

BOOK REVIEWS

substantial changes in the Alliance Canada helped shape 63 years ago.

NATO is a living, dynamic thing, and so its progress and direction is very hard to track without active effort and study. However, the reality is that NATO has dramatically changed in character and complexity since 1999 as the global security environment, European political and economic integration, and transatlantic relations have evolved. With respect to that evolution, references and resources devoted to understanding those changes may be plentiful in number, but they have various shortcomings. One option for an inquiring mind is to slowly and selectively find and read leading articles in learned publications. Another option is simply to read Ivan Ivanov's book, *Transforming NATO: New Allies, Missions, and Capabilities*.

Ivanov manages to accomplish three valuable and specific tasks with his book. First, it is a very current and relevant work, having been published in August 2011. Therefore, he would appear to be the first to publish a work of this academic rigour that comments upon the 2010 Strategic Concept. Second, he has cobbled together 63 years of reference literature, with focus upon the last 20 years, to provide a single descriptive voice dealing with the *nature* of NATO. This is somewhat unique in a field where books are often collections of single issue papers. In my opinion, decent sources in this regard are the *Bison Papers* from the University of Manitoba, and *NATO in Search of a Vision*, edited by Gulnur Aybet. However, while these works provide expert analysis of a number of aspects and issues, and they are well edited, they each nonetheless provide a fractured voice on their respective themes. Not so with Ivanov. His voice and perspective always ring clear, from start to finish.

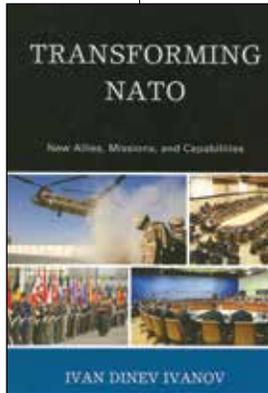
The greatest contribution Ivanov makes with this book is to provide a logical framework for understanding the modern NATO in the context of its new missions, allies, and capabilities. As he is the single unifying voice expressed herein, he can take the time to develop two linked concepts borrowed from Economics: 'Club Goods' and 'Complementaries.' Clearly, NATO fits well the description of a heterogeneous club, and therefore, much of its behaviour as an organization can be placed in context. His development of 'club goods theory' as a description of NATO may be somewhat generous, but it does nonetheless provide a view that the Alliance is a rational actor in an evolving global environment.

It is fascinating to view the rapid expansion of NATO from 16 nations to 28 nations through this lens. Previously, NATO had focused upon the Cold War and practical related issues, such as the number of Western combat-ready divisions available in Western Europe. Using Ivanov's framework, the addition of small states, such as Estonia and Croatia, make more sense because they broadened the Alliance membership, brought new capabilities, and supported new missions.

With the theoretical framework firmly established, Ivanov rigorously reviews NATO's alliance structure, its previous and current missions, and its present capabilities. This is not bedtime reading: it is a textbook where each page literally drips with facts and footnotes. The bibliography itemizes 20 pages of press releases, academic works, and policy documents. This is truly a 'one-stop shop' for acquiring an understanding of NATO in the modern era. It is slow to start, and an academic book, especially through the first two chapters covering Club Goods and Complementaries. Those without an Economics background may need to simply bypass those chapters to get on to the review of alliances, missions, and capabilities. However, the review of these latter elements is engaging and complete. Ivanov's expertise and knowledge allow him to lay bare NATO's complexity in a meaningful way.

It is recommended that those in the profession of arms should read this book. NATO is definitely not an optimal organization, and even an apologist like Ivanov makes this clear. Furthermore, NATO is 'not going away,' and Ivanov's framework provides evidence supporting this premise. NATO outlived its first and largest enemy, just as it has outlived many of its critics. Perhaps Robert Kaplan said it best: "NATO is not perfect but there is nothing better to replace it." The Government of Canada recently re-committed to the Alliance at the Chicago Summit in May 2012, and so the Canadian Armed Forces will remain as contributors to NATO. With that reality solidly reaffirmed, it is important to understand it and to use it to the benefit of our armed forces. Ivanov's book is a good foundation for that understanding.

Major Derek Spencer is an alumni of 1 Combat Engineer Regiment and the Mapping and Charting Establishment. He is presently employed as Chief CIED in the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps, Istanbul.



Little America: The War within the War for Afghanistan

by Rajiv Chandrasekaran

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012

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Reviewed by Jordan R. Fraser

Shortly after taking office in 2009, President Obama ordered an immediate surge of 21,000 troops into Afghanistan, and Rajiv Chandrasekaran followed them there.

After this immediate surge, Obama then proceeded to conduct an overall review of the Afghan mission. Having campaigned on Afghanistan being the 'right war,' his actions

BOOK REVIEWS

appeared to line up with his campaign promises. For the majority of the book, Chandrasekaran is attached to US Marine Brigadier General Larry Nicholson during his 2009-2010 rotation as the commanding general of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade in southern Afghanistan. This provides the author with valuable experiences in witnessing the interactions of US troops and civilian development personnel with Afghan civilians and government officials, a subject that forms an important part of his book.

Obama's surge was a compromise: it was not quite all the troops General Stanley McChrystal had requested, but it was enough. There was to be a surge in civilian personnel as well. The aim of Obama's surge was not to conduct a total counterinsurgency campaign in all corners of the country, but to do it in enough strategic locations in order to 'hold the line' and roll back Taliban advances in recent years. If that could be done, and the Afghan National Security Forces could be strengthened to a level able to manage a small counter-insurgency, US forces could then, at least, leave Afghanistan in a state where the country had a 'fighting chance.' Obama placed limits upon this surge, with withdrawals required to begin by July 2011.

The second portion of the book, entitled "Shattered Plans," details the results of the surge ordered by Obama and the infighting inside the American government's various arms involved in Afghanistan. Chandrasekaran's account reveals a State Department and US Embassy compound in Kabul characterized by a sclerotic and risk-averse bureaucracy. The embassy staff members are rarely allowed out into the streets due to security personnel having become obsessed with maintaining safety, while State department staff, supposedly in Afghanistan to help build governance capacity for the Afghans, sign off their e-mails by counting down the number of days they have left in Afghanistan before they can leave. Chandrasekaran's description of embassy employees and their clear lack of understanding of the cultural norms of an Islamic society (i.e., holding large parties where everyone got drunk) leave the reader embarrassed for the Americans.

US difficulties are further exacerbated when the Marine Corps' surge forces are deployed in Helmand province and given their own separate chain of command. They are made distinct from all the other US forces operating under General McChrystal. While the *efforts* of the US Marine Corps in Helmand are exemplary, Chandrasekaran critiques them for their rogue-like behaviour, which leads to them being in unnecessary places and taking unnecessary casualties. While the reader gets the sense that Chandrasekaran admires Brigadier General Nicholson's efforts, the author signals his disagreement with some of Nicholson's choices in the deployment of his troops.

The final portion of the book, "Triage," deals with how US forces, the Department of State, and USAID tried to

engage the Afghan government and key players in the southern provinces. These efforts were aimed at trying to bring political stability to this part of the country. Targeted counter-insurgency operations in Kandahar and Helmand brought some tangible results. However, a lack of fundamental understanding of basic Afghan needs, and the inability to move bureaucratic inertia to meet those needs led to a series of lost opportunities. For example, it was recommended by a number of USAID consultants that they help the Afghans grow cotton as a substitute for poppies. The Afghan government would subsidize the production of it and thus encourage it as a legitimate crop. However, the US Government was unwilling to grant exemptions to rules that prevent it from supporting countries where the production of cotton was subsidized by the government, and therefore, the project 'went nowhere.' Chandrasekaran's interviews with State Department individuals that reside on the agricultural file in Afghanistan greatly enhance his argument. They highlight the State Department's many missed opportunities for development in the area of Afghan agriculture.

In reading *Little America*, one gets the sense, unfortunately, that the United States has actually been its own worst enemy in Afghanistan, even after the surge. While the Obama administration did renew focus upon Afghanistan, its desire to begin pulling out by July 2011 did not really lend enough time for commanders to necessarily consolidate the surge's gains. As well, the internal wrangling inside the US Government and military apparatus make it clear that the competing objectives inside both the military and civilian branches were not properly reconciled into a clear and cohesive direction.

While Chandrasekaran's account relayed in the book make this point indirectly, I find that he does not often state what his own recommendations should be. The book's value would have been enhanced if he had made more overt recommendations of his own, rather than having the reader try to infer them from the content of his book. That being said, he seems to highlight criticisms and quote the views of specific State Department and military personnel on a more regular basis, leading the reader to believe that their views are synonymous with his own.

This book is truly a fascinating account of both the history of America's involvement in Afghanistan and its failures to complete its work there. This is despite an enormous, albeit hampered and often misdirected effort. It is a book that is certainly worth reading, and it would be of interest to any person wishing to gain insight into America's war in Afghanistan, where it has come from, and where it may be going.

Jordan R. Fraser, BA (Hons.), is an MA Candidate in the War Studies program at the Royal Military College of Canada, and he works on Parliament Hill.