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978-0-521-89999-4 - The Strained Alliance: U.S.-European Relations from Nixon to Carter

Matthias Schulz and Thomas A. Schwartz

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The Strained Alliance

U.S.-EUROPEAN RELATIONS FROM NIXON TO CARTER

Using a wide array of recently declassified archival materials in the United States and Western Europe, this collection offers new insights into the changing dynamics of transatlantic relations during the era of détente (1969–1980). Whereas prior studies of this decade have focused on the end of the Vietnam War or U.S.-Soviet relations, this volume reveals why bitter conflicts developed between the United States and its European allies, and how, contrary to conventional wisdom, European integration evolved less as a consequence of Washington's support than as a result of America's relative decline and growing U.S.-European discord. Taking into account the developments in various bilateral and multilateral settings, such as the European Community, the Helsinki process, and the G-7 summits, the contributions show that a common alliance strategy has always been a difficult undertaking, often the result of bitter confrontation and painful compromises. With clear overtones to more recent disputes, this collection demonstrates that there was never a golden age of transatlantic harmony.

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Preface

This is a book about transatlantic relations from the Nixon to the Carter years. During the 1970s, the U.S. war in Vietnam, the European integration process, different strategic preferences with a view to détente between the two blocs, the oil crunch and instability in the Middle East, economic and monetary globalization, and the renewed arms race challenged and, in many ways, transformed U.S.-European relations. It is the purpose of this collection to shed light on and characterize those changes from multiple perspectives. Most of the essays assembled here go beyond the classical bilateral approach and take into account, as much as possible, interactions on multilateral levels such as between the European Community and the United States, within NATO, in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and at the World Economic Summits that began in 1975. In addition, almost all the contributors could use recently declassified archival materials on either side of the Atlantic.

As Keith Middlemas wrote, “Without contemporary history, studies in the contemporary world – by political scientists, lawyers, economists, or specialists in international relations – rest on a dangerously relative foundation, and students are faced with a blind spot for the ‘years not taught.’”¹ The book hopes to help overcome this difficulty for transatlantic relations and European integration in the 1970s. It provides rich material for courses on U.S. foreign policy, European integration in its transatlantic context, and the West’s policy choices in dealing with the wider but interdependent world. It also hopes to stimulate further research on this important phase that foreshadowed the end of the Cold War.

¹ Keith Middlemas, *Orchestrating Europe: The Informal Politics of European Union, 1973–1995* (Hammersmith, 1995), xii.

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Matthias Schulz and Thomas A. Schwartz