

Meanwhile, after four years of Republican unity and Democratic defections, it's the Democrats who've achieved unity on budgets and taxes, while the Republicans have trouble bringing their measures to a vote. After a decade of running off of cliffs without the slightest negative consequence, the Republican

moderates have suddenly paused and looked down. If the Democrats know how to abet it, gravity will now kick in. ●

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Europe's Choice

Sheri Berman

**THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE:
THE NEW SUPERPOWER AND THE
END OF AMERICAN SUPREMACY**

by T.R. Reid

Penguin Press, 2004 320 pp \$25.95

**THE EUROPEAN DREAM:
HOW EUROPE'S VISION OF THE FUTURE
IS QUIETLY ECLIPSING
THE AMERICAN DREAM**

by Jeremy Rifkin

Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2004 448 pp \$25.95

**WHY EUROPE WILL RUN
THE 21ST CENTURY**

by Mark Leonard

Public Affairs, 2005 170 pp \$20

OVER THE LAST several years a rift has opened beneath the Atlantic, pushing the United States and Europe farther apart. One cause has been increasingly different approaches to foreign policy. Another has been a sense that Europeans and Americans have distinct approaches to domestic affairs as well. Alongside the shelf of books chronicling transatlantic disputes over Iraq, terrorism, the United Nations, and similar topics, another shelf is filling up with analyses of how the "European model" is not just different from the

American one but superior to it. This literature does a good job of pointing out the chinks in America's armor and highlighting the ways Europessimists have overdone their gloomy portrait of the continent and its future. The books tend to have significant flaws of their own, however—including, oddly enough, a shared blind spot regarding Europe's true hope for long-term greatness and the obstacles it must surmount to achieve it.

T.R. REID's *The United States of Europe* is up front about its goals and motivation. A former European bureau chief for the *Washington Post*, Reid sees European integration as designed to create a new actor able to "stand up as a counterweight to the American brute" and penned his book to help this project along.

Reid focuses much of his attention on the business sphere and the ways integration has steadily leveled the playing field between American and European firms. Much of one chapter, for example, is devoted to the story of General Electric's failed attempt to purchase the aerospace company Honeywell. The deal was approved by the boards of both companies and the relevant U.S. authorities, yet it ultimately fell apart. Why? Because Jack Welch "came up against a force more powerful than the most powerful corporate chieftain. He ran headlong into the path of [a] great historic movement . . . the unification of Europe." This is Reid's overwrought way of saying that integration has given Brussels great leverage due to its regulatory

power and ability to control access to a large and lucrative European market. Welch failed to recognize this because he was accustomed to thinking about satisfying only American authorities and actors, and compounded his mistake by appealing to Washington to help get the deal done. The result was predictable: with Europe now unwilling to be treated as a "weak little sister who can be pushed around by swaggering Americans," the merger was rejected and Welch's reputation tarnished.

Reid ties the corporate tales to more general cheerleading about Europe's economic performance and prospects. He touts the growing power of the euro vis-à-vis the dollar, the ways integration has helped European businesses overcome coordination problems and benefit from economies of scale, and the impressive spread of European brands and businesses across the globe. He also includes the requisite sections on the European welfare states, reminding his readers of the many practical benefits the continent's generous social policies continue to offer its citizens. All of this is a useful antidote to those who think that Europe's economy is anemic and unable to compete with its "more dynamic" American counterpart.

WHERE REID OFFERS an informative and entertaining review of Europe's many practical accomplishments, particularly in the economic sphere, in *The European Dream* social theorist Jeremy Rifkin sets out to prove that Europeans are ahead of their American counterparts in the "vision thing" as well. Writing with the fervor of a religious convert, Rifkin sees the key to Europe's success in an ideal of life "far better suited to the next stage in the human journey" than its American counterpart. While America is desperately trying to hold on to an old era, Europe is "creating something new and bold." This vision is idealistic rather than materialistic, focused on the achievement of a better world rather than simply the accumulation of goods. It values community over individualism, favors multicultural diversity over melting-pot assimilation, and views multilateral institutions rather than military hegemony as the path to global stability.

Rifkin argues that the European dream has practical benefits as well as spiritual ones: it helps support, for example, what Rifkin believes is a distinctively European model of governance, one ideally suited to contemporary economic conditions. The emerging interconnected world is rendering the adversarial nature of markets obsolete, he claims; only "co-operative commerce" based on "networks" can deliver the long-term relationships necessary for success in today's "speedy, complex and diverse" world. Rifkin compares these economic shifts to the "great transformation" that occurred with the industrial revolution; now as then, he writes, Europe is in the vanguard.

Both books have a relentlessly upbeat tone, an explicitly evangelical goal, and a firm belief that the "end of History" has indeed arrived (although at a different station from the one Francis Fukuyama envisioned). Driven by an overwhelming desire to prove that Europe is not the stagnant economic backwater that so many Americans (and indeed, a number of Europeans) believe it to be, however, both overshoot the mark.

IT IS CERTAINLY true that Europe's economic problems can be overstated and its accomplishments underappreciated. But the continent also certainly faces important challenges, many of which are the flip side of the very accomplishments commentators such as Reid and Rifkin emphasize. An obvious one is the need to overcome the widespread European view that globalization is something to be feared or resisted rather than embraced. Although it is true that tales of European economic doom are overwrought, there is no doubt that a general sense of pessimism pervades much of the continent. A recent editorial in the German newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, for example, tried to perk up Germans by noting, "Sure, the German economy is in the dumps, and our national mood is sour. But the French are even worse off! Not only is their economy more 'sclerotic' than ours, but they are constitutionally incapable of fixing it." These are not the musings of a people eagerly embracing the New World Order. Books that prattle about a "cooperative" or "trust-based" economic order are no substitute for clear thinking about the

reforms needed in order to allow Europe to flourish rather than flounder in an ever-more-competitive global economy.

Another challenge to Europe's economic future is demography. Slowing birth rates are creating immense economic and social problems across the region, and unless those rates are raised or offset, Europe's future will be cloudy. The most plausible way of offsetting the declines, of course, is through immigration, a controversial subject that is oddly, if tellingly, ignored in both books. In fact, it's hard to take seriously Rifkin's praise for Europe's emphasis on community and diversity, given the inability or unwillingness of most European countries to address the problems facing their own minority populations (as the riots in France have made painfully clear).

IF REID AND RIFKIN are both strangely silent about some obvious problems facing Europe, they also fail to focus on perhaps Europe's most striking and distinctive accomplishments, namely democracy promotion—a topic that given their and the continent's obsessions with countering the “American model” or “American hegemony” is quite odd indeed. Here at least Mark Leonard's *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century* takes up the gauntlet. Leonard's book provides a short, concise summary of the standard Europhile arguments and shares some of the same strengths and weaknesses of the other two books. However, Leonard differs from Reid and Rifkin in highlighting Europe's success in beating the Americans at what they like to think is their own game. In an era when the U.S. government has bet the bank on democracy promotion and has come to argue that political transformation is the key to national security as well as the natural fulfillment of America's “God-given” role, it is striking to recognize just how successful Europe has been at this game. As Leonard notes, “Once sucked into [Europe's] sphere of influence, countries are changed forever. For fifty years . . . Europe has been creating a ‘community of democracy’ and using its market size and the promise of engagement to reshape societies from the inside.” Unlike the United States, he argues, Europe does not change countries by invading them but by threatening

to ignore them.

Indeed, looking back at the “third wave” of democratization that began spreading across the globe in the 1970s, one can see just how critical a role Europe has played in pushing it forward. Beginning with Spain, Portugal, and Greece, the promise of European Community membership encouraged those trying to move away from authoritarian rule. The immense political, economic, and social changes required for membership, combined with immense aid, then helped ensure that these new democracies would steady themselves and develop further. And when the Soviet Union collapsed, of course, the lure of Europe helped bring formerly communist countries firmly into the democratic and capitalist camp. More than eighty thousand laws regulating a vast array of economic, political, and social affairs—the European Union pulled off nothing less than a miracle forcing, or rather enticing, countries to undertake societal, political, and economic reforms that in some cases helped transform them from top to bottom. Thus not only did Europe encourage transitions to democracy, it also helped provide incentives for the types of reform that would help create the contexts within which democracy could work. The practical results have been astonishing. Less than fifteen years after the fall of communism, for example, most of east and central Europe was firmly in the liberal, democratic camp or well on its way to being there—all without firing a shot. As Leonard puts it, “The European model is the equivalent of the strategy of the Jesuits: if you change the country at the beginning, you have it for life.” This approach is incredibly effective and stands in direct contrast to the more expensive and threatening American one. “Rather than relying on the threat of exercising power to secure its interests, Europe relies on the threat of not using it—of withdrawing the hand of friendship, and the prospect of membership.”

This same drama is now playing out in Turkey, where—as in Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe—the prospect of EU membership has driven the country to undertake massive reforms. But here is where the story gets truly interesting, for bringing Turkey into Europe and securing its democratic future would not only

be an accomplishment of world-historical significance (and stand in stark contrast to the U.S.'s bumbling efforts to promote progressive political, social and economic change in other parts of the Muslim world), but would also force Europe to confront arguably its greatest contemporary challenge, settling once and for all questions about its own future and identity.

THE EUROPEAN UNION can either remain a weak confederation of states, joined together largely for economic purposes, or it can become something more. All three authors examined here favor the latter course, both on its own terms and as the only way Europe can counter the United States. Yet in order to move forward, the European Union will have to develop a distinctive consciousness and rationale, one based on more than being the "anti-United States." Herein lies the rub, for doing so will require confronting many of the challenges that books in the Reid, Rifkin, and Leonard genre ignore.

Two different paths are open to Europe. The first would define Europe on the basis of history, culture, and religious heritage. Turkey does not share these, the argument runs, and so letting it in to the Union would threaten Europe's unity and identity. There is something intuitive at the core of this argument, even if it is hard to define in any rigorous way (for example, it is hard to find much commonality in the history or culture of nations as diverse as Sweden and Bulgaria).

But there is another view of modern European identity and the EU's purpose, one that builds upon the key historical accomplishment of the Union thus far. Europe is defined, in this view, by a commitment to a set of ideals rather than an amorphous and perhaps mythical shared past. From this perspective, the EU constitutes a group of nations committed to the maintenance and furthering of democracy, prosperity, and peace. It is grounded in what the philosopher Jürgen Habermas has called a *Verfassungspatriotismus*, a devotion to a certain kind of constitutional order rather than ties of blood, faith, or tradition.

For those who believe in this second model of European identity, Turkey's candidacy should be embraced rather than opposed (at

least to the extent that Turkey demonstrates that it shares the EU goals). Indeed, bringing Turkey into the union would confirm that the "European dream" is not limited to a few specific peoples, but rather a model with potentially universal application. By rewarding the continuation of liberalization in Turkey with full EU membership, Europe would literally make history, breaking decisively with the most negative features of its own past—the ethnic and religious wars and hatreds that so deformed the continent's twentieth century—and offering a stark and plausible alternative to the democracy-spreading aspirations of the United States. This model offers, in other words, a path to a truly attractive European identity and alternative, one that also holds out the promise of building a sphere of influence that could truly rival the United States.

What this would require, however, is confronting head-on the question of what it means to be European in the twenty-first century. By looking backward and inward, choosing to base its identity primarily on culture, religion, and history, continuing to ignore the challenges raised by globalization, immigration, and the need to bring a country like Turkey into the liberal democratic fold, Europe may be able to avoid troubling trade-offs for a long time. But by looking forward and outward, choosing to base its identity on universal values and goals, and confronting the need to change if it wants to remain dynamic and distinctive, Europe could expand its appeal and influence beyond its borders and give itself the sense of purpose and mission that it now seems so clearly to lack.

Up to now these two radically different self-conceptions have coexisted side by side, rarely conflicting with each other on a day-to-day basis. With the recent decision to accept Turkey's bid for full membership, however, Europe has reached the point where it must choose between two alternative visions of its future. ●

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