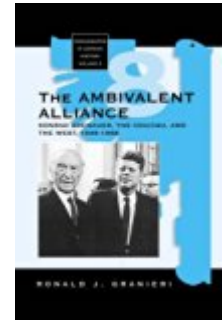


Ronald Granieri. *The Ambivalent Alliance: Konrad Adenauer, the CDU/CSU, and the West, 1949-1966.* New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003. 288 pp. \$69.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-57181-272-8.



Reviewed by Frank Boesch

Published on H-German (July, 2003)

Granieri's book was published exactly at the right moment. The ambivalent alliance between Germany, France and the United States has been obvious since summer 2002, and is frequently discussed. It has become clear that a common "West" is a rather fragile idea, which must be renewed continually by political and symbolic actions. Still, every handshake of George W. Bush is interpreted as a major political action, which is decisive for understanding the unity or the distance in these relationships.

Granieri's study looks at the origins of this ambivalent alliance. The major goal of his study is to improve our understanding of the "West" and the "Westbindung" by examining the policies of Konrad Adenauer and the CDU/CSU (p. xi). Adenauer is an interesting subject for such a case study because he represented the different concepts of the West in one person. During the 1950s Adenauer forged an enduring relationship between Europe and the United States. One decade later he criticized the United States and sought, instead, a continental Europe with a close relationship between Germany and France. This turn led

to a great public controversy which divided his party, the German Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), into two fractions. These "Gaullists" and "Atlanticists" were arguing about the best way to integrate Germany into the West.

Granieri stresses that Adenauer's foreign policy is a topic that has received "little attention" (p. 8). Rather, it has been a central subject of contemporary history since the 1960s. Scholars like Arnulf Baring, Hans-Peter Schwarz and Klaus Hildebrand have written detailed studies on this topic since the sixties, and it was a major theme of Adenauer's biographers.[1] Because these works employ a quietly traditional methodological approach, the modern history of foreign policy still has not been integrated into mainstream intellectual, social and cultural history. The idea of the "West" might provide an excellent link to such a revision.

Granieri is very familiar with the existing literature. His book, which is based on his dissertation, discusses different scholarly interpretations and reveals his knowledge of contemporary German history. At the same time his study uses rich

sources from several German archives (of course these archives were not just opened "over the past few years" as the book cover tells us, but the sources have been used by many scholars before). In his ambiguous introduction, Granieri points out that the origin of the later division into "Gaullists" and "Atlanticists" was rooted in two divergent conceptions of the West. On the one hand was the ideological idea of the "christliche Abendland." This was a cultural concept that essentially included continental Europe and had a special appeal for Catholics and Germans from the South and West of the Federal Republic. On the other hand, there was a more pragmatic conception of "the West in general," including the United States and Britain. This concept relied more on the desire for prosperity and reconstruction, and was especially supported by North German Protestants (pp. 15-17). As in other political questions, Konrad Adenauer had a flexible perspective. While his background marked him as an advocate of the "Abendland," his political instincts encouraged him to be open to Atlanticism as well (p. 19).

After these interesting reflections, Granieri presents the most important steps of Adenauer's foreign policy. The Chancellor is presented as a "calculating pragmatist" (p. 156). He used rearmament to achieve West German sovereignty. Adenauer's reaction to Stalin's note is interpreted as his desire to see the treaties completed quickly (p. 53). A close analysis of Adenauer's journey to the United States in 1953 shows how the symbolic integration within the West was planned. The integration into NATO, after the failure of the European Defense Community, is seen as a triumph of the "Atlanticists" (pp. 79-83). In the years after 1955, Adenauer tried to preserve the new structure and defended the new status quo (p. 102).

Finally, Granieri analyzes how Adenauer changed his position. The years between 1958 and 1961 revealed a crisis within both the West and the Christian Democrats. As the Allies differed on future policy, the Federal Republic now faced a

choice (p. 142). Adenauer and his inner circle viewed the Kennedy administration with increasing mistrust because detente was seen as an assault to his policy. This friction between Washington and Bonn sharpened a division within the Union. After the Elysee Treaty and Adenauer's retirement this debate was completely unleashed in public. The foreign minister, Gerhard Schroeder, was even charged with marital infidelity by the Gaullist members of his own party (p. 213).

It is easy to follow Granieri's strictly chronological and clearly written chapters. One might complain that the book offers only a few new interpretations and details not already mentioned in the existing German literature on this topic. Methodologically, it has a rather conservative approach. The author asks interesting questions in his Introduction, but the book does not really answer them. One should not expect a book discussing different cultural ideas of the West. The author, for example, tells us that Catholics and Protestants had different ideas about the West, but does not closely explain how these differences developed. The CDU/CSU's interpretations of the West, during the 1950s, are mentioned only in a few instances. Instead Adenauer's negotiations are described. Still, for those scholars who are not familiar with the foreign policy of Adenauer, this book is an excellent study in English.

Note:

[1]. See, for instance, Arnulf Baring, *Aussenpolitik in Adenauers Kanzlerdemokratie. Bonns Beitrag zur Europäischen Verteidigungsgemeinschaft* (Munich 1969); Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Adenauer. Vol. 1: Der Aufstieg 1876-1952* (Stuttgart 1986) and *Vol. 2: Der Staatsmann 1952-1967* (Stuttgart 1991); Henning Koehler, *Adenauer. Eine politische Biographie* (Berlin 1994).

Copyright (c) 2003 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originat-

ing list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses contact the Reviews editorial staff: hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-german>

Citation: Frank Boesch. Review of Granieri, Ronald. *The Ambivalent Alliance: Konrad Adenauer, the CDU/CSU, and the West, 1949-1966*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. July, 2003.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=7797>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.