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David G. Haglund, *Sister Republics: Security Relations between America and France.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2023. 312 pp. $45.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9-780807179017.

Review by Michael H. Creswell, Florida State University.

David G. Haglund's *Sister Republics: Security Relations between America and France* explores the unique, often strained relationship between France and the United States, with a focus on their differing strategic cultures. Haglund, a professor of political studies at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada, argues that these cultural differences are a key reason for the recurring discord between the two nations. While the premise of examining Franco-American relations through the lens of strategic culture is compelling, the book presents challenges in both its structure and execution.

The opening chapters set the stage with a discussion of relations among the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and in particular US-NATO relations during the presidencies of Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Haglund uses these contemporary issues to frame the historical tensions between the United States and France. He identifies cultural divergences as a persistent fault line within NATO, positioning France as a perennial outlier in its strategic relationship with the United States. He argues that this "strange and special" alliance has historically oscillated between cooperation and contention, with cultural misalignments exacerbating strategic disagreements (p. xii). While strategic culture is central to the book's thesis, Haglund introduces it in a disjointed way, offering a lengthy intellectual history in chapter two rather than a concise definition. His skepticism about the concept further undermines its role as a foundational element of the analysis.

Haglund transitions to a detailed historical analysis, tracing the evolution of Franco-American relations from the Franco-American alliance of 1778 to the modern day. He asserts that only about three decades of cordial relations have characterized the past two centuries, with the remainder marked by unevenness or outright discord. Notably, he argues that US grand strategy and cultural misalignments have often made France question whether American actions truly align with French interests--a skepticism reciprocated by the United States.

In chapters examining ideology and structure, Haglund contends that the two nations' conflicting worldviews--France's realism versus America's liberalism--play a significant role in fueling mutual distrust. This ideological divide is compounded by the structural realities of the international system, which magnify the disparities between the two powers. Haglund also discusses heterostereotyping, or the formation of negative perceptions about each other, which he links to the broader phenomenon of anti-Americanism in France and American disdain for perceived French arrogance.

The book incorporates numerous international relations theories, including realism, the security dilemma, and democratic peace theory, to contextualize the tensions between the two nations. Although this theoretical exploration is insightful, it often becomes overly dense and digressive, making the narrative challenging for readers unfamiliar with these concepts. The frequent use of jargon, such as "dyadic," "cynosure," and "isomorphism," coupled with its eclectic mix of intellectual history and theory, creates confusion about its target audience. Its complexity likely would deter undergraduates and casual readers, while challenging graduate students lacking a strong methodological background.

Haglund's exploration of leadership through counterfactuals is among the book's strengths, offering nuanced insights into how figures like Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt influenced Franco-American relations, albeit in the short term. This discussion provides a sharp contrast to the theoretical density of earlier chapters, making it one of the more engaging parts of the book.

Despite these strengths, the book suffers from notable shortcomings. Haglund's mischaracterization of the United States' interwar period as isolationist and his conflation of isolationism as a policy instead of a strategy highlight a less-than-comprehensive engagement with historical scholarship. This oversight may stem from his background in political science rather than history. Additionally, the book's lack of a bibliography forces readers to sift through endnotes to discern its sources, a marked drawback for a scholarly work.

For all its flaws, *Sister Republics* does contribute to understanding the distinctive nature of Franco-American relations. Haglund's analysis of how cultural differences and historical experiences shape strategic thinking offers a fresh perspective on the tensions between the two nations. His exploration of leadership and counterfactuals is particularly engaging, demonstrating the nuanced ways in which individuals can influence diplomatic dynamics.

Ultimately, *Sister Republics* is a thought-provoking, if uneven work. Scholars with a strong grounding in international relations theory and an interest in Franco-American relations may find it rewarding, but its methodological weaknesses, stylistic infelicities, and lack of accessibility limit its broader appeal. Haglund's ambitious attempt to analyze this "strange and special" relationship through the lens of strategic culture offers valuable insights but falls short of delivering a definitive study.

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