

Lemke, Bernd: *Die Allied Mobile Force 1961 bis 2002*. Berlin: de Gruyter Oldenbourg 2015. ISBN: 978-3-11-041087-7; X, 374 S.

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The history of NATO in the Cold War has been quite well researched in the last thirty years. A good number of books and articles on military strategy, political history, burden sharing, integration and solidarity and other special problems have been published. Furthermore, historiography has pushed forward to the 1970s and 80s, dealing with, amongst other topics, the rise and fall of *détente*, the double-track decision and the so-called 'Second Cold War'. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done. Scholars have, for example, only recently begun to utilize the NATO Archives; an extremely valuable and easily accessible source.

As NATO has survived the Cold War and is still a major player today, albeit under new strategic and political frameworks, new questions and interests emerge. Historiographical research therefore started to develop new perspectives and to build bridges across the divide of 1990.

Bernd Lemke's research monograph fills a significant gap in the historiography of NATO and is of great value for NATO scholars, strategic and defense studies experts, plus Cold War and military historians. It analyzes the concept, development, structure, and operational history of NATO's first immediate reaction force from the early 1960s to the early 2000s. The Allied Mobile Force (AMF) was designed to be deployed to the flank areas of the alliance in case of provocation or limited aggression by members of the Warsaw Pact and consisted of six battalions and six squadrons of fighter bombers (three for each flank). Its main mission was to impress its military strength upon its adversary („Showing the Flag“) and to act as a conduit to communications, or even as a last warning if aggression extended. The force was commanded directly by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) under the direct supervision of the NAC. It was not integrated into the territorial command structure

of NATO.

Its establishment began in 1961 and was soon developed into a small, elite, multinational force (a brigade-sized formation composed by units of non-Flank members) with headquarters in Heidelberg (FRG). Its units could be deployed rapidly to any part of Allied Command Europe (ACE) if necessary. It had seven contingency areas (Finnmark, Zealand, Greek Thrace, Turkish Thrace, Gorizia Gap in North Eastern Italy, Turkish-Syrian border and Eastern Anatolia towards the Soviet Union). The AMF proved its capabilities for over four decades, and undertook more than 100 NATO exercises within the ACE area of responsibility. In 2002 the force was eventually disbanded (and soon replaced by NATO Response Force – the NRF).

Significantly, the AMF's existence and participation in NATO exercises reassured public opinion in the frontline allied countries. However, it should be noted that during actual crises, NATO authorities refrained from the deployment of the AMF, fearing that such initiative might provoke the Soviets.

Bernd Lemke has produced a book based on exemplary multi-archival research, utilizing sources including the NATO Archives as well as US-American, British and German archives, and the existing academic literature on relevant issues. It is structured thematically in three main parts (save the introduction and the conclusion). Each part contains several chapters (and sometimes sub-chapters). It concentrates on the development and role of a specific NATO military 'instrument' – the AMF – within the broader NATO military strategy and its political role, and offers an institutional history. The role of the AMF within NATO crisis management as tested in major war simulations (WINTEX and HILEX) is particularly analyzed in detail. Lemke builds on the results of already existing literature, especially the very important role of solidarity, cohesion and unity for the alliance. As NATO gradually began to shift from the strategy of 'massive retaliation' and, after a long process, adopted the 'Flexible Response', the alliance attached much more importance to the exposed Flanks: the new doctrine demanded a quick and commensurate (most likely, conventional, in the first in-

stance) reaction to deal with local crises or incidents. The AMF was a decisive factor in the deterrence of limited forms of Soviet bloc aggression or provocation, and even more important for the reassurance of member states (especially Norway, Denmark, Italy, Greece, and Turkey), should a local crisis erupt.

The author integrates the broader international developments into his study while exploring the – often divergent and conflicting – national, regional and global interests and policies of the NATO members and how these influenced the internal courses of action and the dynamics of the alliance. The situation was further complicated, particularly in regard to the Southern Flank, by endemic Greek-Turkish disputes and crises, Greek withdrawal from the integrated military structure of the alliance (1974–1980), as well as the region’s proximity to the volatile Middle East. At the same time, Lemke discusses how the political, strategic and financial factors shaped the function of the AMF during the Cold War and early post-Cold War era. The financial question should indeed not be underestimated. Even in times of East-West tension, burden sharing and the provision of expensive transportation (mainly airlifts) to the AMF was a source of intra-allied friction and struggle. Essentially, other NATO multinational forces, such as the Naval „On-Call“ Force Mediterranean, which later evolved into the STANAVFORMED and then to Standing NATO Maritime Group 2, were also subjected to similar difficulties.

The history of the AMF provides a lot of background points and paradigms for the challenging security environment today. Rapid reaction forces (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force) and crisis management are now considered major components for NATO to counter the manifold threats. Major geographical and contingency areas of the AMF in the Cold War are also still in critical focus for military operations today (Northern Flank / Baltic States, Southern and Eastern Turkey). The NATO ‘toolbox’ used to cope with such problems was originally developed during the Cold War. Many of its components, such as the AMF forces, are still important today. They have to address a whole range of situations and contingencies rang-

ing from the protection of NATO and its partners essential security interests to avoiding major destabilizations and wars. Similarly, many of the patterns of the Cold War alliance still exist today. These include the issue of burden sharing, (in)adequate finance, complicated administrative and command structures, the contradiction between the pursuit of national goals and interests and the maintenance of intra-allied solidarity and cohesion, and even the actual willingness to employ such combat forces should a real crisis erupt.

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