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Reviewed for H-Diplo by **Günter Bischof**, University of New Orleans

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. marked a fateful day on many counts – for those who perished and tried to save lives and for those who watched helplessly around the world. 9/11 unleashed a sea change in American foreign policy. After the end of the Cold War in 1989/1991 the U.S. enjoyed a brief honeymoon -- with intellectuals fantasizing about ‘the end of history’ and asserting America’s unique lonely superpower status. Intimations of ‘peace dividends’ and a neo-isolationist retreat into fortress America were quickly rendered obsolete by the 9/11 attacks. After the ‘loss’ of a long-time adversary during the American Cold War mission of the global containment of communism, 9/11 produced an instant new enemy with the global war on terror.’ After the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. enjoyed a brief moment of a worldwide outpouring of sympathy and solidarity. Yet with President George W. Bush unleashing his punitive campaign against Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 and his preemptive war in Iraq in the spring of 2003, the U.S. quickly faced a new upsurge of anti-Americanism. Many Americans, basking in the prosperity of the globalizing 1990s, asked after 9/11, ‘why do they hate us?’

The essays in this book assess the immediate reaction to the 9/11 attacks in a select group of countries in Western and East Central Europe as well as the often hostile consequences of ‘Bush’s wars’ in the bilateral relations of these countries with the United States. The two introductory essays by Hanna K. Ulatowska and Eugen Freund are anemic and self-absorbed and contribute little to the larger themes of the book. The former compares 9/11 with her experiences as a child in the ruins of Warsaw after the Nazi German attacks on Poland in September 1939 and dwells on “feelings of vulnerability in war and terrorism” (26). The latter nostalgically recalls his visits with Austrian dignitaries to the World Trade Center towers as

¹ This review was originally commissioned for *Contemporary Austrian Studies* and will be published there in late September 2013. It appears here with the permission of the yearbook’s co-editor.

an Austrian press attaché in New York as his personal background to serving as an anchor in the coverage of the 9/11 attacks on Austrian state television.

Margit Reiter, one of the editors, provides much of the meat in this volume with her essays on both Germany's and Austria's reactions to 9/11. Both countries' politicians quickly jumped on the bandwagon of declaring "absolute solidarity" ("*uneingeschränkte Solidarität*") with the United States. A German politician professed that "today we are all Americans" (44). Much hyperbole was spilled in newspapers on the 9/11 events such as when Josef Joffe in *Die Zeit* compared 9/11 with the Holocaust when he spoke of a "civilizational breach" ("*Zivilisationsbruch*"). The Muslim community in Germany condemned the attacks and insisted that the Muslims should not be equated with the Al Qaeda terrorists. However, the initial shock soon turned into 'America bashing' and blaming the Americans themselves for the attacks. The "arrogance" of American capitalism as well as U.S. favoritism towards Israel in its Near Eastern policies became favorite tropes of German commentators for blaming the U.S. (54f). President Bush with his aggressive politics and missionary rhetoric – he had never been a favorite among most Europeans -- was disparaged condescendingly as a "cowboy" and "Rambo" (60). *Der Spiegel* dedicated a racy cover to "The Bush Warriors" and the "America's Campaign against Evil" (61).

With the frequent references to World War II, German commentators were different from all the other countries covered in this volume. While the Germans were never tired of thanking the Americans for their liberation from the Hitler regime, some also compared the destructive 9/11 attacks with American bombing of Dresden (66) and thereby off-setting contemporary American victimization with past German suffering. The pacifist Germans were gravely concerned to be pulled as 'deputy sheriffs' into Bush's retaliatory 'war on terror. The German government supported Bush's war against Afghanistan but not the war against Iraq. Both wars were highly unpopular with the German public. A German playwright fantasized about the Germans being "on their way back to the business of being war criminals" (p. 71). When Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (along with the French) led the European front opposing Bush's preemptive war against Iraq, German-American relations slipped to their lowest point in the postwar period.

Austria's politicians and the public were as shocked as the Germans and professed their deep sympathy to the victims and the American public. The Austrian state television channel ORF reported from New York and Washington for forty-three hours straight -- longer than German TV. The initial reaction among Austrians quickly morphed into a discourse about their neutrality. In a highly partisan debate many Austrians felt "lucky" to be neutral (171), as their benign neutral status allowed the country to stay out of the looming conflict. While the government supported American retaliation against Afghanistan, the Austrian public at large did not. Austrians were even more critical about Bush's war against Iraq and public opinion slipped into dumb anti-Americanism and *Schadenfreude*. While anti-Americanism on the left fell back on its old patterns of blaming 'U.S. imperialism,' the right, which had never forgiven the Americans for defeating Hitler, blamed American "hubris, money and power" (188) for having caused the 9/11 attacks. In a comparison with the German reaction, Reiter points out the Austrian lack of references to World War II as well as their lack of gratitude to the United States for liberation in 1945 and Marshall Plan aid.

Christian Muckenhuber's fine essay on French reactions to 9/11 shows many parallels in French and German reactions. French reactions were also characterized by a massive outpouring of empathy and solidarity with Americans immediately after the attacks. *Le Monde's* famous September 13 pronouncement *nous sommes tous Américains* (115) defined the French response. Yet among the six million Muslims in France – the largest Muslim community in Europe – responses were more controversial than among German Muslims. While Muslim organizations in France condemned the 9/11 attacks, they also harbored many conspiracy theories, blaming American and Israeli secret services for the attacks. There was plenty of *Schadenfreude* among marginalized French Muslims, “V” for “Victory” signs, and “*Allah Akbar*” (“God is Great”) expressions (114). The French press soon began to dig deeper into the causes of the attack and often came up with the usual list of American transgressions of the past, blaming American capitalism, U.S.-driven globalization, Washington's Near Eastern policies, and its great power politics (American ‘*hyperpuissance*’). Muckenhuber is particularly good in tracing the discourses of French intellectuals, who enjoy a uniquely elevated position in French society. For the French media theorist Jean Baudrillard, America's “insufferable superiority” has spawned the “phantasies of the terrorists” – who saw the twin towers as “the multiplication of power” (121f) and therefore a target that invited its own destruction. Yet the even more famous ‘new philosophers’ (Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksmann) came to America's defense. Having supported America's policies towards Israel and American neoliberal capitalism and globalization – which earned them the sobriquet “new reactionaries” – they now grouped fundamentalist Islamism with Nazism and Communism and called it the “new evil” that needed to be fought (114). France showed its solidarity for the United States with the NATO attack on Afghanistan to root out Al Qaeda's terrorist nests. The government of Jacques Chirac, however, joined the Germans in condemning Bush's “preventive blow” against Iraq, which was carried out without a UN mandate (129). This poisoned U.S.-French relations for years to come and unleashed an enormous reservoir of resentment against the so-called spineless ‘frogs’ in the U.S.

The contributions by Helga Embacher on reactions in Great Britain and Filip Fetko on East-Central European reactions -- in Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's unfortunate terms the ‘new Europe’ of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary -- suggest similarly pro-American governmental reactions in those countries. The British reaction was characterized by a considerable discrepancy between the obsequious reaction of Prime Minister Tony Blair's government and a much more complex popular response. Blair invoked the ‘special relationship’ between the U.S. and Great Britain and acted as Bush's quasi-ambassador to Arab states and continental Europe. Blair had visions of greatness “standing shoulder to shoulder” with the Americans like Prime Minister Winston Churchill had done during World War II (81). Blair, Embacher argues, utilized the 9/11 crisis to reclaim British great power status and act as a “big player” (81). The press on the left saw Blair as ‘Bush's lapdog’. Commentators on the right wanted Blair “to lead the world to victory” in the war against terror (83). Similar to continental European explanations, the more intellectual British press made American behavior and foreign policy responsible for the 9/11 catastrophe. Muslim organizations, too, argued that the Bin Laden supporters were terrorists “pure and simple” (91) and had nothing to do with “the real Islam” (91). The British worried, however, about more radical Muslim Imams in “Londonistan” (91) who blamed “the CIA, freemasons, and Zionists” (92) for the

attacks and feared “a fifth column” (93) illegal Arab-Muslim asylum seekers in their own midst. Blair’s overeager support for both Bush’s Afghanistan and Iraq interventions spawned massive antiwar protests on the British Isles and probably also were one of the causes for the Muslim terrorist attacks on the London subways on July 7, 2006 (the ‘7/7’ attacks in British parlance) (102 ff).

Fetko ably summarizes the reactions of the ‘new Europe.’ Polish sympathy for the victims of 9/11 was enormous and their support for all of Bush’s actions total. After their Cold War experiences, these East-Central European countries were very pro-American, the Poles however most so. The United States was seen as an ally and protector against feared future Russian hegemonic drives in the region, and the Poles wanted to become America’s principal partner in the area. The Poles even hoped that the Americans would move their military bases from the “ungrateful Germany” to their country (139). In the public debate anti-Americanism cropped up in Poland and East-Central Europe, too, but was usually muffled and in Poland coupled with anti-Semitism. One Polish commentator even blamed “the Jewish lobby in the U.S.” and its influence on American Near Eastern policies for the 9/11 catastrophe (147). Blaming Hollywood and its love affair with violence and commercialism was a more popular form of anti-Americanism in the region. In its support for Bush’s war policies, Poland became “the poster boy of solidarity with the U.S.” (154). The other nations in the region joined the ‘coalition of the willing’ as well. When Chirac chided these nations for their support of the Iraq war, Rumsfeld shot back the unfortunate metaphor of ‘the new Europe’ that was on the side of the U.S., disparaging the Germans and French (and Austrians who did not open up their air space to American war planes crossing the Alps) as “old Europe (153). The East-Central European nations saw their support of Bush’s war as part of their Westernization strategy; they saw no contradiction in their pro-American policies with their next step of moving towards European economic integration and joining of the European Union (158), which they proceeded to do on May 1, 2004.

Reinhard Heinisch’s essay on Bush’s foreign policy and its impact on American – European relations in the wake of 9/11 serves as a useful complement to the European perspectives. In a *tour de force* Heinisch marches the reader through the fateful months from the 9/11 attacks to the invasion of Iraq and the enormous “transatlantic alienation” and discord (194) that the French and the German reactions to the Iraq invasion produced in Washington. Heinisch lived in the United States during the 9/11 catastrophe and its aftermath and is therefore sure-footed in characterizing the neo-conservative realist/geopolitical mindset that dominated Washington during the Bush presidency. U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz’s doctrine of preemptive blows against “rogue states” such as Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was adopted by the Bush White House, as was Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld’s notions of containing the “axis of appeasement” in the State Department (198). Robert Kagan’s essay *of Paradise and Power*², bemoaning European weakness and unwillingness to confront military threats, defined the condescending view of the neocons in Washington towards continental Europe. Given such arrogance vis-à-vis Europe, the Bush White House should not have been

² Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2004).

so miffed when their best allies – the Germans and French – did not follow them in their ‘preventive war’ against Saddam, particularly without an UN mandate. When the occupation and ‘nation building’ in Iraq went sour and turned violent and dysfunctional, a chastened Bush recognized his mistakes in his second term and began to rebuild the damaged transatlantic bridges.

Essays by Wolfgang Aschauer about the terrorist threat and Islamophobia in Europe and Monika Bernold on 9/11 as an international media event conclude the volume. Aschauer provides a useful summary of the complexity of European discourses about Islam and a growing number of Muslim minority communities living in their midst (and estimated 12 to 20 million Muslims live in Europe [234]). Some critics perceive the spread of fundamentalist Islam in Europe as potentially the biggest challenge the continent may face in the future. In Aschauer’s summary of recent public opinion and values surveys about European responses to Muslims, Germany and Spain are in the lead of European nations with negative opinions about Islam, while Latvia and Austria are leading in xenophobia, rejecting multiculturalism and the integration of minorities in their societies (241). There seems to be a vast undercurrent of mistrust vis-à-vis Islam in Europe that does not bode well for integrating Muslims in European societies. Bernold follows the phases of “knowledge production of the 9/11 transnational media event” (251, 264) from the original dense coverage on television, as well as first analyses about the media coverage (2001-2003), to the cultural productions in films and popular culture of the war on terror and media representations of islamophobia and gender specific visual discourses (2003-2008), all the way to 9/11 as a “cultural chiffre” (2008-2010) (265-268). She covers the “cultural preconditions” of terror as well as “the effects of terror as provocations of cultural order” (266). In her interpretation, the discourses of cultural and media studies mystified and diluted a sea change in history into realms of ‘knowledge production’ and ‘cultural coding’.

It is rare for Austrian scholars to leave their narcissistic, navel-gazing, small country perspective and produce an ambitious work with a comparative European scope. This collection of essays boldly does so and, on top of this, is unusually tightly organized and coherent. The responses to 9/11 in individual European countries show both communalities and differences. After an initial upsurge of solidarity, in most of these countries traditional patterns of anti-Americanism defined their discourses, particularly after Bush unleashed his preemptive wars. The British response differed markedly from the German and French one. The German public was deeply stuck in its postwar antiwar stance and popular pacifism while the government refused to act as a European power; the Blair government acted as the foremost war-monger in Europe and tried to resume its former great power status. The editors are to be commended for an unusually telling selection of cartoons and images that illustrate the particular country responses. More country studies (anti-war Russia, pro-war Spain, anti-war Belgium vs. the pro-war Netherlands, neutral vs. NATO Scandinavians), instead of idiosyncratic personal and fashionable cultural studies approaches would have made the volume even richer. What the editors fail to deliver in their introduction is a thorough contextualization of the deteriorating transatlantic relationship after the end of the Cold War. They do not fathom American emotional reactions to 9/11 and Washington’s strategic response to the global threat of terrorism. The old Cold War transatlantic consensus

collapsed long before 9/11. Europeans never quite contemplated how irrelevant they had become to American strategists after their failure to resolve the Yugoslav Wars on their own.³

Günter Bischof is a native of Austria and the University Research Professor and Marshall Plan Professor of History and Director of CenterAustria at the University of New Orleans. He is the co-editor of *Contemporary Austrian Studies* (22 volumes) and many other books on World War II and the Cold War in Central Europe and the author of *Austria in the First Cold War, 1945-55: The Leverage of the Weak* (Basingstoke: Macmillan-New York: St. Martin's Press 1999).

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³ For example, see Edwina S. Campbell, "From Kosovo to the War on Terror: The Collapsing Transatlantic Consensus, 1999-2002," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Fall 2007): 36-78.