



Gero von Gersdorff. *Die Gründung der Nordatlantischen Allianz.* München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2009. 582 S.

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Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (January, 2011)

G. von Gersdorff: Die Gründung der Nordatlantischen Allianz

The latest monograph of Gero von Gersdorff revisits a well researched theme: the foundation of the Atlantic Alliance in the years 1948/1949. The book reviews the linkage policies between Alliance formation, European integration, military assistance and the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany and thus the genesis of the existing security architecture. The institutional development in the post Cold War environment makes it indispensable to review and revisit the driving forces behind the existing security arrangements (p. 1).

Gero von Gersdorff's impressive study correctly outlines the 'unentwerrbare' connectedness of these parallel and interlinking processes (p. 443), thus disputes mono-causal explanations that dominated the profession during the Cold War years. And the book offers far more than an outline of the existing literature; it is revisiting a theme on a multi-archival basis using both: traditional and newly released archival sources (p. 6). The value of the primary sources is stressed (p. 12) 'with reason'. The author correctly highlights the need to overcome old or traditional interpretations of the genesis of our multi-institutional and hierarchic security architecture. The multi-archival mining stressed is part a new wave of scholarship in contemporary diplomatic history (p. 11). Von Gersdorff's study ably outlines the multi-facetted interests of the players involved. The result is a first rate multi-perspective analysis of the power politics in the Euro-Atlantic area (p. 10). Die Gründung der Nordatlantischen Allianz thus breaks with the older notion that the Atlantic Alliance is a mere response to the Soviet threat.

The study, however, does not offer a revisionist interpretations in line with the revisionism of the late 20th Century 'blaming the US with hegemonic designs'. Von Gersdorff's post-revisionist study on an 'empire by invitation' (p. 4) embeds the John Young and John Kent-thesis on the Brussels Pact and the path to the Washington Pact into the wider strands of the interlinked processes in the immediate post-war era. He thus further corrects the classic or orthodox notion that the Brussels Pact has always been nothing else but a stepping stone to obtain an Atlantic Alliance. The need to solve the German question in a Euro-Atlantic setting has always been a major concern of the Western powers, sometimes even the driving momentum in the creation of the Brussels Pact and of the so-called 'entangling alliance' (p. 42). The study is thus traditional and progressive at the same time.

The most interesting contribution of the author to recent scholarship are the emerging guiding visions of the national players and the analysis of the 'emerging' 'structural constraints' (p.12). The collapse of Bevin's 'Third Force' concept and its aftermath are lucidly presented (chapter 2), so is the French desire to emancipate France from British dominance in Europe by embracing a multi-layered security architecture and a French position in the Standing Group: the military directorate of NATO (chapter 3). Von Gersdorff is thus right to remind the reader of the strong political character of the process driving the formation of the Atlantic Alliance. A mere military rationale is thus relegated. This important insight of the author corresponds with the recommendations of the later SACEUR, Lauris Norstad, to US President Harry S. Tru-

man, that the formation of the Alliance should follow a political and not a military rational, since its major task was alliance management. Robert S. Jordan, Norstad, Cold War NATO Supreme Commander, Airman, Strategist, Diplomat, New York 2000. The US Strategic Air Command (SAC) safeguarded Western security.

It is one of the strengths of the study to always contrast the more Eurocentric visions of the European powers presented in the Brussels Pact forum with the wider set of negotiations in the US involving only the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and (sometimes) France. Von Gersdorff's study clearly indicates that i.e. the Belgium of Paul-Henri Spaak had major reservations to accept a US "dictat" fearing major repercussions for the autonomy of Belgium (p. 280 "eurozentristische Brille", p. 307). Similar were the French voices at the outset. Robert Schuman once considered the Atlantic Pact ephemeral, the Brussels Pact eternal. Ralph Dietl, *Dokumente zur Europaeischen Sicherheitspolitik*, Stuttgart 2009. The latter position changed with the French embrace of the multi-layered security architecture in 1949 (p. 403). This change of heart might merit more attention: the Anglo-French disputes within the

Brussels Pact (p. 303), US military assistance and the formation of the Standing Group are factors contributing to a valid explanation of the *volte face*. Did a US-French common vision emerge in 1949 as François Duchêne stipulates in his work on the emergence of the European integration of the Six? François Duchêne, Jean Monnet, *The First Statesman of Interdependence*, New York 1994. Von Gersdorff's research furnishes very important information in this respect, but finally does not conclusively explain the structural and domestic factors contributing to the change of the French guiding vision of the year 1949 (p. 291). Here might be a field for further "mining" in French archives.

All of the above indicates that it is very timely and important to constantly monitor and re-evaluate the genesis of the Atlantic Alliance in the light of new findings and under the important prism of multi-archival research. *Die Gruendung der Nordatlantischen Allianz* is a first rate monograph: well researched, well written, informative and up-to-date. It offers a valuable contribution of our understanding of the post war institutional development. This book should be available in any scientific library.

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Citation: Ralph Dietl. Review of von Gersdorff, Gero, *Die Gründung der Nordatlantischen Allianz*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. January, 2011.

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