

The European Dream

How Europe's Vision of the Future is Offering an Alternative Model to the American Dream

by Jeremy Rifkin

Jeremy Rifkin is the author of the international best seller, *The European Dream*, which has been translated into eighteen languages. The book won the prestigious Corine International Book Prize in Germany in 2005 as best economic book of the year.

Mr. Rifkin's lecture presentation delves into the many features of the nascent European Dream. For more than two centuries the world has looked to the American Dream for inspiration and guidance. Now, a newly emerging European Dream is beginning to offer an alternative to the American vision. The European Dream represents a new chapter in world history. It is the first attempt at creating a global consciousness, befitting a globalizing economy. Mr. Rifkin will explore the political, social, and cultural aspects of the fledgling European Dream and its implications for the business community and society.

Mr. Rifkin will also explore the future economic potential of the expanded European Union, with particular emphasis on the opportunities and challenges facing both European and American companies in each other's respective markets. The European Union is now a close economic rival to the U.S. and the world's only other economic superpower. With its 455 million consumers, the EU is now the largest internal market in the world. It's also the largest exporting power. And the Euro is now stronger than the dollar—a reality few American economists would have thought conceivable just four years ago. Moreover, much of Europe enjoys a longer life span and greater literacy, and has less poverty and crime, less blight and sprawl, longer vacations, and shorter commutes to work than we do in the United States. When one considers what makes a people great and what constitutes a good quality of life, observes Rifkin, the European model has much to offer the world.

Europe has become a giant laboratory for rethinking humanity's future. In many respects, the European Dream is the mirror opposite of the American Dream. While the American Dream emphasizes economic growth and individual opportunity, the European Dream focuses more on sustainable development, and the quality of life. We Americans emphasize the work ethic. Europeans place more of a premium on balancing work and leisure. America has always seen itself as a great melting pot. Europeans, instead, prefer to preserve their rich multicultural diversity. We believe in maintaining a strong military presence in the world. Europeans, by contrast, emphasize economic cooperation and consensus over traditional geo-political approaches to foreign policy.

All of this does not suggest that Europe has suddenly become a utopia. Its problems, Rifkin cautions, are complex and its weaknesses are glaringly transparent. And, of course, Europeans' high-mindedness is often riddled with hypocrisy. The point, however, is not whether Europeans are living up to the dream they have for themselves. We have never fully lived up to the American Dream. Rather, what's crucial, notes Rifkin, is that Europe is articulating a bold new vision for the future of humanity that differs in many of its most fundamental aspects from America's.

European Union based companies and industries are increasingly reaching out to the Asian market, creating close economic ties in an area of the world long dominated by U.S. commercial interests. Mr. Rifkin will examine the economic, political, and cultural implications of Europe's new relationship to the United States and Asia and how relations between the world's three major economic regions will likely affect the future of globalization.

Mr. Rifkin will also focus on what he believes to be an equally important consideration for both European and American businesses: to wit, the need to fully integrate the internal infrastructure of the European Union over the course of the next decade so that commerce and trade can be carried out with the same ease as in the continental United States. The key to Europe's economic future is a successful integration of Europe's communications, energy, and transport grid and its information technology infrastructure. The EU also has to speed the integration of a common set of regulations governing commerce and trade, as well as capital and labor flows, and ensure that English becomes lingua franca for business by the second decade of the century. The future success of the European Union will depend, in no small measure, on the integration of the European infrastructure. Mr. Rifkin will explore the ways that companies can both facilitate the integration process and benefit from its implementation.

Rifkin draws on more than twenty years of personal experience working in Europe, where he has advised heads of state and political parties, consulted with Europe's leading companies, and helped spur grassroots environmental and social justice campaigns.