

BOOK REVIEW

Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order

By Timothy Andrews Sayle

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019, 360 pages, ISBN 9781501735509

In *Enduring Alliance*, Timothy A. Sayle, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Toronto, provides a chronological history of NATO from its foundation in the late 1940s to the beginning of the 1990s. As the title of the book reveals, throughout the chapters, the author pursues the crises that NATO has encountered in its history, and explores how these crises have been overcome each time, which has helped the alliance to endure until today. Sayle argues that the main threat for NATO and Pax-Atlantica has never been a military attack in essence. Instead, he believes that the dangerous choices of the democratic electorate within NATO member countries to prevent any further war in time of a blackmail by Russians could result in the political disintegration of the allies in Europe.

The timing of the book is noteworthy; *Enduring Alliance* is one of the few books published on the 70th anniversary of NATO aiming to offer a sweeping history of the alliance. Sayle's book, published concurrently with Linda Risso's edited book titled *NATO at 70: A Historiographical Approach*, follows a different path in unravelling the essence of the enduring alliance. While Risso's book rejects the crisis-led approach to explaining NATO's evolution, Sayle focuses on important crises in each of the chapters, such as the Suez crisis in the second chapter, the Berlin crisis of 1961 in the fourth chapter and the French exit from NATO in the sixth chapter. What Sayle focuses on in these crises is not the events, but how the approaches and strategies of the allied leaders, NATO officials, high-level diplomats and scholars of the era worked to maintain NATO and helped it survive.

Sayle's use of sources is quite satisfactory, and the book is considered a comprehensive compilation of NATO-related quotations by the competent authorities of the time. It is clear from the footnotes that the author, as a historian, conducted extensive archival research while writing the book. Sayle's main focus in terms of the direct quotations is on U.S., UK, French

and German leaders and advisors and NATO Secretary Generals. Throughout the book, the author does not extensively deal with the official documents of NATO or other allies, but instead tries to uncover the real intent behind these official written pieces.

The book is riveting and impressive for readers who already have enough background knowledge on NATO. However, it cannot be recommended as a main book on transatlantic relations, since the chapters do not aim to provide a comprehensive historical account of the alliance, with all of the details such a task would require. For readers who have a basic understanding of NATO, *Enduring Alliance* can provide a valuable and distinctive angle to understanding why it has survived until this day, despite the various crises it has confronted. Furthermore, the book may offer some surprises to readers due to its inclusion of frank quotations from statements made by allied leaders while they were conducting diplomacy.

The recurring debates and crises addressed in the book are crucial in terms of understanding the basis of today's discussions about NATO. As a contemporary example, from the book, it can be understood that the U.S. pressure on the European allies to increase their defense spending has actually always been a hot topic in NATO's history, although lately this discussion has become rather identified with the requests of former President Trump. Similarly, the book is quite successful in its discussion of the processes that led to the signing of agreements on the elimination of nuclear weapons, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and the continuing concerns of the European allies about the leaders that could come to power in the U.S. This is interesting when one considers that these same concerns are shared by today's allied leaders in terms of the future of transatlantic relations. Another topic discussed in the book is the history of the establishment of EU-NATO relations. As the current relations between these two important international organizations are based on the principles they adopted in their history, the book could be regarded as a timely piece in this regard as well.

One of the main problems of the book is the period it covers, as it abruptly finishes with a chapter that corresponds to the beginning of 1990s, around the time that the decision to expand toward the former Soviet bloc was taken. Given that it was published on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of NATO in 2019, the book could have included at least one more chapter to cover more recent developments—especially the impacts of the Russian aggression toward Ukraine in 2014. One could understand the author's choice to avoid discussing the most recent events,

as a historian; however, for instance, the use of Article 5 for first time in the history of NATO in 2001 is a very important event and mentioning the “war on terror” with only a few words in the conclusion—even less coverage than the book devotes to the Trump era—seems an odd decision. Although Sayle argues in the conclusion that it would be impossible to deal with the more recent developments, readers would still like to learn more about issues such as how NATO expanded to include East European countries, how it acquired new roles in the war on terror or how out-of-area operations like the ones in Bosnia and Kosovo were decided behind closed doors. Yet all these questions are left unanswered in the book.

Nevertheless, the problems stated above cannot diminish the value of this book, which could be aptly defined as a timely, significant and unorthodox contribution to NATO’s historical evolution, especially at the time of its 70th anniversary. Therefore, *Enduring Alliance* will most likely satisfy readers in search of a novel perspective on transatlantic relations.

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