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Roundtable Review 15-51

David G. Haglund, *Sister Republics: Security Relations between America and France*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2023. ISBN: 978-0-8071-7901-7.

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 Introduction by Lori Maguire, University of Reims

It is a great pleasure for me to introduce David Haglund's *Sister Republics: Security Relations between America and France*. As a citizen of both nations, and one who has done some research on the question, I find the topic fascinating. The book covers a large expanse of time, considering the evolution of the subject since the seventeenth century. It is divided into three parts (as all French schoolchildren are taught to do) with the first one entitled "the problématique," a French term for defining the central research issue. Thus, the two chapters in this section provide us with the main question to be studied. The second part, "Cultural Analysis," examines various causes for the often difficult nature of the Franco-American relationship, while the final section, "Culture and Individual 'Agency,'" considers the role of leaders. Haglund's conclusion is that "The Franco-American special relationship is the transatlantic world's preeminent geopolitical example of "satisficing" in decision-making, in which acceptable even if never optimal degrees of cooperation constitute the norm"—adding on to this observation a big "so what?" (239).

The French and American reviewers all have substantial expertise in the area. Jordan Becker has extensive direct experience of Franco-American relations from his work at NATO and on the French Joint Staff and has published numerous articles on transatlantic relations.¹ While he makes some important criticisms of the book, he also finds that its virtues far outweigh them. He argues that "the book's major contribution is thus to chronicle a long debate, and to frame it in terms that should be mutually intelligible to social scientists, historians, and sociologists."

The other two reviewers are French. Manuel Dorion-Soulié is a specialist of American history and culture, notably with regard to foreign relations. He has published works in both French and English, primarily on American policy in the Middle East.² Dorion-Soulié sees great virtues in the work but believes that Haglund pays too much attention to discourse and not enough to what actually happened on the ground. He writes:

The point here is not that Haglund's argument is too focused on theory to perceive the "reality," of the situation, it is that his argument seems to equate the discourse on security relations with the actual thing. Or, to put it more precisely: the problem with the historical basis for Haglund's study is that it relies on public utterances by officials or observers (academic, journalistic, and those in between) regarding security relations, which are then assumed to represent the actual use of forces and mobilization of resources.

¹ See, for example, Jordan Becker and Edmund Malesky, "The Continent or the 'Grand Large'? Strategic culture and operational burden-sharing in NATO," *International Studies Quarterly*, 61:1 (2017) 163-180 or Becker, Michael Duda, Douglas Lute, "From Context to Concept: History and Strategic Environment for NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept", *Defence Studies*, 22:3 (2022): 489-496.

² See Manuel Dorion-Soulié, "Containment, European Oil Asymmetry, and American Middle East Policy", *Politique européenne*, 76:2 (2022): 12-45 and Dorion-Soulié, "Les États-Unis comme puissance moyen-orientale : Une brève histoire du CENTCOM," *Revue d'histoire*, 153 :1 (2022) :79-89.

He notes that one can come away with a different impression after reading the diplomatic archives.

Julien Zarifien has a doctorate in Geopolitics. He has studied American foreign policy as well as ethnic lobbies in the US and the role of memory.³ His new book on the US and the Armenian Genocide will be published in 2024.⁴ Like the others, he offers great praise for the book but notes certain problems with it. Describing the book as “a remarkable one,” he argues that “the chain of arguments and demonstrations is particularly consistent and well-orchestrated, and the conclusions are convincing.”

In his response, David Haglund graciously thanks the reviewers both for their praise and their criticisms. He then turns to an examination of each of their comments. While Haglund justifies some of his choices in relation to their assessments, he also admits that in some cases they are right: acknowledging, for example, that he probably should not have cut his part on the Australia, United Kingdom, and United States security partnership (AUKUS) signed in 2021, from the final manuscript. In the end, he sums up his views saying: “While I am not really an alarmist about the Franco-American special relationship, it is probably fair to say that when I gaze upon its quality, I see a glass half empty.” However he may see it, Haglund’s book on the subject is a must read for any student of the question.

Contributors:

David Haglund is a Professor of Political Studies at Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario). He received his PhD in International Relations in 1978 from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, in Washington, D.C. He has held visiting professorships in France, Germany, and the Czech Republic. His research focuses on transatlantic security, and on American and Canadian international security policy. Among his books are *Latin America and the Transformation of U.S. Strategic Thought, 1936–1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); *Alliance within the Alliance? Franco-German Military Cooperation and the European Pillar of Defense* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991); *Will NATO Go East? The Debate Over Enlarging the Atlantic Alliance* ((Kingston: Queen’s University Centre for International Relations, 1996); *The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited: Canadian Grand Strategy at Century’s End* (Toronto: CIIA/Irwin, 2000); *Ethnic Diasporas and the Canada-United States Security Community: From the Civil War to Today* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015); *The US “Culture Wars” and the Anglo-American Special Relationship* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); and *Sister Republics: Security Relations Between America*

³ See Julien Zarifien, *Choc d’empires : Les relations Etats-Unis/Iran*, (Paris: Hemisphères Editions, 2018) and, among many other articles, Zarifien, “Les Arméno-Américains, les élus américains, et la mobilisation pour la reconnaissance du génocide arménien.” *Migrations Société* 193:3 (2023) : 61-75.

⁴ Zarifien, *The United States and the Armenian Genocide: History, Memory, Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2024).

and France (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2023). His current research project focuses on the impact of US presidents on the evolution of Canada-US relations.

Jordan Becker is an Academy Professor and Director of the Social Science Research Lab at the United States Military Academy, West Point; a Research Fellow and the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Brussels School of Governance; and a Research Fellow at the Chaire EcoDef, Institut des hautes études de défense nationale (IHEDN). Previously, he served as an Infantry, Special Forces, and Foreign Area Officer, including at NATO and on the French Joint Staff. His work focuses on defense economics, political economy, and strategic culture, and has been published in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, the *Journal of Peace Research*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Defence and Peace Economics*, *European Security*, *International Affairs*, and the *International Studies Review*, and is forthcoming in the *British Journal of Political Science*.

Manuel Dorion-Soulié is Assistant Professor of American Studies at Ecole Polytechnique, IP Paris. His research focuses on transatlantic relations and Western military presence in the Middle East during the Cold War, the history of car culture and transportation networks in Western Europe, and the process of Americanization in France. He is currently working on a manuscript entitled *The Origins of the Carter Doctrine: American Hegemony, Car Culture, and European Oil Dependence*.

Julien Zarifian is Professor in US History and Civilization at the University of Poitiers, France, and fellow at the Institut Universitaire de France (IUF, 2020–2025). Between 2011 and 2022, he was Associate Professor at CY Cergy Paris Université. He received his PhD in Geopolitics in 2010 from the French Institute of Geopolitics, Paris 8 University. His current research involves the role of ethnic lobbies and of memory issues in US politics and policies. He also works on US foreign policy, particularly in Eurasia. He is member of the editorial board of academic journals *Politique Américaine* and *Études Arméniennes Contemporaines*, and has published dozens of academic articles and two books in French. His forthcoming book, *The United States and the Armenian Genocide: History, Memory, Politics*, will be published by Rutgers University Press in May 2024.

Review by Jordan Becker, United States Military Academy; Vrije Universiteit Brussels; Chaire Ecodef, Institut des hautes études de défense nationale (IHEDN)

How should scholars understand the Franco-American relationship? Is it “special?” If so, what is special about it? David Haglund seeks to answer these questions in a wide-ranging monograph which tracks the Franco-American relationship from the seventeenth century to the present, leaning on a dizzying array of intellectual traditions. If there is a single conceptual focus to Haglund’s analysis, it is on the notion of “strategic culture.” After exhausting an array of hypotheses to explain what he refers to as a “suboptimal” Franco-American relationship” (loc. 511), he settles on strategic culture, citing André Siegfried’s explanation of American views of France as oscillating between admiring love and hate. The French side of the relationship might be considered similarly. Hermione’s confession to Cléone in Racine’s *Andromaque* sums up Franco-American intellectual relations neatly: “*Je l’ai trop aimé pour ne le point haïr.*”¹

But what does Haglund mean by strategic culture? And what is he arguing about its connection to the suboptimal Franco-American relationship? Rather than hit the reader with such definitions and arguments up front, Haglund instead offers a slow-building process-of-elimination approach to both defining key concepts and to offering arguments about their relationships to one another. The closest thing we get to a clear argument from the author himself occurs in the book’s concluding paragraph, which, although he uses the phrase “as good as it gets” is redolent of the final scene of the movie *Whatever Works*,² in which Boris Yelnikoff, played by Larry David, admonishes the audience to soak up “whatever love you can get and give, whatever happiness you can filch or provide, every temporary measure of grace, whatever works.” Haglund, in essence, argues that while the Franco-American relationship is indeed suboptimal, it is good enough—particularly in the context of other dyadic relationships.

This answer that the relevant actors are muddling through is not a particularly novel one to the question of why Franco-American relations (or relations between any other pair of countries or actors) are the way they are.³ A reader of *Sister Republics* is treated to a smorgasbord of explanatory options ranging from hereditary enmity to leader characteristics, and Haglund leaves plenty of leeway for readers to “filch or provide” their own answers to questions about causality or empirical regularity, beyond the notion of suboptimality. The book’s major contribution is thus to chronicle a long debate, and to frame it in terms that should be mutually intelligible to social scientists, historians, and sociologists. This is no small feat. The implications are accurate if uninspiring: the most likely path ahead for Franco-American relations will strongly resemble the path already taken—stumbling forward in fits and starts, constrained by both history and culture.

¹ Jean Racine, *Andromaque* (text, FIEVRE, Paul, 1667), https://theatre-classique.fr/pages/programmes/edition.php?t=../documents/RACINE_ANDROMAQUE.xml.

² Allen, Woody, director. *Whatever Works*. Sony Pictures Classics, 2009. https://www.scripts.com/script/whatever_works_23303.

³ Philippe Roger, *L’Ennemi américain: Généalogie de l’antiaméricanisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Jean-Francois Revel, *L’obsession anti-américaine: Son fonctionnement, ses causes, ses inconséquences* (Paris: Plon, 2002).

The somewhat meandering approach *Sister Republics* takes is both a strength and a weakness. I will quickly discuss the weakness before focusing on the strength. The weakness of the broad and serpentine book's style is that it is difficult to discern an overarching research question, an answer to that question, and the analytical steps taken to arrive at that answer. The strengths of the approach are legion, starting with the fact that the book is fun to read, and provides an uninitiated reader with introductory lessons in subjects as diverse as International Relations scholarship on orders and ordering; French sociology on American culture; ethnic conflict; strategic culture; and the history of the "intercolonial wars" in North America.

After introducing the suboptimal nature of the Franco-American relationship, Haglund devotes a chapter to the concept of strategic culture. The chapter involves a tour of what he accurately calls a "confounding notion" (loc. 176). He proceeds to propose, discuss, and dismiss the causal utility of what scholars of strategic culture might call "essentialism."⁴ That Haglund devotes a significant portion of the book to meditate on these notions (such as hereditary enmity or an ethnic diaspora-driven foreign policy) before dismissing them is another strength of the book: while economists or political scientists might find themselves wishing Haglund would 'cut to the chase,' detours through André Tardieu's⁵ and Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's⁶ ethnically-based theories of diaspora politics in the United States and even through more recent self-critical franco-français analyses on French anti-Americanism⁷ provide unique context that only readers with broad intellectual backgrounds would otherwise possess. This interdisciplinary and transatlantic breadth is a unique and positive feature of the book.

As a student of both strategic culture and France, and a practitioner of Franco-American relations, I came to the book with a keen interest in the interaction between strategic culture and Franco-American relations. Haglund's chapter on strategic culture is an excellent primer on the intellectual history of this concept, but leaves the reader wanting to know Haglund's own definition. He takes care to differentiate "strategic culture," which is potentially dynamic over time, from the older concept of "national character,"⁸ which is static within countries and differs only among them, while also noting similarities between the two. He also grapples with a question that is familiar to students of strategic culture: whether to consider it a dependent

⁴ Alastair Iain Johnston, "Strategic Cultures Revisited: Reply to Colin Gray," *Review of International Studies* 25:3 (1999): 519–23; Stuart Poore, "What Is the Context? A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture," *Review of International Studies* 29:2 (April 2003): 279–84, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210503002791>; David G. Haglund, "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off? Security Culture as Strategic Culture," *Contemporary Security Policy* 32:3 (December 1, 2011): 494–516, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2011.623053>; Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," *Review of International Studies* 25: 1 (January 1999): 49–69.

⁵ André Tardieu, *France and America: Some Experiences in Cooperation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927).

⁶ Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *La France et les Etats-Unis, des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1976).

⁷ Philippe Roger, *L'Ennemi américain: Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Jean-François Revel, *L'obsession anti-américaine: Son fonctionnement, ses causes, ses conséquences* (Paris: Plon, 2002).

⁸ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston: Mariner Books Classics, 2006); Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429054419>.

or an independent variable. While my own preference is to consider it simply a variable in a web of causal relationships whose interactions with one another can be visualized, understood, and tested,⁹ Haglund decides to treat strategic culture as an independent variable and to consider its potential effects on outcomes of interest, mainly the Franco-American relationship. His findings are somewhat vague: that cultural differences have left the Franco-American relationship suboptimal, but “pas pire” (loc. 4732). Not bad, all told. This may leave social scientists hungry for a lean theory, a clear set of hypotheses, and clean tests, but he provides readers with invaluable context, which is itself sometimes taken to be the very essence of strategic culture.¹⁰

In the theoretical and empirical context of studying strategic culture, I came away from the book without a clear understanding of Haglund’s definition of the concept, and no more understanding of its place in any sort of causal relationship with anything else than I was when I started reading. In the broader substantive context of studying Franco-American relations, I came away with a better understanding of strategic culture as context—not in the way Colin Gray¹¹ or Stuart Poore¹² use it, but as part of the broader intellectual historical context in which Franco-American relations operate. This places Haglund’s work in relation (I hesitate to use the word context again) with the tradition of contextual political analysis.¹³ In that light the book is masterful.

After presenting “three categories of culture—historical context, ethnicity, and ideas” (loc. 1179), Haglund concludes that the ideational variety of strategic culture has the strongest explanatory value, arguing that differing strategic cultures drive the suboptimality of the Franco-American relationship. I have bones to pick with his methodological approach. First, I do not see a need to identify a variable as “independent” or “dependent” ex ante: as in the “relational realism” (loc. 1651) that Haglund outlines at the end of the chapter on historical context. A variable can be (and usually is) both, depending on the other variables being considered. My methodological preference is to study variables side by side, in comparison or interaction with one another as in multivariate regression, rather than sequentially, eliminating them one after the other until one is left (semi) standing.

⁹ Judea Pearl, “Causal Diagrams for Empirical Research,” *Biometrika* 82:4 (1995): 669–88, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2337329>; Pearl and Dana Mackenzie, *The Book of Why: The New Science of Cause and Effect* (New York: Basic Books, 2018); Scott Cunningham, *Causal Inference: The Mixtape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2021).

¹⁰ See Gray’s argument in “Strategic Culture as Context.”

¹¹ See Poore’s argument in, “What Is the Context?”

¹² Poore, “What Is the Context?”

¹³ Charles Tilly and Robert Goodin, “It Depends,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 3–32, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270439.001.0001>; Pamela Ballinger, “How to Detect Culture and Its Effects,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, by Robert Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford University Press, 2006), 41–359.

Even considering that preference, I derived great utility from Haglund’s exposé of the three approaches (contextual, ethnic, and ideational) in sequence. Haglund and I land on the same provisional inclination: that ideational factors do likely “cause” observable behavior(s).¹⁴ Haglund’s deep analysis points to interdisciplinarity¹⁵ as well as methodological eclecticism.

I was particularly struck by Haglund’s argument, which is worth quoting at length:

that American (or “Anglo-Saxon”) liberalism stands in contradistinction to French realism. According to this way of framing the matter, the two allies so often act as if they are in a continual state of oppositional animation precisely because they actually are animated by opposing ideologies, notwithstanding their supposedly being “sister republics” (loc. 3291).

This argument is fascinating for at least two reasons. First, Haglund does not hesitate to use realism and liberalism, which are generally thought of in the context of International Relations theory as theoretical paradigms facilitating analysis via abstraction, as animating ideologies for national policy. Second, the construct lends itself to bridging gaps between scholars who study strategic culture “contextually,”¹⁶ and those who study it “empirically,”¹⁷ which could help make the concept of strategic culture both less contentious¹⁸ and more relevant to policy decisions.¹⁹ Recent developments in extracting data from texts²⁰

¹⁴ Jordan Becker, “Chapter 17: Strategic and Military Culture,” in *Oxford Handbook of NATO*, ed. Mark Webber and James Sperling, forthcoming, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.19148.64643>; Becker and Edmund Malesky, “The Continent or the ‘Grand Large’? Strategic Culture and Operational Burden-Sharing in NATO,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 163–80, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqw039>.

¹⁵ Rosella Capella Zielinski and Kaija Schilde, “Hatchet or Scalpel? Domestic Politics, International Threats, and US Military Spending Cuts, 1950–2014,” *Security Studies* 28:4 (August 8, 2019): 023, 677–709, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2019.1631379>.

¹⁶ Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context.”

¹⁷ Becker and Edmund Malesky, “The Continent or the ‘Grand Large’? Strategic Culture and Operational Burden-Sharing in NATO,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61:1 (March 1, 2017): 163–80, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqw039>; Tamir Libel, “Strategic Culture as a (Discursive) Institution: A Proposal for Falsifiable Theoretical Model with Computational Operationalization,” *Defence Studies* 20:4 (August 25, 2020): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2020.1814152>; Konstantin Gavras, Matthias Mader, and Harald Schoen, “Convergence of European Security and Defense Preferences? A Quantitative Text Analysis of Strategy Papers, 1994–2018,” *European Union Politics*, June 14, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165221103026>.

¹⁸ Haglund, “Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off?”

¹⁹ Haglund, “What Can Strategic Culture Contribute to Our Understanding of Security Policies in the Asia-Pacific Region?,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 35:2 (May 4, 2014): 310–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2014.927674>.

²⁰ Justin Grimmer, Margaret E. Roberts, and Brandon M. Stewart, *Text as Data: A New Framework for Machine Learning and the Social Sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

open the possibility of measuring such “realism” and “liberalism” in national strategic discourse and testing their relationships with other (including material) variables empirically.

The observational nature of any strategic cultural variable poses serious challenges to causal inference using traditional experimental or quasi-experimental causal identification strategies. However, Haglund’s analysis helps point scholars in a (potentially) more fruitful direction. The use of Directed Acyclical Graphs (DAGs), which are “a graphical representation(s) of a chain of causal effects”²¹ in strategic culture analysis is in its infancy,²² but could be used to test hypotheses like the cultural realism/cultural liberalism one that Haglund advances.

In short, *Sister Republics* offers an extremely wide-ranging discussion of a substantively important issue, and the discussion is full of substance. Empirically, it points toward questions like the one outlined above, which is another strength of the book. Empirically-minded scholars of various fields, subfields, and methodological bents can and should build on Haglund’s insights to derive and test hypotheses not just on the Franco-American relationship, but on the causes and effects of strategic culture in the material world.

²¹ Cunningham, *Causal Inference*.

²² Becker, *Supplementary Tables and Data Sources - Oxford Handbook of NATO Chapter 14 (Strategic Culture)*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.16074.64963>.

The US and France have a special relationship, but this does not mean that they get along well. In *Sister Republics: Security Relations Between America and France*, David Haglund argues that “the two countries have related to each other *in their roles as allies* in a manner in which neither quite relates to any of its other allies” (x). In his telling, “the omnipresent existential reality of Franco-American strategic interactions” (8) can be summed up as “sub-optimality,” the character of “underachieving in the effectuation of cooperation between the two states, even and especially when it should otherwise have made plain sense for leaders in each country to try to work together more fruitfully” (43). This was particularly so in the decades after World War II, when a shared perception of threat “should have led to a consistently more harmonious relationship” (45), and when a shared democratic identity meant that “France should have behaved in a manner not that different from the manner in which the other liberal democratic allies behaved” (46).

Per Haglund, this “suboptimal” character of Franco-American relations found its purest form under French President Charles de Gaulle. After World War II, the risk that a weak France would fall under Soviet domination had made it a crucial component of the strategy of containment.¹ But by the late 1950s, France was recovering its strength, and in 1966 de Gaulle withdrew from NATO’s integrated command, in Haglund’s view seemingly trying to “[hack] America down a couple of notches, through the wonder-working properties thought to be associated with ‘multipolarity’ and ‘soft-balancing’” (25). For all of that, of course, the alliance held. As Haglund notes, perhaps this was the case because the Soviet threat meant that the alliance could not break up. But the fact that France continued to play an important role in terms of European security, even after the 1966 decision, should also be part of the explanation for NATO’s durability (more on this later).²

As the Cold War ended, strains in the alliance reappeared, with France challenging American leadership of the so-called “West.” France, Washington seemed to believe, “had defected from universalistic Western undertakings it had once espoused and henceforth was going to throw itself wholly into the project of building an exclusionary Europe. This Europe, once constructed, would be bound to widen the distance separating France from America” (26). Seen from this ontological perspective, French behavior can be explained as a redefinition of French and European identity through opposing the US. But, as Haglund

¹ Frédéric Bozo, *La politique étrangère de la France depuis 1945*, Paris, La découverte, 1997 ; Jacques Dalloz, *La France et le monde depuis 1945*, (Paris : Armand Colin, 1993) ; Maurice Vaisse, Pierre Mélandri and Frédéric Bozo (ed.), *La France et l’OTAN. 1949–1996*, (Vincennes : Editions complexes, 1996) ; Frédéric Bozo, *La France et l’OTAN. De la guerre froide au nouvel ordre européen* (Paris: Masson, 1991); Michael M. Harrison, *The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security*; (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Charles C. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: The United States and France Since 1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: the Cold Alliance since World War II* (New York: Twayne, 1992).

² The best treatment of Gaullist foreign policy under de Gaulle is Maurice Vaisse, *La grandeur. Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle, 1958–1969* (Paris: Fayard, 1998). In English, see Edward A. Kolodziej, *French International Policy under De Gaulle and Pompidou. The Politics of Grandeur* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974).

himself suggests, this did not stop France from showing itself to be a stalwart American ally in the Kosovo War.³

And then there was the Iraq War. Traumatized by the attacks of 9/11, Americans bemoaned the “incoming verbal fusillades” of French diplomacy, and many in Washington were eager to “punish” France for its refusal to let the UN Security Council endorse the invasion (14-15). French leaders feared that it would lead to a catastrophic destabilization of the region, which would hurt the shared interests of Western allies.⁴ Here, “suboptimal” is an inadequate word to describe a situation where one partner pursued a fundamentally flawed plan to its predictable conclusions, while the other sought to rein it in.

This is the seemingly uncontroversial historical basis on which Haglund asks the question: why have the two “sister republics” acted in such a “suboptimal” way towards each other as allies?

Haglund’s answer is “strategic culture.” For the purposes of the book, strategic culture is understood as cause rather than effect: something in culture must be capable of causing a policy output, rather than simply reflecting the sum of previous behavior. Haglund dives into conceptual debates embodied by the work of Colin Gray and Alastair Iain Johnston, and lays out the two major mechanisms through which culture could be seen as cause: context and cognition.⁵ He first explores “the interplay between two specific and deeply interconnected varieties of context, namely historical and ethnic ones” (150). Going back to colonial wars in North America, he finds that there is scant evidence to support the notion that a deep-seated historical memory of ethnic strife could be the cause for suboptimality in Franco-American security relations, as what is at issue is not “the kind of bitterly adversarial” relationship that is “associated with images of *hereditary* enmity” (151). Ethnic context, in the guise of diasporic influence, cannot be the cause of suboptimality either: when members of diasporic groups inside the US (in particular Irish-Americans and German-Americans during World War I⁶) tried to impact Washington’s strategic postures, this backfired, stimulated the emergence of an *Anglo*-American diasporic blowback, and ultimately favored French objectives more than it hurt them. From these two dead-ends, Haglund concludes that context cannot provide the causal mechanism through which culture can define strategy, and so he moves on to cognition.

³ Michel Fortmann and Hélène Viau, “A Model US Ally? France and the US During the Kosovo Crisis of 1998–1999” in David G. Haglund, eds., *The France-US Leadership Race: Closely Watched Allies* (Kingston : Queen’s Quarterly, 2000): 87-110.

⁴ Frédéric Bozo, *Histoire secrète de la crise irakienne: la France, les États-Unis et l’Irak, 1991-2003*, (Paris: Perrin, 2013).

⁵ Alastair Ian Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 1995); Colin S. Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context : The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back,” *Review of International Studies* 25 (January 1999) : 49-69.

⁶ On this subject, see Haglund’s excellent *Ethnic Diasporas and the Canada-United States Security Community* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015).

Haglund defines a set of interconnected cognitive mechanisms through which culture can impact strategy. The first mechanism is heterostereotyping, “the formation and use of images as a means of cognitive and normative differentiation between oneself and others who are ipso facto deemed problematic” (152). This refers to the way French anti-Americanism could cause suboptimality. The second mechanism is ideology, “the possibility that suboptimality in security and defense cooperation is driven by contrasting principles in the two countries’ grand strategies, with the story line here concentrating upon how American (or ‘Anglo-Saxon’) liberalism stands in contradistinction to French realism” (153). The third mechanism is “structure,” or rather the differences between Paris and Washington with regards to the symbolic charge granted to the “polarity” of the international system (153). Ultimately, Haglund argues that these ideational factors were the most important causes of “suboptimality” in Franco-American security relations (222). In the final chapter, Haglund comforts this conclusion when he moves from “sociopolitical” analysis focusing on “collective historical memory [...], demographic composition, and ideological predispositions” to the analysis of “individual political leaders” (200). Here, he asks what role American and French political leaders may have played in the “chronic suboptimality” that seemingly characterizes their security relations.

It should be obvious by now that this is a work of political science, primarily aimed at students of foreign policy analysis and international relations (IR). But the book also speaks about history, and to historians, in important ways. It provides lively discussions of path-dependence, counterfactuals, “presentism,” and memory (which are developed at length in the sections on the “*Erbfeindschaft* [hereditary enmity] thesis”)(73-112). Haglund’s prose is unique and engaging, and sometimes genuinely funny—all qualities that make this book highly enjoyable, even beyond the difficulties inherent in such a complex argument. Historians of Franco-American relations and, more broadly, transatlantic relations should constitute a ready public, even if the argument is a bit jarring. Indeed, as Haglund notes, “historians have been known to get agitated when they discover political scientists encroaching upon their epistemological and empirical turf” (80). Here, Haglund references John Lewis Gaddis, who argues, as Haglund puts it, that political scientists are “so addicted to theorizing reality as to be unable to recognize it when they see it” (73). But Haglund does not include a more revealing passage from Gaddis’s article:

Historians’ interpretations, like life, evolve. We live with shifting sands, and hence prefer explanatory tents to temples. Yet on the basis of what they understand us to have concluded, our political science colleagues make categorical judgments about the past all the time, confidently incorporating them within their databases. No wonder we stand in awe of their edifices, while finding it prudent not to enter them.⁷

Haglund’s thesis rests on this foundation: “if there is and remains one existential quality of the Franco-American relationship, then suboptimality in cooperation is that quality” (9). But is that in fact the case? Haglund, it is true, bases his enquiry on what appears to be a historiographical consensus regarding the character of the Franco-American relationship as defined in the lexicon of suboptimality: “reluctant allies,”

⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, “History, Theory, and Common Ground,” *International Security* 22:1 Summer (1997): 81.

“guarded friends,” “cold alliance.”⁸ But these works, like Haglund’s text, tend to focus heavily on the *ideas* that frame French foreign policy discourse and ideology rather than on what Sten Rynning calls the *instruments* of foreign policy.⁹ Focusing on the heyday of Gaullism, which should be the period most congenial to Haglund’s thesis, and looking at how de Gaulle’s actual policies, rather than his discourse, impacted the ability of France to cooperate with American strategy into the 1980s, I maintain that “suboptimality” is not the correct descriptor.

De Gaulle’s objective in withdrawing France from NATO’s integrated command was to gain for France the ability to conduct an independent policy of deterrence and to restore the military and strategic foundations of sovereignty.¹⁰ The attendant discourse created a wash, which became the focus of the historical works mentioned above. But as Anand Menon convincingly argues, the negative consequences of withdrawal on allied security should not be overstated. For one thing, French withdrawal “clearly facilitated the task of the Americans” in controlling the alliance’s agenda.¹¹ Also, for France, French NATO policy since De Gaulle had “considerable benefits:” “non-integration served to reinforce France’s quest for wider foreign policy aims: military autonomy, along with a certain standing on the world stage, or *grandeur*.”¹² Moreover, immediately after withdrawing from the integrated command, France launched on a path to improve military relations with NATO members through technical cooperation that was tied to weapons development and operational coordination, most famously through the 1967 Ailleret-Lemnitzer agreements.¹³ Frédéric Bozo goes so far as to write that “far from leading to a reduced scope of the French contribution to the defense of central Europe—the main theater of this contribution—the French withdrawal from the integrated organization indisputably allowed for its increase, and was even conceived as the sine qua non condition thereof.”¹⁴ Why did this increased cooperation go unnoticed by analysts of transatlantic relations? Menon provides a tantalizing explanation: “the General went out of his way to play down the significance of military cooperation with NATO,” insisting that they did nothing more than reiterate French obligations in the alliance. But

in stark contrast to the highly public manner in which France had distanced itself from NATO, the Ailleret-Lemnitzer discussions and resulting agreements were shrouded in almost complete secrecy. Paris for many years proved unwilling even to admit to their existence. Finally, those references that were made to military links with allies...tended to be couched in terms of accords between France and the United States, giving the

⁸ Harrison, *The Reluctant Ally*; Cogan, *Oldest Allies*; Costigliola, *France and the United States*.

⁹ Sten Rynning, *Changing Military Doctrine: Presidents and Military Power in Fifth Republic France, 1958–2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 15–16.

¹⁰ Rynning, *Changing Military Doctrine*, 41–43; Bozo, *La France et l’OTAN*, 65.

¹¹ Anand Menon, *France, NATO and the Limits of Independence, 1981–1997* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 29–31

¹² Menon, *France, NATO*, 3.

¹³ Menon, *France, Nato*, 12–13.

¹⁴ Bozo, *La France et l’OTAN*, 16–17.

impression not only of France being a military equal of the Americans, but also of Paris having maintained its distance from NATO.¹⁵

Could it be that the very public French withdrawal was mostly meant to burnish the *image* of French sovereignty? In any case, actual security relations between France and the US were largely unaffected, or were even improved by the move. De Gaulle’s successors stayed the course.¹⁶ French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing spoke the language of détente, all the while continuing to “covertly [...] tighten technical ties to the NATO allies.”¹⁷ Under Mitterrand, very visible clashes with the US over financial and economic policy obscured the fact that “in the security area Mitterrand’s France managed to become perhaps NATO’s staunchest European pillar,” as illustrated by a series of military agreements, and of course by Mitterrand’s overt defense of NATO’s double-track decision.¹⁸

Beyond European security, the withdrawal also had a positive impact for French “status” in the alliance and “international recognition” in the world at large.¹⁹ As Menon puts it, “repeated French declarations of ‘non-alignment’ and claims to represent a ‘third way’ in international politics, in short, the whole panoply of deliberate ambiguity and obfuscation that characterized much of French rhetoric, gained the country a certain degree of influence especially among less developed countries.”²⁰ This new standing was reinforced by de Gaulle’s open criticism of the Vietnam War and of Israeli policy in the Six Day War (1967), and contributed to French arms sales to Third World countries.²¹ Beyond the obvious benefit to the French balance of payments, these commercial ties bolstered the French arms industry, which were the preeminent symbol of military independence; in turn, this “further enhanced French prestige as a somehow ‘independent’ state acting in defence of the interests of smaller powers.”²²

The image of French independence also proved extremely useful for American strategic objectives in the region that would supplant Europe at the core or American strategic concerns from the late-Cold War onwards: the “greater Middle East.” When the Shah of Iran fell in early 1979, the Carter administration set about creating the military infrastructure that would allow the US to intervene directly in the region in

¹⁵ Menon, *France, NATO*, 14.

¹⁶ Menon, *France, NATO*, 15, 154.

¹⁷ Rynning, *Changing Military Doctrine*, 102.

¹⁸ Rynning, *Changing Military Doctrine*, 126-127.

¹⁹ Menon, *France, NATO*, 29-31.

²⁰ Menon, *France, NATO*, 31.

²¹ On de Gaulle’s criticism of US policy in Vietnam and the prestige its gained him in the Third World, see Vaïsse, *La Grandeur*, 523-538. On his criticism of Israel in 1967 and the prestige it gained him in particular in the Arab world, see Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, 644-647, here 635. On the impact on arms sales, see David A. Styan, “Franco-Iraqi relations and Fifth Republic foreign policy, 1958-1990”, Ph.D. Diss. (London: London School of Economics, 1995), 56, 80-81, 88-90, 96-97, 111-112, 128. On French arms sales policy more broadly, see Edward A. Kolodziej, *Making and Marketing Arm. The French Experience and Its Implications for the International System*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

²² Menon, *France, NATO*, 31.

order to defend the flow of oil. In early 1980, this policy became known as the Carter Doctrine.²³ In February 1980, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance met with French Foreign Minister Jean François-Poncet and laid out the specific demands the US was making of France in the Persian Gulf: to help the United States improve its relations with Iraq in particular, and to foster a climate of security that was conducive to greater cooperation between the West and the countries of the region, by using its “good relations” with them as well as its “important naval forces” in the Indian Ocean.²⁴ Faced with the reluctance of regional allies (the Saudis in particular) to allow American troops on their soil, Americans needed France to play a role that was only made possible by the seeming separation between the two Atlantic allies. France complied, and along with a clear division of labor for French and American naval forces in the region, this was a crucial component of the American ability to build the network of bases that allowed for the creation of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), the military command that is, to this day, responsible for all military operations in the “greater Middle East.”²⁵ In terms of security relations, this may not be “optimal,” but it is emphatically not a case of “underachieving in the effectuation of cooperation between the two states.”

The point here is not that Haglund’s argument is too focused on theory to perceive the “reality,” of the situation, it is that his argument seems equate the discourse on security relations with the actual thing. Or, to put it more precisely: the problem with the historical basis for Haglund’s study is that it relies on public utterances by officials or observers (academic, journalistic, and those in between) regarding security relations, which are then assumed to represent the actual use of forces and mobilization of resources. But the diplomatic archives reveal that in this case public discourse does not match actual commitments and behavior. As Bozo puts it, by the late 1980s the “gap between operational reality and declaratory policy,” and the misunderstanding it fostered even among leaders, was the main political impediment to greater cooperation.²⁶ In other words, there is clearly a “suboptimality” at the heart of Franco-American relations, but it has much more to do with rhetoric than with actual security relations. Of course, as Haglund points out, acrimonious rhetoric could lead the partners to make sub-optimal policy decisions. But historians and political scientists alike should distinguish the nature of the suboptimality when investigating its causes.

²³ Olav Njolstad, “Shifting Priorities: The Persian Gulf in US Strategic Planning in the Carter Years,” *Cold War History*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2004): page numbers; William Odom, “The Cold War Origins of the U.S. Central Command,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 8/2 (2006): page numbers; John H. Campbell, “The Ties That Bind. The Events of 1979 and the Escalation of U.S.-Saudi Security Relations during the Carter and Reagan Administrations,” in Jeffrey R. Macris and Saul Kelly (eds.), *Imperial Crossroads: The Great Powers and the Persian Gulf* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2012):page numbers; Hal Brands, Steven A. Cook, and Kenneth M. Pollack, “Why America Shouldn’t Abandon the Middle East,” *Foreign Policy*, Spring (2020).

²⁴ France, Archives de Ministère des affaires étrangères, 91QO927 21 février 1980, Note: “Conversation entre M. Vance et M. François-Poncet.”

²⁵ For a full account of the strategic cooperation between the US and France in the Gulf in this period, see Manuel Dorion-Soulié, “The Origins of CENTCOM: American Hegemony, Car Culture, and European Oil Dependence,” Ph.D. diss. (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, 2020).

²⁶ Bozo, *La France et l’OTAN*, 19.

There is no question that the Franco-American alliance is a special one. Specialness, as Haglund demonstrates, does not mean “better,” but it does not mean “worse,” either. To focus on just one side of the relationship: in the Cold War (and beyond) France behaved differently towards the US than the other liberal democratic allies who shared a broad perception of threat. But from the point of view of American objectives, the independent image it sought to uphold allowed it to play a different—one might say original, and highly positive—role.

This leaves the question as to why, if the actual relations yielded satisfactory compromises, the discourse remained so acrimonious. Here, the cultural explanation is certainly the most promising, and on this score Haglund’s book provides an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the public bickering of the sister republics. But let us not forget that the sisters share a deep bond made up not only of common identity, but also shared threat perception, and perhaps most importantly, shared interests.

The main points of David Haglund's *Sister Republics* are easy to sum up. The book, which is organized in three parts and six chapters (in addition to a short conclusion), focuses on the suboptimality of Franco-American security relations, and explains the "*différend franco-américain*" essentially as being caused by the enduring differences between French and US strategic cultures, particularly the cognitive and ideational antinomies between the two. What is more difficult to report on and detail with accuracy is the remarkable and constructive complexity of Haglund's demonstration. Indeed, Haglund perfectly guides the reader into a labyrinth of definitions, concepts, ideas, case studies, facts, whose *raison d'être* both underscores the author's conclusions and expands upon various concepts, theories, and factual knowledge. The narrative is written in fine and dynamic language, making it enjoyable to read.

The author, who knows France, French history, and French academic culture very well, starts his study *à la française* with a rather long and elaborate introductory part entitled "The *problématique*." The main goal is to present the topic and ask the main question (i.e. the "*problématique*," in the French sense of the term). The author explains that the two countries have always mattered a lot to each other, in terms of security and defense, but not in a linear and equal way (20). France was very important to US interests for a long period of time in history, and then its importance decreased, especially after the Second World War. For France, it was, to some extent, the opposite. As the United States grew as a superpower, it became increasingly important in France's geopolitics—whereas the United States often had to face at least relative opposition from France, both in terms of French public opinion and among the French leaders (such as Presidents Charles De Gaulle, François Mitterrand, Jacques Chirac).

In any case, chronic disagreement has been the main feature of this complex strategic relationship, which the author conceptualizes as suboptimal because it never reached the qualitative level it could have, and the main goal of the book is to understand why. Following an interesting and original approach, alternating "from theoretical gist to empirical background" (104), and eliminating hypotheses one after the other, the author posits that differences in both countries' "strategic cultures" are essential to understanding this suboptimality. Drawing on authors like Clifford Geertz,² Colin Gray,³ and Alastair Iain Johnston,⁴ Haglund tends to consider that strategic culture is the cause—and actually even the main broad factor—of the troubled Franco-American relations (and not a consequence of them). He identifies three categories of strategic culture, and discusses and tests them in the second and third parts of the book.

He first focuses on the historical context and analyzes a few episodes in Franco-American history, such as the Colonial Wars in particular, to show that "the Venom" does not "truly 'go deep,'" to use the title of a

¹ This now famous expression, used by Haglund, is borrowed from André Kaspi; André Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains. Le concours américain à la France, 1917-1918* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1976), 375, see chapter 14.

² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

³ Colin Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Prime Time for Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 26 (2007): 1-20.

⁴ Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19 (1995): 32-64.

subchapter of the book (74). Despite the violence of some French-American confrontations during the Colonial Wars and other very difficult episodes, the *Erbfeindschaft* thesis, which usually applied to Franco-German relations⁵ and posits that the memory of violent ethnic conflicts in particular could encumber bilateral relationships for very long periods of time, is not applicable to the Franco-American relations. As Haglund explains:

Whatever else that bilateral relationship has tended to be over the course of the past century, it has not really been the kind of bitterly adversarial one associated with the images of hereditary enmity, because neither the Americans nor the French nurture memories of those ancient “folk hostilities,” and even if they did, it is doubtful that those memories could be mobilized in support of a contemporary policy agenda on either ally’s part (151).

The study then discusses the potential role of ethnicity in Franco-American suboptimal security relations. Haglund, who has published much work on the impact of ethnic lobbies on US foreign policy,⁶ develops ideas he had started to work on a few years ago,⁷ and shows that although French historians André Tardieu and Jean-Baptiste Duroselle demonstrated the fact that US-French relations did not benefit from a significant organized French diaspora in the United States,⁸ it is not the main cause of the suboptimality of these relations. Indeed, as evidenced by David Paul and Rachel Anderson Paul, for example,⁹ it is very difficult to assess the actual and precise impact of ethnic diasporas on foreign policy decisions. Moreover, as explained by Haglund, it is also difficult to assert that these decisions would have been totally different without ethnic lobbying (136). In the same vein, the fact that the French are excluded from a hypothetical Anglo-Saxon community, and that this fact played a role in France’s difficult relationship with the United States, is quickly rejected by the author (147).

Finally, considering that these different hints led to an impasse, and that suboptimality has maintained itself no matter who is in charge at the Élysée Palace or the White House, Haglund focuses on ideas and cognition. He explains that a combination of three interconnected ideational categories, namely heterostereotyping, ideology, and structure, are major factors explaining the suboptimality of French-

⁵ Lily Gardner Feldman, *Germany’s Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From Enmity to Amity* (Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2015). See, in particular, chapter 3, “Germany’s Relations with France: From Enmity to Amity.”

⁶ See, for example, David Haglund, *Ethnic Diasporas and the Canada-United States Security Community* (Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2015).

⁷ See, David Haglund, “France and the Issue of a ‘Usable’ Diaspora in (North) America: the Duroselle-Tardieu Thesis Reconsidered,” *The International History Review* 31:1 (2012): 71-88.

⁸ André Tardieu, *France and America: Some Experiences in Cooperation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927), 302-3; Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *France and the United States: From the Beginnings to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 46-8.

⁹ David M. Paul and Rachel Anderson Paul, *Ethnic Lobbies and US Foreign Policy* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009).

American strategic relations. First, the author analyzes heterostereotyping as primarily consisting “[...] in the formation and use images as a means of cognitive and normative differentiation between oneself and others who are ipso facto deemed problematic” (152). This refers mostly to French anti-Americanism (and, to a lesser extent, anti-French feelings in the United States), and the role played in the shaping of the relationship and the security relations, especially in the past century and up to the present day. The second factor, ideology, relates mostly to the fact that both countries reject the other’s principal (perceived) ideology, US “liberalism” and French “realism.” The last one, structure, concerns the international system, the world order, and the different views that both countries have regarding multipolarity, which appears not being problematic at all in the French vision of the world’s geopolitics, whereas it is often perceived as potentially dangerous in the United States. And, in the author’s words, “[i]deas about the proper political order are what have contributed the most to the strategic culture of the Franco-American special relationship” (222).

This book is undeniably a remarkable one. The chain of arguments and demonstrations is particularly consistent and well-orchestrated, and the conclusions are convincing. Without neglecting history and geopolitics, which are often over mobilized when it comes to assessing the level of bilateral relations, the present study somewhat decenters from them, and focuses on other aspects and parameters, relating, in particular, to the role of ideas, cognition, and, to some extent, ideologies. It does it with methodological coherence, systematically using both theory and case studies to demonstrate or refute the points it discusses, and with a dose of moderation in terms of analytical substance. Indeed, this book does not seek to present Franco-American security relations in a pessimistic or radical way as absolutely terrible ones. Neither does it explicitly or implicitly seek to blame one of the two countries, or both, for these relations. In Haglund’s own words: “In fact, it is not a particularly bad bilateral relationship, compared with so many other dyadic relationships in world politics” (225). Yet the author does not hesitate to “stick his neck” out, as, for example when he predicts in his conclusion that “[...] it may be assumed that the dominant trends in this special relationship that have generated *le différend franco-américain* in the past will continue to define the future of bilateral relations” (225).

All this is probably made possible because this book, although totally academic in the formulation of its research question and in its structure—and its length (312 pages)—tends to sometimes take the shape of a historical-political essay. It frees itself from some of the usual and rather formal academic constraints, such as precisely defining and justifying the time scope(s) of the study, using primary sources (and justifying why and how), trying to be exhaustive when mobilizing case studies (and, when not, explaining and justifying the choices). That allows the author, who has perfectly mastered his topic, to present a convincing and well-structured demonstration that is pleasant to read and to guide the reader in a very profitable way into the complexity of it. However, and as often the case with intellectual works, these strengths may also generate weaknesses, or at least questions.

First, it would have been useful for the reader to have more systematic and concrete explanations on why and how the author chose the temporal limits of his study, and the episodes, case studies, and political figures he decided to mobilize and discuss in his demonstrations. As it is, these choices sometimes seem

arbitrary, which is fine—one may actually consider that this is exactly what the mission of a scholar is—but a bit more explanations on these choices would have probably made the reading even more fluid. Second, although the methodological *parti pris* of not using primary sources is perfectly understandable,¹⁾ it could have been explained in the introduction (or, even in a shorter way, in the preface), and 2) the fact remains that some archival works and interviews with political leaders and diplomats on both sides of the Atlantic could have supported the author’s points or offered interesting perspectives. Finally, one may regret that some potential causes of the Franco-American strategic suboptimality are quickly swept away. In particular, the author dedicates only a few pages to the question of “Anglo-Saxonity” and to the fact that France may have sometimes felt excluded from the “Anglo-Saxon club,” whereas almost 40 pages are dedicated to the hypothetical—and in the end non-predominant—role of ethnic lobbying in the suboptimality of Franco-American security relations.

It may be assumed that a deeper study of this “Anglo-Saxon” determinant, and more precisely of how it has been perceived and mobilized in France, would have given significant results. An interesting study case might have been that of the recent US-British-Australian formalized strategic alliance, AUKUS, and the way it has been discussed in France, especially when Australia cancelled a contract it had signed with France for providing the Oceanian country’s navy with twelve military submarines, and replaced it by a contract with... the United States.¹⁰ In a different vein, although politicians, officials, and other agents of this Franco-American relationship, as well as their ideas and perceptions, are often mentioned in the book, a closer look at their role as a “community” may have proved useful. In particular, it is possible that a more systemic study of the influence and force of inertia of what is often called the “foreign policy establishment,” and is sometimes referred to as the “Blob” (in a more provocative way) or as the “Deep State” (in a really controversial way), and whose importance in the US foreign policy decisionmaking in particular has been discussed,¹¹ may also have given interesting results.

¹⁰ See, for example: Elise Vincent, Philippe Ricard, Cécile Ducourtieux, Isabelle Dellerba, Jean-Michel Bezat et Piotr Smolar, “Dix-huit mois de négociations, un point presse et une lettre : comment Aukus a torpillé la vente de sous-marins français à l’Australie,” *Le Monde*, October 8, 2021.

¹¹ See, for example: Patrick Porter, “Why America’s Grand Strategy Has Not Changed. Power, Habit, and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment,” *International Security* 42:4 (Spring 2018): 9-46, and Michael Glennon, *National Security and Double Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Response by David G. Haglund, Queen's University

It is always a humbling experience for an author to lay one's ideas on the line before a panel of experts who understand fully well that their mission must be to afford constructive criticism of what has been presented to them. In my case, I am lucky indeed to have such a knowledgeable trio of reviewers as Jordan Becker, Manuel Dorion-Soulié, and Julien Zarifian. I am delighted, of course, that they all seem to find that what I have presented makes for an enjoyable read. But I am no less delighted to discover that, as I had expected, they were not completely "sold" on the goods I was attempting to sell them. I warmly thank them for the time and attention they allocated to the book.

In this author's response, I will endeavor to do two things. First and chiefly, I will react to the most important criticisms each has made of the book (as I take these to be), and in so doing will vary from, at one extreme, throwing up my hands in abject surrender to them, and at the other extreme, stoutly digging in my heels, and rejecting their criticism. Second, I will occasionally play off against each other some of the reviewers' critiques of my book.

I start with the Becker review, which itself begins with an endearing pair of cultural referents, testifying to the reviewer's erudition, as well as making an important point about my book's major claim. One of the referents is Racine's *Andromaque*; the other, middle-brow not high-brow, is the 2009 film directed by Woody Allen, *Whatever Works*, with its delightful protagonist, Boris Yelnikoff (played by Larry David). The line Becker quotes from Racine has Hermione suggesting that love may lie at the base of what is so often taken to be hate. Boris Yelnikoff, on the other hand, serves as a caution that when it comes to discerning the "meaning" of the Franco-American special relationship, one should curb one's enthusiasm, blowing neither too hot nor too cold. Together, the two referents do capture my major claim in *Sister Republics*: it is something of a "love-hate" relationship, and if its fundamental affective "essence" could be a lot better, it could also be a lot worse. To carry on with cultural referents, and to borrow from a decidedly low-brow set, I might be said to approach the affective quality of the bilateral relationship in the manner of *Mad* magazine's Alfred E. Neuman, for whom "What me worry?" represents the epitome of judgmental acuity. But I wrote the book not so much to judge as to explain. My reason for undertaking the study was not that I thought the relationship was in urgent need of repair, and that somehow I possessed the secret for making it better. Instead, I was fascinated with one particular question: why is it the way it is?

So Becker is more or less correct to hint that my own attestation as to the quality of the bilateral relationship could have come straight from the mouth of Boris Yelnikoff, with his injunction to soak up "whatever love you can get and give, whatever happiness you can filch or provide, every temporary measure of grace, *whatever works*" (emphasis added). I do provide a concept, one noted by all three reviewers, for capturing this "whatever-works" quality of Franco-American relations. I call it "suboptimality" (9) in cooperation on matters of security and defense policy. (One could just as easily use a concept such as "bounded rationality" to depict the essence of the relationship, or "satisficing," or just plain "muddling through.") But I wonder whether Becker's statement that there is really nothing "novel" about assuming the two states muddle through in their dealings with each other is correct. I think not, for on the general question, "how fares the

Franco-American relationship?,” there does, rightly or wrongly, exist a scholarly consensus¹ that the default condition of this strategic dyad is something that might best be articulated from the beak of Chicken Little, given the staggering number of times over the decades that students of the relationship have screamed that the Franco-American sky is falling. Of course, this alarmism serves a nice purpose, as it enables them to peddle their own remedies for “repairing” the relationship. I return to this point later.

A second, perhaps more important, critique Becker steers my way concerns what he takes to be my failure to proffer a clear, crisp, definition of strategic culture—or if not a failure, a delay in making transparent what I imagine this “independent variable” to be—and my obscuring of the book’s “overarching research question.” I think the former charge is more relevant than the latter, as early on I do establish that my aim in the project is to apply culture (in the modified guise of “strategic culture”) to help us take the measure of what I see to be the “suboptimal” quality of Franco-American cooperation (xii), especially within the setting of the two nations’ roles as military allies of each other. In slightly more formulaic terms, strategic culture is my “independent” variable (my *explanans*), suboptimality my “dependent” one (my *explanandum*). Becker wonders whether this formulation works, and suggests that the variables come cloaked in different garb, being sometimes cause, sometimes effect, and sometimes something else. He may be right, and indeed he notes my own invocation of “relational realism”² as proof that I myself am not as committed to the notion of an independent variable as I pretend to be. This is a sharp observation, for it reflects a “levels-of-analysis” problem with which I confess to have wrestled in this book, one that had me for the most part situating my cultural analysis within one of Kenneth Waltz’s famous trio of “images,”³ while still being forced to concede, as I put it in the book, that the “third image has at times been allowed to crash what has been a predominantly second-image party in these pages” (200). Becker points this out, and he is right to do so.

As chapter 2 of *Sister Republics* makes clear, culture is hardly a self-evident concept. The same applies, only more so, to “strategic culture,” which gets variously and often confusingly defined (or “operationalized”) by the legions of IR scholars who traffic in it. I cover their motley assortment of operationalizations in the chapter, and while I do not shy away from cultural studies, I certainly have felt the urge to reach for a stiff drink after one too many definitional encounters with *strategic* culture. Still, I think that some scholarly operationalizations of the concept are more helpful than others, and if I had to cast my ballot on this

¹ See, for instance, Marvin R. Zahniser, *Uncertain Friendship: American-French Diplomatic Relations Through the Cold War* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975); and Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance Since World War II* (New York: Twayne, 1992).

² A concept I borrow from the sociologist Margaret R. Somers; see her intriguing article, “‘We’re No Angels’: Realism, Rational Choice, and Relationality in Social Science,” *American Journal of Sociology* 104 (November 1998): 722 - 84.

³ Briefly, his first image has us examining the impact of individual leaders upon the relationship, his second image instructs us to pay greatest attention to domestic (“unit-level”) variables, and his third image bids us to contemplate the ability of structural features of the international system to shape state behavior; see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

definitional matter, I would vote for Alastair Iain Johnston's compendious understanding of strategic culture in the *cognitively* important sense, as representing the symbolic meaning and employment of policy-relevant ideas. But I also have, paradoxically to those who follow recondite debates among strategic culturalists, a soft spot for Colin Gray's *contextually* mediated understanding of strategic culture.⁴

Part 2's three chapters, then, constitute the empirical "guts" of the book, in which I start by deploying two chapters' worth of context, one tracing the mooted impact of "history" (chap. 3) and the other that of "ethnicity" (chap. 4) upon Franco-American suboptimality. In the final chapter (5) of part 2, I turn to cognition for guidance, and I end up plumping for its being the most useful "explanatory" guide for grasping strategic culture's impact upon Franco-American relations. In particular, I find that France's realist foreign and security policy tradition does not coexist harmoniously with America's fundamentally liberal views on world order, and that this matters a great deal more than is commonly thought—quite possibly because far too many IR scholars fail to realize that realism not only is *not* an American theoretical concoction, but that in important ways it could even be maintained, in the words of James Kurth, that the "realist tradition...is not only rarely in America, it is un-American."⁵

Dorion-Soulié's critique, unlike Becker's, expresses no difficulty with my "independent" variable. Instead, it is my *dependent* one that comes in for criticism. He applauds the manner that part 2 picks apart the various explanations for the suboptimality of the bilateral relationship. But he does beg to differ with me on the discussion in part 1 of "that which is to be explained" (i.e., the explanandum as opposed to the explanans). In a word, he rejects my assessment of the qualitative status of the relationship. More to the point, to use a delightful line I encountered somewhere along the line from Mark Twain, his suggestion seems to be that I have mistaken the lightning bug for the lightning. Because I am so riveted upon discourse and not enough upon events, he says, I tend not to appreciate how functional (maybe even "optimally" cooperative!) the two states' security and defense ties truly have been.

While I am not really an alarmist about the Franco-American special relationship, it is probably fair to say that when I gaze upon its quality, I see a glass half empty. Dorion-Soulié argues for the opposite case. To support his argument, he addresses Franco-American defense and security cooperation during the era in which it is usually considered to have faced its sternest modern test: the decade when General Charles de Gaulle presided over the fortunes of the new Fifth Republic, 1959 to 1969. Indeed, there are many students of the Franco-American special relationship who argue that if it had not been for the bad blood between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and de Gaulle during the Second World War, later relations between the

⁴ For these two understandings of strategic culture, see Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19 (Spring 1995): 32-64, and Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," *Review of International Studies* 25 (January 1999): 49-69. Also see Stuart Poore, "What Is the Context? A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture," *Review of International Studies* 29 (April 2003): 279-84.

⁵ James Kurth, "Inside the Cave: The Banality of I.R. Studies," *National Interest*, no. 53 (Fall 1998), pp. 29-40, quote at 40.

two countries, in the Cold War, would have turned out to be much more harmonious.⁶ While I make it obvious in the book that I do not subscribe to that thesis, even while accepting that Roosevelt and de Gaulle did not have a good personal working relationship, Dorion-Soulié goes much further, and offers the provocative thought that de Gaulle, and the so-called “Gaullist” leaders who succeeded him in the Élysée, were actually builders not destroyers of sound Franco-American cooperation in security and defense matters. A very full glass, indeed, he presents for our consideration.

For sure, one can, as he asserts, overstate the backbiting and other aspects of disagreement that have so regularly *seemingly* constrained more “optimal” bilateral cooperation. In his telling of the Franco-American cooperative story, France turns out to be an ally that looks a lot like Canada, and de Gaulle can be configured to resemble Prime Minister Lester Pearson, a “helpful fixer” extraordinaire. Needless to say, if I accepted this criticism about my selection of dependent variable, there would have been no point in my writing the book in the first place. I do, however, agree that a great deal more cooperation was taking place between the French and American militaries during the Cold War than is typically recognized; I just think that were it not for the strategic-cultural “hiccups” I highlight in the book, their cooperation would have been smoother than it so often turned out to be.

My third reviewer, Julien Zarifian, expresses no criticism of my dependent variable. He expresses appreciation for the utility of André Kaspi’s wonderful encapsulation of “*le différend franco-américain*,”⁷ as do I. And he assesses pretty accurately my own take on the relationship: could be better, could be worse. But he does argue that there are some things I should not have done in the book, as well as some things I should have done.

He suggests that my book takes the “shape of a historical-political essay... free[d] ... from some of the usual and rather formal academic constraints.” I am, happily and possibly perversely, ready to plead guilty as charged on this count, which expressed otherwise is also a criticism that Becker has of the book. Less culpability, I feel, attaches to Zarifian’s criticism, because in chapter 4 I spent more time than he argues was warranted in discussing what I call the “Duroselle-Tardieu” thesis (113), which is another way of referring to the one-time worry of many in France that there were far too many German-Americans and Irish-Americans, and far too few Franco-Americans. As a result of this demographic mismatch, Paris was unable to benefit—quite the contrary—from the game of diasporic politicking and never more so than during the era of the First World War. In the end, he writes, I conclude that the diasporic factor was “non-

⁶ See André Béziat, *Franklin Roosevelt et la France (1939-1945): la diplomatie de l’entêtement* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997); François Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt: le duel au sommet* (Paris: Perrin, 2004); Raoul Aglion, *Roosevelt and de Gaulle: Allies in Conflict, a Personal Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Simon Berthon, *Allies at War: The Bitter Rivalry among Churchill, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); John Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Viking, 1970); Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993); and Dorothy Shipley White, *Seeds of Discord: De Gaulle, Free France and the Allies* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1964).

⁷ André Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains: le concours américain à la France en 1917–1918* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1976), 305.

predominant” as an element contributing to Franco-American suboptimal cooperation. That is not quite accurate: what I argue is that those in France who worried that diasporic lobbying would redound negatively for French interests were overlooking the demographic elephant in the room—America’s large cohort of folks who were descended from Britain (Horace Kallen’s “Brito-Americans”⁸). When American demography most mattered for French strategic interests, i.e., during the first quarter of the twentieth century, it turned out that, after the establishment of the *Entente Cordiale* in 1904, French policymakers—even if they did not realize this—could actually count on Kallen’s Brito-Americans being a demographic element that favored rather than disfavored French interests. That was the chapter’s main takeaway, and because it seems so counterintuitive, I thought it was worth spending a bit of time on it.

Zarifian points to three sins of omission. First, he argues that I gave short-shrift to the part played by “Anglo-Saxony” (Zarifian’s term not mine, but a good one) in discussing Franco-American suboptimality. The criticism stems from the way I briefly addressed this ontological category toward the end of chapter 4. But as my discussion of it in chapter 5 makes obvious, I consider French views on Anglo-Saxony to be important among those cognitive “antinomies” (173ff) explored in the chapter. And while I do not know what an “Anglo-Saxon” *is* these days, I agree with Zarifian that, in France, it is an important staple in the cognitive cupboard, an idea that has contributed to stimulating the juices of “heterostereotyping” that can do so much harm to Franco-American peaceful psychological coexistence (whether or not, to refer again to Dorion-Soulié’s review, they actually matter very much in the real world of military cooperation).

I will again cop a guilty plea, to Zarifian’s charge regarding a few methodological matters (especially my not hitting the archives, and my not specifying and justifying the basis of my “case’s” temporal setting). But I do have to put up a bit of a defense for not discussing AUKUS, the trilateral arrangement reached in September 2021 between Canberra, London, and Washington to equip the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) with an eventual fleet of nuclear-propelled but conventionally armed attack submarines (SSNs), as well as to deepen trilateral cooperation on such matters as cybersecurity, quantum computing, and hypersonic missiles. I did have a lengthy AUKUS discussion in the initial chapter of the first draft of the book, but after its acceptance for publication I was told I needed to trim the manuscript by some 15,000 words. So out went AUKUS, along with some other items.

I realize that AUKUS’s getting left on the cutting-room floor can seem a mistake, especially to those who consider it a “stab in the back” by the Anglo-Saxons.⁹ There is reason for this upset. First, France lost a

⁸ About 60 percent of the American population in that era were descended from Britain; see Horace M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States: Studies in the Group Psychology of the American Peoples* (New York: Arno Press, 1970; orig. pub., 1924).

⁹ Angelique Chrisafis and Daniel Boffey, “‘Stab in the Back’: French Fury as Australia Scraps Submarine Deal,” *Guardian*, 16 September 2021, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/16/stab-in-the-back-french-fury-australia-scraps-submarine-deal>; and Sylvie Kauffmann, “No Wonder the French Are Angry,” *New York Times*, 22 September 2021, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/22/opinion/france-us-china->

multibillion-dollar contract to supply the RAN with a fleet of diesel-electric attack submarines. Second, to the French, the deal reeked of an Anglo-Saxon *conspiration*, constituting one more in a long list of episodes in which the Americans and British have failed to give due consideration to the interests of their French ally.

Finally, and in retrospect, I would have been well-advised to cut something else, so as to slim down to the stipulated word length. For the AUKUS case actually speaks volumes about the thesis of my book, which is that strategic culture matters. Had cooperation been more “optimal” between Washington and Paris, it is doubtful that the French would have been so rudely treated as they found themselves to be. On the other hand, had relations between Paris and Washington been as terrible as the Chicken-Little flock routinely clucks that they are, it would have been impossible, less than a half year after AUKUS, to discover Paris and Washington working as closely together as they did in response to Russian president Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. So whatever else AUKUS may or may not represent, it surely testifies to the perdurability of Kaspi’s “*différend franco-américain*.”

[submarines.html](#). Also see Eric Motter, Frédéric Lasserre, and Barthélémy Courmont, “La France et l’AUKUS: quelles politiques et quelles limites stratégiques en Indo-Pacifique?” *International Journal* 78, 3 (2023): 335-44.