French President Emmanuel Macron is engaging in selfish trade protectionism when seeking to limit the freedom of movement of workers and services. Lofty rhetoric of social dumping is bad old trade protectionism dressed up as social fairness.

Well-capitalized Western companies with their know-how and huge scale have an advantage in the trading of products. Eastern Europe, with an educated and ambitious, albeit poorer, workforce, has an advantage in the provisional offering of service labor. These complementary strengths and weaknesses combined in the common market could fuel growth and strengthen the European project.

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Harnessing the relative strengths for common good requires mutual adjustment, as all growth does. Several years ago, well-capitalized Western corporations in possession of numerous patents and the latest technology received tariff-free access to Eastern European markets.

Local producers had to restructure, and many closed shop. Eastern Europeans accepted products from Western European producers in our national markets believing that trade is a two-way street.

[irp]

However, now that Eastern European providers of services have found their footing in the common market (see chart below), Macron wants to make intra-EU trade a one-way street: Eastern Europeans purchase Western Renaults and Volkswagens, but the West will erect trade barriers against Eastern European truck drivers and construction workers.

Source: The Hill. Read more…

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