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The Myth of Europe

The euro crisis isn't really about money. It's about the fiction that Europeans ever existed at all.

BY GARETH HARDING | [JAN/FEB 2012](#)



When the euro officially entered circulation at the stroke of midnight on **Jan. 1, 2002**, fireworks lit up the night sky across Europe to celebrate the scrapping of the French franc, German deutsche mark, Greek drachma, and a clutch of other ancient currencies. Brussels hosted an extravagant sound-and-light show, while Frankfurt unveiled a five-story statue of the freshly minted euro as a pop band **belted** out "**With Open Arms (Euro World Song)**." "I am convinced," European Central Bank President Wim Duisenberg **declared**, that the launch of euro coins and banknotes "will appear in the history books in all our countries and beyond as the start of a new era in Europe."

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The early 2000s *did* feel like the European moment. Enlightened policy wonks on both sides of the Atlantic gushed about the glamorous new arrival on the global stage. In this magazine in 2004, Parag Khanna described the "stylish" European Union as a "**metrosexual superpower**" strutting past the testosterone-fueled, boorish United States on the catwalk of global diplomacy. Later that year,

economist Jeremy Rifkin penned a book-length encomium, [***The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream***](#), which was followed by *Washington Post* reporter T.R. Reid's unlikely bestseller, [***The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy***](#). In 2005, foreign-policy expert Mark Leonard explained [***Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century***](#).

One wonders how well these books are selling today, now that the European dream has become a nightmare for many, with the euro teetering on the brink of collapse and the union that produced it mired in a triple crisis that will take years, if not decades, to resolve.

EXCLUSIVE



[Deep Dive: Can Europe Be Saved?](#)

First, there's the economic catastrophe. Like the United States, Europe is living through its fiercest financial crisis since the 1930s. Unemployment is high -- more than 20 percent in formerly go-go Spain -- while growth is almost nonexistent, banks are collapsing, and indebted governments are running out of money. Some countries, among them Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, face the prospect of a generation of hardship.

Second, the economic crisis comes on top of the deepest political crisis the European Union has faced. Its most ambitious project, the creation of a single currency, is in danger of collapse. The principle of the free movement of people, another cornerstone of EU integration, is being challenged as some states [reintroduce border controls](#). Visionary leadership is in short supply. And a disgruntled electorate is turning in droves toward anti-immigrant populism. In his annual address last September, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso [admitted](#), "We are facing the biggest challenge in the history of our union." A month later, German Chancellor Angela Merkel described the threat to the euro as Europe's "[worst crisis](#) since the end of World War II." For the

first time in my 20 years in Brussels, the splintering of the European Union is no longer science fiction but a real, if still somewhat unlikely, possibility.

The European Union was built on the myth that we are one people with one common destiny -- an "ever closer union," in the words of the 1957 Treaty of Rome that founded what was then called the European Economic Community. We are now discovering that regional and national differences are not dissolving and that Europeans think and act very differently from one another. The British view of the state's role is very different from the French view. The Greek or Italian concept of law is very different from that of Sweden or Denmark. Latvians have a very different view of Russia from Germans. What an Irishman is prepared to pay in taxes is very different from what a Dane or Belgian will allow.

This lack of unity is Europe's third and most profound crisis, one that underlies the continent's economic and political woes. Most Europeans have little idea what the EU stands for in the world, what binds its people together, where it has come from in the past, and where it is going in the future. After more than 60 years of EU integration, 200,000 pages of legislation, and a hefty (and still growing) stack of treaties, we have succeeded in building a European Union without Europeans.

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Jean-Pierre Muller/AFP/Getty Images

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Gareth Harding is Brussels program director of the Missouri School of Journalism.

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JDGOLDER

12:57 PM ET

January 3, 2012

[On building a U.S.Eu., and the the building of the USA](#)

If any Europeans thought that they could form a United States of Europe (U.S.Eu.) in ten, twenty, or even 50 years without growing pains, they are as guilty of failing to learn from others' history as American are often claimed to be. The US went through many of the same problems when thirteen colonies succeeded from the British Empire and went there own way. Take a look at the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, then at the Treaty of Lisbon. They share many of the same flaws, rooted in the same desire to maintain the independence of the state.

Even once the Constitution (1787) and Bill of Rights (1791) were ratified and in effect it took almost 80 more years and a civil war that killed almost 2% of the nation's population before Americans began to use the term "the United States is..." instead of the "the United States are..." Even to this day, the differences between American's native to different states are FAR larger than most Europeans realize.

This is not to say that a United States of Europe will never happen, but it must be understood that it will be a long, slow process, and will likely be longer and slower than the process was in the US, due to a longer legacy of conflict between nations and, of all things, longer life-spans. The simple fact is that people who are raised thinking of their nationality as French, or Germany, or whatnot will probably always think of themselves thus. It may take several generations for the concept of being French, or German, or whatnot to become the equivalent of being a New Yorker or Californian to an American, and those generations will be longer than generations were here in the US in the 1800s.

The final point is that Europeans must ask themselves if a 'U.S.Eu.' is, in fact, truly what they want. A true nation of Europe will require the majority of its citizens to share common values, common ideals, common mores, and, most likely, a common language. If these do not exist naturally, they must be cultivated, and that leads to some very difficult ground for debate and discussion (and the potential for many, many problems). As part of this, Europeans must ask themselves why they want a U.S.Eu. Is it to compete economically with the USA, China, and other large population economies (a really bad reason to build a nation)? To prevent any possibility of another grand European war? To bring together people with more in common than not? To feed the French and German economies? To enable bureaucrats to regulate to their hearts' content (this seems to be the EU's main function at the moment)?

GUNDARICUS

5:44 AM ET

January 5, 2012

Examples

There are many examples of countries that combine different populations with their own languages and still function properly. Canada, Switzerland, Belgium. There even are examples of flourishing countries that combine languages without even having different peoples related to those languages. Think of Luxemburg.

The point is that North-Western Europe may very well have more common ground together than *all* of Europe. You see, the concept of Europe is a geographical one. It would basically make every country that happens to exist in Europe a possible member of the EU. However, that is nonsense. The core of the EU have common history enough to give it a try, but when the EU started expanding the idea of cultural differences being a problem was considered very politically incorrect.

JRACFORR

10:09 PM ET

January 4, 2012

The dream of a European Union

The dream of a European Union capable of challenging America, is just that, a dream. The history of the USA has hardly began, it has a thousand years left to go. Although this may seem impossible at the moment, it is a fact. The crisis we are in will get worse and dramatic changes will come to the contry but these changes are stages in a long process that must occur. The European Union will endure and eventull undergo changes that will replace German leadership with East European /Slavic leadership, but despite this it will not replace the USA as a world power. China will emerge as a world power in it's own domain and endure for a century. As the world transition from a Germanic dominated world to a Celtic dominated world, we will be in for a wild ride, hang on.

GUNDARICUS

5:16 AM ET

January 5, 2012

too big

The crux seems to be that the Union wanted to eat the cake and have it: They should have stayed with the initial 6 states and merged them ever more. Then there had been a basis for a common currency. It looked almost like the 90s merger mania in the business world, the way the EU was ready to accept new members.

GUNDARICUS

5:35 AM ET

January 5, 2012

Re: too big

Mind you, for the core Europe there is an actual common ground for more then an trade zone: Northern Italians are unlike their Swiss counterparts. French are not even unlike the Belgians and Dutch. The Flemish may have considerable differences from the Dutch, there actually is enough common culture between the two to feel more akin then to the rest of the world.

But it is a fragile feeling, and the crime of bureaucrats is that they looked down upon the reservations people had towards a united state, that they ignored the fragileness of the kinship and rammed their ideas down the populations throat. There was a collosal party when the euro came about that new years party of 2002 in my home town. But I found no one that actually liked the idea even back then.

There is more: Back in the old days whenever you conquered a piece of land and proved you were the man to deal with, only then you started minting coins. Somehow the EU thought they could do this the other way around. Once the coin was there everybody would start to feel that they were the "man to deal with".

DR. KUCHBHI

8:56 AM ET

January 5, 2012

Can't we all get along?

What you described happens in most parts of the world including your own UK - where the Scots and Welsh don't care much for the English or in the US where I find more in common with the French than my right wing nut job Tea Partyers.

Like any country with diversity, learning to get along takes time and institutions take time to create.

If Europe were to choose to split up back again, it will have given up relevance in world affairs. The individual countries are way too small to provide a counterweight to the US, China or any other 800 pound gorilla out there.

JIVATMANX

12:31 PM ET

January 5, 2012

The average person

The average person does not want "National greatness" or being anyone's counterweight. They prefer to keep their own real, organic culture, and live their lives simply and prosperously as possible.

"National Greatness Conservatism", also known as neoconservatism, for example, was a project of academic elites in think tanks like the PNAC that the average person never actually knew or cared about. Even GWB, in debates, presented himself as LESS of an interventionist than Gore and constantly presented a "Humble Foreign Policy". But of course, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, and others neoconservatives with a long history together, saw 9/11 as an opportunity to promote their philosophy.

The happiest, wealthiest countries, like Canada, Switzerland, and of course Scandinavia, are those that care about the prosperity of their citizens rather than "national greatness".

ROBERTLS

2:04 AM ET

January 6, 2012

To JIVATMANX

I do agree with you about the academic created vision of 'National Greatness', it is an ideal that has no great grounds to begin with in extremely diverse settings. The average person is more concerned about their own welfare and much less with the country as a whole.

However, I disagree with you including Canada as one of the happiest and wealthiest countries, being from Canada. The Canadian working class face terrible losses and grief at the hands of tough, idiotic, and nonsensical provincial and federal legislation. Of course this varies greatly throughout the country so it is a hard subject to tackle but the general issue is there. In Canada, the wealth is so unbalanced between the rich and the poor that I believe it is to an even worse degree than states.

Everyday our (conservative) government pushes in new laws and legislation that just bends the population over backwards in favor of the United States. Now this obviously can't be attributed to the population at large in the states, the powers that be see to all of this in their backroom dealings with our higher ups. Along with the ever increasing population of immigrants, that don't vote or do but don't understand our system well enough to make an educated choice, Canada is quickly becoming an external state of the US because of our major diversity.

DR. KUCHBHI

1:39 PM ET

January 6, 2012

National greatness ?

I think what you're suggesting is a false dichotomy between citizen's happiness and prosperity on one hand and national greatness on the other.

Take this example>

During the recent Olympic games, Sarkozy initially wanted to boycott the opening ceremony (not the entire games) as a symbol of protest against the Chinese action in Tibet.

Not sure if you see that as an attempt to showcase French "greatness".

Since France is already in the category of "who cares about what they think" - other than the fact that they wield a anachronistic veto power in the UN, such an opinion ought to have been irrelevant to China for the most part.

However, irrelevant was just not good enough. The Chinese turned the screws and Sarkozy showed up at the opening ceremony in what would be considered to be insulting to the French.

If it was Europe rather than France, the Chinese would have thought twice. France can NEVER think of even providing an OPINION on what they think unless it is done through the voice of Europe. Does the average French citizen care? Possibly not. Should he? I dunno...

ROLAND33

12:44 PM ET

January 5, 2012

Sometimes European sometimes not

What I find personally, is that if the EU does something towards the USA or China like not selling them lethal injection drugs or imposing a carbon tax, that the sense of being "European" becomes stronger. I'll even take on a "we" form in forums and comment threads that concern these things. But when the European Union comes in telling us Dutch we can't push up the minimum age of migrants coming in for family reunification or not allowing "us" to do what we feel is best in dealing with migration problems then I become fiercely anti-European I have no idea why they want to deal with issues that really concern domestic policies of the member states and do not focus more on foreign policy alone. Because in the end that is where Europe really matters. Coming together to form a united front to the world at large. I don't want it to overrule domestic policies like at what age migrants can apply for family reunification it doesn't concern others every country has different problems and seeks different solutions on migration. In fact I didn't even know Brussels could veto such a thing and believe me that wakens up a fierce nationalism being told by outsiders what we can and cannot do. But it's a strange and odd hybrid identity if an American uses the term "Europeans" or "THE Europeans" I can easily switch to this identity while not caring a bit if Italians can retire at 62 or if they go bankrupt or if they allow in millions of refugees. Another thing that can make me furious is that the EU now has rules concerning the environment that means we can't drain or dredge certain lands without "compensating" the nature areas with something else. So you end up having to flood perfectly good farmland polders because we wanted to dredge the Scheldt estuary to allow for larger ships to enter Antwerp. Like who thinks of these kind of policies and why can't nature be a thing for the member states themselves to implement how they wish? Some like birds and bees others like concrete and factories it should only concern the people living with the actual environment. Like I found out that we can't even drain and close the Wadden sea because apparently it's some kind of EU protected, UN protected, unique and special nature reserve for birds. Can we please decide how we want to design our land? We've been doing it for thousands of years we take care of it just fine without you sticking your collective noses in.

MATT_Z

6:22 PM ET

January 5, 2012

[What you thought to yourself](#)

You should have just told that to your students:

"I was born in Wales and have lived in continental Europe -- Oslo, Prague, and Brussels -- for most of the last 25 years. I've traveled to every EU country except Malta. I speak a handful of European languages and studied European history and politics at university. I have worked in the European Commission and European Parliament. My best friends are Dutch, German, Slovak, and Swedish. My partner is French, and my children are bilingual. Unlike some recent U.S. presidents, I know the difference between Slovenia and Slovakia. If anyone should be European, or at least know what constitutes one, I should. "

You know, you had hit the spot and never even realized it. We Europeans are to be considered a nation of the willing, not unlike Switzerland. We share a common destiny. Much like you thought to yourself without saying it aloud.

GRINSHER

12:09 AM ET

January 6, 2012

[You know when you're European](#)

I am not so concerned about the long-term future of the European Union. The European Project is indeed only quite young. In its 50+ years however, it has already made enormous progress with solid institutions, a free market and a single currency. It is only normal that, given the speed and depth of the changes, there are major crises from time to time; these function to wake up leaders and the people of Europe themselves. In fact, there actually haven't been that many crises in those 50 years--remarkably so. When things went right, nobody was ever seriously questioning the EU, apart from some hard-core nationalists who had out-of-line thoughts. Europe unmistakably feels very different than 20 years ago, and it does have to do with open borders, a single currency--even though France still looks like France and London is still English, and that's what everybody wants anyway. The fact that people may not be geographically as mobile as in the US, does not mean much. If in most countries of the EU, social mobility is higher than in most other countries of the world, there is apparently no need to be moving physically elsewhere. A comparison with the US is helpful to see how that country developed in 200 years to where it is now. Europe definitely needs more time, and it needs to see its own position and history in perspective.

As to diversity, I don't think it is a problem for any European that she or he is different from his or her neighbor. It is fun and we like it when we travel in Europe, en masse, at that. The most important thing though is that being European goes very deep, and it might be as a result of having suffered through various wars and occupations. The differences seem folkloric rather than insurmountable. I have never felt more European than the 15+ years I lived outside Europe (Asia, the Americas). Suddenly I realized it made as much sense to talk about 'Europeans' as about 'Americans'--a sign that, like Americans, on the superficial level we have reached an important commonality without suggesting that all Europeans are identical. Nobody seriously would want the EU to break up if they really knew what that meant on a political and economic level. However, the current crisis is a welcome foot on the brake to rethink what is good and what is not good for Europe--and not whether the very concept of 'Europe' is good or not good.

MORANI YA SIMBA

3:34 AM ET

January 6, 2012

[What a malicious piece](#)

This vile little guy, Gareth Harding, seems to enjoy spreading panic just as the EU is fighting a sort of "financial Battle of Britain" fight. I am generally very much in favor of free speech but this sort of hateful propaganda should perhaps be curbed until the immediate danger has passed. It is absolutely not my desire to force Dutch, Poles, Italians, Brits or Germans to be "Europeans" but how they want the EU to work, and how much union they want, is an important decision that should not be forced out of their hands by panic and fear. This Harding is nothing but a vile little jackel snapping at what he thinks is a corpse but I think is anything but. If he's American, revoke his visa and send him home. Otherwise, intern

his little ass to prevent panic from spreading and letting people know that trying to induce complete collapse and chaos to Europe, and then the global economy, is not acceptable in the middle of a dangerous crisis.

JAMESPYTHON

11:35 AM ET

January 6, 2012

[Yes Europe is no more!!](#)

by Steven Hill, author of *Europe's Promise: Why the European Way Is the Best Hope in an Insecure Age* and Director of the Political Reform Program at the New America Foundation

Picture two flags, side by side, one the Stars and Stripes, also known as Old Glory, the other the European Union royal blue with a circle of twelve gold stars, like a halo. While Europe is considered the "old world," the United States actually is far older than the European Union. The European Union is the new kid on the block, a fundamentally different "Europe," reconstructed from the rubble of World War II with America's generous assistance. Because modern-day Europe is so new and still in formation, it is frequently misunderstood by Americans. Numerous myths and half-truths about Europe now pass as conventional wisdom, and these myths have clouded Americans' perceptions and understanding of Europe. It will be helpful to the future of the transatlantic relationship to clarify some of these myths.

Myth 1. Europe has a weak, sclerotic and noncompetitive economy.

FACT. Europe has the largest economy in the world, producing nearly a third of the world's economy, almost as large as the United States and China combined. It has more Fortune 500 companies than the United States and China combined, and some of the most competitive national economies in the world, according to the World Economic Forum. From 1998 through 2008 (until the global economic collapse), Europe had a higher per capita GDP growth rate than the U.S. , and currently the continent previously known as the "land of high unemployment" has a lower unemployment rate than the U.S. (U.S. 10%, European Union, 9.5%, Germany 7.6%, France 10%).

Europe is the largest trading partner both of the United States and China. Europe's stocks and investment returns have out-performed those in the U.S., making Europe an international investment magnet. In fact, Europe is corporate America's biggest target for foreign investment, and U.S. businesses make far more profits there than anywhere else in the world, over twenty times more than what they have made in China.

But Europe's economy is not just powered by Fortune 500 companies and big corporations. It has more small businesses than the U.S. that provide two-thirds of Europe's jobs, compared to about half the jobs in the United States.

Myth 2. The European "welfare state" hamstring its businesses.

FACT. Hardly a welfare state, Europe's economy and comprehensive social system are two halves of a well-designed "social capitalism" that is better geared than America's "Wall Street capitalism" to support families and individuals, and keep them healthy and productive. Europeans are supported with quality

health care, a comfortable retirement pension, paid parental leave after childbirth, paid sick leave, child care and “kiddie stipends,” more vacation time, free or nearly free university education, job training, affordable housing, senior care and more. This is more “workfare” than “welfare,” since it keeps workers in good health and able to work. And it reveals real family values, as it provides families the support structure they need in this economically insecure age. The overwhelming evidence shows this has been good for the economy, producing highly productive workers who have sufficient wages to be active consumers.

Myth 3. Europe is a socialist den of government interference and intervention.

Europe is completely capitalist, not socialist, with more Fortune 500 companies and more small businesses than in the U.S. But Europe has figured out how to harness capitalism’s tremendous wealth-creating capacity so that its prosperity is broadly shared. Practices of economic democracy known as “codetermination,” “supervisory boards,” “works councils” and “flexicurity” are crucial to that harnessing. Codetermination allows workers to elect representatives to corporate boards of directors (known as supervisory boards). Half of the board members for the largest corporations in Germany — Siemens, BMW, Daimler and others — are elected by the workers. In Sweden, one-third of a company’s directors are worker-elected. Imagine Wal-Mart’s board of directors having anywhere from a third to half of its directors elected directly by its workers. It’s hard to even conceive of such a notion from the American standpoint. Yet, most European nations employ some version of this. The impact has been immensely significant, and research shows it has fostered a healthy degree of consultation and cooperation between management and workers.

Works councils are the other twin pillar of codetermination. Elected works councils at individual companies allow workers to gain significant input into their working conditions. Works councils, which are separate from labor unions, have real clout. They enjoy veto power over certain management decisions such as redeployment and dismissal of individual employees. They also have “co-decision rights” to meet with management to discuss the firm’s finances, daily work schedules, scheduling of holidays, work organization and other operating procedures; and “consultation rights” in regard to planning for the introduction of new technologies, mergers and layoffs.

Codetermination fosters the right balance of workers’ rights and consultation with robust commerce and entrepreneurship. It is one of the keys to how Europe’s brand of “social capitalism” has managed to harness its economic engine.

Myth 4. Europeans pay more taxes than Americans.

FACT: For their taxes, Europeans receive a seemingly endless list of benefits and services for which Americans must pay extra via out-of-pocket fees, premiums, deductibles, tuition and other charges, in addition to our taxes. For example, many Americans who have health care coverage are paying escalating premiums and deductibles, while Europeans receive health care in return for a modest amount deducted from their paycheck. Other Americans are saving a hundred thousand dollars per child for their college education, yet European children attend for free or nearly so. Millions of Americans are scraping to save the amount they will need for retirement beyond Social Security, but the European retirement system is much more generous. Many Americans pay extra for child care, or self-finance their own sick leave or parental leave after a birth, but Europeans receive all of these and more—in return for paying

their taxes. When you sum up the total balance sheet, it turns out that many Americans pay out as much as or more than Europeans — but we receive a lot less for our money.

Myth 5. Europe's economy will be hurt by its inadequate domestic energy supply and its dependence on Russia for its energy needs.

FACT: Europe's energy efficiency is the best in the world. As a result of widespread implementation of conservation and renewable technologies, Europe's ecological "footprint" (the amount of the earth's capacity that a population consumes) is about half that of the United States for the same standard of living. The European landscape is being transformed slowly by giant high-tech windmills, vast solar arrays, underwater seamills, hydrogen-powered vehicles, "sea snakes," and other renewable energy technologies. Europe is implementing conservation and "green" design in everything from skyscrapers to fuel-efficient automobiles, high speed trains, low wattage light bulbs, and low flush toilets. Europe has gone both high- and low-tech: It has also developed thousands of kilometers of bicycle and pedestrian paths that are used by people of all ages. In the process, Europeans are creating entire new industries and tens of thousands of new jobs.

As a result of this activity, Europe has reduced its energy reliance on Russia and the Middle East, diversifying its foreign sources of oil and natural gas. The heads of all 27 E.U. nations have agreed to make renewable energy sources 20 percent of the union's energy mix by 2020 and to cut carbon emissions by 20 percent. For all these reasons, BusinessWeek has stated that Europe is better prepared than the United States for this era of energy uncertainty.

JIVATMANX

12:30 PM ET

January 6, 2012

[Can't Argue with your points](#)

I simply can't argue with any of these points - Health Care systems are generally far superior there, In many countries, especially Scandaniva and Switzerland especially, starting a business and pay taxes is much simpler and easier than the supposedly more capitalist U.S.

The problem is that these points list positive attributes of European countries as a whole, and have nothing to do with the European Union. The only time you mention anything connected to the European Union is the flag in your introductory paragraph.

Please try again and instead address criticism of the European Union itself as a political structure.

You may start with this one: The democratic deficit.

Why are voter turnouts in E.U. elections are abysmally low, on a continent that regular has 80%+ turnout in national elections. Why are so many of the main E.U. political bodies, like the Commission, completely unelected?

JAMESPYTHON

11:36 AM ET

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structure they need in this economically insecure age. The overwhelming evidence shows this has been good for the economy, producing highly productive workers who have sufficient wages to be active consumers.

Myth 3. Europe is a socialist den of government interference and intervention.

Europe is completely capitalist, not socialist, with more Fortune 500 companies and more small businesses than in the U.S. But Europe has figured out how to harness capitalism's tremendous wealth-creating capacity so that its prosperity is broadly shared. Practices of economic democracy known as "codetermination," "supervisory boards," "works councils" and "flexicurity" are crucial to that harnessing. Codetermination allows workers to elect representatives to corporate boards of directors (known as supervisory boards). Half of the board members for the largest corporations in Germany — Siemens, BMW, Daimler and others — are elected by the workers. In Sweden, one-third of a company's directors are worker-elected. Imagine Wal-Mart's board of directors having anywhere from a third to half of its directors elected directly by its workers. It's hard to even conceive of such a notion from the American standpoint. Yet, most European nations employ some version of this. The impact has been immensely significant, and research shows it has fostered a healthy degree of consultation and cooperation between management and workers.

Works councils are the other twin pillar of codetermination. Elected works councils at individual companies allow workers to gain significant input into their working conditions. Works councils, which are separate from labor unions, have real clout. They enjoy veto power over certain management decisions such as redeployment and dismissal of individual employees. They also have "co-decision rights" to meet with management to discuss the firm's finances, daily work schedules, scheduling of holidays, work organization and other operating procedures; and "consultation rights" in regard to planning for the introduction of new technologies, mergers and layoffs.

Codetermination fosters the right balance of workers' rights and consultation with robust commerce and entrepreneurship. It is one of the keys to how Europe's brand of "social capitalism" has managed to harness its economic engine.

Myth 4. Europeans pay more taxes than Americans.

FACT: For their taxes, Europeans receive a seemingly endless list of benefits and services for which Americans must pay extra via out-of-pocket fees, premiums, deductibles, tuition and other charges, in addition to our taxes. For example, many Americans who have health care coverage are paying escalating premiums and deductibles, while Europeans receive health care in return for a modest amount deducted from their paycheck. Other Americans are saving a hundred thousand dollars per child for their college education, yet European children attend for free or nearly so. Millions of Americans are scraping to save the amount they will need for retirement beyond Social Security, but the European retirement system is much more generous. Many Americans pay extra for child care, or self-finance their own sick leave or parental leave after a birth, but Europeans receive all of these and more—in return for paying their taxes. When you sum up the total balance sheet, it turns out that many Americans pay out as much as or more than Europeans — but we receive a lot less for our money.

Myth 5. Europe's economy will be hurt by its inadequate domestic energy supply and its dependence on Russia for its energy needs.

FACT: Europe's energy efficiency is the best in the world. As a result of widespread implementation of conservation and renewable technologies, Europe's ecological "footprint" (the amount of the earth's capacity that a population consumes) is about half that of the United States for the same standard of living. The European landscape is being transformed slowly by giant high-tech windmills, vast solar arrays, underwater seamills, hydrogen-powered vehicles, "sea snakes," and other renewable energy technologies. Europe is implementing conservation and "green" design in everything from skyscrapers to fuel-efficient automobiles, high speed trains, low wattage light bulbs, and low flush toilets. Europe has gone both high- and low-tech: It has also developed thousands of kilometers of bicycle and pedestrian paths that are used by people of all ages. In the process, Europeans are creating entire new industries and tens of thousands of new jobs.

As a result of this activity, Europe has reduced its energy reliance on Russia and the Middle East, diversifying its foreign sources of oil and natural gas. The heads of all 27 E.U. nations have agreed to make renewable energy sources 20 percent of the union's energy mix by 2020 and to cut carbon emissions by 20 percent. For all these reasons, BusinessWeek has stated that Europe is better prepared than the United States for this era of energy uncertainty. Myth 5. Europe's economy will be hurt by its inadequate domestic energy supply and its dependence on Russia for its energy needs.

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Thanks

Admin of [phen375](#) | [genf20 plus reviews](#)

JIVATMANX

12:30 PM ET

January 6, 2012

[Can't Argue with your points](#)

I simply can't argue with any of these points - Health Care systems are generally far superior there, In many countries, especially Scandaniva and Switzerland especially, starting a business and pay taxes is much simpler and easier than the supposedly more capitalist U.S.

The problem is that these points list positive attributes of European countries as a whole, and have nothing to do with the European Union. The only time you mention anything connected to the European Union is the flag in your introductory paragraph.

Please try again and instead address criticism of the European Union itself as a political structure.

You may start with this one: The democratic deficit.

Why are voter turnouts in E.U. elections are abysmally low, on a continent that regular has 80%+ turnout in national elections. Why are so many of the main E.U. political bodies, like the Commission, completely unelected?

LIAHASAN11

10:54 AM ET

January 8, 2012

[Over the past few years,](#)

Over the past few years, there has been a growing tendency to dub Muslims as terrorists. And leading from the front in this blame game is none other than the superpower, the United States. It is extremely sad that such a tolerant and loving community is being dubbed as behind the terror outfits.

It is gross injustice that the Muslims of this world are being treated as second class. How many of you think that Muslims are behind the terror plots, no matter where they happen? No doubt most of the terror outfits are comprised of Muslims, but is it correct to say that all Muslims are terrorists? If we look at the community as a whole, the Muslims will outnumber almost the rest. Indeed most of the rich nations are Muslim nations.

There are a few misguided youth who have spoilt the spirit of Islam, disturbed the Muslim norms, created havoc in the world, revoked the laws of the land, disturbed peace, affected fraternal relations, and above all marginalised the facets and tenets of the KORAN --the Holy Book-- that has been leading several generations ever since it came into being. It is not just the Muslims that bow before the Koran, I being a non-Muslim, too, bow before the most sacred book, and I have no doubt in saying that millions of non-Muslims treat the Koran as their HOLY BOOK--much like the Geeta of Hindus, the Bible of Christians, and the Guru Granth Sahib Ji of Sikhs. All these sacred, religious books preach their followers fraternity, brotherhood, and love for all --no matter which religion they belong. Wouldn't it have been wonderful, had all of us followed our religion, keeping in mind the sanctity of all other religions?

this is my request to everyone..standby your faith, your religion, your prayer, your worship, your norms, but for God's sake don't use the pious name of God for violence, waging wars, letting bloodshed, diluting sacred human values, massacring men, women, children and old n infirm,---just for the sake of POWER n SUPREMACY over others.

ASK God when, you leave for haven, how correct are those indulging in gross human rights violations just to gain power n prestige just to create dread, fear n havoc in the world.

Muslims are a religious community, who believe in the sanctity n virtues of the Koran n the Prophet --the Great Prophet, who taught them to fight those who kill innocents, to wage a jihad against those who r antihuman-- not against all n sundry..

So, how did Muslims started being dubbed as terrorists? Being a community rich of strength n valor, the powerful Muslim lords saw themselves reaping dividends by ruling over the world. Just this was the beginning...n the rest is history, v much the present--may b d future too.

But can we let the blood of our brethren, n fellow citizens flow like this in suicide bombings, bomb blasts n all such atrocious tactics of the so-called terrorists? The disgruntled few r in a state of dissatisfaction n to satisfy themselves have started waging a war on innocents that they call as jihad. however, they fail to understand that in doing so, they have tarnished the sacred name of ISLAM, n invited criticism from world over..resulting in the world calling the entire Muslim community as associated with terrorists.

For God's sake stop calling Muslims terrorists. They are a community that loves its religion, its God, its Prophet, and upkeep human values. The dissatisfied n misled among them r the real culprits, who need to be justified. I have so many Muslim friends and trust me, they all believe in upkeeping human values, they believe in brotherhood, fraternity, their heart cries at the suicide bombings, their lives r disturbed by terrorist activities. They love humanity, first.

Do you know so many Muslims have died in the suicide bombings and bomb blasts? If the terrorists who care so much for their religion, loved their religion n fellow Muslims, will they kill them? Will they place bombs at places where muslims r predominant? will they target muslim locations n habitations?

they have targetted muslim habitations..hyderabad in INDIA is a glaring example, where so many muslims were killed in the blast incide the mosque. such disgruntled elements placed the bombs inside the mosque only to create misunderstanding between different communities so that people fight each other out, which would result in the victory of the terrorists.

A Muslim scholar from Pakistan says: "Our religion teaches us that the murder of an innocent person is the murder of humanity as a whole. "

MUSLIMS r not terrorists. muslims r friends n fellow citizens. please do not mistake such a tolerant community because of a misled few!

MUSICMASTER

1:06 PM ET

January 6, 2012

Tightrope

The phrase "ever closer union" always reminds me of a tightrope and when I hear it I feel being suffocated.

I have always considered the US only half a nation. All this stressing of the flag and the anthem is there for a reason: because otherwise the citizens might forget they are Americans.

It is a myth that a "fiscal, economic, or political" union would have helped the EU in any way to prevent the present problems. What killed the euro were the neo-liberal policies that refused to regulate the bubbles in Southern Europe. Yet more of a union would have meant yet more of this neo-liberal poison and even larger problems.

GONZOV

4:52 PM ET

January 6, 2012

Relevant:

http://www.ted.com/talks/paddy_ashdown_the_global_power_shift.html

Or:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/tedtalksdirector?blend=1&ob=4#p/a/u/1/zuAj2F54bdo>

CALIFORNIA PETE

5:46 PM ET
January 6, 2012

[The Myth of European Exceptionalism](#)

Like the very first commenter above, my biggest gripe with this piece is Harding's assumption that Europe's multicultural challenge is somehow unique in today's world. Indeed, I'd argue that that few places on Earth DON'T "have such a glorious mishmash [as Europe] of cultures, languages, landscapes, and peoples coexisting in such a small area."

As I elaborate in a longer "Brewing Geographer" blog entry elsewhere (<http://t.co/qdnca1GB>), building a shared European identity does indeed look to be a stiffer challenge, circa 2012, than maintaining a comparable USAmerican identity. But that challenge will not be met by a false sense that modern multicultural nationhood rests on a foundation of "shared values". Instead, political unity today rests in a shared commitment to make the "imagined community" work, recognizing that just like a large extended family, not everyone in that community is going to think (or talk, or eat, or dress, or ...) alike.

LINDASNET

7:44 PM ET
January 6, 2012

[A malicious piece](#)

I am generally very much in favor of free speech but this sort of hateful propaganda should perhaps be curbed until the immediate danger has passed. If he's American, revoke his visa and send him home. Otherwise, intern his little ass to prevent panic from spreading and letting people know that trying to induce complete collapse and chaos to Europe, and then the global economy, is not acceptable in the middle of a dangerous crisis. [pecas aeronaves](#)

ANON45

6:06 PM ET
January 8, 2012

[Then you are not in favor of free speech.](#)

You are only in favor of popular speech.

It is even more important to protect this writer's piece because what it says is difficult to say (and he isn't calling to kill anyone).

Far more so when this is a politically related piece.

BGFNDPA98FSA

7:45 PM ET

January 6, 2012

[very good web: ===](#)

very good web: === <http://www.plzzshop.com>

The website wholesale for many kinds of fashion shoes, like the nike, jordan, prada, also including the jeans, shirts, bags, hat and the decorations.

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thank you!!!

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Opportunity knocks but once

TOMMYER

1:01 PM ET

January 7, 2012

[The Myth](#)

Since France is already in the category of "who cares about what they think" - other than the fact that they wield a anachronistic veto power in the UN [dslr cameras for beginners](#), such an opinion ought to have been irrelevant to China for the most part.

SMITHUK

11:38 AM ET

January 8, 2012

[Muslims are a religious](#)

Muslims are a religious community, who believe in the sanctity n virtues of the Koran n the Prophet --the Great Prophet, who taught them to fight those who kill innocents, [to](#) wage a jihad against those who r antihuman-- not against all n sundry

JOEWHITTAM

6:05 PM ET

January 8, 2012

[:!](#)

the world is so small for us all it seems no matter who wears the [personalised workwear](#) or just [workwear](#).

what ever will happen next

TERENCE HUGHES

8:21 AM ET

January 13, 2012

[Harding's complaint](#)

This Harding is a fine example of a person who has materially benefited in every way from this illusion called Europe and has the temerity to negate its validity or viability.

If he came to America he'd be like the Tea Partiers who bleat, "Keep your government hands off my Medicare."

FILOZOF

11:21 AM ET

January 20, 2012

[Scary Developments](#)

I think this crisis is not regional. Matter of the whole world. If it is not found a solution: the world will be waiting for a big war. War is the end of the [world](#).

09BAYKID

12:50 PM ET

January 24, 2012

[Euro](#)

I was doing a search for something totally unrelated and I stumbled across this [Parent plus loan](#). Saw the headline and said, ok, I'll bite. You hit the nail on the head. I would go on and say that the Euro is like a community stew that everyone contributed to, but those that [mamaws primitives](#) contributed the least have consumed their share and then some, and for some reason they think that the others should keep

contributing to the stew while they keep consuming. The greediest people in the world are the socialists [increase page rank](#).

CONNE

8:31 AM ET

February 4, 2012

Time

For A united Europe that is truly functional to happen it takes time. Not just 10 or 20 years but even a hundred of growing up pains before the goal can be reached.

It will be a long and slow process, and could even be longer than the process the US went through due to the legacy of conflict between the different nations. The long history of people who think of themselves as Germans, British, French etc is not going to suddenly have people thinking of themselves as Europeans.

So for the goal of a united Europe to be achieved, we need a lot more time and patience and determination, without which the [dream](#) will fail.

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