

The International Spectator 3/2003

## Book reviews and Notes

---

# The Transatlantic Alliance under Review

Nicole Renvert\*

NATO, the European Union, and the Atlantic community : the transatlantic bargain reconsidered / Stanley R. Sloan. - Lanham, Maryland : America by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, c2002. - 304 p. - ISBN 0742517594 ; ISBN 0742517608 (pbk)

Defending Europe : the EU, NATO and the quest for European autonomy / edited by Jolyon Howorth and John T.S. Keeler. - New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. - 247 p. - ISBN 140396114X

The new order of international security structures is faced with challenges that require not only a thorough analysis, but a rethinking of the existing instruments of security and international security policy. These two books successfully take on this rather ambitious project with sound arguments and even deliver something like a catalogue of strategic suggestions.

Whereas Stanley Sloan focuses primarily

on the development of NATO's architecture of security and its relevance as an important platform for transatlantic relations, the authors of *Defending Europe* provide a broad, European-based analysis as they chart the ESDI's arduous path and the new questions provoked by the eastern expansion of the EU and NATO. Both books are highly readable, well-researched and analytically cogent, making them ideal textbooks for the study of these issues. They are sure to be popular within both the international relations and academic communities.

Stanley Sloan's underlying thesis is that, through NATO, the transatlantic community was able to create a politically and militarily unique foundation for interaction that permitted the coordination of European and American interests via the necessary "deals and bargains". NATO's role is therefore much more than a political-military alliance. As Sloan convincingly asserts,

\* Nicole Renvert is Director of the Transatlantic Project, Division of International Relations, Bertelsmann Foundation, Gütersloh.

NATO, for all its cool and calculated pragmatism in the name of national interests, is at its core a community "with roots in the hearts as in the minds of the partners".

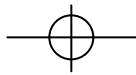
The end of the Cold War as well as the new threats posed by international terrorism and weapons of mass destruction have forced this instrument of international security as well as other security organisations to face the difficult prospect of reconsolidation and the drafting of a new transatlantic contract. The bases for negotiations of such a treaty are without doubt altered by the overwhelming hegemonial power of the US. Because objectives and priorities have changed, the transfer of existing instruments and policies to this new phase of international cooperation is bound to be problematic. The resultant imbalance, which is sure to be further accentuated by the challenge of international terrorism, can be brought into balance only through a reiteration and development of common values. Sloan argues that in the long run, it is in both American and European interests to reform existing instruments of security policy to accommodate the new conditions.

In the US, it is now widely recognised that the strengthening of European instruments of defence and security is essential to the new order of international security and that the Europeans must assume greater responsibility in leadership. Sloan is correct to argue that this would embolden the EU pillars of government while improving inter-institutional cooperation between NATO and the EU. The events of 11 September have created a new momentum in such

strategic discussions because questions of how to confront international terrorism and the effects thereof have exposed numerous fissures in the façade of a security architecture undergoing a difficult process of consolidation and reform. According to Sloan, what remains vital is the political will to meaningfully employ and therefore strengthen NATO as an instrument of international security policy and to prompt Europeans to overcome their "capability gaps".

Variations of this argument are put forth by the authors of the equally well-researched and substantiated articles in *Defending Europe*. Certainly, the goal of European autonomy in security policy has turned out to be a prolonged and laborious process. Yet, as the authors in this collection assert, Europeans and Americans continue to be dependent upon one another because both must build upon their common values to create a global security order and processes of democratisation if they are to meet the threats posed to communities of nation states. The authors claim convincingly that despite all the obstacles ballyhooed during the unilateralism vs. autonomy debate in transatlantic relations, a coordinated and goal-oriented European security and foreign policy would lead to the strengthening of the Atlantic Alliance. Regardless of all the tension put on the transatlantic structure recently, the US and Europe will remain each other's most important partner.

Both books offer more than quick glances at the difficulties in reshaping the security architecture on both sides of the Atlantic. They look closely at the



complexities of such a project, mapping out realistic future scenarios and offering potential plans.

The one weakness that both books share is the timing of their publication. The Iraq debate, which continues to strain transatlantic relations and has provoked a deep identity crisis in the process of inner-European unification, finds no mention in either book, with the unfortunate result that they run the

risk of seeming anachronistic, even though they are nothing of the sort.

Both books make for good reading and are recommended to those who wish to further their understanding of contemporary transatlantic relations. Of particular interest in both are the strategic suggestions which call for a future-oriented policy on both sides of the Atlantic and the creation of options at political turning points.

