

# symposium: terrors in transatlantia: the future of us-european relations

All of the four articles collected below were the result of a highly successful roundtable organised by the European Consortium for Political Research at the American Political Science Association in 2004. All four deal with one of the central issues facing Europe today: its relationship with the United States. At a moment in time when nearly everything seems to be in flux in Europe, it is perhaps symptomatic that one area where this uncertainty has been most acute (and for a longer period of time) has been that loosely defined as European-American relations. However, as the reader will be able to judge from the different pieces below, there is no single agreed line as to how and why the crisis broke out when it did, how seriously we should view it, and how worried we all ought to be about the future. Perhaps the least optimistic perspective is that provided by myself. The wolf I think is at the door this time, and no amount of deft diplomatic footwork is easily going to overcome what I see as a growing gap between the two continents. The bridge might hold (just). But it is no longer the solid structure it once was. John Peterson comes to a similar if less fatal conclusion. As he notes, the Iraq War was the most serious transatlantic dispute of the post-Cold War period. However, he takes the longer view. The transatlantic family did not begin to come apart in 2001 but after 1989 when the Cold War came to an end. There is more-

over some room for hope. The EU and the US will no doubt continue to disagree over a range of issues: however, as he points out, these in the last analysis will be more disagreements about means than about ends. Michael Smith shifts the focus somewhat towards the EU, noting that one of the big questions is not whether Europe is now prepared to say 'No' to the United States but whether it can adopt a united position itself on anything. Indeed, one of his more significant claims is that there is perhaps no such thing as a collective and unified European response to the American challenge but a series of different responses determined by the nature of the policy issue. Finally, Mark Pollack and Gregory Shaffer remind us of the importance of deeper economic ties across the Atlantic, suggesting that these almost appear to have an autonomous life of their own outside of the larger political and military relationship. They also remind us of something else as well: that the relationship is too multi-faceted to be easily pigeon-holed into nice neat categorical boxes. In this important way, they take up one of the themes running through all four essays – that academic analysis of the transatlantic community needs to come to terms with a very rapidly changing landscape where old ways of thinking are no longer capable of capturing the complexity of that relationship today.

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