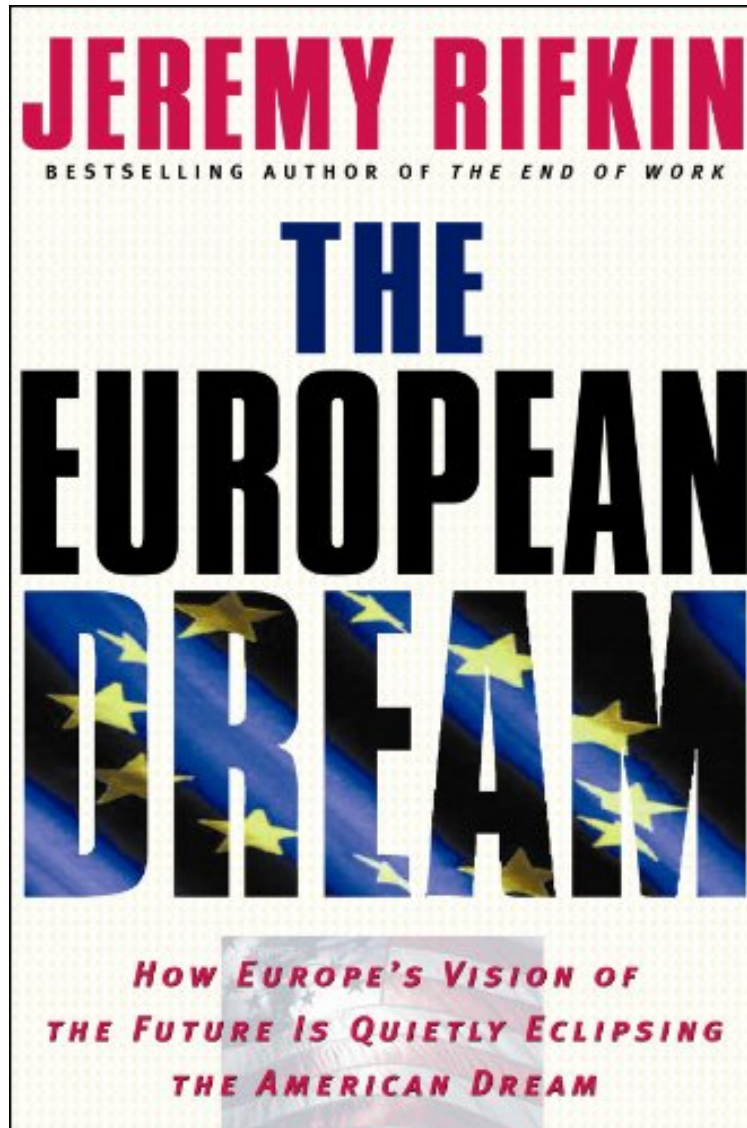


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The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream

Jeremy Rifkin

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Jeremy Rifkin : The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Hobo Philosopher By Richard E. Noble The European Dream By Jeremy Rifkin Book Review By Richard Edward Noble The "European Dream" by Jeremy Rifkin was published in

2004, well before the Great Recession. I knew the book would be out of sync with the current world economy but I thought it would be interesting to see how Jeremy's ideas held up through this trying period. First, what is the European Dream and what is the American Dream for that matter? The European Dream according to Jeremy Rifkin: "The European Dream emphasizes community relationships over individual autonomy, cultural diversity over assimilation, quality of life over the accumulation of wealth, sustainable development over unlimited material growth, deep play over unrelenting toil, universal human rights and the rights of nature over property rights, and global cooperation over the unilateral exercise of power." And now for Jeremy's interpretation of the American Dream: "That dream emphasizes the unbridled opportunity of each individual to pursue success, which, in the American vernacular, has generally meant financial success. The American dream is far too centered on personal material advancement and too little concerned with the broader human welfare to be relevant in a world of increasing risk, diversity, and interdependence. It is an old dream, immersed in the frontier mentality that has long since become passeacute;." Jeremy contends that the European Dream, sponsored and promoted by the EU (European Union), is extremely progressive. He is clearly an intellectual progressive. So first the reader must ask if this is all Jeremy's imagination or objective fact. Jeremy supports his thesis with declaration after declaration from the EU coupled with policy notions and contentions that support his interpretation of the economic community. These declarations certainly support his thesis. So it is contended and seems to be fact that the EU is/was a progressive economic organization up until the year 2004. The idea is presented that the EU desired to become a sort of United States of Europe. As with the United States an immediate battle ensued between the sovereign rights of the individual nation states and the economic community. This battle the author admits is/was on going. Unlike the United States the EU is a non-territorial community based on universal human rights and the sharing of their economic interests. Like the United States it is founded on an idea or philosophy and not one's place of birth. One goal, for those presenting this view, has been to promote the notion of nation state members thinking of themselves as being European as opposed to being a Frenchman or a German. Another goal is the globalization of the community outlook in tune with their notion of universal humanitarian rights as opposed to individual nation states' rights - private property and other exclusionist notions. Since the world economic collapse we have seen changes taking place and conflicts arising in both the U. S. and Europe. In our last presidential election here in the U.S. we all witnessed a direct assault on progressive notions of any sort. The moneyed interest attacked and put forward a program of extreme regressive, conservative notions. They were supported by a large number of Americans but in the final tally they were defeated by a majority of American voters. After reading Jeremy's book it appears that a similar assault has been taking place in Europe. The progressives, liberals and workers are rioting in the streets of one nation after another in Europe while the moneyed interest and the conservatives attempt to enforce their will from the main governments and the power positions. It is very easy to see now after reading "the European Dream" why the power brokers, moneyed interests, conservatives and plutocrats would be so vehement in attacking liberalism and the spread of progressivism in Europe. These liberal and progressive notions were much more advanced in Europe than in the U.S. To turn Europe and the European Union around in its direction would be a major victory for the conservative and moneyed interests around the world. The war between labor and capital interests has never been concluded. No truce or treaty has ever been signed. No laws or settlements have ever been arranged. Consequently exploitation by capital management is strong in third world countries and the first world countries have closed their eyes to the goings-on in these poorer nations. They trade freely, ignoring humanitarian rights and violations to basic human dignity. This has kept the capitalists fat, sassy, wealthy and powerful. Now they are making their bid for the re-establishedment of their basic dominance in mainstream industrial nations and all the old rivals are back at each other throats. We are witnessing a replay of the period from 1850 through 1950. The fighting in the streets is also more advanced in Europe than the U.S. because the workers, middle class and the lesser-off have much more to lose in Europe than they did in the U.S. Although I agree with much of what has been presented in this book in terms of goals and aspirations, once again, I find Mr. Rifkin far more advanced in his thinking than the world at this time is ready to accept. I find Mr. Rifkin's idea of a non-territorial, non-ethnic, global economic cooperative at least 100 years too soon. I even have doubts about such a possibility at all. Nation state loyalty, pride, patriotism, competitive well-being and security may be more genetic than contrived as Mr. Rifkin contends. The "I'm a citizen of the world" idea was presented a couple of centuries back by Tom Paine. The world was not ready for it then and is not ready for it now in my opinion. There are more people claiming to be World Citizens today than there were in 1776 but it is still a very small minority. Those that speak in those terms are still looked upon as lonely voices screaming in the wilderness. I doubt if any French or German citizens are contemplating disavowing their Nation State for a World Citizen birth certificate. I don't see any such thing happening here in the United States either. The global economy is also losing ground. Americans are screaming for more products to be made and manufactured here in America and Europe seems to be heading in that direction also. None of the workers of the Western advanced economies are looking forward to a lower standard of living. The wealthy, capitalists, and international conglomerates are saying they must and the laborers and workers are saying they will not. I see Nation States here to stay and growing stronger and the global economy waning and getting weaker - not the reverse. The European Dream is food for thought as are the other books that I have read by Mr. Rifkin. I see Mr. Rifkin as ahead of his time and utopian in scope and flavor. He certainly has a dream. But to me his

dream is more of a fantasy. One interesting aside to me, as pointed out by the author but expressed in my words and not his, is how the American government and its love for war and imperialism has been instrumental in promoting the European Progressive Dream. If it were not for the American Government's huge military spending in Europe a much greater portion of the European citizen's tax money would have gone into their national defense programs and consequently their advanced progressive agenda would have been curtailed somewhat. If not curtailed, it would have taken a greater monetary commitment and sacrifice on the part of the Europeans to achieve these positive social goals. As it turned out, the U.S., in the name of national security, financed a good portion of the better life for the European citizens while sacrificing a better life for its citizens here at home. This was and is not a good bargain in my opinion. The Hobo Philosopher, Richard Edward Noble, is a writer and the author of: "Hooked on Books." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By John Francis Xavier Griffin I personally believe that America can take a lesson from European thought in the way it stress communitarianism. 5 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating facts on Europe, but... By CJ There are some very illuminating observations Rifkin brings up in his book - illustrating the contrasts of secularism vs. religiosity, more individualism vs. less individualism, etc. However, this book is horribly slanted to the eurocentric position (and I am one who is the opinion that Europe is better in a lot of ways) - this slant is considerable enough to get in the way of the main thrusts of this book. This book also has a "dreamy" quality - Rifkin seems to gloss over a lot of shortcomings - particularly the difficulty in ethnic and socioeconomic melding (as relatively poor Eastern Europe joins the union). My opinion of this book is colored by the fact that France rejected the EU constitution while I was reading this book, disproving the Rifkin idea that Europe is currently speaking with one voice. Rifkin's book is a nice dream, but it at this time, a dream in his head.

The national bestseller that shows how the American Dream is languishing, surpassed worldwide by a powerful alternative in the lifestyle of the new Europe.

From Publishers Weekly Why are so few Americans paying attention to the dramatic changes taking place across the Atlantic, Rifkin (*The End of Work*) asks in his provocative and well-argued manifesto for the new European Union. Famously, Americans "live to work" while Europeans "work to live," and Rifkin demonstrates statistically and anecdotally that Europe's humane approach to capitalism makes for a healthier, better-educated populace. The U.S. lags behind in its unimaginative approach to working hours, productivity and technology, Rifkin claims, while Europe is leading the way into a new era while competing well in terms of productivity. Rifkin traces the cultural roots of what he says is America's lack of vision to its emphasis on individual autonomy and the accumulation of wealth; Europe's dream is more rooted in connectedness and quality of life. Americans may be risk takers, but Rifkin is more admiring of risk-sensitive European realism, as well as its secularism and social democracy. Exploring the history behind the two continents' wildly differing sensibilities, Rifkin examines the myth of the U.S. as "land of opportunity" and the two continents' contrasting attitudes to foreign policy, peace keeping and foreign aid. Rifkin's claims are not new, but he writes with striking clarity, combining the insights of contemporary sociologists and economists with up-to-the minute data and powerfully apt journalistic observations. While he may appear to idealize Europe's new direction, Rifkin's comparative study is scrupulously thorough and informative, and his rigor will please all readers interested in the future of world affairs. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist The American Dream is not dead, says Rifkin, but it's showing its years. Contrasting definitively American fantasies of individual autonomy, material wealth, and cultural assimilation with an emerging European vision of community relationships, quality of life, and cultural diversity, Rifkin argues that the great bloodshed of the twentieth century liberated Europeans from their past, better preparing them for global citizenship in the twenty-first century. Rifkin paints this contrast with grandiose, if sometimes messy, strokes, blending an intellectual history of the Enlightenment into an informed discussion of modern European political infrastructure. Rifkin is an American who has spent much of his life doing business in Europe, and his reasoned arguments are likewise often accompanied by personal anecdotes; it's clear on which continent his heart lies. But those who would dismiss Rifkin's polemics as rewarmed socialism miss the author's core argument. It is not a clash-of-civilizations diatribe but rather an appeal to Europeans to back their emergent vision with (American) courage and to Americans to temper their intemperate optimism with (European) moral perspective. The point is conversation, not competition. Brendan Driscoll Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "The European Dream should be required reading on both sides of the Atlantic." Andrew Moravcsik, Financial Times "Jeremy Rifkin, whose European Dream compares the economic and cultural boasts of the United States against the statistical and European reality, is that rare phenomenon: a management guru on the left of US politics, who eschews jargon, questions assumptions and feels as comfortable in Europe as in the US. Rifkin's argument is so compelling because it uses simple facts and figures to challenge US claims of supremacy." Mary Dejevsky, The Independent, "Rifkin gives Europeans something to cheer us up and to which we should urgently aspire." Chris Patten, The Guardian Occasionally, in history, an outside observer is best able to define the spirit of a people. In 1831, for example, the French political philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville, visited a young America and wrote about his experiences in a book entitled Democracy in

America. De Tocqueville helped Americans understand the American Dream and its importance for the world. Now, an American observer, Jeremy Rifkin, has written a book about the new European Dream which captures the very essence of the great experiment unfolding in Europe and its importance for a globalizing society. Europeans are in the midst of a profound debate about our vision of the future. Mr. Rifkin's book mirrors the European soul, providing us a clear reflection of who we are, and what we stand for and aspire to in the new Europe. The European Dream is a thoughtful and inspiring work." Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission