

OPEN SKIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

With the creation of the multilateral peace process much attention has been focused on the question of stability in the Middle East region. In general terms, it is reasonable to suppose that a lasting peace will not be achieved unless agreed comprehensive security relationships are eventually negotiated. This should lead to a diminution of armed forces in the region, as well as a reduction in readiness, along with appropriate verification measures. A useful first step might well consist of transparency measures designed to increase the confidence of the parties in such a way that they are able to consider more ambitious steps.

Such a process unfolded in Europe during the 1970's and 80's with successive agreements aimed at increasing the level of confidence in the region, leading to more concrete arms control measures. Of course, it would be folly to suppose that mechanisms and procedures designed to work in one setting could be easily transported to another. Each region is unique, and has its own needs. But it does seem reasonable to suppose that any peace process could begin with small steps, and that the most useful of these would be measures aimed at increasing the level of transparency in a given area.

This paper will examine the potential for the creation of an Open Skies regime in the Middle East. The paper will begin with an assessment of the recent Open Skies Treaty which will identify the major issues of that negotiation and speculate as to how they might apply in the Middle Eastern context. An attempt to determine whether an Open Skies regime might be acceptable in the region, and what type of regime that might be, will follow. An annex to the paper will review the experience which has been gained by various Middle Eastern peacekeeping forces which have used aerial reconnaissance techniques for confidence-building over the years. A second Annex will explore the issue of the costs of establishing an Open Skies regime. A final Annex will provide a brief bibliography on the subject.

OPEN SKIES: LESSONS OF THE RECENT NEGOTIATIONS¹

The recently completed Open Skies negotiations began in Ottawa in February of 1990 during a three week conference which included the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states, and those of what was then the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO). After a month of reflection, the parties gathered again in Budapest to continue their work. It had

¹ For more on the recently completed negotiations see Jones, P.L. "Open Skies: A New Era in Transparency" Arms Control Today vol. 22, no. 4, May, 1992.