

Book Review

Walter A. Kemp, *Security through Cooperation – To the Same End*, London and New York: Routledge New Diplomacy Studies, 2022, 128 pp.

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On the day that the Russian troops invaded the peaceful neighbor of Ukraine, Walter Kemp's book on "*Security through Cooperation – To the Same End*" was presented in The Hague. The time could not have been more cynical, as the tragic event of that day immediately raised the question whether there is any future for 'cooperative security'. Was the unimaginable Russian aggression against a seemingly weaker neighbouring state not the answer to the question whether 'security through cooperation' with its key tools of dialogue, negotiations, compromise and consensus has any future left?


At the same time, since the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has always been functioning on the basis of its key concepts of cooperative and comprehensive security, is there any future left for such organization, since one of its key participating states has made it abundantly clear that cooperative security has no meaning left for it? Would it not be more effective to return to the more old-fashioned principles of blunt power politics, since the soft tools of cooperative security have turned out to be ineffective, at least in this striking case of aggression by one of the main states in Europe against one of its neighbours? Is it time to go back to the rough times of geopolitical power play which many had considered to be belonging to the 19th century? The Russian imperialist war seems to point in that direction.

In spite of this gloomy environment Kemp's book was published right in time to keep us aware of the enormous benefits of the concept of cooperative security, even in times when it seems to have been fatally wounded. As a matter of fact, his book is even more necessary than before to remind everyone of the enormous benefits of diplomacy, partnership, cooperation to the mutual benefit and conflict prevention before things get out of hand.

Kemp's book is an excellent tool to get (re)acquainted with the concept of cooperative security, its benefits and drawbacks. The author benefits highly from his many years of practice in various international organizations, particularly within the OSCE, where he worked both for the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and the Secretary-General. In particular, the HCNM has been a flagship of conflict prevention on the basis of cooperative security. Fortunately, however, the author draws lessons not only from the Eurasian experience, but also from examples all over the world. This results in a passionate plea to go back to the basics of cooperation with highly convincing arguments. The book, therefore, deserves a place on the desk of all practitioners and academics in the field of international relations.

In six well-written chapters the book argues that cooperation is not altruism or 'liberal internationalism', but that it is totally in the self-interest of states. Drawing extensively on both theory and practice, the author looks at how cooperation can be promoted within and between states as well as in the global community. It goes without saying that the author clearly explains the concept of 'cooperative security' which seems to be contrary to the present trends of fragmentation in the international arena. The book also contains an interesting chapter about the potential impact of technology on cooperation. At the end of the book the author (p. 101) almost summarizes his urgent plea for cooperative security as follows: "The big issues of our time and those on the horizon can only be tackled together. They transcend borders and therefore require multilateral responses. When it comes to slowing climate change and environmental degradation, regulating artificial intelligence and lethal automated weapon systems, coping with large flows of refugees and migrants, and dealing with pandemics, transnational organized crime, cyber threats, while ensuring nuclear safety and promoting arms control, states must work together. Indeed, on most global issues, either there is a cooperative solution or no solution at all." Here, Kemp is in the good company of the UN Secretary-General who also stated that "in an interconnected world, it is time to recognize a simple truth: solidarity is self-interest."

The big question right now is, of course, what future the concept of cooperative security has. Although most would agree with the arguments in favour, as presented by the author, the present-day reality demonstrates that at least one key player in the international arena is acting in total violation of the principles of the concept. It is clear that rational arguments are overtaken by emotional considerations which may lead to enormous risks, if not worse, in the world. If, however, the developments around the war in Ukraine turn against the Russian aggressor, maybe the time will be ripe to rethink the value and importance of cooperative security as the leading concept in international relations. Kemp's book will be a valuable tool for that purpose and will hopefully stimulate critical thinking about how the international community could possibly return to a situation of more cooperation and multilateralism.



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Security and Human Rights (formerly Helsinki Monitor) is a journal devoted to issues inspired by the work and principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It looks at the challenge of building security through cooperation across the northern hemisphere, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as well as how this experience can be applied to other parts of the world. It aims to stimulate thinking on the question of protecting and promoting human rights in a world faced with serious threats to security.

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