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Cooperative Engagement: The New Imperative of International Security

Just as the Cold War subsided and Americans began to enjoy a novel sense of nuclear safety and rub their hands over the budgetary windfall of a downsized military, a host of new world problems arose to dim confidence in a peaceful future. In 1992 nuclear weapons were still spread through fourteen of fifteen republics of the former Soviet Union, creating uncertainty about central command and control. While East-West agreements were worked out to recall all tactical nuclear weapons to Russia for storage and dismantling, as of 1994 long-range missiles remained in the territory (though not the operational control) of three non-Russian states, and one, Ukraine, was temporizing about giving them up. Today, anxiety about Russia's ability to safeguard its nuclear arsenals has prompted joint Russian and United States efforts to protect the warheads, missiles, and fissile materials against unauthorized access, seizure, and distribution.

Four countries other than the five formally acknowledged nuclear powers are reportedly prepared to deploy weapons rapidly in a crisis, and more aspire to that dubious state.* In 1993, North Korea, an important signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), warned that it would withdraw its membership and has barred the International Atomic Energy Agency from making on-site inspection of its suspect nuclear-energy facilities.

*India, Israel, Pakistan, and perhaps North Korea have the capability to deploy nuclear weapons rapidly. As many as fifty states reportedly have the technological base to support the development of nuclear weapons. A number of countries in this group have produced weapons- grade materials but are not considered a proliferation risk. Iran, Iraq, and Libya are known to be interested in acquiring nuclear arms. Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine have Soviet nuclear weapons on their soil but are transferring them to Russia. South Africa dismantled its nuclear weapons program in 1992.

The prospect of nuclear bomb capabilities emerging from yet new and possibly unfriendly sources is alarming enough, but there are other concerns: According to U.S. intelligence estimates, more and more countries are stockpiling biological and chemical weapons. In conventional weaponry, well over a dozen states have the capacity to produce ballistic or cruise missiles that could, in the hands of an aggressive, radical leadership, be fired at regional adversaries. Some countries have growing access to sensing and information-processing technologies that are the heartbeat of advanced conventional weapons systems.

Contributing to arms proliferation are wide loopholes in some leading states own systems for controlling the arms trade and for regulating the transfer of nuclear-related technologies and know-how. Indeed, by their steady export of arms they have, in the view of some

experts, fueled dangerous arms races between countries that have reason to fear each other.

If this were not all, for the first time in fifty years a savage war rages in Europe -- one with the potential to spill over national borders into neighboring states. Even where United States interests are not directly involved, as in the bloody internecine struggles in Africa and Central Asia, ethnic strife and political chaos have become all but impossible to ignore.

In short, the old bipolar structure of superpower relations has given way to a veritable hydrahead of international problems that are posing security challenges of a new and dangerous character. How to deal with them? What principles should guide decision making -- especially when military force might be engaged?

A Transformed Agenda

In a multiauthored volume published by the Brookings Institution, a think tank in Washington, D.C., some of the most respected policy analysts in the country have addressed just these questions. To them, the looming threats to international peace and security are of such a different order that they cannot be directly addressed by traditional military means: by deterrence, readiness to fight, countermeasures, and the unilateral exercise of superior military force. "Desperately needed," they assert, are more sophisticated forms of problem solving and new security instruments that promote collaboration among nations "across the residual fault lines" of confrontation and competition.

It is the researchers contention that the major powers must completely reconceive their vaunted security strategies in this more multicentric and unstable post-Cold War environment. Rather than, as in the past, prepare for large-scale warfare even as they seek to deter it, leading countries, together with smaller powers, must join hands with their erstwhile adversaries in preventing war from arising in the first place. In the former case, the enemy is another nation-state; in the latter, the enemy is war itself.

Global Engagement: Cooperation and Security in the 21st Century (593 pages: $39.95 cloth; $19.95 paper) is the culmination of six years of intensive study and collaboration by John D. Steinbruner, head of the Brookings Institution's Foreign Policy Studies program, Brookings senior fellow Janne E. Nolan who edited the volume, and a diverse group of technical analysts, political scientists, regional and economic policy specialists, and legal scholars based variously at Brookings, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Stanford and Harvard universities, and ten other institutions. Calling themselves the Cooperative Security Consortium, the thirty-four members, buttressed by research assistance and input from forty-seven other experts, include former Corporation grantees William J. Perry, a specialist on defense conversion and currently U.S. secretary of defense; Ashton B. Carter, a Harvard nuclear policy analyst now heading the Clinton administration's denuclearization efforts in the former Soviet Union; Antonia Handler Chayes and Abram Chayes, prominent defense analysts; and Leonard S. Spector and Geoffrey Kemp, respectively experts on nuclear proliferation and Middle East arms control, who are also spearheading policy research and public education in their fields under separate Corporation grants.

Their proposals for a cooperative security framework to regulate the military forces and relations of states turn Cold War assumptions on their head; their arguments are compelling and, like many groundbreaking ideas, seem evident once understood; less clear is how

universal acceptance of the concept can be brought about, what happens if it is accepted by some and not by others, and how a comprehensive cooperative security system would work under real conditions.

Mutual Consent for Mutual Benefit

To Steinbruner and his colleagues, forging cooperative responses to contain the next generation of international security threats is not a matter of choice; it is "a strategic imperative." During the Cold War, they write, the organizing principles of deterrence, nuclear stability, and containment were invaluable in guiding thought and action. Today, the concept of "cooperative security" provides a corresponding principle for maintaining international stability.

As consortium members define it, cooperative security is a strategic principle that accomplishes its purposes through institutionalized consent rather than through threats of material or physical coercion. It "seeks to establish collaborative rather than confrontational relationships among national military establishments." It accepts the defense of the home territory as the sole legitimate national military objective of states but otherwise "subjects the projection of power to the constraints of international consensus." It is thus designed to ensure that organized aggression and interstate conflict cannot start or be prosecuted on a mass scale.

A cooperative security regime would presuppose fundamentally compatible security objectives among the participants, with the aim of providing maximum mutual reassurance of the peaceful intent of all. It would entail the shared commitment by nation-states to regulate the size, technical composition, investment patterns, and operational practices of all their military forces. Such regulation would be coupled with generally applicable limitations on permissible weapons systems and force structures (restrictions that would not necessarily apply to some future force of genuine international character).

In such a system, compliance would be voluntary. It could not be achieved through primary reliance on coercion or other punitive means. Sanctions would have a place, but as coauthors Antonia Handler Chayes and Abram Chayes point out, the absence of any central political authority in a cooperative security regime, as well as the practical limits placed on participating countries ability to resort to force, "would mean that substantial compliance could not be assured by the threat of military retaliation." Compliance would have to be "induced by the continuing sense that the limits imposed on military capabilities are consistent with the security requirements of the participants and that they are being generally observed."

In a functioning cooperative security system, the participants must have confidence that the others are abiding by the restrictions. Fundamental to this is transparency -- the conditions under which relevant information is available to all parties. Transparency is achieved by self-reporting by the members, information exchange, and independent means of verification. As the Chayeses point out, transparency "sets up a powerful dynamic that helps ensure that a treaty will work as intended." In particular it provides reassurance to the actors that they are not being taken advantage of, and it has a deterrent effect on those contemplating noncompliance or defection. "The power of transparency," comment the Chayeses, "is that deviations from prescribed conduct can be observed by the other members of the regime and must be accounted for and justified."

Another key to a functioning cooperative system is inclusiveness and non-discrimination -- there can be no significant holdouts to the rules and no policies that discriminate unfairly against any of the members. Cooperative security, the Chayeses maintain, "cannot be achieved if more than half the world feels threatened and victimized by perceived inequities or discriminatory policies. Without an effort to accommodate the concerns of the have-not countries, it would be impossible to create the norms that an effective regime requires."

An illustration discussed by Leonard Spector and Jonathan Dean in their chapter assessing the "tools of the trade" is the need to harmonize or offset "the extraordinary disparity in the existing levels of military power among participating nations." States must believe they are not threatened either by proximate or traditional adversaries with roughly comparable military might or by their "superiors" in the global military pecking order. States would also have to be protected from new challenges by traditionally weaker states or from the sudden emergence of new superior powers from among the state's current rough equals. A successful cooperative security regime would therefore have to offer reassurance to states at each level of military capability.

Full implementation of a cooperative security order may not win quick acceptance from leaders whose careers were formed during the Cold War and who still see the preparation for mass conflict and the unilateral projection of military power as the way to promote state interest and provide protection. But *Global Engagement* collaborators believe that in the long run this "may not matter too much," because the forces of globalization -- the progressive integration of international finance and trade and the acceleration of information and technology transfer, to name two of the most salient -- are effectively driving governments in this direction anyway, "whether or not the idea is congenial to them." By way of analogy, they observe that, the Cold War did not end by organized vote or by any strategic design. It was "terminated by diffuse, spontaneous historical forces powerful enough to override the prescriptions of established policies." Such forces are at work today, they say, "revising the axioms of international politics and providing incentives for cooperation and the resolution of conflict without recourse to mass violence."

Cooperative security "is, and probably will remain, an aspiration that will be only incompletely fulfilled," agree consortium members. It will never be the solution to every security problem. It will not eliminate all weapons, prevent all forms of violence, resolve all conflicts, or harmonize all political values. It will not prevent the underlying causes of conflict, including those currently fueling civil disorder around the world. What it will do is provide the conceptual framework by which the international community could organize joint responses to conflict -- not only that between states but also possibly civil violence. It will prevent amassing of the means for deliberate and organized aggression -- such as the seizure of territory by force or the destruction of vital assets by remote bombardment for unilateral gain. And it will guide governments in the reconfiguration of their military forces to support "preventive management" of the new security conditions, "rendering it unlikely that armed aggression could occur or succeed."

Building on Existing Foundations

The principle of security through cooperation is not new. By late 1993, as chapters discuss, an extensive and diverse array of international security arrangements that reflect the concept were in evidence globally, regionally, and bilaterally. The concept is imbedded in such recent security arrangements as the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), both of which are anatomized in the book. Cooperative forms of security are also being practiced in many

areas of the world, not least in the struggle to promote the denuclearization of the former Soviet Union and to define appropriate responses to the threat of continued disintegration of the political order in the former Yugoslavia. Former military rivals in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the former Warsaw Pact are developing a new sense of shared destiny. International agreements and norms restricting the acquisition or use of unconventional weapons, including biological, chemical, nuclear technologies, and ballistic missiles, are the subject of renewed international attention and support. Efforts to strengthen codes of conduct guiding conventional weapon sales are being discussed in the United Nations and within the governments of both industrial and some nonindustrial countries. And norms of international behavior have been established that condemn the use of weapons of mass destruction or the changing of international borders by force.

Greater emphasis on cooperation, moreover, is emerging among other regions and countries where military tensions have traditionally been severe. Regional confidence- and security-building measures are under active consideration in the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America. And lastly, there are signs of a growing perception of common threats, including the risks posed by weapons of mass destruction, ecological destruction, and the ravages of economic recession.

While existing arrangements have many deficiencies -- most are limited in scope, they cover a small geographic area, they are narrowly focused on particular types of weaponry, they give some states preferred status, or they enhance the security of states differentially -- they point to the prospect of greater integration into a common system of norms and practices; they serve, at least theoretically, as the building blocks of a possible global cooperative security network.

The questions posed by the Brookings group are whether states will seize the opportunities presented by these promising developments in Europe and elsewhere and take the lead in crafting a transition to a stable world order in which cooperation is *explicitly* embraced as the driving principle behind security -- or whether indeed they will choose to live with the downside risks of not having adequate policy responses to the emerging domestic and foreign policy challenges.

In making the case for the former course, *Global Engagement* analyzes the implications of existing international arrangements for broad policy action. Chapters address the principles and elements of a cooperative security regime; explore the means by which such a regime would alter and improve the formulation of policies guiding the use of force and other forms of international intervention; assess ways the regime would affect defense planning, military investment, and the design of systems to control the diffusion of destabilizing technologies; consider the conditions under which collective military intervention might be justified, and examine the legal, trade, and financial inducements that might promote the new international standards of military behavior. They also assess the prospective applications of cooperative security to regional problems in the former Soviet bloc, Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and South and Northeast Asia.

They conclude with an agenda of near-term security issues that, they contend, can be addressed only by cooperative engagement among members of the major military establishments. This agenda primarily centers on circumstances in the former Soviet Union and includes the issue of denuclearization, instruments for controlling technology diffusion, conflict prevention and mediation, and demobilization of former Soviet officers and other aspects of converting excess defense capacity to civilian uses. Most importantly, it defines a

new leadership role for the United States in promoting nonproliferation and security cooperation.

Three Nodes of a Cooperative Security System

Spector and Dean discern three major intersecting sets of security arrangements that could provide the hub or "nodes" of an eventual global cooperative security system.

The first is the impressive network of security agreements emerging in Europe (including the United States and Canada and to some extent Russia). Building on post-World War II nuclear agreements, this network relies on elaborate structures of reassurance among countries to eliminate the threat posed by each other's conventional forces and also moves the parties toward greater economic and political cooperation and integration. Notable are the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe treaty, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Union.

The second is the expanding set of prohibitions on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, of which the centerpiece is the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The third is growing acceptance in the world of the "rule of restraint," which says that military force cannot be used against other nations except for self-defense and that force must be limited to multilateral actions to enforce cooperative security norms.

In an idealized system, a state and its regional neighbors would be enmeshed in a multiplicity of reassurance arrangements similar to those found in Europe today. Superimposed on these would be the various nonproliferation regimes, which, if adopted universally within the region, would significantly reduce the risk of new nuclear or chemical weapon states emerging and would constrain the further development of advanced missile delivery systems.

Since these steps would not necessarily eliminate the nuclear threat from existing nuclear powers or the threat of intervention by some extraregional states with superior conventional capabilities, there would need to be institutionalization of the rule of restraint among militarily superior nations. The residual risk to all states from biological weapons would remain, as would threats from outside the region, unless the various cooperative security arrangements were truly globalized.

Translating Vision into Action

A great question is whether the appealing vision of cooperative security would survive the transition. As James A. Shear puts it in his chapter on global institutions in a cooperative security order, it is one thing for nations to agree that armed aggression as a way to advance national interests is outdated, another to make actual progress toward the network of self-restraints and coordinated management of armed forces contemplated by the concept. Presumably countries that perceive they were being asked to bear unfair burdens in implementing the system would resist joining unless the promoters of the concept could promise an equitable distribution of benefits. "Above all," emphasizes Shear, "it is the assurance of fairness, credibly conveyed, that will energize progress." His view is that, for the time being, "the full-blown version of cooperative security is far too radical by contemporary standards to be achieved quickly."

One strategy for advancing the concept is to utilize existing diplomatic mechanisms. Shear discusses the United Nations as a possible vehicle for forging consensus on the basic framework of cooperative security and on its implementation over time. The U.N. could augment the basic cooperative security design in a number of key areas where it is already generating new or improved modes of operation -- in weapons transparency, peacekeeping, peace building, and enforcement -- that could help in shaping the transition. "Slowly and painfully, U.N. members are developing better habits of cooperation on security matters, and international secretariats are becoming more proficient across a range of operational activities." But Shear emphasizes that much more strengthening is needed in current U.N. activities that are compatible with the concept. Outright reform or restructuring is needed in others. For example, the Security Council should be more representative of all powers and all regions than is the current one, and the international Secretariat should be far better equipped and funded to mount major field operations. Perhaps hardest of all, says Shear, there must be an "abiding sense" among a greater number of member states that independence of action must at times be balanced by prompt collective effort in dealing with conflicts and in spreading the political, human, and financial risks that such conflicts may pose internationally. Changes of this kind, he says, will be absolutely necessary in providing a future cooperative security community with the requisite diplomatic tools to meet the challenges of the new era.

Cooperative Security and the United States

In recent years, the United States' perception of its global responsibilities and destiny has seemed "conceptually adrift," *Global Engagement* editor and coauthor Janne Nolan declares in her chapter on cooperative security in the United States. That U.S. security policy might be primarily directed at preventing security threats from arising in the first place has not yet fully taken hold. Although there appears to be growing acceptance of multilateralism in the conduct of economic, political, and military affairs, the U.S. foreign policy debate is still charged with two seemingly incompatible impulses: an "implicit yearning for American military superiority embodied in a Pax Americana," on the one hand, and "a strong push to isolationism or disengagement" on the other. Neither view accepts that other countries might be worthy of equality or that their friendship might be important in crafting new rules for the international system. To Nolan, the United States' present failure to face up to the new international imperatives is the "product of years of studied indifference to all but a narrow set of technical security issues and a proud embrace of ignorance about and rejection of politics, culture, and regional dynamics as legitimate influences on national policy."

Once again, she and her colleagues ask whether the United States and other countries that are in a position to promote a new security regime will be forced into half-hearted cooperation by domestic constraints and international realities or will seize the opportunities presented to them, taking the lead in crafting an approach to security that emphasizes preventive diplomacy, nonmilitary instruments for conflict prevention, mediation in place of war, and collective intervention only when other approaches fail.

Sidebar

Arms Control: To Deny or Not to Deny Technology and Know-How

Where the meaning of cooperative security becomes clear is in the concept's projected application to the problem of weapons proliferation and so-called dual-use technologies.

From their analysis of the patterns of scientific knowledge and technology diffusion -- spurred by the information revolution and the progressive globalization of finance and trade -- the coauthors of *Global Engagement* conclude that the longstanding Western policy of denying nuclear-related civil and military-related technologies and technical assistance to "have not" states should be modified. It has not worked well, partly because of poorly implemented export controls and partly because the practice of denial has been highly discriminatory and inconsistent, causing resentment and subterfuge among states that lack these capabilities.

More important, they argue, the policy of denial is rapidly becoming irrelevant, as global economic integration proceeds and national borders become more permeable, and as more countries develop their own highly competent scientific and technological cadres, sufficient to develop the deadliest weapons without having to rely on outside suppliers.

While the ultimate policy goal remains nonproliferation, the contributors to the Brookings volume advocate a shift away from the strategy of denial to the principal of disclosure, in which cooperative mechanisms are created to provide mutual reassurance of peaceful intentions and ensure a nation's safety.

Contrary to existing policy, which had its origins in the Cold War, disclosure would impose on industries and governments the requirements of transparency. This would entail the sharing of information all the way from the source of arms to the end use -- and willing compliance buttressed by measures for independent monitoring and verification of the end uses of technology and equipment. As a last resort if cooperation fails, there would have to be political and military means of enforcing the rules. (Some combination of art and collective muscle will be sufficient to bring an "obdurate violator" into compliance, say Antonia and Abram Chayes, who argue that a reassurance regime strongly grounded in legitimacy would by its very nature discourage defection.)

The policy implications of this shift in perspective are considerable, and admittedly risky, but the Brookings scholars outline the ways that the regulation of arms supply and demand within the cooperative security framework could be induced to work.

Sidebar

Cooperative Security in Europe:
A Regional Model

After living through two world wars, dictatorship, Cold War stalemate, and 100 million dead, the states of Europe and North America have evolved a set of interlocking confidence-building measures, arms control agreements, and institutions for multilateral peacemaking that the contributors to *Global Engagement* believe could offer a model cooperative security network to the rest of the world. Against a stable nuclear backdrop achieved through the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and rudimentary beginnings in the 1975 Helsinki Accords, a major expansion of cooperative security measures for Europe and North America began in the period of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. The most comprehensive of these is the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with a current membership of fifty-three states. The OSCE provides for voluntary advance warning of military maneuvers above specified sizes of forces and for independent observation of such activities. It eliminates most possibilities for preparing a surprise attack under the guise of military maneuvers or of using such maneuvers for the purpose of political intimidation. Other provisions cover the exchange of military-related information.

The Open Skies Treaty, signed in March 1992, provides for low-altitude overflights by aircraft with standard cameras and sensors over the territory of twenty-seven signatory states, including Russia and Belarus, and for sharing the data among the signatories. These overflights provide timely warning of unannounced large-force concentrations and other unusual military activities.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, signed in 1987 between the United States and the Soviet Union, provides for the destruction, and prohibition of further production, of all surface-to-surface missiles of ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers deployed by the two countries in Europe, along with means of verifying this destruction. The treaty was later augmented to include the withdrawal by both countries of all land- and sea-based tactical nuclear weapons, leaving only some U.S. air-delivered tactical range nuclear weapons deployed outside national borders.

The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, which went into effect in July 1992, is regarded as an "indispensable framework for security and for political and economic cooperation in Europe." It eliminated the large numerical advantage in conventional weapons the former Warsaw Pact states had over the NATO states and established, among other outcomes, a numerical ceiling on the holding of these arms by each of the signatory states, including the Soviet successor states. These force levels can be verified by all of the participating nations.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization remains essential as assurance against the aggressive resurgence of Germany and Russia. With its integrated staff, logistics, and intelligence capacity, NATO has the highest capability in Europe for conducting peacekeeping and peace enforcement actions. In 1991 the NATO governments created the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which includes all NATO states, central European states, and all of the Soviet successor states. Established as an organization for the discussion and coordination of mutual security problems, in the long run NACC might slowly become the military arm of the OSCE for cooperation in peacekeeping.

The European Union (EU), the coordinating center of a unified European economy, is taking on an expanded role in the area of security and in the ensuing decades may become one of the most important institutions dealing with European security. Through the Maastricht treaty, which went into force in November 1993, the EU took the first steps toward a common foreign and security policy and designated the Western European Union as its future defense arm.

The cooperative process in Europe is ongoing, tightening and strengthening the web of regional and subregional agreements that provide all parties, besides reassurances for mutual security, structures for crisis management and prevention, for responding to outbreaks of ethnic and nationalistic violence, and for the organization of peacekeeping and peace enforcement. All of them satisfy the principles laid out in *Global Engagement* for a cooperative security regime: a strong normative base, inclusiveness, nondiscrimination, transparency regarding compliance with regime requirements, a system of sanctions to enforce regime rules, and other mechanisms for regime management.

Weaknesses in the present system include the continuing frictions between Russia and some of the surrounding states and the failure of European institutions concerned with European security to resolve the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. *Global Engagement* coauthors Leonard Spector and Jonathan Dean warn that the European security system could unravel if these intrastate conflicts continue unchecked. A disquieting prospect, too, is if new

agreements are not concluded successfully to eliminate the very large arsenals of nuclear warheads, missiles, and fissionable materials that remain in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. There is, moreover, still no bilateral U.S.-Russian obligation under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties, START I and II, to move toward an irreversible reduction of the strategic arsenals of the two countries. (A recent breakthrough is the agreement between President Clinton and President Boris N. Yeltsin of Russia to try to speed destruction of nuclear weapons in the two nations.)

Although chemical weapons demilitarization is already a multinational enterprise, at least ten nations are working to produce both previously known and futuristic biological weapons. Despite the close comparison to chemical agents that is frequently assumed, biotechnology, in the view of consortium members, constitutes a unique threat and a fundamentally different problem of control. If anything, it is a microcosm of the overall problem of technology diffusion and makes the most compelling case for cooperative engagement on a worldwide basis.

-- Avery Russell

Illustration by Jonathan Bentley

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