Reviews

All for One: Terrorism, NATO and the United States

by Tom Lansford

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Reviewed by Bruce George

The events of the 11th September 2001 have spawned a plethora of hypotheses to explain why the terrorists attacked the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. The issue of terrorism has become a principal area of study in both policy and academic circles, as we consider the impact of the events of the 11th September and how they have affected national governments and international institutions.

Thomas Lansford presents a detailed analysis of the role played by NATO and traces the organisation's involvement, after its historic invocation of Article 5, in the 'war on terrorism'. Lansford's success is the identification of two groups who he suggests see the 11th September 2001 as either 'the beginning of the demise of the body' or as 'the Alliance's finest hour'. This disparity between the two groups primarily focuses on what role the alliance should play in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks. However, Lansford argues that this is a manifestation of a wider debate about European security objectives and in particular the significant capabilities gap between European members of NATO and the United States.

At an operational level, Lansford cites the positive nature of the alliance's role in garnering support through NATO, which resulted in a British-led UN peacekeeping force and saw Germany hosting a conference on the development of a post-Taliban regime. Although the focus of much of his thesis is on the role of NATO, he also analyses the wider implications on European capabilities. Specifically, Lansford notes the differences in approach between the US and her allies. For example, while the Pentagon was planning for a force comprising special forces and special operation troops, the European allies pledged troops in large numbers but who were of limited value to Operation Enduring Freedom. This focus is a good demonstration of where Lansford sees the crucial dilemma, insofar as he illustrates the current developments in military strategy pursued by the US that have left the Europeans, with the possible exception of the UK, trailing in her wake. His conclusion, that the Europeans are committed to burden-sharing, is insightful—he suggests that military contributions are only one level of support and furthermore that the non-military measures adopted by NATO will have a broader impact on the transatlantic regime. It will become essential for NATO to increase its capabilities to carry out humanitarian and peace support operations, which will have far-reaching implications on how the alliance deals with conflicts in the future, especially after the successes in Afghanistan.

Lansford's study is not just a detailed examination of the role of NATO after 11th September but also how future operations will be conducted. In particular his focus on the relationship between the EU and NATO is central to the evolving European security architecture. In summary, Lansford

argues that, overall, the alliance was able to strengthen the capabilities of the United States by pooling the resources of a collective body—NATO. This he believes is the most positive outcome of the alliance's involvement in the 'war on terrorism', and also for the future, as NATO continues to be the cornerstone of the transatlantic regime.

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