

## **Chairman's Summary**

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## The Role of the Military Cooperation in Times of Crisis

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In recent years, military cooperation and assistance undertaken by states or non-state actors outside treaty-based alliance frameworks have increasingly played significant roles in conflicts and other arenas of international politics. Particularly in the twentieth century, as warfare and conflict became globalized and the risks of great-power confrontation rose dramatically, such cooperation was pursued through a diversification of actors and methods. In the study of international politics, alliances have traditionally been a central topic, and extensive debates have examined their structures and functions across regions and scholarly traditions. Historically, however, options for military cooperation that did not entail the activation of treaty-based alliances were often chosen precisely because they could be implemented outside institutional constraints. Accordingly, in assessing the significance and effects of the forms of military cooperation addressed in this report, it is essential to examine the specific circumstances and conditions under which such cooperation was undertaken, as well as the consequences it ultimately produced.

Understanding the realities of military cooperation that unfold outside institutionalized frameworks is also crucial for grasping the security environment in which Japan finds itself today. In the ongoing Russia–Ukraine War and the conflict in Gaza, both sides have prosecuted their wars not through alliances requiring direct participation in hostilities, but by receiving support, military and non-military alike, from various external actors. These developments underscore the growing importance of examining the role played by military cooperation conducted outside formal alliance relationships, the very focus of this report.

Guided by these concerns, the 2024 International Forum on the History of War sought to elucidate empirically, through historical case studies, how military cooperation has actually been carried out and how its complex dynamics have manifested. The program consisted of a keynote lecture and two thematic sessions covering the interwar period through the Second World War, and the postwar era through the 1960s, featuring seven research presentations.

The first part addressed the collapse of the international order, leading to the Second World War and its aftermath. During the interwar period, intensifying great-power competition in Europe and East Asia destabilized the existing order. States repeatedly formed and dissolved alliances, and the resulting opaque power politics ultimately paved the way to global war. During the Second World War, cooperation was organized within the Allied framework, led by the United States and the United Kingdom.

The second part examined East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East from the postwar period through the 1960s. These regions experienced repeated armed conflicts under the broader structure of the U.S.–Soviet Cold War, while simultaneously undergoing decolonization and the formation of postwar regional orders. As a result, complex patterns of cooperation and confrontation emerged among state and non-state actors under great-power intervention.

A common feature across both sessions was the extreme instability of the international order. In such conditions, each actor sought security not primarily through institutional frameworks,

alliances, multilateral treaties, or international organizations such as the League of Nations or the United Nations, but through secret diplomacy and military cooperation. This is precisely why the 2024 International War History Forum and this report take up the theme of military cooperation “in an age of crisis.” The Forum thus aimed to illuminate how various forms of military cooperation shaped the collapse and reconfiguration of the international order before, during, and after the Second World War. This report also follows the same structure: the first part addresses the interwar period through the Second World War, and the second examines the Cold War up to the 1960s.

Richard Overy’s contribution depicts how the collapse of the international order and the entanglement of national security policies in the 1930s weakened international cooperation and ultimately led to another world war. Unlike the rigid alliance systems before 1914, the 1930s order was fluid and unstable. The League of Nations espoused collective security but lacked effective enforcement beyond economic sanctions. Conflicting great-power interests, economic crises, and rising protectionism eroded international cooperation. Britain and France, constrained by imperial commitments and pacifist public opinion, avoided decisive military action. Although they later shifted toward rearmament and deterrence against Germany, their cooperation remained fragile and failed to prevent war. Meanwhile, revisionist powers, Japan, Germany, and Italy, challenged the existing order through military actions such as the Manchurian Incident and intervention in the Spanish Civil War. Overy concludes that the limits of multilateral cooperation and the absence of a hegemonic stabilizer produced profound insecurity in this age of crisis.

Ian Johnson analyzes military cooperation between Germany and the Soviet Union as a key factor in the erosion of the post-Versailles order and the outbreak of the Second World War. From 1921 to 1933, and again from 1939 to 1941, the two powers forged close cooperation in armaments production, technology, training, and intelligence, mutually reinforcing their strategic interests. Their partition of Poland and military expansion destabilized the international order, while the international community proved unable to respond effectively. Hitler continued cooperation with the Soviet Union, accelerating German rearmament and Soviet military modernization. The 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact revived economic and military cooperation and set the stage for a global war. Johnson concludes that interwar military cooperation contributed not to the preservation but to the destruction of the existing order, driven by shared hostility that transcended ideological differences.

Tajima Nobuo examines Nazi Germany’s Far Eastern policy through its relations with Japan and China. Germany had no alliance with either state during this period. Although the Anti-Comintern Pact existed, Germany refrained from forming a military alliance with Japan due to the legacy of the First World War and the belief that Japan would inevitably lose a war against the United States and Britain. Meanwhile, Germany maintained relatively friendly relations with China, dispatching military advisers and exporting weapons, armaments plants, and economic assistance. This triangular relationship persisted for some time after the outbreak of the Sino–Japanese War, but as German–Japanese relations deepened, cooperation with China was severed. Even so, cooperation with Japan, particularly in military technology, intelligence, and covert operations, did not develop into a robust alliance. Tajima concludes that Germany’s East Asian policy remained ad hoc, driven by the interests of individual organizations, and never matured into a strategic alliance.

Fujii Motohiro analyzes the military development pursued by the Chinese Nationalist Government with U.S. support during the Second World War. In the latter half of the Sino–Japanese War, the Nationalists sought reconstruction through American training and equipment. The United States

established new U.S.-trained Chinese units in India, introducing comprehensive American-style training and equipment. U.S.–Chinese military cooperation unfolded within a broader Allied war-fighting network linking China, Burma, and India. After the war, both countries attempted to continue their military cooperation, but the dissolution of the Allied wartime framework left the Nationalist Government unable to secure a new support structure. Fujii concludes that U.S.–Chinese cooperation faced structural limits, including divergent understandings of military modernization and the inherently wartime-limited nature of American assistance.

Christopher Goscha explores the multilayered realities of international military cooperation during the First Indochina War from both micro-level and macro-level perspectives. Early in the war, France sought British and Chinese assistance to reestablish control over Indochina, while on the ground, Japanese surrender personnel were utilized by British, French, and Vietnamese forces—an often overlooked form of international military cooperation. The Chinese Communist victory in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 integrated the Indochina conflict into the Cold War structure. The United States expanded military and economic aid to France, viewing Indochina as vital to Pacific defense, while China supported the Viet Minh’s regularization and modernization. Thus, the Indochina War became a laboratory for internationalized military cooperation at the intersection of decolonization, the Cold War, and regional conflict, and remained a focal point of global tension even after France’s withdrawal in 1954.

Matsumura Fuminori examines the nature of cooperation between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Soviet Union from the end of the Second World War to the conclusion of the Sino–Soviet alliance, focusing on its strategic character. The author proposes an analytical perspective that distinguishes between “official” intergovernmental relations and “unofficial” party-to-party relations in assessing the nature of Sino–Soviet relations during this period. After the war, the Soviet Union supported the CCP from its base in Manchuria, while at the same time constructing a three-layered strategy centered on “unofficial” cooperation so as not to provoke great-power political tensions. The CCP, for its part, sought to avoid Western intervention through the peaceful surrender of southern cities and the use of united-front tactics, advancing toward the establishment of a national regime by linking urban political work with rural control. Moreover, although the Soviet Union positioned the CCP as a regional leader in coordinating with surrounding communist movements, the CCP established a line of self-reliance while receiving external assistance. Thus, the study concludes that the essence of the Sino–Soviet alliance was not an offensive anti-American bloc but a limited and defensive framework grounded in informal strategic cooperation.

Onozawa Tōru traces the historical development of the U.S.–Israel alliance and demonstrates that its origins lay in early forms of military cooperation. He shows that the bilateral relationship evolved through a multilayered set of institutions, laws, and agreements. During the Eisenhower administration, the United States prioritized relations with Arab states while providing only limited support to Israel, whereas the Kennedy administration witnessed internal debate over arms transfers such as the Hawk missile system. U.S. Middle East policy sought to maintain regional stability and balance between Arab states and Israel, adapting flexibly to domestic political pressures and shifting international conditions. As a result, the U.S.–Israel alliance became increasingly institutionalized and policy-dense, forming an important framework for regional security that continues to shape the contemporary Middle East.

All contributions examine how military cooperation functioned in contexts where fixed alliance

structures were absent, fragile, or limited. This raises a fundamental question: how should military cooperation be defined? Neither this report nor the 2024 Forum adopted a unified definition. Many cases discussed involved cooperation outside formal alliances or below the threshold of alliance formation. A closed session held the day after the Forum devoted considerable time to this issue. The Forum's discussions emphasized three analytical elements: the presence or absence of a common enemy, the instrumental and goal-oriented nature of cooperation, and the effects of cooperation on international order.

Military cooperation often arises from the presence of a common enemy. As Johnson's analysis shows, interwar German–Soviet cooperation was driven by shared hostility toward Poland and the victorious powers under the Versailles system. Yet the presence of a common enemy is also a classic condition for alliance formation, making it difficult to treat as a feature unique to military cooperation. More intriguing is that cooperation can occur even when the definition of the enemy is ambiguous or threat perceptions are not shared. Tajima's study shows that the absence of shared threat perceptions hindered the development of strategic alliances among Germany, Japan, and China, yet Germany still derived benefits from limited cooperation without deep entanglement. In the U.S.–Israel case, Onozawa shows that the definition of threats evolved flexibly with regional and international conditions. Thus, the presence or absence of an enemy shapes both the motivation for cooperation and its durability and transformation.

Military cooperation is often undertaken as a means to achieve specific strategic objectives, but its purposes are rarely linear. In Goscha's analysis of the Indochina War, France, the United States, and China each pursued their own strategic interests and visions of regional order, while local actors prioritized survival and immediate needs. Means and ends frequently overlapped in nested layers. Cold War U.S.–Israel cooperation intertwined instrumental goals, deterrence, and regional balance, with broader political objectives such as U.S. Middle East strategy and domestic stability. Matsumura's study shows that the Sino–Soviet relationship contained multiple layers of purpose, from U.S.–Soviet rivalry to the expansion of the communist bloc. Fujii demonstrates that cooperation can be constrained by its own purposes: U.S. assistance to China was limited by divergent understandings of military modernization and by the wartime-specific nature of the support framework.

Military cooperation directly shapes the formation, maintenance, transformation, or erosion of international order. Overy shows how the fluidity of the 1930s order and the weakness of collective security shaped patterns of cooperation and accelerated the collapse of the system. Johnson highlights how German–Soviet cooperation undermined the Versailles order and contributed to its destruction. Goscha illustrates how military cooperation in Indochina catalyzed the emergence of new regional orders amid decolonization and the Cold War. Onozawa shows that U.S. military cooperation with Israel was originally intended to stabilize the regional order. Thus, military cooperation can serve as a force for maintenance, supplementation, transformation, reconfiguration, or destruction of international order. It may also contribute to both stability and fluidity through institutional ambiguity and informal networks.

This report has synthesized the various forms of military cooperation discussed in the Forum through the three analytical elements of enemy, purpose, and international order. The presence of a common enemy motivates cooperation; the multilayered nature of purpose shapes its durability and evolution; and its effects on international order reveal its historical significance and contemporary relevance. In today's security environment, multilayered and flexible military cooperation beyond

institutionalized alliances is increasingly important. In emerging domains such as cyberspace, outer space, and economic security, cooperation across official and unofficial channels, and among state and non-state actors, has become indispensable. These realities highlight the importance of understanding how military cooperation affects international order. Continued theoretical and empirical analysis of military cooperation beyond formal alliances is essential for grasping its implications for the evolving global order.