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Contending cultures of counterterrorism: transatlantic divergence or convergence?

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Abstract

Terrorist attacks on the United States, Spain and the United Kingdom have underlined the differing responses of Europe and the United States to the

'new terrorism'. This article analyses these responses through the prism of historically determined strategic cultures. For the last four years the United States has directed the full resources of a 'national security' approach towards this threat and has emphasized unilateralism. Europe, based on its own past experience of terrorism, has adopted a regulatory approach pursued through multilateralism. These divergences in transatlantic approaches, with potentially major implications for the future of the relationship, have appeared to be mitigated by a revised American strategy of counterterrorism that has emerged during 2005. However, this article contends that while strategic doctrines may change, the more immutable nature of strategic culture will make convergence difficult. This problem will be compounded by the fact that neither Europe nor America have yet addressed the deeper connections between terrorism and the process of globalization.

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