When Opponents Cooperate

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Great Power Conflict and Collaboration in World Politics

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With a New Preface
and Afterword

To Liora and Adi

and to the memory of

my mother and father

Contents

Preface to the Paperback Edition

The international relations field is distinctive not only in addressing the competition in the real world of international politics but also in the intense conflict among competing explanatory perspectives in the field (the so-called war of the isms). This book synthesizes some of the competing perspectives and different levels of analysis in international relations. This focus on synthesis was uncommon when the first edition of the book was published in l995. Such a focus is even rarer today. Despite a widespread recognition of the need to include a number of different perspectives in explaining complex phenomena in international relations, not only has the war of the isms not ceased since the end of the Cold War, but it has actually escalated with the debates on which perspective best explains the end of the Cold War and which best predicts the future of international politics in the post–Cold War era, in the global arena as well as in different regions such as Europe and Asia. Moreover, the emergence of the constructivist school in the last decade added another, and arguably a deeper, dimension to the war of the isms by posing some fundamental challenges to the dominant perspectives of neorealism and neoliberalism.

On the other hand, many scholarly works that avoid taking a clear-cut position in the war of the isms do not contribute more to our understanding of world politics than do the enthusiastic partisans of the different schools. One might even argue that for the purpose of theory construction, they contribute less. Some of these works present long laundry lists of explanatory factors, which do not add up to produce a powerful explanation despite the great importance of each of the individual variables. In a sense, these works provide little more than rich descriptions. Other works, while explicitly affiliating themselves with one or another of the competing schools as loyal members of their respective "church," in fact produce incoherent and inconsistent explanations by mixing independent variables from different paradigms. The combination itself might be a good idea, but many of these scholars implicitly add variables in an ad hoc fashion rather than explicitly stating in advance the causal relations between them and specifying which variable explains which aspect of the phenomenon in question. Indeed, as a first cut for producing theoretical synthesis, the work of the first group of theorists, who are in the

trenches of the war of the isms, is very useful since they present a coherent and parsimonious explanation.

This book aims not only to show that the integration of variables from different perspectives is desirable for providing more relevant explanations for complex phenomena but also to demonstrate that the synthesis can be done rigorously, by deducing specific causal relations from certain core ideas. These relations point out which categories of the phenomenon to be explained (the dependent variables) are best accounted for by which causal factors (or independent variables) and what is the logic behind these causal relations. As a result, the combined effect of the independent variables derived from different schools can explain variations in the explained phenomenon. Thus, I hope that the book will encourage researchers who are interested in constructing parsimonious and coherent theories to entertain the possibilities of synthesis and integration, thus generating richer but still rigorous explanations.

The book also sheds light on important developments in the international politics of the post–Cold War era, including some recent events that have taken place since the publication of the hardcover edition. The possible emergence of multipolarity, especially in East Asia, might be very dangerous and bring about unintended escalation of disputes, despite the unwillingness to embark on a major war in the nuclear age. The model developed in the book shows, however, that to the extent that a U.S.-China bipolarity emerges in East Asia, the outcome might be the evolution of rules of crisis management that will regulate the use of force between the two great powers, even if only tacitly, as was the case during the Cold War, despite all the ideological and political differences between the competing great powers. On the other hand, successful democratization in China is likely to result in a much higher level of great power cooperation than tacit rules of crisis management and may bring about the effective resolution of disputed questions such as the issue of Taiwan. Still, political changes resulting from democratization might be dangerous and difficult to manage in a multipolar context, at least during the transition period.

As the theory developed in the book indicates, in a unipolar world, such as the current post–Cold War system, the hegemon is more able to intervene militarily than under bipolarity, but it also has fewer incentives to do so. The U.S.-led NATO operation in Kosovo in l999 suggests the possibilities for massive hegemonic intervention in regions where it would have been unthinkable during the Cold War because of the countervailing power of the Soviet Union. At the same time, in other places, such as Africa, the United States has become much less inclined to intervene in the absence of the superpower rivalry. This difference in the level of U.S. military intervention in different regions exists despite the similar nature of the atrocities and human rights violations committed in Africa and the Balkans (in some African civil wars, such as in Rwanda, they were even worse than in the Balkans). One might

explain this difference by the higher U.S. stakes in the Balkans than in Africa due to the much greater proximity of the former region to key U.S. allies in NATO. Yet because the Balkans also lack much of an intrinsic (strategic and economic) value in the post–Cold War system, the United States was reluctant to go beyond the resort to air power and deploy ground troops in combat missions there. This reluctance is in contrast to the massive resort to force in the oil-rich Gulf region in 1991.

The book highlights the conditions for the formation of a great power concert in the post–Cold War era. The shared dangers and threats facing the great powers provide important incentives for cooperation against the proliferation of nuclear weapons as well as against terrorists. However, unit-level factors such as political and ideological differences among the great powers still make it difficult to form a great power concert that would include not only the American and European democracies but also nondemocratic China and partially democratic Russia. Still, democratization in Russia has made it a much more acceptable partner for the United States and the Europeans, notably in the "contact group" vis-à-vis the former Yugoslavia, than was the case with the Soviets during the Cold War.

The discussion in the book of great power attempts to resolve regional conflicts either cooperatively or unilaterally is important for understanding recent events in different regions, especially the Balkans and the Middle East, where a number of great powers—Russia, European great powers, and the United States—are involved in difficult regional peacemaking. The United States is much more likely to involve fellow democratic powers in peacemaking efforts than to engage authoritarian ones, and thus the recent process of global democratization makes concerted diplomacy more likely. On the other hand, the power advantages of the United States in the current international system might tempt the United States to go it alone rather than to cooperate with other powers in the crucial regional diplomacy in places such as the Balkans and the Middle East. Such "go it alone" tendencies might lead either to unilateral attempts at constructing Pax Americana or to disengagement. Because of its pluralist domestic politics, the United States is likely to disfavor an imposed solution, especially in the Middle East, although coercive outside pressures might be vital in order to stop the violence and advance the Arab-Israeli peace process. Indeed, disengagement by the United States from regional conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, will have major destabilizing effects for the region and beyond.

I hope that the publication of the paperback edition will encourage future research on the opportunities for, and the constraints on, great power cooperation in crisis situations and normal diplomacy. These studies should not only be rigorous but will also have policy implications for crisis management and conflict resolution, including in regional conflicts. Future scholars should inte-

grate insights from international and regional politics in order to understand better the interrelationships between the international system and regional conflicts. This will increase the possibilities of preventing escalation from the regional level to the international one and will allow use of international resources for resolving regional conflicts.

Preface and Acknowledgments

I was born and grew up in Israel. Thus, I naturally became interested at a relatively young age in questions of war and peace and international conflict and cooperation. My participation in the intense Yom Kippur battles on the Golan Heights[1] did much to sharpen my concern about these issues, as did my service in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, which included a mission to the United Nations (UN). Yet both the 1973 war and the UN mission have also made me aware of the great importance of the role of the great powers in international politics. Indeed, great power cooperation faces many difficulties but is critical for world peace and prosperity. Accordingly, this book suggests some of the conditions not only for the occurrence of great power conflict but also for the emergence of cooperation—both intended and unintended.

While writing this book I have also learned the importance of cooperation on the personal level. Indeed, what made possible completing this project was that I have been fortunate to meet many helpful people who were willing to cooperate; thus, I have accumulated a great number of debts. It is a great pleasure to acknowledge them here. All responsibility for what follows rests, of course, with me.

I started the project at the University of California, Berkeley. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Professors Kenneth N. Waltz, George W. Breslauer, Aaron Wildavsky, Ernst Haas, Nelson Polsby, and William Brinner as well as to Professors Alexander George of Stanford University and Steven Spiegel of the University of California, Los Angeles. I am especially grateful to Kenneth Waltz for both his support and his stimulating criticism. My friends and colleagues Clay Moltz, Ronnie Lipschutz, Jeff Kopstein, and Jim Gold-geier deserve special thanks for sharing ideas and providing detailed comments on different chapters. Hugh and Sunny Dewitt provided a feeling of home to my family despite the long distance away from our home country.

I also appreciate the stimulating ideas kindly provided by the following scholars and decision makers: Jack Citrin, Neil MacFarlane, Dennis Ross, William Quandt, Harold Saunders, Alfred Atherton, Raymond Garthoff, Reuven Gal, Aaron Yariv, Abba Eban, Haim Bar-Lev, Yossi Sarid, Hagai Eshed, Shimcha Dinitz, Shlomo Avineri, Shai Feldman, and Shimon Shamir. The University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation

Somewhat different versions of portions of this book have been published previously in "Explaining the Emergence of Great Power Concerts," *Review of International Studies* (October 1994); "Polarity, Nuclear Weapons, and Major War," *Security Studies* 3, no. 4 (Summer 1994); and "Explaining Great Power Cooperation in Conflict Management," *World Politics* 45, no. 1 (October

1992): 1–46. I appreciate the cooperation of these journals in permitting me to use material that first appeared in their pages.

Finally, there are five people without whom I would never have arrived at this point: my wife Liora, my daughter Adi, my sister Eti, and my late father and mother. My love and gratitude to them cannot be expressed in words.

Introduction: Recent International Changes and International Relations Theory

After more than four decades of continuity, recent years have seen far-reaching changes in international politics. The changes have appeared at both the unit level and the international system level. In the former instance, they occurred within the political and socioeconomic systems of states, taking the form of democratization and transition to market economies, notably in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and, so far to a more limited extent, the former Soviet Union. Changes at the international system level include the decline of bipolarity due to the disintegration of Soviet power and its disengagement from Eastern Europe and other parts of the globe and the potential for an integrated Europe or a united Germany and for China and Japan to become major world powers. In many ways, these changes have been the most dramatic since the end of World War II and the onset of the Cold War in the late 1940s.

What does international relations theory lead us to expect concerning the effects of these changes on stability and conflict management in the post–Cold War world? On the one hand, it raises concerns about the expected changes at the systems level: the classic debate on the relative merits of bipolarity and multipolarity notwithstanding, many analysts have recently come to accept the Waltzian argument about the greater basic stability of bipolar systems.[1] Indeed, pessimists in the realist camp anticipate greater instability in post–Cold War Europe because of the structural transition from bipolarity to multipolarity.[2] On the other hand, optimists in the liberal camp would find the unit-level changes reassuring,[3] because of the anticipated pacifying effects of the democratization process (the Kantian argument that democracies never fight each other having been recently confirmed empirically) and of economic liberalism (expressed by the rise of the trading state, the transition to free-market economies, and the related growing economic interdependence).[4] These contradictory predictions have not so far been reconciled in a coherent theoretical argument.

Indeed, contemporary international relations theory fails to provide an adequate and parsimonious (i.e., elegant) model that can both explain patterns of great power cooperation and conflict in earlier eras and predict these patterns for the post–Cold War era, though it is so important for issues of war and

peace. More specifically, no theoretical model has attempted to explain the conditions for the occurrence of both intended and unintended cooperation and conflict in international politics.[5] In the present book, I attempt to provide such a model. Indeed, for the post–Cold War era, the proposed model differs from both the pessimists and the optimists by predicting that the likelihood of failure in crisis management, and thus of inadvertent wars, will increase but that at the same time, intended cooperation in conflict resolution will be more likely than during the Cold War.

The proposed model explains two types of outcomes or dependent variables: great power conflict and cooperation. Each of these outcomes is divided into two ideal types,[6] the two conflictual outcomes being intended war and inadvertent war, while the cooperative ones are cooperation in crisis management and in conflict resolution. These four ideal types of outcomes are distinguished according to a basic criterion: whether they are intended or unintended by the great powers. Indeed, the recurrence and frequency of unintended outcomes, that is, outcomes that cannot be deduced from actors' intentions and attributes, is one of the most puzzling phenomena in international relations. Such outcomes can be more cooperative or more conflictual than what the actors initially wanted. Namely, the actors may unintentionally achieve a higher level of cooperation or conflict than they desired. This distinction between intended and unintended outcomes is one of the major themes of the book. A second major theme is the distinction between crises and normal times.[7] The proposed model combines these two themes by arguing that *intended outcomes occur in normal times, while unintended ones take place in crises.*

The third major theme of the book is that different levels of analysis account for different types of international outcomes.[8] Broadly speaking, international relations theory can be divided into two main families according to the distinction between the system and the unit levels of analysis: inside-out or unit-level theories (which focus on state attributes and on cognitive factors)[9] and structural-systemic theories.[10] Assuming that both these major theoretical approaches have some explanatory power with respect to international outcomes,[11] in this book I introduce one way of reconciling their competing claims, at least in the areas of conflict and cooperation. Thus, based on a combination of the three themes into a single coherent theoretical argument, I develop the proposed model (see tables 1 and 2) and argue that *whereas*

TABLE 1.   The Outcomes (dependent variables)

	Conflict	Cooperation
Intended	Premeditated wars	Conflict resolution
Unintended	Inadvertent wars	Crisis management

TABLE 2.   The Main Causal Relations

	The Setting	Explanation
Intended outcomes	Normal times	Unit-level
Unintended outcomes	Crises	Structural

structural factors account for the unintended crisis outcomes (namely, in-advertent wars and unexpected success in crisis management), *unit-level factors explain the intended outcomes in normal times* (that is, the results of decisions to resort to premeditated wars and conflict resolution).

Overview of the Book

The conflictual and the cooperative outcomes studied in this book are considerably affected by the central attribute of international politics—anarchy, namely, the absence of an international authority. In chapter 1, I introduce two different conceptions of international order that are both compatible with the condition of anarchy: the structural balance-of-power and the international society schools. I then discuss two major implications of anarchy for conflict and cooperation in international politics. The first is the special role of the great powers as the managers of the international system, thus justifying the focus of this book on great power conflict and cooperation. The second major implication of anarchy is its permissiveness for conflict—most notably, wars (Waltz 1959), and the constraints it places on cooperation (Grieco 1990; Jervis 1978; Waltz 1979).

However, the linkages between anarchy, war, and cooperation, although important, are too general and unspecified to provide a theoretical explanation of either conflict or cooperation. One crucial step in developing an explanatory model of both the outbreak of war and the emergence of cooperation is to distinguish between intended and unintended outcomes. In chapter 1, I provide such a distinction by presenting the four ideal types of outcomes. I also relate them to the two schools referred to above, by demonstrating that the international society school is mainly concerned with intended outcomes, while the structural school provides theoretical background for unintended ones. With regard to great power wars, I draw on the important distinction between premeditated and inadvertent wars.[12] Such a distinction is more difficult for great power cooperation, however.

Indeed, although the literature on cooperation under anarchy has demonstrated that international cooperation is possible even in the absence of a world authority,[13] one of the problems with this literature is its insufficient differentiation among kinds, degrees, and objectives of collaboration.[14] I address this

problem in chapter 1 by differentiating between two modes of cooperation and between two substantive categories of joint great power action in conflict management. The two ideal modes of cooperation are the spontaneous-tacit avoidance type (associated with the structural approach) and the consciously explicit and affirmative type (related to the international society approach; see table 3).[15] The two major substantive categories of cooperation in conflict management are closely related to these two modes: tacit rules for regulating the use of force during crises are a manifestation of unintended spontaneous cooperation, whereas joint diplomacy for the purpose of conflict resolution is a reflection of the consciously affirmative type of collaboration. Thus, chapter 1 concentrates on the dependent variables and provides a broader theoretical background for them. In the subsequent chapters, I discuss the conditions for the occurrence of these outcomes.

Another major shortcoming of the literature on cooperation is the failure to advance parsimonious (that is, elegant) explanations of different types of collaboration by linking different sets of causal factors with different cooperative categories. Similarly, the literature on wars has not introduced a parsimonious model that can explain the occurrence of intended and unintended wars.[16] In chapters 2, 3, and 4, I address these shortcomings by developing and specifying the general argument introduced above that structural factors (namely, polarity) best explain unintended outcomes (which take place in times of crisis), whereas unit-level elements account for intended outcomes (which are not related to crisis situations). At the same time, unit-level theories fail to explain unintended outcomes, while structural theory is unable to account for intended ones. Chapter 2 is mainly concerned with the two cooperative outcomes. In that chapter, I introduce the general model of the book, which links causal factors at different levels of analysis with the two major kinds of collaboration in crisis and noncrisis settings (that is, structural factors are linked with crisis management and state-cognitive elements with conflict resolution). More specifically, bipolarity is conducive to successful crisis management, while the combination of the unit-level attributes of similarity and moderation bring about cooperation in conflict resolution.

In chapter 3, I apply the above argument to explaining the two conflictual outcomes: inadvertent and intended wars. In explaining the outbreak of major wars, it is inevitable that we consider the effects of another systemic variable—military technology.[17] Inadvertent wars are accounted for by the international structure. More specifically, multipolarity is prone to such wars, whereas bipolarity is conducive to their avoidance. Indeed, in bipolar systems tacit rules for regulating the use of force in crises tend to emerge. Although the substance and the implications of these rules are unintended, their emergence considerably reduces the likelihood of failure in crisis management and thus of inadvertent wars.

TABLE 3. Two Modes of Order, Cooperation, and Conflict in International Politics

General Perspective on the International Order (see chap. 1)	Structural Balance-of-Power Theory	International Society
General type of outcomes	Unintended	Intended
Setting	Crises	Normal times
Mode of cooperation (see chap. 1)	Spontaneous, self-generating	Deliberate
Means of cooperation	Tacit rules	Explicit agreements and joint actions; concerted diplomacy, security regimes, concerts
Objectives of cooperation	Negative—avoid an unwanted outcome	Affirmative—achieve a set of goals
Application to conflict management	Crisis management; regulation of use of force; war termination	Conflict resolution; crisis prevention
Explanation of origins (see chap. 2)	Situational factors; distribution of capabilities (under bipolarity)	A shared cognitive-normative framework
Manifestations of cooperative relations among the great powers (see chaps. 3–4)	Tacit recognition of spheres of influence, the status quo, and the coequal status of the great powers	Explicit legitimation of the status quo or of peaceful change; explicit acceptance of the coequal status of the great powers
Historical application (see chaps. 3–6)	Postwar superpower crisis management	Nineteenth century Concert of Europe
Sources of war	Counterhegemonic; inadvertent	Intentions and attributes of the actors; ideological differences
Main danger (see chap. 3)	Inadvertent escalation due to unclarity of structural factors under multipolarity	Eruption of intended wars because of political-ideological differences and calculated decisions by aggressive leaders and states
Application to post–Cold War (see Conclusions)	Inadvertent wars due to the likely transition to multipolarity	Concerted diplomacy at conflict resolution because of growing democratization and liberalization

Intended wars are caused by unit-level factors, yet their outbreak is conditioned by the type of military technology: conventional or nuclear. Indeed, because of the critical effects on warfare of the revolution in military technology after World War II, the chapter focuses on these conditioning effects rather than going into detail regarding the specific relations between unit-level factors and intended wars. Thus, the presence of nuclear weapons in the postwar era contributed to the Long Peace by making premeditated wars obsolete.[18] But

the structural change—the transition from multipolarity to bipolarity—was the major factor that precluded unintended wars.

Since anarchy constrains cooperation, especially intended affirmative co-operation, only restrictive unit-level factors can make possible the emergence of such cooperation. In chapter 4 I am concerned with a very high level of intended cooperation, namely, a great power concert in conflict resolution, and further elaborate the unit-level conditions necessary for its emergence and durability. The emergence of great power concerts requires a shared vision of the international order, or at least a convergence of leaders' perceptions and a related process of cognitive learning by elites. These are achieved by a com-patibility of state attributes and an explicit legitimation of the status quo (or of acceptable means for revising it), which help to resolve conflicts and thereby minimize the probability of crises and wars. The absence of these conditions, which prevents the emergence of a concert, may also constrain lower forms of intended cooperation.

Both chapters 3 and 4 include some historical examples, especially from the Concert era and from the Cold War. In chapters 5 and 6, I provide more detailed empirical case studies of the superpower involvement in the Middle East. In chapter 5, I illustrate unintended superpower cooperation in crisis management that succeeded largely because of structural factors. Chapter 6 focuses on attempts at intended cooperation in conflict resolution that failed largely due to the absence of necessary unit-level elements. The reason for the choice of the Middle East is that it has traditionally been a major arena of great power conflict and cooperation—both intended and unintended. Indeed, for the last two hundred years, the Middle East has been more consistently and thoroughly ensnarled in great power politics than any other part of the non-Western world (Brown 1984, 4). From the inception of the Eastern question[19] with the creeping decay of the Ottoman Empire through today's Arab-Israeli dispute, the Iran-Iraq War, the Lebanese crisis, and the Gulf War, an abundance of local problems has provided rich opportunities for external meddling in the Middle East. More specifically, there have been important attempts at conflict resolution by the great powers in this region during the Concert era, the Cold War,[20] and recently the post–Cold War initiative that resulted in the bilateral and multilateral Arab-Israeli talks. Moreover, the Eastern question has gener-ated the danger of inadvertent escalation both during the Concert period, when the focus of the conflicts was in the Balkans, like in the Crimean War and World War I, and during the Cold War, when the focus has shifted to the Middle East, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, as suggested by the recurrence of crises that have involved the superpowers.[21] Although it was in a completely different way, the Gulf Crisis showed the difficulties of crisis management in the Middle East in the post–Cold War era as well. Indeed, because of the intensity of the various conflicts in the Middle East and the linkages between

them, the region remains a dangerous place that, because of its strategic and economic importance, could drag in external powers. The dangers might even increase in the post-Cold War era due to the rise of extremist forces such as Islamic fundamentalism and the growing problem of the proliferation of non-conventional weapons.

Consequently, in the Conclusions, I spell out the implications of the model for the post–Cold War period regarding intended and unintended conflict and cooperation of the great powers in general and in the Middle East in particular. Although the two subjects are interrelated, this book focuses on the sources or the factors affecting the likelihood of great power conflict and cooperation, rather than on the effects of these interactions on regional conflicts. Yet in light of the growing salience, and also the dangers, of regional conflicts in the post–Cold War era,[22] in the last section of the Conclusions, I offer some propositions for future research on the implications of different patterns of great power involvement and interactions for regional security.[23]

In addition to making a contribution to cooperation theory and the causes of wars, the proposed model is relevant to three general issues of international relations theory.

The first issue is the level of analysis problem. Rather than assuming that a single level best explains international politics (as a whole or at least in a certain historical period) or that all levels account for all outcomes in international relations, in this book I suggest that causal factors at different levels best explain different phenomena. Thus, the casual relations noted above between certain levels of analysis and types of wars and cooperation are specified.[24] Yet because of the difficulties, in social science in general and in international relations in particular, in identifying necessary and sufficient conditions,[25] I apply a weaker criterion for making the linkages between the causal factors at different levels of analysis and types of conflict and collaboration, namely that "the presence of a certain type of independent variable appears to 'favor' the occurrence of a certain type of outcome" (George 1982, 16).

The second issue is neorealism versus neoliberalism.[26] Instead of adopting one at the expense of the other, the model combines both power-related and normative-cognitive factors and thus proposes a way for integrating the insights of both structural realism and liberalism in a single theoretical argument. Some of the most relevant insights of neorealism include the constraints posed by anarchy on international cooperation, the effects of the global distribution of capabilites on international outcomes, and the importance of unintended consequences with regard to both conflict and cooperation. Important liberal insights include the effects of state attributes and factors related to them, such as values and norms, on intended wars as well as on high-level intended cooperation. Indeed, the analysis of great power collaboration and concerted diplomacy in conflict resolution integrates the realist insight on the crucial

influence of the great powers in international politics with the liberal ideas about the possibilities for international collaboration, regimes and institutions, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

The third issue is structural theory. Although structural factors form an important part of the model, it goes beyond structural realism and provides a refinement of that theory by limiting and specifying its explanatory power with regard only to unintended crisis outcomes, namely, inadvertent wars and spontaneous-tacit crisis management. Thus, the book also makes a potential contribution to the old-time but recently revived debate on polarity and stability.[27] Other types of outcomes, such as intended wars and high-level cooperation in conflict resolution, are best explained by nonstructural factors, which consequently play an equally important part in the model. These factors may explain great power concerts that are considered an anomaly by structural theory.

The major effect of nuclear weapons, according to the proposed model, is to make premeditated wars obsolete. But since they are insufficient to prevent inadvertent wars, the likely future transition to multipolarity is dangerous with regard to possible failures in crisis management and wars of this kind. This situation creates the necessity for concerted great power diplomacy for the purposes of crisis prevention and conflict resolution. Indeed, when the structural conditions are not conducive to peace, there is a strong need not only for great power cooperation as such but also for powerful institutional and managerial cooperative arrangements to contain threats to global or regional stability and to prevent the outbreak of unintended wars. The most effective of such arrangements is a great power concert in conflict resolution. At the same time, the recent unit-level changes are promising with respect to the higher likelihood and feasibility of a great power concert in the post–Cold War era—a subject that I discuss in the Conclusions in light of the theoretical model of the book.