

My Dearest Subcontinent

Caption:

European industry in the museum, European military buildings in the Caribbean, and Chinese high-speed trains through Africa (Kenya): the new era.

I have travelled a lot through Europe and have been impregnated by its beauty, its former greatness, and its incredible diversity. A big moment and a great “aha” for me was in spring 2001. I travelled by train through Wales and saw an obsolete industrial landscape in action there, something I hadn’t seen in Luxembourg for 30 years. Europe’s wealth was industry, which changed so quickly (and the beginnings of which in England and Germany were financed with stolen gold from America).ⁱ

I grew up firmly believing I lived in the best of all places, at the navel of the world. Every atlas confirmed it. There was Europe: at the center of the world. Weren’t the USA, Australia, and even India a piece of Europe? And poor, bitter Africa tried to copy the European Union with the AU to somehow escape its misery. Everything was fine.ⁱⁱ

Of course, I also visited non-European cultures. There too, I saw evidence of human creativity, inventiveness, power, and immense intelligence. But even in the Dominican Republic, the small pointed towers you also see above the Alzette, or other symbols, were signs of European dominance. Our enemies, all barbarians: Huns who cooked their meat under the saddle, Ottomans only good for being split in two, Indians who danced for rain, and (more recently) Russians, peasants who tried to become aristocrats with super gifts (Green Vault) before communism starved them. That was the world view I was taught.

Two years ago, Peru shocked me. Geothermal agricultural labs, temples without human sacrifice, and Machu Picchu cured me of the Euro-centric view for good. A highly civilized indigenous empire, ruined in a short time by a few Spanish bandits. And in the European worldview, unlike China or Japan, it’s really just a footnote. Earlier, I had written an editorial in the Luxemburger Wort. If you looked over the Pacific from San Francisco, Europe was very far away, it said. That the Euro-centric world map was a political power instrument, distorting the size of countries, their demographics, and their resources, has become increasingly clear. If India is an Asian subcontinent like often said, Europe is not more than that, honestly.

Overestimation and misjudgment are temporary errors that can be corrected. Like a person, a country can adapt to new power relations. A few months ago, leafing through Huntington’s famous bestseller reminded me: literally every warning from that recognized author is being stubbornly ignored by today’s EU.ⁱⁱⁱ Europe’s behavior in the world is marked by arrogance, as if the European world map were reality. We Europeans rest on our (industrial) wealth, always invent new ways to make industry’s existence harder, and tell the world how to protect its resources. Meanwhile, in China and India, three

million engineers graduate every year, and in international statistics, European engineers in training don't even appear in relevant numbers.^{iv} We prefer to train specialists in gender studies. Just as we used to hand out glass beads to natives, today we come with EU blue-white plastic barriers to keep waste out of the sea. And then we wonder why China, meanwhile building highways and railways in these countries, gets the concessions for the rare earths we desperately need, even if only to make our electrification craze seem somewhat realistic.

Europe has known for over 50 years that births in our region aren't enough to meet the labor needs brought by economic growth. That's why (and not out of a sense of equality) we've sent more and more of our female population to work and now care for the next generation with a new industry (daycare, preschool, and school), which also allows us to influence and control children early. Fewer children and migration are our answers to a demographic that can no longer guarantee our prosperity. Helping couples have more children was, when the problem was recognized in the 1970s, demonized as "rabbitism" and an attack on privacy, but getting people excited about vegan food to save the climate is okay! (I have to laugh myself that the rabbit accusation can be understood for both cases, dear friends of the root.)

A good part of Europe's greatness from the 15th century onward was also and above all due to military power. After World War II, especially after the Cold War, Europe decided to benefit from big brother America and let its military decline. Notably involved was a certain Mrs. von der Leyen, then German defense minister. Today, that lady wants to lead Europe into a war with Russia. The world is changing rapidly, and countries must flexibly respond to new orders. But in the EU, the regulatory corset is being tightened ever more, leaving the 27 countries less and less room for manoeuvre, even in tax policy. We Europeans haven't heard the alarm bell, and we let the deaf determine our future.

It's only a matter of time until the wealth accumulated over centuries at the expense of the rest of the world is no longer enough to secure the standard of living we're used to. The middle class already feels it, Europe-wide. But as people and voters, we're so trapped in our system that we stare at the EU like a rabbit at a snake, waiting for a miracle. Brussels' original sound: "We need more EU to clean up the mess the EU made for us." Really? The European politicians have learned one thing though. They dance like the old tribes to save the world climate. Unfortunately with the same amount of success.

Europe today is a bit like Schalke 04's [a famous and once overwhelmingly successful German soccer team] trophy collection: lots of past greatness, but no competence, no desire, and no foresight to hope for improvement in the rankings. Europe may still be the navel of the world in many minds, but after birth, that's a pretty superfluous body part anyway. And that's exactly how more and more countries see us. Without sympathy, by the way, because for

too long we were the rich, arrogant know-it-all uncle who told others with a contemptuous grin how stupid, bad, and undemocratic they were.

ⁱ Excellent reading on European wealth: Eduardo Galeano, "Les veines ouvertes de l'Amérique latine."

ⁱⁱ A great tool to compare the real size of countries: This Map Tool Lets You See Just How Distorted the Mercator Projection Is [Google finds it]

ⁱⁱⁱ Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations

^{iv} Top 10 Countries Producing the Most Engineers in 2025 [Google finds it]