

Coincidence or Commonality of Interests? German and American Views on NATO Enlargement

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The Long Entanglement: NATO's First Fifty Years, Lawrence S. Kaplan (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999). 262 pp., cloth (ISBN: 0-275-96418-3), \$65.00; paper (ISBN: 0-275-96419-1), \$22.95.

The Challenge of NATO Enlargement, Anton A. Bebler, ed. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999). 244 pp., cloth (ISBN: 0-275-96108-7), \$65.00.

NATO 2000. Transatlantische Sicherheit im Wandel, Johannes Varwick and Wichard Woyke (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1999). 262 pp., paper (ISBN: 3-8100-2292-6), EUR 12.68.

Plädoyer für eine sanfte NATO-Osterweiterung, Peter Robejsek (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1999). 330 pp., paper (ISBN: 3-631-34288-8), EUR 50.06.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) seemed to have lost its traditional purpose of a collective defense alliance with the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989, the subsequent dissolution of the Warsaw Pact Organization, and the territorial disintegration of the Soviet Union. The enemies against which NATO had guarded the Western world began to seek integration in two major Western organizations, the European Union (EU) and NATO. The democratizing states that had liberated themselves from Soviet domination either had vanished from the Warsaw Pact or were in such disarray that they temporarily no longer posed a serious military threat, as was the case with the former Soviet Union and the new Russian republic.

This decreasing military threat coincided with the rise of new threats in the region formerly behind the iron curtain: ethnic tensions within states grew and,

on several occasions, erupted violently; bilateral relations, previously dominated by “proletarian internationalism,” suffered from the reopening of almost forgotten territorial and minority conflicts; and Russia, although weakened and with a keen interest in good relations with the West, sought to reassert its position in Europe and the world. The transformation of NATO from a defense alliance into an organization charged with providing or at least contributing to comprehensive security across the European continent seemed to be an ideal solution. NATO’s new mission could assure countries in Central and Eastern Europe, through various institutions such as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and programs such as Partnership for Peace (PfP), of the West’s commitment to their democratization process. This commitment would intensify and improve in the long-term relations with Russia (for example, the [delayed] NATO–Russia Founding Act).

Things turned out to be more complicated. Several states in Central and Eastern Europe, especially Hungary and Poland, wanted NATO membership rather than “special relations.” The club of aspiring members soon grew, including the Czech and Slovak Republics, Romania, Slovenia, and the three Baltic states. Deeply troubled domestically and in its relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States, Russia strongly opposed any expansion of NATO into what was then and still is now considered a zone of vital interests. NATO itself did not favor the idea of enlargement unilaterally either, especially after the violent breakup of Yugoslavia and NATO’s involvement in the Bosnian war. Although this had underlined the importance of a strong military component for Europe’s new security architecture, many critics of NATO’s proposed expansion thought it failed to prove convincingly the necessity to forge ahead with expansion plans. Nor did it deter those in favor of enlargement. By the time of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, the debate about NATO’s future had been going on for several years.

Initially, Germany and the United States were the strongest advocates of NATO enlargement. They were the first two alliance partners to change their stance from firmly ruling out the admission of former member states of the Warsaw Pact Organization to supporting NATO’s admission of selected states in Central and Eastern Europe. The motivation to do so was different in each country, while, over time, the German and American positions became more closely aligned. Recent publications outline the debate on NATO enlargement and its driving forces in both countries up to the NATO campaign against Serbia in spring 1999.

In *The Long Entanglement*, Lawrence S. Kaplan traces the development of NATO from its origins in the late 1940s to its fiftieth anniversary in 1999. As the title suggests, it is primarily the relationship between NATO and the United States that interests Kaplan. This compilation was written in the 1980s and 1990s and is grouped into four chapters, each with a short introduction. The author works his way from the “Origins of the Alliance” (chap. 1) through what

he calls “NATO in the First Generation” (chap. 2) and “NATO in the Second Generation” (chap.3) to the challenges that confront “NATO in the Third Generation” (chap. 4).

Although the book lacks the consistency and comprehensiveness that we might expect from a monograph, Kaplan provides informative case studies—for example, “The Impact of Sputnik on NATO” (pp. 65–75), “The Berlin Crisis” (pp. 77–98), and “The INF Treaty and the Future of NATO” (pp. 165–182). These and other essays in the first three chapters of the book benefit particularly from the “American” perspective, which places NATO’s complex history firmly in the context of American politics without losing sight of wider developments inside and outside the alliance.

In the final chapter, this approach is less satisfactory. Of the three essays in this chapter, the last one, “Counterfactual History of NATO” (pp. 221–237), investigates the potential alternatives to the U.S. involvement in Europe, such as “Red Italy,” the “Fourth Balkan War,” and “the Fourth Reich.” None are found to be desirable. The benefits of such a counterfactual history retrospectively may be beneficial in justifying American entanglement, but Kaplan’s analysis of the NATO enlargement process in the essays “NATO after the Cold War” (pp. 185–201) and “NATO at Fifty” (pp. 203–220, an updated version of the preceding essay) is weak.

Placing enlargement in the context of the Bosnian war, Kaplan credits Germany with being the “primary champion” of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary in their quest for NATO membership (p. 194), but this assumes that the motives behind the German commitment are an attempt “to further its traditional influence in Central Europe” (*ibid.*). The analysis of Germany becomes more elaborate in the updated version of “NATO at Fifty” but falls short of grasping the complexity of the German position. Kaplan recognizes that NATO enlargement also offered Germany the unique opportunity “to end once and for all the ugly history of German-Polish conflict,” but he adds that another objective of Chancellor Kohl was to “advance German economic interests in Central Europe” (p. 212). At best, even this is a half-truth. For Germany, NATO enlargement was also about enhancing its own security in Central and Eastern Europe.

Across political parties (except for the postcommunist Party of Democratic Socialism and some radical pacifists among the Greens), it was recognized that admitting Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic to NATO would have a positive impact on their democratization process and set an example for other countries in the region. Democratization and the encouragement of economic reforms in Central and Eastern Europe had been top items on the German foreign policy agenda since 1989–90. Promoting this process through NATO enlargement rather than through the EU was a decision driven by considerations about the economic impact of admitting new members to the EU. Germany was not alone among EU member states to fear negative repercussions of the sudden availability of cheap labor and increased competition for EU development funds.

The discussion of the U.S. position and the changes it underwent is equally unsatisfactory.

Kaplan notes the American preoccupation with Russia in the early years of the first Clinton administration (pp. 194–195) but, except for a few sparse references to the domestic political process in the United States, he fails to answer why and when a change in American enlargement policy occurred, unlike James Goldgeier.¹ There is also too little discussion of the impact of the EU and Western European Union (WEU)—the EU’s military arm, founded after the failure of the European Defense Community in the mid-1950s—on the enlargement process. The American perspective on the process may be justifiable, but even U.S. lawmakers could not, and did not, ignore the West European dimension of the enlargement process. This perspective is broader than the Bosnian war, although enlargement is a particularly good example of the current and potential future threats to European security. These essays were written before the escalation of the Kosovo conflict. But even in the mid-1990s, it was clear that one key U.S. objective could be achieved only through the enlargement of NATO rather than the EU: securing the transatlantic dimension, thereby anchoring the United States in Europe. Clearly, this was an obvious outcome of NATO enlargement and the transformation of its role from defense to security alliance. For this reason, the enthusiasm of the European allies varied considerably.

France was far more skeptical than Britain and Germany because it intended to strengthen the role of the Europeans in NATO, parallel to its own reentry into NATO’s military structures. Italy and other southern members feared a North–South imbalance and German domination among European NATO members similar to Germany’s predominant role in the EU. Interestingly, the NATO–EU connection worked also the other way around. Turkey, whose application to EU membership had been rejected for many years, most painfully when the EU decided to open accession talks with Cyprus in 1998, sought to promote its own chances for EU membership through exercising potential veto pressure on the EU members of NATO.

Perhaps no single essay could answer all the complex questions related to NATO enlargement, but several contributors to Anton A. Bebler’s book, *The Challenge of NATO Enlargement*, provide comprehensive and conclusive accounts. This is particularly true for the contributions by Jonathan Eyal (“NATO’s Enlargement: Anatomy of a Decision,” pp. 22–34) and Theo Sommer (“The Problems of Enlargement,” pp. 35–40). Eyal examines the enlargement process through its various stages and forerunners, from the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) to the PfP program. Analyzing the German position, Eyal argues that the “leaders in Bonn understood, earlier than those in

¹James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999).

Paris and London, that the security void which had been created in the heart of the Continent would ultimately have to be filled” (p. 27).

Given the alternative to NATO integration—a repeat of the same fragmented and opposing bilateral and multilateral security partnerships in Central and Eastern Europe that had already played a major part in the origins of two world wars—the choice for Germany was obvious: “integration of these countries into both NATO and the European Union, not only in order to ensure security in the heart of Europe, but also in order to spare the Germans themselves any new historic choices between East and West” (*ibid.*). Initially, Germany’s American counterparts considered things differently. U.S. leaders saw the need to maintain Congressional support for continued American involvement in NATO and for the further existence of the alliance as equally important. Calculations about electoral support from East European immigrants figured prominently in presidential support for the admission of Central and Eastern European countries (pp. 27–28).

Eyal also provides a good analysis of the background to U.S. opposition to admitting more than the three initial candidates, pointing out that the entire enlargement process was driven by anything but supposedly scientific objectiveness (p. 33). This is a far more detailed account than Kaplan’s, but surprisingly, Eyal also misses the economic calculations made in the United States and Germany. The United States saw the accession of new members to NATO as three more markets for its armaments industries, which, like NATO in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of communism, now otherwise seemed superfluous.

Theo Sommer’s assessment of the enlargement process reaches a conclusion very similar to Eyal’s. He argues that “NATO extension to the East is by no means a military imperative, but rather a project entirely based on political calculations” (p. 37). He also sees the rationale for the changed American stance on enlargement in electoral terms, but he points to the “additional advantage” this process offered for the American desire to remain involved in European security affairs (*ibid.*) Sommer also gives a comprehensive account of West European governments’ considerations about whether and how to enlarge NATO. According to Sommer, these considerations concerned primarily three inter-related issues: the consequences of enlargement for NATO, the organization’s strategic coherence, and its impact on Russia.

Other essays in Bebler’s book deal with Russia and Ukraine, their incorporation in new security structures, and their reaction to NATO enlargement (chap. 2). Further contributions address the political and military situation in the new member states (chap. 3) and in those Central and East European countries that have not been admitted to NATO in the first round of the enlargement process (chap. 4). The book concludes with a perspective on the neutral and northern European countries (chap. 5). Crucially, some of the essays look at such fundamental issues as the relationship between NATO and the EU/WEU

(Monika Wohlfeld and Fraser Cameron) and beyond enlargement to the future of the alliance (Jeffrey Simon, Daniel N. Nelson and Thomas S. Szayna). The essays are succinct and well written, and, unlike many other edited books that emerge from conference papers, they are held together well by a common theme.

In *NATO 2000: Transatlantische Sicherheit im Wandel*, Johannes Varwick and Wichard Woyke begin with a brief but sufficient overview of NATO's history (chaps. 1 and 3) and structure (chap. 4). They then examine recent changes in NATO strategy and how it has influenced and was influenced by NATO enlargement (chap. 6), the Europeanization of NATO (chap. 7), and the new tasks of NATO as an instrument of collective security. The analysis of these processes is compelling in relation to Germany.

Varwick and Woyke point out that Germany primarily had a strong security interest in NATO enlargement based on the need for a European system of collective security to be achieved through the parallel process of NATO and EU enlargement that would respect Russia's interests and permit further development of existing Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) structures (pp. 105–106). Like the other books reviewed here, Varwick and Woyke include in their discussion a brief factual account of the costs of the enlargement process and its impact on the enlargement debate as a whole. But, as with the other authors, it is just that—a factual account without the analysis that this matter deserves.

The debate over the costs associated with enlargement more explicitly highlights the different rationales that drove the enlargement process in the United States and Germany. Released by the Congressional Budget Office in 1996, initial figures between \$60 billion and \$125 billion over fifteen years were based on the U.S. assumption of a NATO enlargement that served primarily military and strategic purposes. That is, it meant including new members into a collective defense organization while retaining and extending its military capabilities and enhancing its strategic position.

Understandably, the Germans formulated a different position. They did not perceive a major security threat to NATO arising from admitting the three new members. With Britain, Germany shared the opinion that NATO's Article 5 guarantees could be extended to the three newcomers without major financial implications. The German government considered NATO enlargement as a political process with few costs but significant benefits. Emphasizing the political importance of enlargement over its military significance also implied stronger German support for the transformation of NATO into an organization that could provide security beyond the boundaries of its member states. In contrast, the U.S. government could only secure Congressional support for a NATO enlargement based on resisting such a transformation and maintaining NATO as a defense alliance, as outlined in Senator Jesse Helms's famous ten conditions put to the Clinton administration in 1997.

Unfortunately, national governments on both sides of the Atlantic were unwilling and unable to engage in a direct discussion of NATO's future direction beyond enlargement. Whatever the financial cost, as Varwick and Woyke point out, Germany and the United States would still be the primary beneficiaries of the enlargement, along with the new member states.

An enlarged NATO would enable the United States to extend and solidify its influence in Europe. A political, economic, and social stabilization of its immediate neighbors (p. 117) would end Germany's role as a military front-line state (p. 104). In "The Europeanization of NATO" (chap. 7), Varwick and Woyke discuss at length how the enlarged NATO has affected the transatlantic relationship in the context of a "revitalization of the European integration process." They also discuss how and with what results "the EU and WEU will take over tasks previously performed by NATO" (p. 119). They make clear that the duality of the EU and NATO enlargement process is especially important to Germany, not only because of its role vis-à-vis Central and Eastern Europe, but also because of the traditional core partnership of Germany and France in the EU.

Germany has to maintain a careful balance between its own commitment to NATO and the French policy of strengthening a European defense and security identity through building up the WEU as the EU's own military organization. The German-French Eurocorps and the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) have made French rapprochement with NATO easier. Varwick and Woyke correctly argue that the reintegration of France into NATO structures was a priority for Germany (p. 128) because the consequences meant strengthening NATO's European component, or, more precisely, a "greater independence of the Europeans" resulting from changed geopolitical constellations rather than a weakening NATO (p. 129).

The consideration of European developments in the NATO context is a particular strength of this book. It makes a convincing case for NATO's continued existence. The authors also emphasize the need for a strong European contribution to security, not only to its member states, but also beyond the geographic boundaries of the alliance, while not underestimating the significance of the transatlantic dimension of the NATO framework. In underlining the importance of NATO in Europe and vice versa, Varwick and Woyke are not blind to the limitations that a transatlantic security concept built on NATO alone would have. In sum, the authors argue in "The Future of NATO" (chap. 9) for complementing NATO with further elements to "secure institutionally the bond of common interests between North America and Europe" for conflict management (p. 151).

Like Bebler's book, Peter Robejsek's *Plädoyer für eine sanfte NATO-Osterweiterung* focuses almost entirely on the NATO expansion process. Yet Robejsek argues from a different perspective, that of "soft enlargement." After analyzing the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe (chap. 2)

and studying the various political, military, and economic threats perceived by Central and East European countries, Robejsek examines the military doctrines and security concepts of the Višegrad Four (chap. 4).

The analysis of the relationship between the economic integration of Central and Eastern Europe into Western Europe through admission to the EU and the security needs of Central and East European countries (chap. 5) is followed by a chronological summary of the major developments leading to NATO's enlargement (chap. 6). Unfortunately, all of this is done in excessive detail without adding any compelling new insights. These preliminary studies may be needed as a basis for Robejsek's "real" point, but their elaboration leaves only two chapters to make a compelling case for the need for and the benefits of soft enlargement.

In "Comprehensive Security Policy for Eastern Europe" (chap. 7), Robejsek examines the options available to Central and East European countries: NATO membership, admittance to the EU, reliance on their own defense potential, regional alliances, and neutrality. In one way or another, he finds all these concepts of security policy limited in their capacity to provide comprehensive security both to the region and beyond. He also rightly criticizes the fact that despite an awareness of the greater risks of internal security threats, traditional security concepts prevail (p. 237) and military doctrines remain at odds with the reality of military capabilities and the economic abilities to provide for them (p. 241).

From this conclusion, Robejsek advocates an all-encompassing security policy that covers political, economic, ecological, social, and military aspects. Such a policy would provide a framework within which economic modernization and transformation and internal and external security could be achieved in the mid and long term. Moreover, the policy would ensure economic integration with Western Europe and help the Central and East European countries escape the political instability and economic underdevelopment of the Russian-dominated zone of Eastern Europe (p. 243). Although this is not necessarily a new approach, in the context of NATO expansion, it reveals critical and innovative thinking.

Soft enlargement, as Robejsek envisages it, would introduce a strictly defensive component into the military and political integration process of new NATO members. This component would avoid building up new zones of regional instability or excluding states that do not or cannot join the alliance from security arrangements that reach beyond the boundaries of NATO. It would assure these states of the nonexistence of any military threat from an enlarged alliance and would thus prevent them from overreacting (p. 273). According to Robejsek, this process would be achieved through military doctrines whose practical effects imply a structural inability to attack due to the type of existing armaments, logistical support, and structure and type of military units (pp. 274–278).

We might disagree with the feasibility of such an approach, but there would be numerous political and economic advantages to such a strategy, both for

Central and Eastern Europe and for the “old” transatlantic alliance. Such advantages include cost savings, rechanneling human and material resources in the economic and ecological reconstruction process, an elimination of Russian fears of NATO enlargement, and eventually the possibility to build a radically new European collective security system (pp. 279–285). Despite these and other potential advantages, Robejsek is realistic enough to see that the chances of realizing this soft enlargement strategy are minute. Developments since the admission of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic prove him right in his skepticism.

Although all four books use different terms for emphasizing individual aspects of the enlargement process and clarifying what motivations are seen as primary driving forces of the enlargement process, each provides—within its own occasionally self-imposed limitations—informative reading. Collectively, they emphasize that German and American interests initially coincided in bringing about the enlargement of NATO, although the two countries were driven by different rationales. Between 1994 and 1999, when Germany and the United States managed to convince their alliance partners of the necessity and benefits of enlargement, these rationales have become more closely aligned. The result is true common interests shared by the Federal Republic and the United States, as well as by their allies and the new NATO member states. These common interests have led to the creation of comprehensive security structures for all of Europe, including the United States and Canada, while neither alienating nor incorporating Russia and other nonmember states of NATO.

To be effective, such security structures will require a military component in the future, as events in Bosnia and Kosovo made only too apparent. NATO alone cannot provide this type of security. It must work in close cooperation with other organizations to attain this goal. As Kaplan points out, if this objective were realized, “NATO would be *primus inter pares* among regional organizations that include the WEU and EU, as well as the OSCE, while the American presence would serve as the rubric beneath which positive change could take place” (p. 210). In this respect, Germany and the United States also share interests. NATO will have to play a pivotal role in European security arrangements, but, to do this, the alliance will need the continued involvement of the United States in Europe.