Growing Apart?

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has seemed to be growing apart from its democratic neighbors and allies. Why has this happened? The answers to this question are found in the social, political, and economic forces that shape advanced democratic states, rather than the current policies of particular governments. This book brings together a set of leading scholars who examine the evolution of different social, political, and economic forces shaping Europe and America. It is the first book to unite the international relations scholarship on transatlantic relations with the comparative politics literature on the varieties of capitalism. Taken together, the chapters in this book address whether the “West” will continue to remain a coherent entity in the twenty-first century.

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To our professors at the University of California, Berkeley
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Acknowledgments

Like all intellectual endeavors, this book should be situated in its specific historical context. Our original idea was to bring together a group of North American and European scholars who were each asked to explore an aspect of “American Exceptionalism.” We essentially wanted to know how and why the United States continued to appear so different from its democratic allies.

In our two days of meetings, under the auspices of the University of Colorado’s Tocqueville Initiative, we repeatedly found that our conversations were driven in two directions that we had not anticipated. On the one hand, the discussions of differences and similarities between the United States and its allies inevitably led to disagreements and sometimes heated arguments about American foreign policy. On the other hand, we were continually confronted by the fact that it was almost as difficult to talk about America as a single or coherent social and political entity as it is to talk about “Europe.” As our group discussion evolved, we soon came to understand that these two phenomena are related: The growing political and social divisions inside the countries of the West are profoundly shaping the meanings and agendas of the West.

Clearly these ideas merited further consideration. We quickly agreed to reconvene later that year at the University of Toronto’s Institute of European Studies with the generous support of the European Commission. Here we delved more deeply into the social evolution of American and European societies and specifically asked ourselves how these changes are refracted in the obviously difficult relationship between America and its democratic friends. We all agreed that the policies and personalities of individual American and European leaders, especially after September 11, 2001, rendered transatlantic relations more fraught than they otherwise would have been.
Yet what was dividing the West was clearly more than a few personalities or a handful of policies.

At this point, we realized we were working on a project that was unique. This is neither a book just on American exceptionalism, nor is it yet another wistful remembrance of transatlantic opportunities lost. Instead, this book offers a deep and thoughtful study of the evolution of countries that so obviously share common ideals and beliefs and an analysis of how and why these countries are growing apart.

We are deeply grateful to the friends and colleagues who have contributed to the development of this project. We would especially like to thank the several colleagues who offered careful readings of the papers at each of our workshops. Michael Adams, Vanessa Baird, Kenneth Bickers, Colin Dueck, Desmond King, and Renan Levine should not be blamed for what we did not include in this book, but they can be rightly commended for some of the better ideas that did make it into this book. We would also like to express our gratitude to two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press. These reviewers’ comments and criticisms were helpful in their details, but we especially appreciate their encouragement to engage the “bigger arguments” that this book develops. Andy Saff, our copy editor, did a wonderful job melding the styles and voices of so many different authors. Finally, we would like to thank our editor, Lew Bateman, for his confidence and good judgment.

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