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Introduction

The original aim in this new issue of *Cercles* was to present a collection of papers delivered by young scholars at SHAFR's (Society for the Historians of American Foreign Relations) annual conference in Washington (June 2001), to give them an opportunity to circulate their work more broadly. However, as time went by, the focus shifted to bringing together European and American scholars, sharing a common interest in American foreign policy.

This is a novelty for *Cercles*, whose previous issues range from literature to the history of thought, following our original purpose when this journal was created, i.e. to offer an interdisciplinary forum around the central theme of the study of the English-speaking world. Hence, this fifth issue has been devoted to the study of U.S. foreign policy, seen not only as a department of political science but as a subject worthy to be examined from various perspectives. Our choice was dictated by the scope of U.S. influence on the English-speaking world—as defined geographically and culturally—and the circulation of ideas between the U.S. and the rest of the world. Moreover, by gathering contributions coming from European and American scholars, we feel that we do—somehow—reach our interdisciplinary purpose, albeit in a sub-category of the civilization of the English-speaking world.

Some of our papers adopt a strict diplomatic history methodology (Dosal, Larres), others focus on the cultural dimension of foreign policy (Kashay, White), while others take economics or ideology as their starting-point (Buchenau, Kennedy). A few are devoted to the discussion of a central figure's ideas and visions (Catterall, Sy-Wonyu), and to finding an original discourse on a specific period, for instance, White through the use of Blues metaphors or Augé's study of American movies as a reflection of American foreign policy. One engages in the difficult task of assessing the historiography of a specific area from two points of view (Healy). The challenge here was to have recent and ground-breaking views on old subjects or sometimes neglected areas of the history of American foreign relations.

So as not to exclude any approach or to be locked in by a specific historical school, this issue combines the works of distinguished scholars belonging to different generations, with young researchers infusing fresh ideas into

often studied topics—such as imperialism in the Caribbean or American policy towards Mexico through a case study—or into neglected geographical areas or periods—such as the Pacific in the nineteenth century or the Caribbean in the 1860s—and more experienced and internationally acclaimed specialists, like Peter Catterall, David Healy, Ross A. Kennedy, and Klaus Larres, combining depth and insight with a will to reassess German-European relations, isolationism in the 1930s, the British position vis-à-vis Europe and the U.S., or the historiography of the Spanish-American war from the American and the Cuban side. New interpretations are offered, sometimes bold and daring. Finally we have strived to offer a truly international panel—composed of American, French and German scholars—whose position show how internationalism is no vain pretence for *Cercles*.