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The Quiet Superpower

Andrew Moravcsik, Professor of Politics at Princeton University comes to the defence of Europe. Moravcsik is probably one of the most influential contemporary writers on European Politics and introduced a *liberal inter-governmentalist* approach to the study of European Integration. On the occasion of the EU's 50th birthday he writes an article in Newsweek - *The Golden Moment* - debunking the myths of Europe's allegedly sclerotic economies, labour markets and politics.

Europe is not a continental-size museum dropping into the dustbin of history...on the contrary. Economically, Europe is doing a lot better than is often claimed by 'the pundits'. Even though Italy and France may be lagging a bit, Britain is booming and so are the Nordic countries. Central and Eastern European countries are showing even higher growth rates than the US. Slovakia, Estonia and Latvia are even growing at 10 percent or more annually. And this can even be done with a stable welfare state.

Despite nearly 50 percent tax rates and cradle-to-grave welfare benefits, Northern European social democracies like Denmark, Sweden and Finland grab half of the top slots in the World Economic Forum's ranking of the world's most competitive economies. "Nordic social democracy remains robust," says Anthony Giddens, former head of the London School of Economics—"not because it has resisted reform, but because it embraced it." (...) Remember those six to eight weeks of vacation every European is assured? Most Americans say they would make the same trade-off—if only their employers would permit it.

He also addresses Europe's demographic challenges and explains why immigration can be a feasible solution for this, despite the recent problems with Muslim integration/assimilation in some countries. He argues that the greater diversity of future immigrant groups (because of the current selective policies) will solve those problems: in the end, the specter of restive immigrant populations unsettling Europe, let alone undermining its culture, is overblown to the point of unreality. Final point is Europe's role in global politics. He is very clear here: the world is bipolar, and the other pole is Europe.

Consider how the EU began, 50 years ago, as a parochial Franco-German entente. Today, it's the model for a continent. The EU expansion, subsuming a dozen former communist states, has been the surest exercise in democracy promotion since the end of the cold war. (...) It has extended the reach of democracy and free markets within and beyond its borders—in a way that American neocons can only dream about—and is becoming a model to the developing world. It is the "quiet superpower."

Europe's tools go well beyond EU enlargement. The EU is the largest trading and investment partner of every nation in the Middle East. The EU provides 70 percent of the foreign aid and humanitarian assistance in the world today. Almost all the world's peacekeeping and policing forces, outside of Iraq, are staffed or funded primarily by Europeans—Lebanon, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, Afghanistan.

True or not, it's significant that 50 years after the EU's march to unity began, it is now Europe, not the United States, that's held up as a new lamp unto nations. I too think that the European Union has achieved a lot in its 50 years, possibly more than optimists held possible at the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. I also think that a 50 year old sometimes needs some innovative ideas and a good overhaul in order to face the future. Yes...many arguments can be brought forward against the optimism of Moravcsik. But why would you do that to someone that just turned 50 years old?

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