, as well as Iraq’s regional neighbors, realized at least two things: that they needed to more actively pursue their nuclear nonproliferation efforts in the Middle East, as they realized that Saddam Hussein had been much closer to obtaining nuclear weapons than anyone had realized; and that international cooperation between the two Super-Powers could reshape the contours of the Middle East. Thus, U.S. and Soviet policymakers such as Denis Ross (one of James Baker’s closest aides), decided that it was time to propose the same sort of “confidence building measures of the sort we developed with the Soviets in Europe [to] be pursued between Israel and her Arab neighbors [in order] to reduce the risk of war and miscalculation and to lay the basis for their political

⁸ Seen from the point of view of legitimacy, positively ignoring (or “obviating”) the military past (like the story of many campaigns and battles) as an object of knowledge allowed Kahn to de-legitimize the monopoly that military professionals had over military knowledge, and speak to a broader American public.

engagement” (cited in Reich, 1994:131). Some politicians from the Middle East echoed these calls, like the Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres who entertained “the hope that the Middle East’s future w[ould] duplicate Europe’s past – where modest experiments in cooperation snowballed into greater interdependence and nation-building” (Barnett, 1998:231). As the peace process continued from 1992 to 1995, the U.S. and Russia thus institutionalized a working group under the name “the Arms Control and Regional Security” (ACRS), which comprised experts from Israel as well as the thirteen Arab states which had taken part in the Madrid Peace process (excluding Syria and Iran).

For regional players, the exercises in ACRS were just scenario-making exercises and not diplomatic negotiations. During the conferences,⁹ ACRS experts emphatically drew a boundary between Europe’s past, which was the fiction that they were asked to study for its applicability in the Middle East, and the diplomatic reality of the Middle East, a region in which most state actors across the Arab-Israeli divide (with the rare exception of Egypt and Israel since 1979) did not even recognize the legitimate existence or territorial boundaries of the other side.¹⁰ Most participating states (Reich 1994:226), including Israel, “attended reluctantly” the real diplomatic conference in Madrid that started the peace process in October 1991 (Barnett 1998:221). And as far as participation in ACRS was concerned, as noticed by Shai Feldman (1997b:26), a leading Israeli ACRS participant, the Israelis were very careful not to claim that they had engaged in official discussions because “the Israeli government seems to believe that once discussions are initiated, it is difficult to ensure that they do not ‘slip’ into negotiations,” which is why “Israel prefers to avoid such discussions altogether.”

The dramaturgy that followed during ACRS conferences allowed participants to deny that they had participated in any “official” negotiations with warring states on each side of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ACRS conferences were almost like “seminars by American diplomats who had been involved in East-West arms control negotiations, to present the concepts and ideas” (Krause 1994:278). As the Jordanian delegation head, Abdullah Toukan said, initially the talks were “basically a seminar for mutual familiarization of terms in the field” of arms control “based on the European example,” (cited in Krause, 1994:289) which had a fictional and academic quality. The study of Europe’s past gave Arab and Israeli foreign policy makers some measure of plausible deniability: if asked, they could respond that no, they were not engaged in official inter-state negotiations of “their” own regional security, they were only learning which confidence building measures that Europeans had implemented in the past. Thus, the ACRS Working Group held several workshops to learn about European procedures: one on verification of disarmament measures (Egypt, July 1993); a seminar on maritime confidence building measures to avoid accidental escalation led by Canada (Nova Scotia, September 1993); one on exchange of military information about arms procurement and doctrines (Turkey, October 1993); as well as a direct observation of the on-site inspection procedures adopted by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in the U.K. and in Denmark and the declaratory confidence-building measures of the

⁹ The U.S. and Russia organized a series of conferences convened in Moscow (January 1992, September 1992) and in Washington (May 1992, September 1992) to assess the lessons of Europe for the Middle East.

¹⁰ It was only after the September 1993 Oslo agreements, by which Israel recognized a Palestinian interlocutor, and after the peace treaty signed between Israel and Jordan in 1994, that some normalization between some of the states involved occurred without sanction (Barnett 1998).

CSCE (Vienna, October 1993).¹¹ In these meetings, U.S., European and Soviet diplomats acted as professors, and diplomats from the Middle East as students, each of them playing a role that allowed them to deny that any inter-state negotiation over the contours of a peaceful Middle East had started.¹²

A Forward Analogy, Not a Metaphor

ACRS participants used the comparison between Europe's past and the Middle East's future as an analogy rather than as a metaphor: they did not believe that the European precedent could be a road map to be copied from scratch, nor did they completely "blackbox" differences between the two contexts.

ACRS participants shared the diagnosis that the Middle East's security problems were more acute than those encountered by Europeans in the past. For them, the main obstacle they needed to overcome was that they could not officially recognize each other's existence: Arab states in the Middle East had to agree that the "Middle East" would include a non-Arab state like Israel, and Israel had to agree to settle some territorial claims with Arab states, before they could even start discussing their state's present-day doctrines and visions of the regional order into objects of deliberation (and of possible transformation). Although European historians could argue that the issue of West Germany's recognition by the Soviets was at least as problematic as that of Israel by the Arab states, Feldman and Toukan (1997:82) believed that "the multilateral process [of] the ACRS discussions was bound to be more complicated than the bilateral East-West process," because, they claimed, European states had been able to maintain diplomatic representation and mechanisms of inter-state recognition throughout the Cold War.¹³ The point here is not to dispute the historical validity of this statement, but to note that ACRS participants underlined differences between the two contexts rather than their similitude. Indeed, all ACRS experts shared the belief that "in Europe, unlike the Middle East, there were no major territorial questions to resolve by the time of the CSCE, nor were there issues related to the existence of the parties,"¹⁴ quite unlike the case of Israel or the Palestinians" (Ben-Dor and Dewitt, 1994:6).

From this shared diagnosis, ACRS participants drew the conclusion that the solutions to be applied in the Middle East would be different from those adopted in Europe, even though the overall logic may be similar. I will only cite two differences that they stressed: the roles of confidence-building measures and human rights provisions. First, regarding the place of confidence-building measures: ACRS experts stressed that, in Europe, it had seemed wise to start with "operational" confidence-building measures (e.g. those which aimed at increasing communication and transparency over military doctrines), as the latter made it more likely that "structural" confidence building measures (e.g. those legally-binding

¹¹ For an overview of how ACRS advanced compared to other working groups (like Economic Development), see Solingen (2000), or Jones (1997); and on other transnational arms control communities, see Adler (1992).

¹² Real negotiations actually occurred in the background, leading for instance to the joint Israeli-Jordanian declaration in 1993 (Feldman, 1997a:9), and their 1994 bilateral peace treaty, which called both parties to enlarge their talks to regional actors by committing "themselves to the creation, in the Middle East, of a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Middle East (CSCME)," (art. 4.1.B), modeled after the European precedent, <http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/peacetreaty.html>.

¹³ For instance, as Brynen (1994:53) writes, "the primary purpose of confidence building measures in Europe in the 1980s was to stabilize the postwar territorial status quo," whereas, "in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict [or in the Syrian-Israeli conflict], the reverse is true." – see also Krause (1994:270).

¹⁴ The exception was Eastern Germany, which no Western state recognized as a state.

measures which seek to cap the number of weapons and prohibit either the production or use of WMDs) would latter be adopted and implemented (Gera, 1994:149; Heller, 1994:105). At the same time as they “learnt” the lesson that one had preceded (and caused) the other in Europe,¹⁵ they emphasized that such a prediction would not work in the Middle East. Indeed, Alan Dowty (1994:72) writes, participants believed that in the Middle East, transparent communication of military doctrines could actually prove counter-productive: whereas “demonstration of nonviolent intent was relatively noncontroversial” in Europe in the 1970s (a statement whose historical validity might be taken with a grain of salt), “since neither side intended to initiate military action... and the task was [thus] to guarantee to each an accurate perception of the other’s intentions,” in contrast, in the Middle East, diplomats might find that “closer acquaintance might show that the hostile intent is real, and goes beyond prudent defense against possible attacks,” which would make improved communication counter-productive. Thus, even if ACRS experts claimed some of these confidence-building measures – like, in 1994, the establishment of a communications network to inform neighbors of military exercises (Feldman, 1997a:10) – could be a good idea in the abstract, they emphasized Middle Eastern “exceptionalism.”¹⁶

Second, regarding the place of human rights provisions, ACRS experts insisted on the impossibility of directly transposing the European experience in human rights regulation onto the Middle Eastern scene. One of the main pillars of the Helsinki agreement of 1975 stated that the defense of human rights is not a purely domestic concern but that it entails an international security dimension (Ben-Dor and Dewitt, 1994:17).¹⁷ Seeing the impressive progress in the drafting process subsequent to the 1993 ACRS meeting in Cairo, Saudi Arabia pressed other participants during the next meeting in Doha (May, 1994) to eliminate all references to human rights issues in the final text of the Declaration of Principles that the parties to the ACRS adopted (Feldman, 1997a:11). As most participants in, and observers of, the ACRS process emphasized, “it [wa]s obvious that transplanting a Western term born in very specific – and probably unique – circumstances in Europe to other areas of the world [wa]s a very hazardous enterprise,” (Ben Dor and Dewitt, 1994:6) and ACRS experts were convinced that studying the European past with the goal of copying it in this instance would not help them turn uncertainties into calculable risks: rather, they believed that if Middle Eastern states copied Europe’s past, especially as far as human rights were concerned, they would only create new sources of incalculable uncertainty. Saudi Arabia had no trouble convincing other parties that the inclusion of human rights provision in the Final ACRS Declaration would allow neighbors to meddle in legislation regarding discrimination against religious and/or ethnic minorities, which all states in the region (both Arab states and Israel) frame as “domestic issues.”¹⁸ As a result, the Final Declaration included no mention of Europe’s precedent of defending human rights.¹⁹

¹⁵ In fact, this widely held belief that “operational” measures came first was actually a historical post-hoc reconstruction of the Helsinki process (Kremenjuk 1994:250).

¹⁶ For instance, among the many authors who emphasize the “significant differences” between the European and Middle Eastern context, see Brynen (1994:55); Gera (1994:160); Krause (1994:271).

¹⁷ But they did not look for an exact probability of such a relation of causality.

¹⁸ The participants in ACRS did not explain why the Soviet failed to anticipate the consequences of such a clause among Polish and Hungarian dissidents, who could then voice their concerns for human rights in Eastern Europe (Ben-Dor and Dewitt, 1994:17).

¹⁹ Among the relevant differences between Europe and the Middle East, the “political and cultural differences,” (Ben-Dor and Dewitt, 1994:6; but also Feldman and Toukan, 1997:84) ranked high.

These two examples are emblematic of the way the forward analogy between Europe and the Middle East functioned in the rhetoric of ACRS experts: the prediction extracted from the historical reconstruction of the European case was affirmed in general at the same time as its validity was denied for the Middle East. Thus, at no time, the difference between the two contexts was suppressed, buried or black-boxed, as experts do when they use a metaphor (like “Munich”) to think through a new situation. In fact, this emphasis on the Middle East’s exceptionalism might be related to the logical contradiction between the two imperatives placed upon ACRS participants (to stop thinking that the “Middle East” could not be turned into a peaceful region, and to remain aware of the implausibility of progress toward peace in their region). This “double bind” (Bateson, 1972) reflected the contradictions in the diplomats’ own position: they could not present themselves as “negotiators” mandated by a state; but in fact, they did negotiate not just confidence building measures but a broader road map toward a Zone specific to the Middle East.²⁰ And, as psychologists write about these situations, the only way to escape the double bind is for the individuals not to stress logical links (predictive relations of causality on the form ‘if you do this, that will happen’), but rather, to suggest an intention to continue communicating despite the apparent contradictory injunctions (Wagner, 1978:790).

The main success of the ACRS group was not “to learn” from past foreign experience so as to turn uncertainties into calculable risks, but rather, to prove the possibility that a transnational forum could organize (non)discussions about a “Middle East” (one defined by its difference and similitude with Europe) between Arab and Israeli experts. At this point, as Shai Feldman (1997a:14) writes, “the array of activities conducted in the [ACRS] framework was unprecedented and extraordinary... and the exercise itself was an important confidence building measure, since it provided opportunities for a growing number of Israeli and Arab military personnel and government officials to interact informally.” A proposal made by the Jordanian delegation head Abdullah Toukan was emblematic of this convoluted logic in which Europe’s referent was always there in ACRS experts’ talk, but such that ACRS experts could contrast it with their “Middle East”: during a meeting in Jordan in 1994, ACRS accepted Toukan’s proposal to create a Regional Security Center, modeled after the CSCE communication center in The Hague, yet at the same time different from that center, since it would have been used primarily for studies on conflict resolution rather than as a communication hub between military administrations (Feldman, 1997a:11). By proposing to institutionalize their itinerant foreign policy forum, which until then, moved from place to place, ACRS experts sought to escape the double bind in which they were trapped and get some official recognition for what they were doing. The end of the Madrid peace process put an end to that process of institutionalization,²¹ as I will explain next.

Blackboxes and Taboos in the Diplomatic Talk of Europe and the Middle East

²⁰ For Bateson (1972:206-7) a “double bind” takes the form of a primary negative injunction (of the form: ‘do not do this’); complemented by a positive injunction (‘do that’), which contradicts the first one; to which is added a third injunction (of the form ‘stay there’), which makes it impossible to escape the tensions.

²¹ The process of institutionalization started in 1994, as Feldman (1997a:14, 15) underlines, as the ACRS activities forced inexperienced central administrations in many Arab countries to “develop a cadre of experts” and to “appoint individuals and small governmental bodies to prepare for ACRS activities, creating small bureaucratic islands that had gradually developed more than a fleeting interest in arms control.” Still, the process stopped when the Madrid peace process ended in 1995.

In contrast to a metaphorical discourse, talks of the future that are analogical in kind neither bury nor blackbox all the differences between the two terms of the analogy chosen. Does this mean that such talks are taboo-free? Are all the relevant differences between the two terms of the analogy thoroughly explored and discussed by those who use these analogies? In this section, I will highlight the existence of discursive taboos, which ACRS experts carefully avoided violating, by burying some important differences between Europe's past and the future they envisioned for the Middle East.

Nuclear History as Taboo: The Difference That Was Not Mentioned

At the origins of ACRS, we find the willingness of Middle Eastern states to get rid of nuclear weapons, after the discovery that Saddam Hussein had been close to obtaining them in 1990. At the time, Egypt developed its ideas on the contours of a peaceful New Middle East with the "Mubarak initiative" of 1990, which conceived of the Middle East as a WMD Free Zone. The goals of the initiative were reaffirmed by the head of the Egyptian delegation, Nabil Fahmy, in the ACRS meetings of 1992 (Feldman 1997a:8). At the beginning of the talks, as Feldman (1997a:7) writes, "Israel stressed the deep distrust prevailing in the region and the importance of dealing with conventional weapons" before nuclear questions, but in what seemed a surprising move, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, the architect of Israel's nuclear program and defense posture since the mid-1950s (Cohen, 2010), announced that talks on the prohibition of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in the Middle East should also occur in the context of ACRS. Through his voice, Israel stressed the need to envision the "Middle East" as a Zone free of nuclear as well as chemical and biological weapons. When he signed the Chemical Weapons Convention during the conference of January 1993 in Paris, Shimon Peres essentially "adopted the substance of the Mubarak initiative but made it clear that the establishment of the WMD Free Zone in the Middle East would be required prior [to the] establishment of peace" (Feldman, 1997a:8) in the region. Thus, when the American and Russian cosponsors suggested in late 1992 that each party to the ACRS deliberations "define long-term objectives (a 'vision') for the process" (Feldman, 1997a:7), most states agreed to open the nuclear file as well as the biological and chemical files.

This willingness to talk about every topic, even nuclear issues, could be interpreted as an indication that the taboo over Israel's possession of nuclear weapons was about to end, at least in discussions by experts inside the ACRS group. That taboo dated back at least twenty years, from when President Nixon and Prime Minister Golda Meier agreed in the 1970s that Israel would never publicly acknowledge its nuclear weapons, and that in exchange, the U.S. and other world powers would neither force Israel to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a Non-Nuclear Weapon State (NNWS), nor would they force Israel to open its nuclear facilities to inspection by the IAEA (Cohen, 2010:29).

However, ACRS experts did not move very far from the original Israeli position. In the joint Declaration of Principles that they issued after their Plenary Session in Tunis (December 1994), experts included a list of shared goals, except on the nuclear question: in this area, the parties agreed to leave apparent the distinct positions of Egypt and Israel over the steps to achieve the Zone. The Egyptian position linked the creation of the Zone to the signature by Israel of the NPT as a NNWS (in violation of the Israeli official position, which is to avoid discussing the NPT and Israel's status as either a NWS or a NNWS in any official document); the Israeli position was also written down in the Declaration, and it excluded any

reference to the NPT while endorsing a regional “mutual verification regime”²² to verify compliance with the Zone requirements (reproduced in Feldman, 1997a: 320-325).²³ The Israeli ACRS participants justified their preference for regional rather than IAEA controls on pragmatic rather philosophical grounds: as Shai Feldman (1997b:17) writes, “in contrast to India, Israel did not dispute the rationale of the NPT, ... it only viewed the application of the treaty as flawed,” as illustrated by the fact that the IAEA had not prevented clandestine nuclear proliferation in the case of Pakistani sales of centrifuges to Iraq.²⁴ This disagreement (the last and only one, and one that was limited to Egypt and Israel) was proof that ACRS deliberations could achieve some great measure of success in a fairly limited amount of time. It also showed that the taboo over the Israeli possession on nuclear issues was hard to remove: the official statements coming from ACRS did not single out Israel’s nuclear past as the only one outside the law (here, identified with the NPT).

In fact, most of the ACRS experts did not wish to open the file of Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons and its non-adherence to the NPT in public – only the Egyptian ACRS experts like Nabil Fahmy did. Indeed, as Feldman (1997a:129) writes, “it appeared that Arab officials felt threatened both by Israel’s nuclear ambiguity and by the prospect that Israel’s nuclear option might become explicit.” For instance, the “revelations” made during the “Vanunu affair” in 1986 (Feldman, 1997a:128) showed that increased transparency over Israel’s nuclear status could destroy trust rather than increase it: many Arabs were shocked by the revelation that Israel’s nuclear arsenal amounted to about 200 operational nuclear warheads, as the large size of that stock contradicted Israel’s private justification that nuclear weapons were weapons of last resort (in that case, 10-20 nuclear weapons would be enough to deter Arabs from using WMDs on Israel’s soil).

Besides, an explicit official recognition by Israel of its nuclear past would have triggered dramatic effects in Arab states (as well as in Iran), and Arab statesmen would have had to characterize such recognition as a major threat to their security that warranted their decision to leave the NPT (which is permissible with three-months notice, per art. 10.1). Even when Egyptian participants insisted that Israel should immediately commit to sign the NPT, before the creation of any new regional organization in charge of mutual verification, they did not state that Israel’s signature should come with a full disclosure of its nuclear past or an opening of military bases in which Israeli nuclear weapons might be stored. As the NPT only forces the NNWS (but not NWS) to sign with the IAEA a Safeguards Agreement on all their “peaceful” activities using source and special fissionable materials, one could imagine that during a first period, Israel’s signature would have only amounted to a freeze on its military nuclear activities, but that Israeli special fissionable materials already in nuclear warheads would have escaped IAEA controls.²⁵ Although this legal point was not discussed

²² The same proposal was also expressed outside the ACRS deliberations: for instance, the U.N. General Assembly commissioned a report in 1990 to the Secretary General, whose conclusions made it clear that a Zone could adopt more rigorous “verification procedures” than those adopted by the IAEA (Feldman, 1997a:160).

²³ Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had publicly said that after Israel signed peace with all the member-states of the Zone, it would only take two years for Israel to start the nuclear disarmament phase (Landau, 2008:13).

²⁴ Israel pointed to the fact that the IAEA had failed to conduct “short notice” and “challenge” inspections in order to maintain good relationships with member-states (Feldman, 1997a:154).

²⁵ Regarding NNWS’ safeguarding obligations, the NPT says that “[t]he safeguards required by this article shall be applied to all source or special fissionable material in all *peaceful* [my emphasis] nuclear activities within the territory of such State, under its jurisdiction, or carried out under its control anywhere” (art. 3.1). The NPT leaves obscure how the IAEA could be involved in verifying nuclear disarmament.

explicitly, it was clear that Arab states did not want to see Israel “come clean,” in the words of those who advocate for Israel to declare its nuclear weapons arsenal (Bundy, Crowe and Drell, 1993:68-70). In fact, they stressed the possibility of agreeing on future common goods without a prior resolution (or even discussion) of the contentious issues of the past, according to a vision of deliberative justice akin to Rawls’ (1985) understanding: for Rawls, indeed, one’s past should not be an obstacle on the road toward the creation of a common perspective, and as a corollary, peacemakers should throw a thick veil (or rather, a velvet curtain) of ignorance on the bloody past if it is required to make peace.²⁶

The preservation of the nuclear taboo over Israel’s nuclear weapons among ACRS participants explains why, for such experts who were so prone to underlining the differences between Europe and the Middle East, they refrained from mentioning the most obvious difference between Europe’s past and the future they envisioned for the Zone in the Middle East: the fact that in contrast to their envisioned WMD Free Zone in the Middle East, Europe was the land of the nuclear plenty. Indeed, Europe still has two independent nuclear weapon states (NWS), France and the U.K., and five Western non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) still holding nuclear weapons under dual-key on behalf of NATO (Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Turkey).²⁷ Furthermore, NATO countries have rejected most attempts made to open deliberations on the creation of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in Europe, and France has consistently blocked attempts to de-nuclearize NATO as an alliance. Thus, if the goal were really to learn how to create a WMD Free Zone, Europe would have been one of the most unlikely candidate regions from which to learn. A Middle East looking like Europe after the end of the Cold War would have meant that Israel would have maintained its nuclear deterrent and could be recognized as a NWS under the NPT – an option that was for instance advocated by prominent U.S. experts (Bundy, Crowe and Drell, 1993:68-70) – and that all Arab states and Israel would have to sign security guarantees with the U.S., which would agree to station troops and even nuclear weapons (oriented toward a common enemy like, for instance, Iran) on behalf of the new alliance.

Still, the parties involved in ACRS talks consistently affirmed the two goals of ‘learning from Europe’ and ‘creating a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East’ in their official declarations. None of the ACRS experts explicitly underlined this fundamental difference between Europe’s past (present and future) and their envisioned future for the Middle East. When ACRS participants agreed to look toward Europe at the same time as they left Pandora’s box (e.g. Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons) closed, they signaled that they prioritized the continuation of peace negotiations among themselves over the implausible achievement of an immediate denuclearization. That might be the reason why Middle Eastern diplomats prefer to compare their envisioned Middle to Europe rather than to other regions (like Africa), as Europe is quite exceptional in the sense that it achieved what appears as long-lasting peace with a continued taboo over nuclear weapons. The comparison with Europe’s past offered a model that was not threatening to the nuclear taboo in the Middle East, as its translation to the Middle East would not force Israel to reveal its lies about not

²⁶ This contrasts with Habermas’s (1995:117) normative definition of deliberative justice which “rests on the intuition that ... from an [transparent] interlocking of perspectives emerges an ideally extended we-perspective,” or with the dramaturgy of reconciliation through public acknowledgement of past wrongs, as in the case of “Truth and Reconciliation” commissions.

²⁷ This is why others have proposed that the “Middle East” be modeled after “Africa,” and that Middle Eastern states should look at the Pelindaba Treaty (Miller and Scheinman, 2007).

possessing nuclear weapons, nor would it force Israel to destroy its nuclear arsenal. This might also explain why the reference to Euratom has worked as a productive catalyst to spur new track-2 discussions in the context of the renewed calls for talks on the WMD Free Zone in the Middle East. Indeed, Euratom has never imposed nuclear disarmament nor even nuclear non-proliferation requirements on its parties. In this context, the reference to Europe's foreign past achieves two goals in the context of the Middle East: it draws the attention of the Middle Eastern parties away from their own nuclear history; at the same time, it preserves the most important taboo in the diplomatic negotiations in the region.

No Longer a Scenario-Making Exercise... and Thus a Real Failure

Until the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the dramaturgy of negotiations followed by the ACRS experts was based on the use of a forward analogy, which experts systematically used to constitute "their" common Middle East as an object of discussion in contradistinction with Europe – although the explicit emphasis on differences did not extend to the nuclear realm. Not mentioning the difference between Europe's nuclear past (and present) and a future nuclear-free Middle East was central to the continuation of ACRS talks, as was made manifest when Egyptian experts suddenly departed from this dramaturgy. Indeed, ACRS talks abruptly ended when Egypt insisted on making explicit references to Israel's position with regard to the NPT in the ACRS talks; and then bringing the results of ACRS (which until then, had been framed as just a scenario-making exercise) into real official diplomatic negotiations (in the NPT Review Conference of 1995).

First, until 1995, President Mubarak of Egypt had given the impression that the attempt by Egyptian diplomats like Nabil Fahmy to impose a reference to the NPT in the ACRS Final Declaration was not shared by the top Egyptian military leadership. Until then, the Egyptian initiatives to force Israel to sign the NPT as a NNWS came mostly from Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Musa and Fahmy, his advisor, who "attempted to organize a united Arab effort to press Israel to sign the NPT by threatening not to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)" (Feldman, 1997a:214). This position was first presented at the 1989 Paris Convention and had remained consistent since (Feldman 1997a:215). Initially, the Israelis believed that this pressure reflected the professional bias of career diplomats like Fahmy and Musa for U.N.-based negotiations, but that it was not shared by military professionals like Mubarak (Feldman 1997a:210). But in the months preceding the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, Egypt proposed to link further progress in the adoption of confidence building measures modeled after the precedent in Europe with Israel's signature of the NPT; and in 1995, Mubarak himself "became personally identified with these efforts" (Feldman, 1997a:217). The Egyptians' insistence on clarifying the nuclear status of Israel in the Middle East departed from the relative silence that ACRS participants had maintained on this issue, and on the difference between their envisioned Middle East and Europe's nuclear status.

Second, not only did Egyptian diplomats and politicians insist on talking about Israel's nuclear status within ACRS, but they related the discussions in ACRS with the ongoing NPT Extension negotiations. For the first time in early 1995, President Mubarak said that Egypt would not sign the NPT for an unlimited period if Israel did not also sign the NPT as a NNWS (Landau, 2008: 14). The Egyptian decision to outsource the deliberations of the Zone to the NPT Review Conferences signaled their determination to avoid slipping into a path whereby Israel would obtain a stamp of certification on their (opaque) nuclear status

by the fourteen Arab states which participated in ACRS. But in the process of transferring the debate over the “Middle East” as a WMD Free Zone from ACRS to the NPT Review Conferences, Egypt lost the direct engagement with Israel, as Israel did not participate in the five-year NPT Review Conferences, and the talks with Israel lost the fictional character provided by the claim that Arab states and Israel were only “learning” from Europe. The Israeli reaction was immediate: they refused to position themselves with regard to the NPT Review Conference’s declarations, and they stopped their involvement with ACRS. As Feldman (1997b:14) noted, “Israel attempted to avoid international conferences in which it might have faced a united Arab front that would be influenced by the most hardline of the Arab states... and it rejected the imposition of linkages that might have made the process hostage to the preferences of the least cooperative party.”

Even though Egypt’s campaign was not successful,²⁸ as no Arab block coalesced around Egypt’s strategy in the 1995 NPT Conference (instead, all Arab states agreed to sign the NPT for an unlimited period),²⁹ the effect on ACRS deliberations was quite dramatic. As soon as Egyptians transferred their criticism of Israel’s nuclear posture from the (non)negotiating platform of ACRS to other more international and official venues, the performative character of ACRS ceased to operate: the Egyptian move was immediately sanctioned by the U.S., as the U.S. cancelled the ACRS session scheduled for September 1995 in Washington. With the failure of ACRS, the problem of constituting the “Middle East” as a geo-strategic reality resurfaced. In the context of deliberations in which most participating states did not officially recognize each other, only a scenario-making exercise could be legitimate, and as soon as the latter were associated with real-life negotiations, controversies erupted between the parties (Israel and most of the other Arab states) for whom “progressive ‘confidence building measures’ could be seen as ... basic truisms,” and those for whom they “were instead as major concessions” (Brynen 1994:52). Whereas ACRS talks had advanced despite the absence of Syria, Iraq or Iran, whose inclusion in the WMD Free Zone would be necessary in the future, after 1995, the fact that ACRS did not include all the member-states that would be included in the future Zone also became a major problem (Ben Dor, 1999:203). Egypt’s decision to shift deliberations of the Zone out of the ACRS and into a real diplomatic forum ultimately destroyed the reality of that new “Middle East.”

Conclusion

Many decisions of world-historical importance, as David Gibson (2011:1) writes about the Cuban Missile Crisis, are shaped by how people talk about the future. So far, the literature that looks at the significance of knowledge practices designed to envision the future, such as modeling, forecasting, and scenario planning, has emphasized the predictive use of metaphors and comparisons: their use by policy makers to foresee the likely consequence of their action in a world of uncertainties, or their varying level of success (or failure) to predict likely outcomes (May, 1973; Jervis, 1976; Kuklick, 2006). But as this

²⁸ Egypt only obtained a complementary “Resolution on the Middle East,” which called all NPT signatories to facilitate the creation of the Zone (Feldman 1997a:222), as a face-saving token. The NPT Review and Extension Conference did not mention Israel by name.

²⁹ Neither was the Egypt-led boycott of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) followed by Arab states, most of which had signed the CWC by the end of 1993.

paper shows, analogies used to talk about the future play an essential part in *constituting* strategic things (such as a peaceful region) as objects of knowledge and intervention.

Forward analogies can serve such constitutive purposes as they can give, in the present, a higher degree of reality to an unstable ontology (like a region) whose future existence and whose contours have yet to be defined. In the case under study, the commensuration made between “Europe” and the “Middle East” helped constitute the latter as an object of deliberation across former warring parties (Israel and Arab states). This analogy worked differently from a metaphor, as those experts who used such an analogy were careful to emphasize both the similarities between both contexts and some important differences. Still, as I showed, some important differences between the Middle East’s envisioned future and the European precedent remained blackboxed, in particular, the story of both regions’ nuclear history. As it happened, it was absolutely key for such an analogy to function that some differences remained taboo while the talks were going on. In particular, by focusing the deliberation on a foreign past rather than on their own, participants in these talks avoided opening the blackbox of their own taboo histories with the bomb.

By focusing on forward analogies, this paper has sought to expand the study of scenario-making exercises (Lakoff, 2007; Guilhot, 2011), which are routinely conducted to re-create geo-political threats in laboratory conditions. In contrast to other constructivist scholars of anticipatory knowledge practices, who have focused on future-oriented practices that help constitute catastrophic events and worst-case scenarios as objects of intervention (Aradau and Van Munster, 2011), this paper has examined how anticipatory knowledge constitutes best-case scenarios into objects of intervention. In doing so, this paper corrects a trend in the studies of governmentality (Foucault 2009), which focus more often on “prudential” anticipatory practices involved in the management of collective “evils” (pandemics, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, etc.) rather than on “conjectural” knowledge practices involved in the production of collective “goods” (like peace, progress and human security). In the latter case, the translation of the fictional negotiation (in ACRS) to real-life diplomatic discussions (in the NPT Review Conferences) was not as direct and unproblematic as it may have seemed: as soon as it was attempted, it derailed both scenario-making and real-life negotiations. As other scenario-making exercises become the object of study, we will soon be able to better understand how one successfully moves from scenarios to the real-life, an essential step toward explaining how fictions can change reality.

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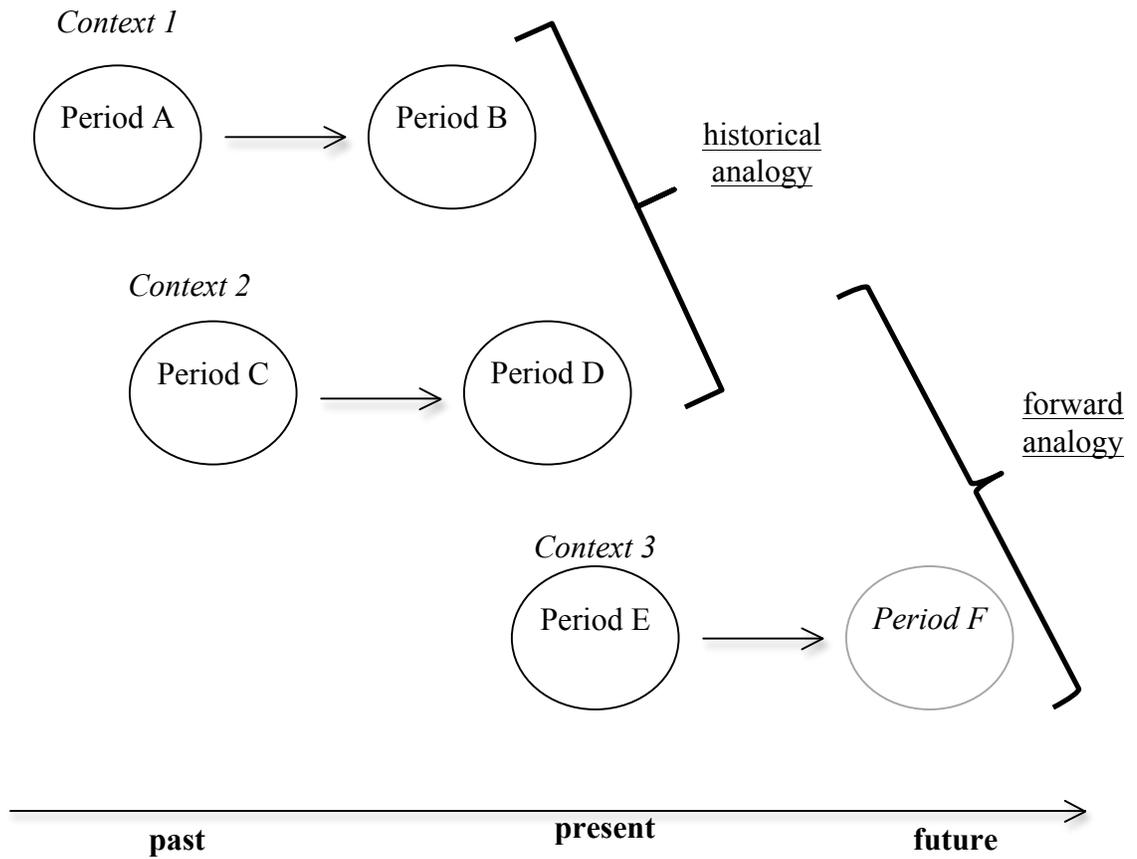


Table 1: Historical and Forward Analogies