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The Cold War as Cooperation

Superpower Cooperation in Regional Conflict Management

Edited by

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A key element in the preparation and emergence of the present study was a major workshop on the cooperative aspects of the superpower relationship throughout the entire postwar period. This workshop was held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on 4–6 May 1989. Contributors and invited guests, most of whom had already met in smaller groups to work out the details of the theoretical framework of the project, came together to address the issue of cooperation within the context of conflict in the postwar US–Soviet relationship. In addition to the primary contributors who presented the initial drafts of the papers included here, Frederick S. Pearson of the Wayne State University in Detroit and David W. Tarr of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, served as formal commentators and provided detailed written comments on the papers. Terry D. Clark and James M. Finlay, both of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, served as rapporteurs.

The editors wish to express their appreciation to all the participants whose perceptive criticisms and suggestions resulted in greater clarity and precision in the final drafts of the individual papers. They also wish to thank James Finlay for the index of cases of superpower cooperation that he prepared. This index is drawn from the regional chapters and is designed to assist scholars and analysts who, like the authors of the volume, wish to pursue further and test the thesis that the Cold War can be understood as an epic effort to decide the

political order and socio-economic welfare system of the emerging world society and the principles of legitimacy on which it should rest.

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Preface

Measured by the blood and treasure marshalled and directed in its pursuit, the Cold War must be reckoned among the great epics in human history. Unprecedented quantities of wealth and hundreds of millions of people from nations around the world were absorbed in this endeavor. Unlike Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it was not limited to two peoples washed by common waters. It spread and sprawled to the far reaches of the globe, sparking wars – Korea and Vietnam most notably – and stirring civil strife along its path.

Among the many puzzles that the superpower struggle prompts, quite aside from its causes and consequences, is the question why the Cold War did not result in a global conflagration similar to the great power conflicts that led to the Napoleonic wars and to two world wars in this century. This volume attempts to supply a partial answer to this question. By that token it also contributes to an explanation of why the Cold War is rapidly drawing to a close and why the Cold War experience may be viewed as a necessary bridge between a lamentably devastating war-ridden past to a more productive or, at least, less destructive future.

Following the principle that the simplest solution to a problem is the best, this volume argues that the Cold War was cooperative from start to finish. Chapter 1 explains this paradoxical proposition. Situating the superpower struggle in a historical setting created by over four centuries of nation-state competition, this volume portrays the Soviet–American competition as the last in a line of Big Power attempts to define the structures of world political order and economy to suit their preferences and to base those structures, putatively, on principles of authority of universal worth and legitimacy. The Cold War served the aims and interests of the superpowers and for a long time those of many nations and peoples in the developed and developing world. It catalyzed, for example, the process that culminated in the globalization of the nation-state as the principal unit of authority in the world society. Except for close calls, like the Cuban Missile crisis and a series of Berlin crises, the leadership of each superpower was careful to signal to its rival-partner that their regional conflicts could be managed short of general war, the traditional international instrument to settle profound national clashes over interests and values. Even in these crises, superpower

diplomacy was marked by a prudence and restraint that was sometimes belied by the bombast and threats issuing from leadership circles.

In the logic of game theory, each superpower has had to learn to cooperate – mostly implicitly, sometimes explicitly – with its adversary to coordinate their mutually contingent behavior to avoid the worst consequences of their competition and to maximize the differential gains of compromises. They also had to develop rules of engagement and disengagement to regulate their conflict, as well as those of their allies and clients. These implicit and explicit compromises on outcomes and conflict processes essentially formed an institutional structure on which the superpowers could provisionally rely in pursuing their discord within an evolving and enlarging set of understandings, and of tolerable and legitimate practices in pressing their respective national and systemic claims.

The regional chapters below attempt to apply this conceptual framework to the superpower struggle since World War II. Each author is a specialist who has an intimate knowledge not only of the politics and local cleavages but also of superpower behaviour and stakes in his or her region. The editors charged each contributor to draw on his or her knowledge and experience and, speaking *ex cathedra*, to identify the lines of superpower cooperative behavior within the meaning of the term used in this volume.

As a collaborative exercise, the editors and contributors trust that the final product will be greater than the sum of the individual parts. Dr Victor Kremenjuk's important contribution encourages this view. Across the barriers of language, culture, and a bitter and costly Cold War, Dr Kremenjuk and the other authors struck an immediate rapport when we first met in a conference on the campus of the University of Illinois in May 1989. Dr Kremenjuk, who has been honored by the Soviet Academy of Sciences for his contribution to conflict resolution and mediation theory and practice, assumed a leading role in the vigorous and sometimes heated discussions leading to adoption of a common conceptual framework and to the game theoretic notion of cooperation underlying this volume. Cooperation is understood in broad enough terms to encompass, paradoxically, the surface phenomena of superpower conflict as well as the coordinated choices of otherwise apparently irreconcilable foes.

The final chapter echoes and elaborates on Dr Kremenjuk's view that the past, i.e. the Cold War, has to be understood as cooperation, if it is to be successfully surmounted by the United States, the Soviet

Union, and other leading nations of the world. The regional chapters furnish *prima facie* evidence for the proposition that there has been more superpower cooperation than may initially strike the eye of the untutored observer. This experience and the expectations that it has generated among ruling elites in the United States and the Soviet Union provide a foundation on which to build toward a more peaceful and prosperous world and to define principles of political authority that apply across national boundaries and that approach system-wide acceptance to guide international conduct.

The volume is one attempt to get below the surface appearance of seemingly irremediable conflict to reveal the ill-formed, loose, and unsymmetrical cooperative webbing that underlay the Cold War. Chapter 1 differentiates the approach of this volume from several other parallel efforts. Unlike Penelope's tapestry, unraveled daily to await a better future, the fabric of superpower cooperation promises to be more durable and lasting cloth than the conflict that instigated the chain of decisions and actions that, not always wittingly designed, now comprise its warp and woof. As the Cold War recedes as a force, the remembrance of those cooperative experiences and of the limited but mutually beneficial results of superpower cooperation can be projected into the future to inform expectations in foreign capitals about the risks and likelihood of multiplying the frequency and scope of cooperation not only between the superpowers but also among the other nation-states of the globe. The shadow of the future can be seen, however dimly, in light of the past.

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