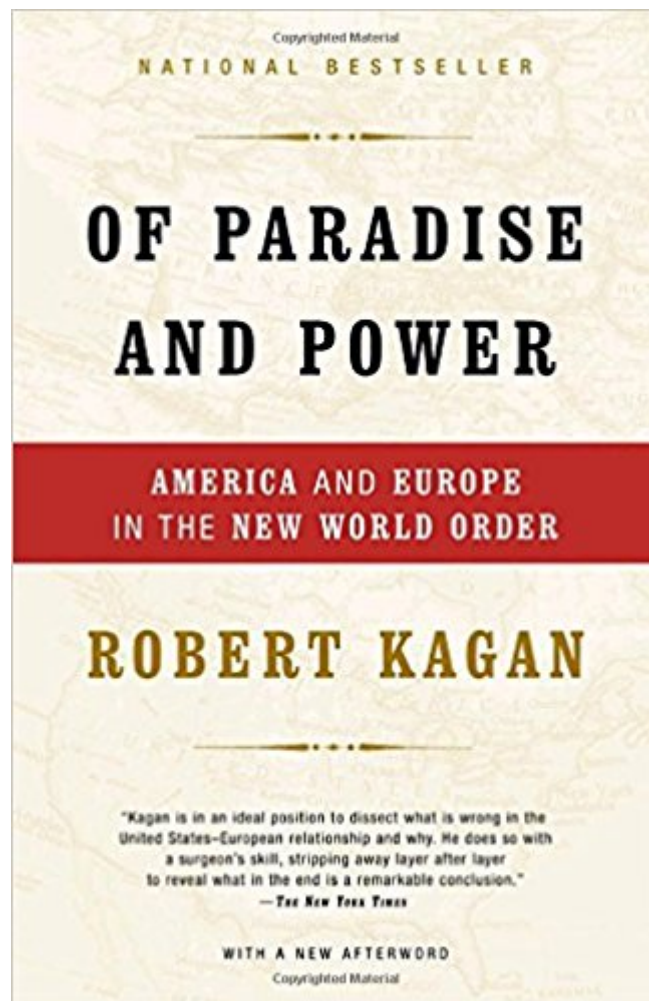


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Of Paradise And Power: America And Europe In The New World Order



Synopsis

From Robert Kagan, a leading scholar of American foreign policy, comes an insightful analysis of the state of European and American foreign relations. At a time when relations between the United States and Europe are at their lowest ebb since World War II, this brief but cogent book is essential reading. Kagan forces both sides to see themselves through the eyes of the other. Europe, he argues, has moved beyond power into a self-contained world of laws, rules, and negotiation, while America operates in a "Hobbesian" world where rules and laws are unreliable and military force is often necessary. Tracing how this state of affairs came into being over the past fifty years and fearlessly exploring its ramifications for the future, Kagan reveals the shape of the new transatlantic relationship. The result is a book that promises to be as enduringly influential as Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

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Customer Reviews

From its opening-line salvo, "It is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world" Of Paradise and Power announces a new phase in the relationship between the United States and Europe. Robert Kagan begins this illuminating essay by laying out the general differences as he sees them: the U.S. is quicker to use military force, less patient with diplomacy, and more willing to coerce (or bribe) other nations in order to get a desired result. Europe, on the other hand, places greater emphasis

on diplomacy, takes a much longer view of history and problem solving, and has greater faith in international law and cooperation. Kagan does not view these differences as the result of innate national character, but as a time-honored historical reality--the U.S. is merely behaving like the powerful nation it is, just as the great European nations once did when they ruled the world. Now, Europe must act multilaterally because it has no choice. The "UN Security Council is a substitute for the power they lack," he writes. Kagan also emphasizes the inherent ironies present in the relationship. European nations have enjoyed an "American security guarantee" for nearly 60 years, allowing them to cut back on defense spending while criticizing the U.S. for not doing the same. Yet Europe relies upon the U.S. for protection. This has led America and Europe to view the same threats much differently, as evidenced by the split over how to deal with Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Kagan points out that some European leaders are more afraid of how the U.S. will wield its power in the Middle East than they are of the thought of Hussein or other "rogue state" leaders acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Kagan's brevity is as impressive as it is appreciated; most writers would have required thrice as many pages to get to their point. At any length, the book is nothing short of brilliant. This is essential reading for those seeking to understand the post-Cold War world. --Shawn Carkonen --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review Cogent and important best describe this slim book, its lack of vast pages belying the weightiness of its message. This is an expanded version of an essay originally published as "Power and Weakness" in the June/July 2002 issue of Policy Review, written by the senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who is also a columnist for the Washington Post. The article created such a stir that a book-length expansion proved necessary for a wider readership. Tight, rigorous reasoning stands behind Kagan's cold analysis of the growing disparity between U.S and European views of the post-cold war world and how best to achieve peace and order. The lack of agreement is based primarily on opposing beliefs concerning the "proper balance between the use of force and the use of diplomacy in international affairs." Europe, as Kagan points out, is economically strong but militarily weak, while the U.S. is strong on both fronts. How to settle the world's problems is seen very differently, then, depending on whether one is negotiating from strength or from weakness. Further, the author avers that American military power has "made it possible for Europeans to believe that [military] power [is] no longer important." Controversial arguments, certainly, but this book deserves to be read by all conscientious citizens. Brad Hooper Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I was a bit surprised when I got "Of Paradise and Power" and found that it more resembled a hardbound pamphlet than an actual book. There are only 101 pages of actual material and with a tiny book size of 8" by 5" Kagan's mini book can be breezed through in no time at all. I bring this up because it seems like a rather puny snack for the \$18.00 U.S.A price tag printed on the inner dust jacket. The book is not only physically lightweight but lightweight on content in general. For an op-ed writer on the Weekly Standard Robert Kagan seems rather empty on opinions. As one of the Directors for 'The Project for the New American Century' Robert Kagan certainly has opinions about the future of the 'New World Order'. He seems to be trying to write like a detached historian simply presenting the unavoidable future. For instance, the neo-conservatives have had a love affair with building a missile defense system and Kagan tries to pass it off as a Clinton idea and a natural response to rogue nations with nuclear weapons. Never mind the cost, the feasibility or the danger of spurring a new arms race. Kagan never defends the missile defense system as he doesn't defend much of what he says he simply presents them as inevitable. On China Kagan asserts that it is our biggest rival and then quickly moves on. The point of the book, however, is the relationship between the United States and Europe. To Kagan Europe is great, it is the 'Paradise' in 'Of Paradise and Power'. Europe is also weak and increasingly irrelevant. Kagan doesn't really disparage Europe for their pacifist attitude; after all, war brought the continent nothing but misery in the past century. The paradise, however, has been maintained for the past sixty years through American strength, defending the walls against Communism. Now that the Red Threat is no more, Kagan sees less reason for the U.S. to worry about its relationship with Europe or to continue to bind itself with international treaties like the ABM. On the last couple pages, however, Kagan suddenly decides that the United States SHOULD work towards good relations with Europe. I suppose Kagan is thinking that respect for Europe is the magnanimous thing to do even if it's technically unnecessary. There is a certain irony in the fact that the senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International PEACE would like to see a 30 percent increase in defense spending in order to modernize our military and maintain our global dominance. Kagan also encourages a gloves off attitude when the U.S. is fighting in less developed regions. When in the jungle fight by the rules of the jungle even if this includes ignoring international laws. The Europeans can live in their paradise while the U.S. maintains its hegemony. 'Of Paradise and Power' takes a very calm measured tone but I suspect that Kagan's opinions are much stronger in reality than what he expresses here. I suppose that Kagan may have intended this as more of a book for the ages than a neo-conservative polemic which isn't such a bad thing.

Excellent analysis of the American perspective of US - European relations. A must read to understand today's global politics.

The thesis of the author is quite simple - American military power has allowed the Europe to spend its resources on social programs and therefore live in a "paradise", defended by this American power. Kagan explains why this has developed and its implications for Europe and the rest of the world. Furthermore, Kagan believes that being militarily weak, the Europeans prefer to keep a low profile and tolerate external threats, indeed to even deny that they even exist. This thesis has brought on a storm of negative criticism as witnessed the vitriolic denunciations that the book has received in some of the one star reviews, many of which are quite personal in nature. Many see the author, and this book, as a proponent of American "cowboy" diplomacy; of using its power in an overbearing manner. This book can also be seen as providing an explanation of American actions and a plea for more European support, or at least understanding of the role that America is playing in defense of the ideals that they all hold dear. I suggest that you read the book and decide for yourself what is the most valid characterization. This is a short book, short in length (103 pages of text), and short in the size of each page (the footprint of the text is only 3.5x5.75 inches). I only mention the size of the book because this may disappoint a prospective buyer. The ideas are presented clearly, although they may not be accepted by all, particularly by Europeans who feel that they have more than paid their share for the defense of western ideals in two disastrous world wars and are appalled by what they see as American "cowboy" behavior and a lack of subtlety in dealing with problems and other nations. I will not go into more detail as this has already been covered in the other reviews, which cumulatively are actually longer than the book itself. I would recommend this book for those interested history and foreign policy. It is a quick and entertaining book (for those whom like this material) and it should be quite thought provoking, whether or not you agree with the theses of the author.

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