Unanswered Threats raises important policy-relevant questions, and it has made a significant contribution to theoretical developments in international relations theory.


Reviewed by Garret J. Martin, American University

In his book *Les Intellectuels et les figures politiques charismatiques: De Gaulle, Mendès France, Mitterrand*, French academic Nicolas Mary presents an engaging account of the relationship between intellectuals and three charismatic French political leaders—Charles de Gaulle, Pierre Mendès France, and François Mitterrand. Although the book may be of limited interest for scholars focused solely on international affairs and the Cold War, it will appeal to those working on twentieth-century French history, as well as on intellectual and cultural history.

The book is primarily concerned with intellectuals, a term initially coined during the Dreyfus affair to refer to the cultural avant-garde that chose to oppose political elites, hoping to keep them accountable in the name of the values of freedom and justice. Mary pays particular attention to the intellectuals who, not satisfied by a position of perpetual opposition, chose to gravitate toward the entourage of influential politicians in order to be involved in the corridors of power (p. 7). In doing so, Mary believes he can help to shed light on the often mysterious and nebulous concept of charismatic authority, defined by Max Weber as based on the personal and exceptional grace of an individual (p. 16). Mary argues that, by concentrating on the ebb and flow of the ties between a charismatic personality and his or her entourage, one can learn more about the origin of charisma (p. 26).

The book focuses on three case studies in postwar France, starting with Mendès France, who was briefly prime minister (1954–1955) during the Fourth Republic. The intellectuals who followed Mendès France tended to do so in part because they were attracted to his moral virtues, his honesty, and his refusal to sacrifice his convictions in order to get into office. They believed they could support Mendès France without compromising themselves and their self-perceived position as moral guardians of society, and they also viewed being part of the politician’s entourage as a way to raise their profile and credibility. As for Mendès France, he did not specifically court the intellectuals but constantly worked to have access to forums to promote his views. Lacking a solid base of support within existing political parties, he needed the support of newspapers to promote his cause and to remain a key figure in the public eye.

The second case study revolves around General Charles de Gaulle, the first president of the Fifth Republic, from 1958 to 1969. Unlike the relationship with Mendès France, the ties that bound the intellectuals in de Gaulle’s entourage to the charismatic leader involved far greater trade-offs and compromises. Though often recipients of great
rewards—such as writer André Malraux serving as minister of culture throughout de Gaulle’s presidency—the Gaullist intellectuals could not quite sustain the coveted position of society’s moral guardians. Through their loyalty to de Gaulle, they were compelled at times to caution against actions they disapproved of or that went against their previous stands. According to Mary, this was a charismatic relationship greatly shaped by the indulgence and leniency of de Gaulle’s followers (p. 255).

The final case study follows Mitterrand in his quest for the presidency and during his time in office (1981–1995), tracing an often complicated and tortuous relationship between the larger intellectual community and the first Socialist president. Although Mitterrand cultivated the image of a man passionate about literature who loved to spend time with writers, he did so without taking them seriously in the realm of politics. Prominent intellectuals tended to view Mitterrand as a man driven by ambition rather than conviction, and the politician disliked the moralizers who claimed to give him lessons without ever taking the risk of running for office themselves. Relations improved, however, in the 1980s. Some intellectuals did work closely with Mitterrand, believing that their presence in his entourage would enhance their credibility, and even prominent newspapers such as *Le nouvel observateur*, despite its contentious interactions with Mitterrand, ended up supporting him in each of his presidential elections.

Mary concludes that throughout the postwar period intellectuals gravitated around men of influence for several reasons. Some believed they were serving a just cause, others were simply tempted by power, and still others saw in their powerful patrons a platform for intellectual recognition. They served in various capacities, some becoming career officials and others staying in the shadows and serving as unofficial adviser. All of these examples are tied together by the growing personalization of power that took place during the Fifth Republic. Presidents were keen to mold their public image and believed intellectual support could play a favorable role in that context. As for the intellectuals, their declining prestige in the postwar period made many of them more likely to view an official position as valuable or helpful for their profile.


Reviewed by Ralph M. Hitchens, Independent Scholar

Ingo Trauschweizer, a scholar educated in the United States and Europe, has written an institutional history of the U.S. Army in the context of its role in European defense from the 1950s to the end of the Cold War. This is an important story. Although America has maintained a standing army since the Revolutionary War, the army’s history is one of cyclic swelling and starvation until the Cold War, when it faced an unprecedented challenge: to maintain robust, combat-ready forces overseas in an era