

Sayle, Timothy Andrews. *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order*. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2019. xi + 346 pp. ISBN 978-1501735509.

Engaging domestic politics is critical for understanding foreign policy, as several scholars have demonstrated in studies of influential diplomats and executives. Timothy Sayle's new book, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order*, uses insights from internal political developments across several countries to reassess the history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Tracing the institution from its origin in the 1940s through the conclusion of the Cold War in the 1990s, the author reveals the continual importance of democratic turmoil to NATO's purpose and activity. The work achieves a concise, focused presentation of tension between national objectives and international cooperation around Europe.

Sayle argues that statesmen across the Atlantic built NATO to manage security challenges created by European democracy. They hoped to harness the United States' forces and effective multinational coordination against the possibility that Soviet strategists would dominate Europe's pacifist publics in isolation. Communist expansion in Eastern Europe during the late 1940s and early 1950s led Western leaders to develop NATO, largely not to fight together but to reassure European nations, allowing policy independent of Moscow's inclinations. Nations that sought NATO's active participation in defending colonies against communist guerrillas would be disappointed. Such interventions would hamper European political unity by pitting colonizers France and Belgium against anticolonial Nordic states, thus not suiting NATO's purpose. From the late 1950s onward, divergence developed, as French President Charles de Gaulle no longer saw the USSR as an existential military threat. By contrast, American leaders such as President John Kennedy increasingly treated NATO as a resource for military forces to support confrontational U.S. strategy in Europe. Transatlantic fears of a potentially resurgent, nuclear Germany provided ongoing purpose to the alliance, containing Germany and ensuring its security despite growing public criticism. NATO's nations increasingly faced difficulties justifying to their citizens the policies of nuclear modernization and military



spending during economic distress. Nevertheless, despite lost respect for President Jimmy Carter and fears that the Ronald Reagan administration's arms-reduction agreements would expose Europe, the alliance endured. Leaders' commitment to resolve disagreements privately and maintain unpopular security policies quietly allowed NATO to survive the challenges democracy caused for security cooperation. As a result, NATO endured the Cold War, playing a key role in handling issues of German reunification and Eastern European security.

The book's chronological narrative does not present an exhaustive history, but highlights key debates and crossroads revealing ongoing themes in NATO's relationship to democracy. While the economics of the alliance are never fully detailed, the book thoroughly develops the ongoing struggle between American attempts to push Europe toward greater financial commitment supporting conventional forces and European attempts to reduce defense spending and achieve domestic political gains. This thread of tension connects to the thematic difficulty politicians on both sides of the Atlantic had in explaining the need for the alliance to skeptical citizens and parliaments. Finally, the author highlights the importance, recognized by NATO leaders, of repeated threatening moves by the Soviets renewing political commitment to multinational security cooperation, despite domestic difficulties. These currents tie the episodes presented into a coordinated picture of democracy's lasting importance for NATO's purpose and development.

The author leans on diplomatic history methodology, deftly tying in political history as well, with a corresponding preponderance of sources drawn from collections of key leaders' and institutions' papers. American presidential archives contribute significant material, but Sayle also conducted extensive research in the United Kingdom alongside more targeted research in Brussels and Ottawa. Memoirs, memoranda, and official communication constitute a key portion of primary sources. As a result, the narrative is tight and brisk, avoiding detours into the grainy detail of domestic politics in various countries. Sayle sketches the rise and

fall of coalitions and governments so that readers can contextualize NATO's debates, but his focus never shifts from leading officials and their interactions in response to internal pressures and external events. This approach makes the work more accessible and is well-suited to its goals.

While scholars have explained NATO's endurance by pointing to shared civilizational heritage or democratic institutions, Sayle rejects these claims. Common culture does not guarantee security cooperation for him. Further, NATO included autocratic regimes in Portugal and Turkey and functioned nondemocratically internally as well, lacking majority-rule procedures that might have restrained the largest allied states from setting policy (4). Finally, the author discards the idea of a transnational elite as an explanation for NATO's cohesion, although shared experiences of World War II did provide some valuable personal connections. More positively, he draws on Lawrence S. Kaplan's work as an inspiration for historical writing on NATO. Sayle also presents books by John Lewis Gaddis, Marc Trachtenberg, Melvyn Leffler, and Francis Gavin as clarifying his particular project toward understanding post-1945 strategic thought around NATO's confrontation of non-military Soviet threats. Thus, the focused argument envisioning NATO as the foundation of a stable political structure in a Europe threatened by democracy contributes to studies of both NATO and the postwar international order.

Sayle's work unites a human story with steadily developed arguments for an accessible, insightful examination of democracy's importance, as a threat and challenge, to NATO's history. A wealth of primary sources and a cohesive chronological organization thoroughly support the thesis. At times the author pushes his emphasis too far, as when Willi Brandt's *Ostpolitik* is characterized as "domestic politics, not diplomacy" (171). The episodic approach also tends to momentarily highlight certain nations – De Gaulle's France in the 1950s, Brandt's Germany in the 1970s – leaving the reader pondering broader developments effecting other member nations' political and diplomatic positions. Still, these concerns do not detract from the author's central purpose. The focused, forceful approach fits naturally with the attempt to significantly revise the historiographical perception of NATO as an international security organization held together by democratic goodwill, rather than a fragile instrument of power politics riven by democratic antagonisms.



Enduring Alliance manages to achieve this intervention while maintaining interest and concision, accomplishments that enable the book to yield value for laymen, students, and historians.

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