



Mary Ann Heiss, S. Victor Papacosma, eds. *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intrabloc Conflicts*. Kent: Kent State University Press, 2008. xv + 244 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87338-936-5.



**Reviewed by** Luke A. Nichter (Texas A&M University-Central Texas)

**Published on** H-German (August, 2009)

**Commissioned by** Susan R. Boettcher

## Post-Pact Rivalry: New Insights into Intrabloc Rivalry

Although scholars have studied interbloc conflicts in the Cold War repeatedly, recent declassification of materials by NATO and member states of both blocs since the early 1990s has permitted them a closer study of intrabloc behavior on both sides. Much of this action, especially in the Warsaw Pact, had been somewhat shrouded in mystery. The essays in this volume were drawn from papers delivered at a conference, “NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intrabloc Conflicts,” held at Kent State University and co-hosted by the Lemnitzer Center for NATO and European Union Studies and the then-Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (now the Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security). The resulting volume provokes readers to consider issues of great importance, including the future of NATO, the ways in which both the Atlantic alliance and the Warsaw Pact handled crises that resulted in intra- as well as interbloc conflicts, new angles on the complexities of the Cold War, and the lessons that NATO still has to learn from the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact. All of the essays are authored by scholars with broad expertise.

An introductory essay by S. Victor Papacosma sets forth the origin and structure of the volume. Its editors chose to split the contributions into two sections, on NATO and the Warsaw Pact, respectively. Given the focus on intrabloc conflict, however, greater comparison might have been facilitated had the essays been organized according to the types of intrabloc conflicts they describe. These include conflict that arose from routine pact decision-making, conflicts between pact member states, conflicts between member states and pact leaders, and conflicts that arose at least partially because of a non-pact third party.

The essays on conflict from routine pact decision-making reveal a strong contrast between the two sides of the Cold War. Lawrence S. Kaplan’s “NATO United, NATO Divided: The Transatlantic Relationship” provides the backdrop for the NATO half of the volume. Kaplan argues that despite the constant presence of crisis or conflict with this alliance, the greatest sign of its enduring success is the lack of withdrawal by any member nation. NATO’s recent expansion to the East also under-

lines this success. Kaplan notes that the greatest challenges to the alliance will be adaptation to expansion beyond its original boundaries and the need to respond to out-of-area conflicts. Meanwhile, Vojtech Mastny, in “The Warsaw Pact: An Alliance in Search of a Purpose,” argues that the Warsaw Pact had a very different *raison d’être* than NATO. While NATO clearly existed to protect member states against the Soviet threat, the true purpose of the Warsaw Pact was unclear at its inception in 1955. Mastny’s argument is based on new archival evidence from former Warsaw Pact states, which shows that discord was rife in the pact than outsiders used to suspect. In addition, Mastny notes that the Warsaw Pact’s institutions were never tailored to accommodate a diversity of views, that the pact’s purpose was more divisive than that of NATO, that its military and political purposes created an unresolved tension, and that Moscow never relied on it in the manner that Washington relied on NATO.

A second group of essays treats intrabloc tensions that arose from bilateral disputes between pact nations. Mary Ann Heiss shows in “Colonialism and the Atlantic Alliance: Anglo-American Perspectives at the United Nations, 1945-1963” that, although NATO member states were the world’s leading colonial powers, frequent discord on the issue emerged between member states, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. Historical support in the United States for self-determination and self-government as universal rights had influenced major elements of U. S. foreign policy, such as Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and Franklin Roosevelt’s Atlantic Charter, while the United Kingdom expected its allies to respond to challenges to British colonial policy. In response, Heiss argues, American diplomats employed a variety of tools designed to soften anticolonial sentiment at the United Nations and other forums. French diplomacy also mitigated intrabloc tensions within NATO states, as shown in Charles Cogan’s “The Florentine in Winter: François Mitterrand and the Ending of the Cold War, 1989-1991.” Cogan argues that while it has become commonplace to criticize Mitterrand for his inability to anticipate the sudden German call for reunification in 1989-90, at a fading point of his career and while in poor health, Mitterrand maintained equilibrium in the French-German relationship and thus worked to anchor Germany to the West. Cogan pays particular attention to late 1991 Maastricht summit, in addition to other achievements that have thus far received scant attention from Mitterrand’s detractors.

In terms of intra-pact relations, perhaps unsurpris-

ingly, the Germanies provoked their share of problems. With reference to the West, in tracing the origin and development of *Ostpolitik*, with its culmination during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) at Helsinki in 1975, Oliver Bange demonstrates, as many of us have always suspected, that West German *Ostpolitik* provoked intrabloc tensions in NATO. In “Ostpolitik as a Source of Intrabloc Tensions,” Bange moves beyond the standard interpretation that *Ostpolitik* caused sparks in the Bundestag as well as in bilateral relations with the United States to show that the policy resulted in pushback from Chancellor Willy Brandt’s Social Democratic Party and his coalition cabinet. Bange notes that Brandt sought to mitigate these problems by taking care not to speak of the ultimate objective of German reunification—preferring instead to use the term “zusammenwachsen.” Regarding the Warsaw Pact, in “Polish-East German Relations, 1945-1958,” Sheldon Anderson argues that insurmountable differences between the East German and Polish Communist parties precluded the “illegitimate” governments of each nation from brokering an honest reconciliation between their peoples after World War II. These differences included Polish administration of German territories east of the Oder-Neiße line, conflicting points of view toward policy regarding the West, especially West Germany, and tension over East German rearmament in 1956. In addition, the staunchly nationalist stance of the rank-and-file political leadership in both states posed a significant problem for Warsaw Pact cohesion on the strategic western front. Anderson notes that this problem became so serious that without intervention from the Soviet Union, a serious, perhaps epoch-making rupture would have occurred. Douglas Selvage, in “The Warsaw Pact and the German Question, 1955-1970: Conflict and Consensus,” begins where Anderson left off by arguing that debate over Warsaw Pact policy toward the Germanies actually concerned how that body should function in the political realm. In particular, we learn that East Germany promoted the idea that the Warsaw Pact should serve as the “transmission belt” of the bloc as a way of bolstering its standing with Soviet leadership and improving East Germany’s international position. Meanwhile, Polish leaders came into conflict with the East German government, and Poland sought to broaden the Warsaw Pact to take more interest in non-German issues. In the end, Selvage notes, Moscow tended to be more open to Polish than to East German views.

Conflict also occurred as a result of tension between pact nations and their respective bloc leadership. First,

in "Containing the French Malaise? The Role of NATO's Secretary General, 1958-1968," Anna Locher and Christian Nuenlist argue that among the many instances of intrabloc tension throughout NATO's existence, the era of French Gaullist foreign policy was the most intense. What emerges from their treatment of this otherwise familiar theme is the role of the three NATO secretaries general during this period—Paul Henri-Spaak, Dirk Stikker, and Manlio Brosio. While Spaak actively sought confrontation with French president Charles de Gaulle in tackling key controversies, Stikker and Brosio tried to minimize the appearance of crisis within NATO, but all three succeeded in addressing the French tendency toward obstructionism. Looking at this sort of conflict from the Warsaw Pact perspective, Csaba Kocsis shows the effect that even small states had within the Warsaw Pact. In "Why Was There No 'Second Cold War' in Europe? Hungary and the East West Crisis Following the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," the author argues that Hungary was able to oppose the Soviet invasion and exert pressure on Soviet leadership because Moscow considered it a loyal member of the Warsaw Pact. In addition, Kocsis adds, the Soviet invasion enhanced the development of a unique eastern European identity that in turn contributed to the emergence of a growing European self-awareness beginning in the 1960s.

Finally, intrabloc conflict could arise because of the actions of non-pact third parties. In "Leaning by Doing': Disintegrating Factors and the Development of Political Cooperation in Early NATO," Winfred Heinemann illustrates the trade-off for pact member nations between national and collective interests. Pushback by the United States after the creation of NATO's "Three Wise Men" in 1956—a committee tasked with identifying ways that NATO integration could expand into areas of cooperation beyond collective defense—resulted in a much-diluted recommendation to hold regular meetings of NATO foreign ministers. On this failed effort to expand NATO into a true "Atlantic community," Heinemann argues that such desires would have burdened the alliance unreasonably. Indeed, expansion was always a source of tension for NATO. In "Failed Rampart: NATO's Balkan Front," John D. Iatrides argues that the decision of the Atlantic Council in October 1951 to admit Turkey and Greece into NATO, a step designed to impede the advance of Soviet forces into the eastern Mediterranean, represented a significant expansion of the defense community's capabilities. Although NATO membership alone was not enough to stem the perennial conflict between Turkey and Greece, all-out war did not occur, due in large part

to direct intervention by the United States. While continued conflict between Turkey and Greece showed NATO member nations that a unified "Balkan front" was unrealistic, Iatrides notes the advantages that both nations received from their access to the resources of NATO member nations.

As Jordan Baev shows, the Warsaw Pact also experienced difficulties along its southern borders. In "The Warsaw Pact and Southern Tier Conflicts, 1959-1969," Baev argues that at the beginning of this period Romania, Albania, and Bulgaria were all trustworthy allies of the Warsaw Pact. Yet, within the decade, Romania opposed Soviet initiatives in the Warsaw Pact, Albania opposed Soviet "revisionism," and Bulgaria suffered internal, allegedly Maoist, challenges to the nation's political leadership. Ultimately, she notes, this disintegration prompted western leaders such as Zbigniew Brzezinski to speak of the "desatellitization" and "heterogenization" of the Soviet bloc, which over time led to a different American policy toward eastern Europe. In dealing with another pact border, in "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Warsaw Pact, 1969-1980," Bernd Schaefer argues that institutional links between the Warsaw Pact and China were severed as early as 1961 over differences in policy toward Vietnam and China's decision to cut relations with the entire Warsaw Pact except Romania during its own Cultural Revolution. From 1969 onward, the author notes, China had become increasingly dangerous to Moscow, especially after full normalization of U.S.-Chinese relations in January 1979. Moreover, any Soviet hopes for a warming in relations with China after the 1976 death of Mao Zedong were quickly dashed when the strong anti-Soviet direction of Mao's foreign policy persisted after his death.

As these summaries indicate, many essays seem to conceptualize intrabloc conflict as a sign of the unraveling of perceived need for the alliances themselves. For example, in "The Multilateral Force as an Instrument for a European Nuclear Force?" Ina Megens argues that the idea that Europeans could one day provide their own nuclear protection was first raised at the end of the 1950s, when some west Europeans began to question the American nuclear guarantee. Such desires for independence created transatlantic tension during the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations and suggested the need for a different type of bloc alliance. But, in sympathy with the wishes of European leaders such as Jean Monnet, the project met its end in late 1963 after Kennedy's assassination and the retirement of German chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

Each of these contributions adds to our understanding of the origins and operations of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, although over all, the essays rely more heavily on documents from the member nations of each pact rather than on sources from the pact leaderships: NATO documents, U.S. NATO documents, and documents from the Soviet Union. Certainly these are harder to come by, but especially in the case of NATO, these records have become available at the NATO archives in Brussels in recent years. Thus, we await their use before we can learn more

about the inner workings of this enduring transatlantic reliance. As additional primary source documents become available, no doubt our understanding of intrabloc conflict will continue to develop. However, criticisms aside, this volume greatly advances our understanding of the inner workings of the two most powerful military alliances in history during a period of time in which the possibility that they could meet each other in armed conflict was never distant from policymakers' concerns.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-german>

**Citation:** Luke A. Nichter. Review of Heiss, Mary Ann; Papacosma, S. Victor, eds., *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intrabloc Conflicts*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. August, 2009.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=24016>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.