

## Book Review

*The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy*

by T.R. Reid

By Suzanne Wright

In June, I visited Ireland, solo, but with several books to keep me company. A fellow traveler, a British woman now living in Seattle, turned me on to my favorite book of the summer and one I am recommending to friends and colleagues. *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy* by T.R. Reid is a provocative, fascinating non-fiction read in the vein of *The Culture Code*, *Freakonomics* and *The Tipping Point*.

Reid has impressive credentials. One of America's best known foreign correspondents, he has covered the U.S. Congress, national politics and four presidential campaigns for the *Washington Post*. He served as the *Post's* Tokyo bureau chief from 1990-1995 and then became head of the paper's London bureau, where he chronicled the stunning rise of the European Union at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Reid is now the *Post's* Rocky Mountain bureau chief and a popular commentator on National Public Radio.

The book—its title is a term Winston Churchill coined—is a briskly told, eye-opening account of the ascendancy of the EU as a global superpower and rival to the U.S. From his opening chapters that discuss the love-hate relationship between America and Europe, Reid builds his case that today's EU is not your father's Europe.

In lucid, compelling, page-turning detail, Reid cogently lays bare the myriad ways in which the EU is positioning itself to be a global counterweight and second superpower on equal footing with the U.S. From our side of the Atlantic, the rapid growth of the EU has been downplayed, but is America still the undisputed global power we once were? Or have we ignored the geopolitical revolution that has taken place over the past decade or so?

Tracing the continent's struggles since World War II, he shows how a successful effort to sustain peace and drive unity has been accelerated by the powerful mood of anti-Americanism that has swept the continent since the unpopular war with Iraq. Consider that the EU already has 25 member nations and boasts a population of 450 million. Citizens. The EU also more trade than the U.S. and more votes on the United Nations Security Council and all other international organizations with a far-ranging ability to flex its political and economic muscle on the world stage.

Reid argues that Europe is larger and richer in GDP than the U.S.—and arguably more powerful. In the economic arena, the euro now has more daily users than the dollar and is fast becoming a reserve currency and new standard for global finance. Plus, generous foreign aid policies reap political clout. Additionally, unification has spawned a generation of European corporate leaders who have surpassed their U.S. competitors in key sectors with such top-ranking firms and products as Nokia, Airbus and Vodafone.

The centerpiece of Reid's reporting includes a sobering example of American obliviousness: former General Electric CEO Jack Welch's fatal miscalculation of European objections to a proposed multi-billion dollar merger with Honeywell, which lead to the deal being scraped and Welch disgraced.

In short, the European Union has rapidly and resoundingly emerged as an economic, political and cultural power. Timely and thought-provoking, *The United State of Europe* is riveting reading—whether you are stateside or not—and an important book you'll ponder long after you've read the last sentence.