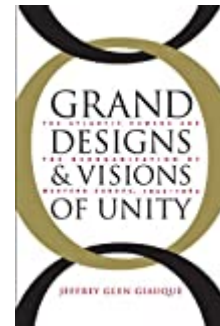


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

**Jeffrey Glen Giauque.** *Grand Designs and Visions of Unity: The Atlantic Powers and the Reorganization of Western Europe, 1958-1963.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. 327pp. \$30.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8078-5344-3; \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2679-9.



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## Shifting Alignments

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Philosophers of antiquity have taught us that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Nowhere is this more apt than in diplomatic history, in particular the diplomatic history of multilateral alliances. After reading Jeffrey Glen Giauque's lucid synthesis of the inner dynamics of the Western Cold War alliance system at the turn of the 1960s, one is left wondering why so many historians of international relations have for so long confined themselves within their unilateral or bilateral research agendas, when so much more can be achieved from a multilateral perspective.

Its merits notwithstanding, multilateral diplomatic history, and this book is no exception, is not total history. Much can be achieved as well as lost. Historians of international relations have not rejected multilateral approaches merely because they are difficult, but because other research strategies lead to different types of knowledge. The tension between multilateral syntheses and more limited, deeper monographs is not simply a matter of taste, as both types of history need each other. In any case, the historical study of European integration and

U.S.-West European relations has been ripe for new syntheses, which fortunately are now appearing.

At the core of Giauque's narrative are two people, who appear larger and more pivotal than anyone else: Charles de Gaulle, the president of France's Fifth Republic, and Konrad Adenauer, the German chancellor who supervised West Germany's re-emergence as a European great power. The vehicle of the fulfilment of their political goals, the European Common Market, created in the treaties of Rome in 1957, forms the framework of the diplomatic and political processes of cooperation and competition that determined the future of the Western alliance system during the first years of the 1960s. U.S. and British policymakers more or less had to adjust and adapt their own designs with this uneasy partnership and its founders' ambitions.

As the author clearly shows, the Western alliance system did not develop according to a particular master plan, devised in Bonn, Paris or somewhere between, but as the result of competing visions and designs, many of which failed to materialize, but still shaped the outcomes of the processes that led to concrete outcomes. The 1960s was

a difficult period in U.S.-European relations. In the end, the Western alliance proved to be remarkably flexible and capable of accommodating various national preferences and ambitions, in contrast to the rigidities of the Soviet system, as illustrated by John Lewis Gaddis.[1]

*Grand Designs and Visions of Unity* has two particular strengths. The first is the sensitivity to the historical processes that left no visible mark in the institutions of the Western alliance, but nonetheless shaped the circumstances under which more lasting decisions were made. The author's reconstruction of the situations in which decision-makers found themselves is excellent and generally well-balanced. Experts will undoubtedly find their debating points in the ways in which the author generalises and summarises complex national positions, but that is unavoidable in a book which relies on a heavy selection of the material presented.

The other strength is in the way in which the author manages to weave these complex national positions, preferences, and actions into a readable, logical narrative that is accessible to non-experts on the topic as well. The book can be read and easily understood by someone with little previous knowledge of European integration history or the history of U.S.-European relations, and will undoubtedly be valuable for students trying to make sense of an essentially confusing period in European history.

While the ways in which alliances work, are formed, reformed, or dissolved can only be explained in a multilateral setting, there are many aspects of international history that can easily be overlooked or completely left out. What is achieved horizontally can be lost vertically, if multilateral diplomatic history returns to its starting point a century or so ago: in the chancelleries and closed cabinets of power, in traditional narratives of secret diplomacy, the personification of political and social processes—that is, the history of great men and the world they made.

Being aware of the pitfalls, Giauque's work highlights both the benefits and the apparent shortcomings of the genre. In several important ways its basic approach, methodologies, and presentation signify a return to the roots of diplomatic history, especially to its origins in the history of European great power diplomatic relations. The book is a perfect example of traditional diplomatic history. It does not hide its character behind impenetrable conceptualisations of international relations and is not ashamed for being what it is. Its focus is the Western alliance system in 1955-1963, set against the backdrop of

the fluctuating Cold War and seen from the viewpoint of a small group of key decision-makers from four powers: the United States, Germany, France and Great Britain. The Soviet Union appears merely as a structural threat, sometimes more active, sometimes less so, but usually helping the Western leaders to solve their differences by its mere existence.

Other Europeans have no place in this story, as it is great power history. International relations are seen as the interaction and relationships of foreign policy leaders in these countries. The foreign policy machineries are actors in their own right, sometimes supporting their political masters, sometimes challenging them, but clearly pigeonholed in their constitutional roles. Integrative processes, competing visions and ideas about the future roles of particular nation states, the role of individuals, conflicting national interests are all analysed as a complex game of shifting alliances and allegiances, where the actors are solely driven by the necessity to maximise their power according to the information they have at hand. A classical power-political chess game is played out within the existing and emerging institutional structures of the Western alliance amidst the Cold War. While the chosen actors exercise rational choice and maximise their realpolitik interests, they occasionally misjudge or misunderstand the situation. These, however, are aberrations, and Giauque's way of telling the story will find many supporters in the realist camp of international studies.

Although the basic approach of the book is clearly stated, and serves its purpose well, it can be asked whether the processes of integration that developed in Western Europe in the 1950s and early 1960s can be easily considered from the viewpoint of traditional alliance policies, by subordinating economic and societal changes to an analysis of fairly clear-cut foreign policy issues. With the creation of the Common Market, the rules of the game in Western European international relations were changing profoundly. Important domestic issues as well as aspirations for grandeur were now at stake, and it is questionable whether these processes can be seen solely from the viewpoint of the power-political game Giauque narrates. The Western alliance needs its multilateral history, but whether the actors had only the politics of the Western alliance in mind is another matter.

The author's approach also has made it more difficult to engage in a dialogue with competing interpretations of European integration history. Admittedly, Giauque's research task has been formidable. Not only are secondary works about this moment in Western European and U.S.

history legion, but there is a vast amount of recent scholarship touching upon the peripheral themes of his book. Moreover, the amount of primary material in the archives is daunting. That said, the way in which he has been able to use French archival evidence, in particular, is a definite step forward.

The author uses summary to engage with previous scholarship, which is typical in textbooks, but more difficult to justify when the argumentation is anchored in primary evidence. Other scholars, who have used the same material, are included in passive voice, and appear as quiet lists in footnotes. It would be futile to start revising Giauque's bibliography; nonetheless, one omission is notable. Andrew Moravcsik, with his radically different interpretation of Charles de Gaulle's statecraft as motivated largely by economic and not geopolitical concerns, is nowhere to be found.<sup>[2]</sup> Readers can and will reach their own conclusions, but clearer and more explicit engagement with existing, dissenting voices would not have weakened Giauque's thesis.

With these reservations in mind, Giauque's is an extremely welcome work, in particular since other historians have failed to address the larger and inter-connected issues of Western alliance politics adequately. What both experts and students have for long missed is a major synthesis of the period when European and Atlantic international relations took their shape for years to come. As the author points out, a lot of attention has been given

to the details of national experiences, sector studies, bilateral relationships, or the newly created institutions as such. While valuable and highly necessary, the increasing specialization of historical scholarship on European integration has made it more difficult to digest into a coherent whole.

The call for multilateral, multilingual international histories is not a recent one. But it is easier to pay lip service to it, or to produce spuriously multi-archival studies, hiding more limited research agendas, than to achieve a multilateral synthesis which does justice to all sides of the story. The difficulties in producing multilateral syntheses are well known and need no further elaboration here. Jeffrey Glen Giauque has overcome these difficulties and produced a work that deserves to be read by experts and students of international history alike.

#### Notes

[1]. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

[2]. Andrew Moravcsik, "De Gaulle Between Grain and Grandeur: The Political Economy of French EC Policy, 1958-1970, Part I," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 2:2-3 (2000), p. 43, and "Part II," 2:3-4 (2000), p. 68; and Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

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