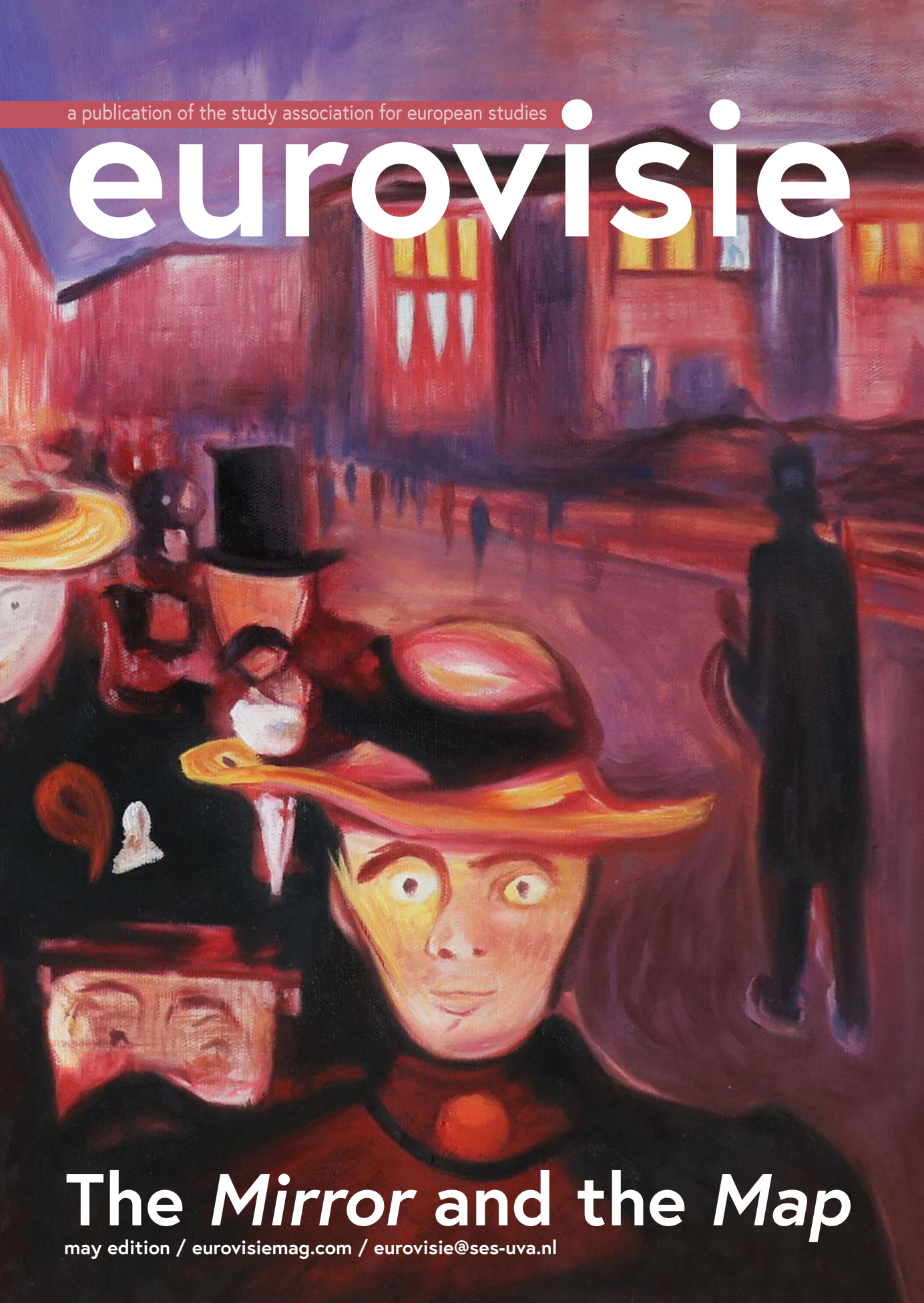
a publication of the study association for european studies

eurovisie



The *Mirror* and the *Map*

may edition / eurovisiemag.com / eurovisie@ses-uva.nl

IN THIS EDITION...

eurovisie
Volume 20 Issue 3 May Edition

Imprint

Editorial office: Kloveniersburgwal 48, room E2.04/2.05, 1012 CX Amsterdam
Editor-in-chief: Francesco Bernabeu Fornara
Editors: Francesco Bernabeu Fornara, Davide Distaso, Twan Hover, Angèle Boleis, Jonathan Ernesto Hernandez, Emma Bates, Simmo Petersen, Rytis Gulbinas and Riccardo Bortolan.
Design: Agnette Dobloug

Editorial

Francesco Bernabeu Fornara

Dear reader,

As another academic year draws to a close—with final exams swiftly approaching and, for some, thesis writing picking up speed—many of us stand on the cusp of graduating from our Bachelor's in European Studies at UvA. In this spirit, here at Eurovisie, we've chosen to cast our gaze wide and explore Europe in relation to the world beyond.

The outcomes are as varied as they are captivating. While some of our contributors delve into the enduring echoes of Europe's past that continue to shape present-day affairs, others contemplate Europe's future in realms ranging from AI to the forces of globalisation. Some have turned inward—scrutinising how Europe's self-image as the champion of liberal democracy is now challenged not only from external pressures but increasingly from within. From the complexities of AI governance and the contradictions in climate diplomacy, to the rising tides of protests and populism, this edition of Eurovisie is, above all, a testament to Europe's interconnectedness within an ever-evolving global landscape. Yet, despite its diversity, a common thread binds our recent work with this edition: an insatiable curiosity about Europe's place in a rapidly changing world.

In examining the lingering shadows of empire, our editor, Emma, explores how modern trade routes and global inequalities are still haunted by colonial logics—long after the flags were lowered. In a poignant open letter across time, our guest writer, Simmo, reaches out to Austrian author and early Europeanist Stefan Zweig—wrestling with the fragile legacy of European peace, the privileges of cosmopolitanism, and the unyielding persistence of youthful hope.

In commemorating an April conference hosted by our very own SES, I reflect on the key points articulated by some of its speakers regarding the critical governance of AI and its risks. Meanwhile, Riccardo, in a timely reflection, interrogates whether the EU continues to shape global affairs—or whether its internal divisions and global crises have dimmed its once-immense promise.

In examining the EU-Mercosur free trade agreement, Jonathan sheds light on how centuries of colonial history still cast their shadow over modern economic and social cooperation between Europe and South America.

Diving deep into history, memory, and the language of protest in France's colonial legacy over Algeria, Angèle poses a vital question: How can a nation move forward when it refuses to look back? And against the backdrop of the US' startling withdrawal from the influential Radio Free Europe, Rytis traces the subtle demise of this key player in transatlantic soft power—posing the critical question: Is Europe ready to speak for itself in an age of rising disinformation?

From a cinematic perspective, Davide explores how Japanese animator and filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki both romanticises and critiques Europe—depicting it as a cultural muse and a cautionary tale of modernity and war. And through an insightful conversation with Alya, an Indonesian national, Twan offers fresh perspectives on the continent's global image and the enduring legacies of its colonial past.

It's safe to say that no matter your area of interest, this edition offers something for everyone.

Enjoy the read—and the summer ahead.

Ex Europa,
Francesco Bernabeu Fornara, editor-in-chief.

The world of today: A Letter to Stefan Zweig

Simmo Petersen

24 May 2024

Dear Stefan Zweig,

We do not know each other; that would be impossible. After all, life has determined that nearly a century separates our existences. And yet, I feel – and this would certainly please you – that I have reached you spiritually through your books. You might best think of me as one of your pupils. Yes, you still have those. After reading *Die Welt von Gestern*, your final work, I felt compelled to write to you. Your life and work, your unconditional love and dedication to Europe, as well as your exile and suicide, deeply moved me.

Much has changed since then. The world has become a different place. For a time, it regained the calm and certainty you knew in your youth. Some wounds remained, others worsened – and yet, in your absence, humanity made enormous strides forward. After Hitler was defeated and the war ended, the unthinkable happened. The countries of Europe managed to reconcile and unite, first in an economic and later also in a political community. A global organisation for peace and stability was established, millions of people escaped extreme poverty, we set foot on the moon, revolutionised our communication through technology, and enjoyed more rights and freedoms than ever before. *The end of history* was declared. The age of war was said to be behind us, and with it the era of ideological conflict. Only glory years laid ahead! It all seemed too good to be true, and so it was. In fact, it was a childish dream.

Not long after, a new genocide unfolded on our continent. The United Nations, led by my own country, stood by, watched, and in a single stroke forfeited its credibility. Decades later, I visited the site of the atrocity and saw a hillside covered in graves, as far as the eye could see. Never before had I so clearly seen the destructive instincts of humankind, as your friend Freud once described. Srebrenica made me realise that history, however dark, can indeed repeat itself and that the "Never again" slogan drilled into us at school turned out to be a mere fantasy. Later, in my birth year 2001, the attacks on the Twin Towers extinguished the last flicker of hope for perpetual peace.

"History repeats itself." That was the thought that kept coming back to me as I read your passages. Once more, generations have grown up in peace, and thus have come to take it for granted. War? It is exactly as you wrote: "The trees were in bloom, the air was mild and light; who, in the face of so much delight, could bear to think of something so unimaginable?" And so, once more, people let down their guard. Once more, tensions silently crept beneath the surface of society. And once more, we became blinded by the age of certainty.

Some may still find these comparisons a bit exaggerated. After all, we have not yet seen widespread destruction. But my concerns are sincere. I have watched, with disbelief, how nationalist populism has spread over the past decade; how attacks on politicians and Jews have increased; how the rule of law in certain European countries has been gradually dismantled; how journalists are increasingly prevented from doing their work; how entire groups within society have been set against one another; and how a hateful, extremist, anti-European party recently won the elections in my own country.

So, Mr Zweig, I try to stay vigilant. You did not see the collapse of Europe and the regression of humanity coming, and you blamed yourself for that. You describe how, by dedicating yourself fully to art and culture, you chose to remain on the sidelines. But your ignorance was not solely the result of that choice; you lived in an elitist bubble. You had the privilege of a multilingual upbringing and a high-quality education. You had enough money to live careless and to travel across borders. That allowed you to form international friendships and embrace a cosmopolitan life. Of course it was easy for you to feel European. Of course you were blind to the catastrophe that was approaching. How far removed you must have been from social tensions, from economic hardship, from the everyday life of

ordinary people. Thinking European was, and still is, mostly a privilege.

And yet, the European spirit did not die with you. It has, in fact – just as you had hoped – developed and strengthened. The very environment from which I write would have amazed you. Around me, students interact in all sorts of languages. Young people from every corner of the continent have come together to study Europe – yes, as a discipline of its own! Our train rushes over land borders at high speed, without any barriers or barbed wire, without the need to show our papers. All this is once again possible in today's Europe and, in many ways, even better than before. Thanks to your ideas, we now have rotating cultural capitals and student exchange programmes. We created the largest internal market in the world, introduced a shared currency, won the Nobel Peace Prize, and became pioneers in the fields of democracy and human rights. Together, Europe rose from its ashes and, together, we now reap its rewards.

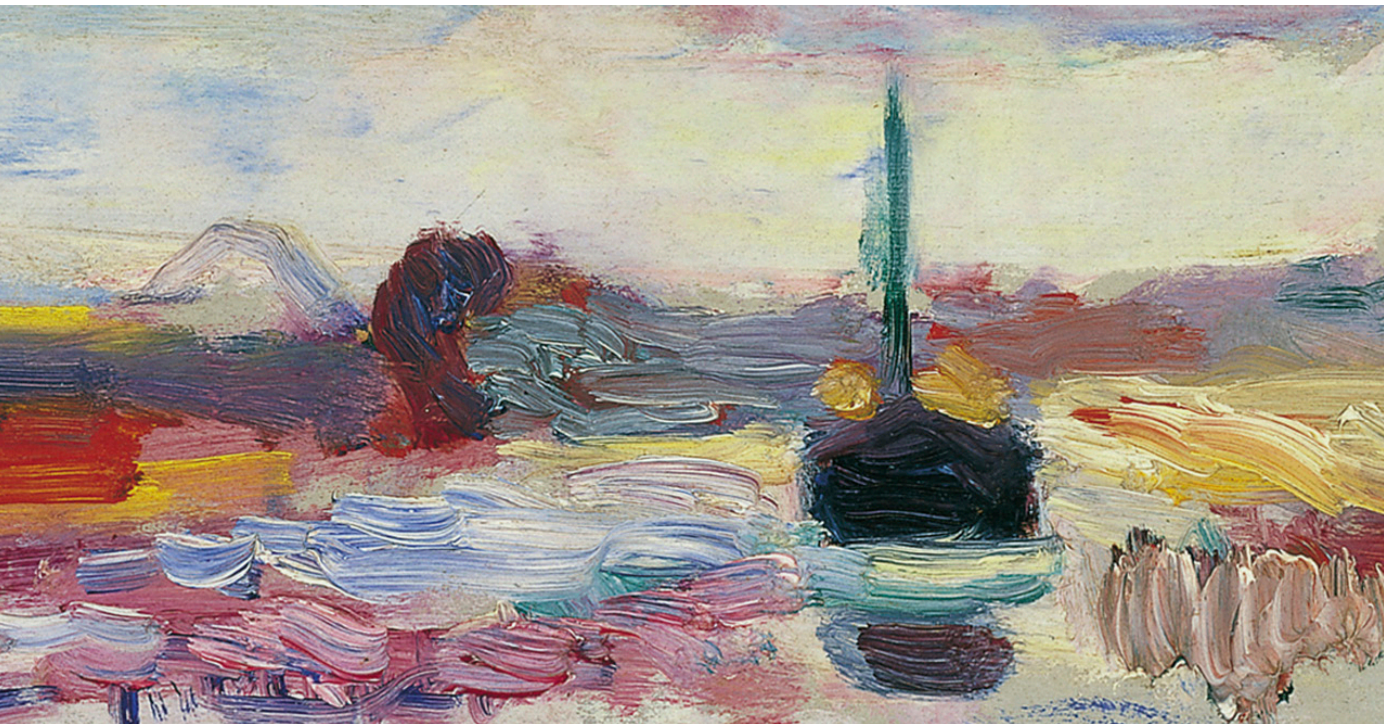
But to truly embrace the European identity? Most people never did. It was said to be too "vague," too "imposing." And so, out of fear that popular support might wane, we chose restraint. In practice, that meant a focus solely on economic and political integration – and whether that was the right strategy is up for debate. Yes, the European Union still functions, but it keeps running into the same problem: the lack of engagement from its citizens. Put simply: too few Europeans actually feel European. As a result, we continue to cling tightly to national frames of thinking, which holds back the further growth of this project. "If I had to do it all over again," Jean Monnet later said, "I would begin with culture." Something you, of course, understood from the very beginning.

So how do I end such a letter, Mr. Zweig? How do I explain that, after everything your generation had to endure, a large-scale war has once again broken out in Europe? How do I explain that our peace has once again been brutally shattered by a power-hungry tyrant – this time, a Russian one? That our security is once again under threat? Honestly, I don't know.

Like you, I live through the history of my time with a sense of tension and helplessness. It is painful to see that warning works like yours, no matter how powerful, seem to offer no real protection against the suffering the world has already known. And so, there is nothing left but to hope. Hope in the continued functioning of international institutions that contain war. Hope in my generation – that it may find the way forward and be spared further suffering. But also, hope in *amor mundi*. And not just any hope, but a powerful kind. A kind you lost in your old age, but which is still very much alive in me: youthful hope.

"Because, as you once wrote, the essence of true youth is not to be mistrustful, but to believe in something."

Yours sincerely,
Simmo Petersen




Pas de

The EU's AI Dilemma Between Ethics and Competitiveness: SES Conference Edition

Francesco Bernabeu Fornara

As countries scramble to stake their claim in the booming artificial intelligence (AI) market, the European Union—known for its regulatory persona—seems to face a strategic dilemma: should it prioritise fundamental rights or foster business-driven innovation? For critics of the EU's so-far rights-first approach to AI, the institution resembles a case of "regulate first, ask questions later". Is the Union at risk of regulating itself into irrelevance, can it instead regulate itself out of the dilemma—or is the dilemma itself a false one entirely?

To answer this question, we enter the halls of the University of Amsterdam's Roeterseiland Campus in its CREA Theatre. There, in a conference hosted by our very own Study Association for European Studies, we're met with Dasha Simons, Leevi Saari, and Laurens Naudt—three professional and academic experts in AI whose insights could hopefully help us elucidate our dilemma. As the clock ticks 12:00 on April 12th, our host, Niels ten Oever, starts the discussion.

Setting aside the practical challenges of regulating AI for ethical purposes, from a normative perspective, how important is fundamental rights protection in the innovation process itself? Against the backdrop of Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency, for Laurens Naudt, it cannot be overstated. Given the new administration's deepening ties with Big Tech, ensuring a robust legal framework to protect individual rights becomes a vital counterbalance to increasingly centralised power structures.

After all, as Dasha Simons notes, ethics is always embedded in whatever you create. And what's more, embedding ethics in AI is no one-way street. Prioritising certain rights inevitably influences how others are safeguarded. Either regulation will step in to establish a coherent system of rights protection, or private actors will set their own rules.

"Is it, then, time for a kind of AI constitution? Perhaps."

But as Dasha Simons continues, innovation isn't the only concern—data storage and digital dependency are just as pressing. AI requires staggering amounts of data and computing power, which today are mostly centralised in a handful of (predominantly American) companies. Layered onto this is the geopolitical volatility of U.S. politics. How comfortable can Europe be knowing that its data is stored under a government whose policies could shift dramatically every four years?

So, are AI gigafactories—large-scale, high-capacity computing facilities—the solution? Leevi Saari disagrees. In his view, they are vastly overhyped and often serve more as political symbols than practical tools. As Laurens Naudt adds, they are also extraordinarily expensive. While gigafactories might provide the infrastructure to train powerful AI systems, they are of limited strategic use if Europe lacks its own foundation models—software like ChatGPT or DeepSeek—capable of running on them. Without that, the hardware remains underutilised.

In terms of their objective—reducing dependency on the US—, however, the question of who replaces this dependency becomes a new question nobody really is asking, as Laurens Naudt notes. Will it be government-controlled gigafactories that we'll become dependent on? Could US multinational subsidiaries sneak in? Indeed, reducing dependency on the US is easy to say, but what are its broader implications? And even if gigafactories were utilised to their fullest extent, as Leevi Saari highlights, AI can also be overused.

As the clock ticks 13:30, a round of applause fills the air as the panel discussion comes to an end. Up next? Tijmen Wisman comes to the forefront to talk about human rights. Continuing the previous topic

on the overuse of AI, Wisman, as a lawyer himself, makes his claim clear: legal due process and automation clash.

Within the world of governance, automation within administration has become an ever increasing practice—from tax collection to subsidy allocation, governments have started to digitally automate their practices under the motive of efficiency. Alluding to the infamous Dutch Child's Benefit Scandal, Tijmen Wisman emphasises how decision-making with legal effects should never be removed from human oversight—something that the EU's GDPR does regulate, but as Wisman highlights, there are far too many exceptions to it.

In the end, the EU's crossroads on AI is not a choice between rights and innovation, but a test of whether it can integrate the two meaningfully. As the speakers at the SES conference made clear, ethical imperatives are not necessarily obstacles to progress—they are conditions for legitimacy, trust, and long-term competitiveness. Whether confronting foreign dependencies, regulating AI gigafactories, or resisting the creeping automation of legal decisions, the real challenge lies in building a framework where technology serves society and where regulation is met with practical necessity, rather than hype—not the other way around.

The EU in the 21st Century: A Key Global Actor or a Faded Utopia?

Riccardo Bortolan

The European Union, as we know it today, represents the realization of an ambitious post-war project initiated by several smaller European nations. What began as an economic community quickly evolved into a financial and political force capable of standing alongside major power such as the United States and the former Soviet Union. While the EU remains a significant player in global affairs, recent crises—such as the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic—have raised questions about its current relevance and ability to compete on the world stage. So, we must ask: is the EU still as influential as it once was, or has it gradually lost its global standing?

Let's start from the beginning. After World War II, European nations had three urgent priorities: economic recovery, peacekeeping, and diplomatic strength. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), founded in 1952, was created to meet these needs. Over time, the ECSC developed into a deeply integrated union that now plays a central role in global trade, human rights, and regulatory frameworks. This integration helped solidify the euro as a strong international currency and positioned the EU as a key actor in shaping global economic policy.

However, over the last two decades, shifts in the global political landscape have challenged the EU's credibility and power. One clear example is the internal division brought about by Brexit—the first instance of a member state voluntarily leaving the Union. This event triggered debates over the continued relevance of EU membership and fueled nationalist and populist movements across member states, weakening public support for the European project. Debates around migration policy and foreign affairs have further fragmented the bloc.

Economically, the EU has faced multiple crises, from the 2008 debt crisis—particularly in Southern Europe—to ongoing struggles in maintaining financial stability. Today, the EU continues to lag behind more robust economies such as China and the United States, as well as fast-growing emerging markets. Additionally, the war in Ukraine has forced the EU to reevaluate its policies on inflation, energy dependence, and defense spending. When it comes to foreign policy, there is growing divergence among member states, especially concerning how to respond to global crises like the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

The EU's limited military capacity, especially when compared to powers like the US, Russia, or China, highlights its reliance on "soft power"—diplomatic influence, climate leadership, and human rights advocacy. Yet, its responses to international crises have often been inconsistent. This stems in part from the Union's need for broad internal consensus before taking action—a dynamic that frequently delays or dilutes its global positioning. In global politics, how an actor responds to crisis fundamentally shapes its reputation and influence.

That said, it would be inaccurate to claim that the EU has lost all of its influence. Economically, it remains a heavyweight as one of the largest trading blocs, with significant regulatory power. The EU also leads global efforts in climate policy and digital governance. Politically, its commitment to multilateralism and diplomacy acts as a counterbalance to more aggressive geopolitical actors. Even with limited military capabilities, the EU continues to play a crucial role in shaping international norms and standards.

So, what lies ahead for the EU in world politics? While the future is uncertain, one thing is clear: the EU must act decisively to maintain and strengthen its global relevance. This means fostering internal unity, ensuring economic resilience, and embracing strategic independence—while also respecting the diverse national identities within the Union. The EU has been instrumental in shaping the post-war world, and it must continue to assert its leadership.

"After all, there cannot be a Europe without the EU, just as there cannot be an EU without Europe."

Global Europe: A Continent Seen from Afar

Twan Hover

Europe—a continent that has shaped the world like no other. From the dawn of civilisation, it has stood at the centre of global affairs, often defining the course of history. Consider 1492: while the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella celebrated the fall of Granada, they also funded Christopher Columbus's westward voyage. That single decision set off a wave of European expansion that would redraw the world map, decimate Indigenous civilisations, and establish the foundations of the modern global order.

"Even when the world was not Europe-centric, Europeans found ways to make it so"

—exporting their culture, ideals, and influence across continents, for better or worse. The impact of this legacy remains visible to this day.

In this article, I take a different approach to understanding Europe—not through the familiar eyes of a European, but through the perspective of someone who has never set foot on the continent or in the West. My interviewee, Alya, is from Indonesia—a country deeply shaped by European colonial history, not through the actions of its own people, but by the decisions of European colonisers.

Through Alya's words, we gain insight into how Europe is perceived from the outside—how its influence, reputation, and ideals are understood by those beyond its borders. Her perspective may resonate with many non-Europeans, offering a fresh view of Europe's global image today.

Europe vs. Indonesia: A Question of Perspective

Is life in Europe truly better than in Indonesia? The answer is complex and depends on how we define "better." For some, it means economic opportunities and social freedoms. For others, it's about community, culture, or even climate. The reality is that both Europe and Indonesia offer unique advantages and challenges Indonesia is a country surrounded by active volcanoes, Marapi is a volcano near Jakarta that has a tremendous impact on my daily life, which is unimaginable for Europeans. For example, on 10 April, I had to leave my house while running because of an earthquake in the middle of the night. There are always floods during the rainy season; floods happen every day. Luckily, I live on the second floor, but the ground floor is not safe when this happens. Most houses do not have a second floor, for example my neighbour had to flee into my house because he did not have a second floor.

In Indonesia, we learn about the Netherlands' colonial history in high school, that's the first time most Indonesians get in touch with Europe. Other ways in which I get into touch with European culture, is through music, namely, one of my favourite songs is "Hij is van Mij", a Dutch song, however, this is because of my own personal interests. Many Indonesians also get into contact with European culture through Netflix, this platform provides a large myriad of European films and series. The Dutch series "My Best Friend, Anne Frank" is very popular here in Indonesia.

Additionally, on the one hand, the bulk of the Indonesian population is very fanatic regarding the Dutch football team. When the Dutch football team is playing, everyone is watching. On the other hand, most football players in the national team are Dutch, but they do have Indonesian ancestry. In the entire national team, there are only two full-blooded Indonesians and the rest are Dutch. This is a heavily discussed topic here in Indonesia, people think it's a bit odd. Most people thought this was not fair, especially during the World Cup in Bahrain. Moreover, these Dutch football players are immensely popular in Indonesia, way more than actual Indonesian players. A good example is Justin Quincy Hubner, he is one of the most popular football players right now. In a way, Dutch people are idealised and idolised. These players are in all ads, and promotions for Indonesian products, we see them everywhere. The Netherlands is seen as a progressive, socially liberal, and environmentally advanced country. Thousands of Indonesian

students study there yearly, often returning with admiration for Dutch directness, bike culture, or pragmatic governance.

The European Dream: A Land of Opportunity?

For many Indonesians, Europe represents prosperity, stability, and social progress. The continent is widely perceived as a place of economic security, where efficient healthcare, education, and public services provide a strong safety net. Social media platforms like "Global Friends" have given Indonesians greater exposure to European culture, sparking curiosity and even a desire to learn European languages. As of April 2024, approximately 9,600 Indonesian students are studying in Europe, attracted by the continent's high-quality education systems and diverse cultural experiences. Programmes like the EU's Erasmus+ have facilitated this trend, with 225 Indonesian students awarded scholarships to study in various European countries.

But beyond the romanticised images of cobblestone streets and historic architecture, Europe is also seen as a place of freedom. Social liberties in Western Europe allow individuals to express themselves in ways that may be more restricted in Indonesia's conservative society.

For someone who feels constrained by traditional expectations, Europe can appear as an open, liberating space. However, moving abroad doesn't automatically guarantee a better life. Integration into a foreign society presents its own challenges. While European values emphasise tolerance, they don't always translate into immediate acceptance. Being an outsider in a new country can lead to isolation, and adapting to unfamiliar customs takes time.

European Influence in Indonesia: A Legacy That Remains

Even without travelling to Europe, Indonesians live in a world shaped by European influence.
Colonial history has left its mark on everything from language to infrastructure. For example, Europeans such as the Portuguese arrived in Indonesia from the 16th century seeking to monopolise the sources of valuable nutmeg, cloves, and cubeb pepper in Maluku. In 1602, the Dutch established the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch-East India Company) or simply "VOC" and became the dominant European power by 1610. The VOC once controlled vast territories, establishing trade networks that would shape Indonesia's modern economy. While colonial rule was marked by exploitation, it also introduced legal systems, educational institutions, and urban planning models that persist today.
European identity tends to grow stronger when individuals engage with what is commonly referred to as European culture. While it is widely acknowledged that Western culture, including European culture, is rooted in the legacy of ancient Greece and Rome, this historical foundation is not something people consciously recognise in their daily lives.

One of the most accessible ways to foster a sense of European identity is through travel and intercultural encounters—whether by visiting other countries or interacting with foreigners within one's own country. Such experiences encourage open-mindedness and align with the idea of "thinking globally while acting locally."

However, for European identity to take root in a meaningful way, it must be tied to personal experiences and positive associations. Just as people develop a sense of belonging within their families based on fond childhood memories, they also cultivate a sense of 'Europeanness' when they feel connected to the wider European community. This sense of belonging is not shaped solely by shared symbols and ideas but also by common living standards and access to rights and protections.

Ultimately, the more actively individuals participate in societal life, the stronger the sense of European identity among EU citizens becomes. In this sense, Europe has a profound influence on shaping its peoples identity.
European influence extends beyond history. European products are widely respected for their quality, sustainability, and ethical standards. Many Indonesians associate European brands with reliability, often choosing them over local alternatives. Even something as simple as buying from H&M can evoke a sense of connection to a broader global marketplace.

At the same time, Indonesia is often overlooked by Europeans. While Bali is a well-known tourist destination, the rest of the country remains unfamiliar to many. This reflects a broader trend—Southeast Asia isn't at the top of most Europeans' travel lists.

Cultural Contrasts: Values, Norms, and Identity

One of the biggest differences between Europe and Indonesia lies in values. Europe's long tradition of democracy and human rights has fostered a culture of

political and personal freedoms. Indonesia, on the other hand, remains deeply rooted in communal traditions, religious influence, and hierarchical social structures.

While these cultural contrasts may seem stark, they don't necessarily mean one system is better than the other. Indonesia's sense of community provides a level of social cohesion that many Europeans admire. However, its emphasis on conformity can feel restrictive to those who seek individuality.

For Indonesians who have encountered European culture, whether through education, travel, or social media, the idea of European identity can seem both fascinating and distant. Many see the EU as a model of international cooperation—an alliance of former rivals united by shared goals. But could something similar work in Southeast Asia?

The Role of European Companies in Indonesia: Help or Harm?

Oftentimes, Indonesians get in contact with Europe through firms - multinationals. Their establishment affects Indonesians' lives in various ways, by employing locals, locals buying produce from them, but also in ways that are more directly impacting the land itself rather than its people.

European businesses operating in Indonesia have had both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, they provide jobs and contribute to the economy. On the other, concerns about environmental damage, climate impact, and labour exploitation remain.

The good impact is that European companies create a lot of labour workers in Indonesia, we have a lot of European brands, like H&M.The good impact is that European companies create a lot of labour works in Indonesia, we have a lot of European brands, like H&M.

But the negative side is that local brands are outcompeted by European brands, they don't stand a chance. Indonesians feel very proud when they wear something from a European brand, that's why they prefer it above Indonesian brands. A lot of European companies attribute to deforestation, especially in Kalimantan. This is very bad for the environment. They do this to make place for buildings for their companies, without keeping into account how badly this impacts the environment.

Companies that adhere to EU regulations tend to have better sustainability practices, but corporate in-

fluence isn't always beneficial. The relationship between European businesses and Indonesia is complex, requiring careful balance between economic growth and ethical responsibility.

Would You Want to Live in Europe?

For many Indonesians, the idea of living in Europe is appealing. Cities like Amsterdam offer economic opportunities, a high quality of life, and a progressive social environment. But relocating comes with its own set of challenges. For Indonesian day-to-day life, nature plays a role, it can determine the course of your day, week or even month. For Europeans, this reliance is unimaginable.

Indonesia is a country surrounded by active volcanoes, Marapi is a volcano near Jakarta that has a tremendous impact on my daily life, for this to happen to a European is unthinkable. For example on 10 April, I had to leave my house while running because of an earthquake in the middle of the night. There are always floods during the rainy season, floods happen every day. Luckily, I live on the second floor, but the ground floor is not safe when this happens. Most houses do not have a second floor, for example my neighbour had to flee into my house because he did not have a second floor.

The cost of living in many European cities is high, and adjusting to new cultural norms can be difficult. For some, the transition is worth it. For others, the comforts of home outweigh the promise of a new beginning abroad.

What Would Surprise Europeans About Indonesia?

While Indonesians are familiar with European culture, the reverse isn't always true. Europeans moving to Indonesia may face unexpected culture shocks, from the tropical climate to different healthcare standards and transportation systems. Language barriers can also pose challenges.

Tourists only come to Bali and skip the rest of the country, even though Indonesia is a huge country and has a lot to offer, it's way more than just Bali, Indonesia has beautiful nature.

I have heard from many Europeans that they even thought Bali was just a country on its own, not a part of Indonesia, even those who have visited it. Europeans are very uneducated when it comes to Indonesian topography. Western Tourists exclusively visit: Bali, Java Island and Seribu Island, never anywhere else. Even though Indonesia is just as large as Europe itself.

However, for those willing to embrace the experience, Indonesia offers a vibrant, welcoming society with a rich cultural landscape. The contrast between the two regions highlights an essential truth—whether in Europe or Indonesia, quality of life is deeply personal.

Conclusion: Is Life in Europe Really Better?

At the end of the day, there's no universal answer. It all depends on what an individual values most. If economic stability, social freedoms, and structured public services are priorities, then Europe might seem better. If strong community ties, cultural warmth, and a more relaxed pace of life matter more, Indonesia has its own unique appeal.

In Europe, there's a lot more tolerance, they respect people of different religious backgrounds more, they don't respect people that work for a bad company in Indonesia, which is different from Europe. Like a friend of mine from high school, moved to Australia and has been able to visit Europe, this was a big contrast with Indonesia. In Europe there's a lot more culture. In Europe it's very common for people to work and study at the same time, but in Indonesia this is impossible.

"There's no lack of workers, there's only a lack of money."

Many companies here, banks and factories, go bankrupt because they are unable to pay their employees. This is a big problem in Indonesia, very different to Europe.

Life in Europe isn't always as glamorous as it seems, and life in Indonesia isn't as limiting as some might assume. The question isn't about which place is superior—but which one feels like home.

Common Values through Entangled History: The EU-Mercosur Deal and its colonial past

Jonathan Ernesto Hernandez

Recently, the EU has signed a free trade agreement with the Mercosur countries of South America. This trade agreement has been in the making for decades, but the relations between the two continents have been around since the colonial age. However, from the 15th to 19th century, the relations between the two were not mutualistic and were instead dominated by European countries. In Osterhammel's book "Colonialism: A theoretical view", European Colonization as a "Pan European Project" is described as a world where individual colonial histories would play a part in the culmination of these colonies. Osterhammel writes about how the colonies were exploited, but does not engage with - why these countries have decided to come together and why they have expressed enthusiasm in this doing so. Is this a result of the contemporary world order or is this the "Pan European Project" maturing into something beyond its original use of unbalanced exploitation?

"The Latin American values have been affected by colonization, however, this is not because European countries decided to impose their ways of life on the Latin American countries and forced them to live with it, but rather because these values were developed in Latin America during colonial rule."

Influential missionaries and jurists, in the colonies, such as Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolomé de las Casas began laying the groundwork for modern concepts such as human rights and sovereignty during the colonial ages. Similarly, economic values were developed in Latin America as well. Most notably, Spain had the task of creating an economic system at a scale that the world has never seen. The economic system that Spain set up enabled the European and South American economic relations that we see today. The effects of this economic system was not only felt in Spain, but in its colonies as well. In the same breath you can also say that: the implementation of these ideas interacted with the South American way of thinking as much as it did with the Spanish and European one.

From this perspective, it starts to make sense why both of these entities come together. Both Europe and South America were a great part of the creation of this contemporary world's values as they were infused into each other through the common experience. Both continents in their modern day are living and promoting these ideals created by their past which has made them both compatible partners in cooperation. As a matter of fact, we can see the the principles they uphold created in their colonial past in the EU-Mercosur agreement itself.

The free trade agreement dynamic that they would like to establish today has its roots when the European countries controlled South American territories in the 15th and 19th centuries. The European economic market was connected deeply with the South American market which left a deeply rooted connection between the two once the South American colonies claimed independence. In particular, South America grew a dependence for European finished goods, while Europe grew a dependence for South American raw materials. Today this need persists mutually and it is why they decided to come together. Their past of having closely connected markets is why they came together.

The EU and Mercosur's common view of human rights has brought both entities together. The EU has based its international trade agreements on level playing field. In essence, this means that both sides of the agreement must maintain a high level of labor standards. This is done to prevent this race to the bottom where both entities refrain from lowering their standards to attract businesses. Agreeing to maintain a high level of labor standards has been hard to come by, but Mercosur and the UK were able to come to an agreement with that in mind. That is because of the common history the

EU has with them. While Mercosur did not interact with the European member states in the same way as they did with the UK, the common history between the European member states and Mercosur countries still remains vital in sharing this core value of workers rights.

Ultimately, the EU-Mercosur free trade agreement happened because of the colonial past they share. The economic and social aspects of the deal were made because of their core experience together. The Colonial experience from the 15th to 19th century impacted both sides in how they see the world around them and how they see each other. As a result, the "Pan European project" in South America began to take a new form as the centuries went on. The EU-Mercosur agreement represents a change in the foundation to the "Pan European Project" in South America as its apparent that this relationship is not as one sided as it used to be. This new foundation that can be found in the EU-Mercosur deal is based on the common values that both the EU and South American countries involved in Mercosur made together through their entangled history.

Two Worlds in Dialogue: Europe Through the Eyes of Hayao Miyazaki

Davide Distaso

It is impossible to think of Europe as a cultural fortress confined within its territories. Indeed, the
history of this land is one of exchanges and dialogues, making it an "interlocutor of the world".

This dialectical capacity, which Europe possesses, has been translated into various forms of communication, from art to music or, inevitably, even war and conflict.

However, the vehicle that will conduct this narrative is very specific, namely animated cinema, and the destination can only be one: Japan.

The vastness of the animated production of the Land of the Rising Sun is now widely recognised: millions of "anime", namely Japanese cartoons, are translated into many languages, reaching most of the world's countries.

Among these productions, taking centre stage in this story is Studio Ghibli, a Japanese animation film studio founded in 1985 in Tokyo by Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata.

Indeed, Miyazaki's film production repeatedly turns its gaze to European culture, telling it in a unique and fascinating way.

From the very beginning, both directors showed great admiration for the Western world. It was a French film "Le Roi et L'Oiseau" ("The King and the Mockingbird") directed by Paul Grimault that convinced them that making animated films that also appealed to an adult audience was possible, giving birth to Studio Ghibli. This admiration cultivated by Hayao Miyazaki translated into an accurate romanticisation of Europe, visually declaring a deep affection for its architecture, landscapes and stories.

Films like Kiki Home Deliveries, Castle in the Sky or, to name one of the most famous, Howl's Wandering Castle, tell their own stories on canvases full of references to Western tradition.

The sloping roofs, the cobbled streets and the tall buildings are unmistakable in the eyes of a European citizen, who, absorbed by the stories of the little girl Kiki and her deliveries or the mysterious figure of Howl in his wandering castle, can only be enraptured by this declaration of love for his or her own heritage.

However, these visual references constitute only a small portion of the enormous dialogue Miyazaki's films have engaged in with the European tradition.

Porco Rosso, released in Japanese cinemas in 1992, tells the incredible story of Marco Pagot, an Italian air force ace who, following a mysterious accident, takes on the appearance of an anthropomorphic pig.

His story is imagined in a very precise time and place: in the skies and coasts of the Adriatic Sea, in an Italy marked by the aftermath of World War I and the rise of fascism.

Everything in this film is a reminder, almost an animated recollection of a living memory.

A Europe on the move, victim and executioner of what the experience of war had left it, is overwhelmed by modernity and the rise of totalitarian regimes, leaving behind its heroic and romantic individualism that has now become a purely anachronistic concept.

Marco, the pig aviator, becomes a perfect symbol of this transition. His figure, skilfully rendered as a pig among humans, symbolises a dying era, something that no longer has anything to do with its surroundings.

His avowed anti-authoritarianism, his famous phrase "I'd rather be a pig than a fascist", his pure and sincere love for aviation free of war, are overcome by the rise of fascism, mirroring a Europe bent towards a utilitarianism that will be its doom.

His only peace is enclosed in a remote island in the Adriatic waters that becomes his refu-

ge from a reality of weapons and steam engines.

Porco rosso perfectly represents the dualism that characterises Miyazaki's vision of Europe: if scenographically the European setting becomes synonymous with beauty and romanticism, narratively the latter often combines with ideas such as dynamism and conflict.

Therefore, Miyazaki's Europe is not only an enchanted landscape, but also a centre of power, modernity and a relentless race towards the future.

If Porco Rosso tells the story of the post-war West through the eyes of an Italian, to understand how, on the other side of the world, Japan looked at Europe in those days, it is necessary to cite another masterpiece: The Wind Rises.

Here too, the story is set after the First World War, but this time we are in Japan, a Japan in turmoil and facing adversity, deeply marked by historical events such as the great earthquake in Kanto in 1923, and the economic crisis of the 1930s.

Jiro, the protagonist, dreams of becoming a great aircraft engineer.

He dreams of and is inspired by European aviation: German and Italian planes become an emblem of progress and beauty for him.

Europe, in the dreamer's mind of the protagonist, becomes almost a technical utopia, an idyllic landscape where planes are created for the love of flying, and not for military use as in Japan.

In fact, here is contained the ambivalence that drives the entire film: the beauty and love of aviation is ineluctably contaminated by the logic of war.

The Miyazakian vision of Europe reaches its sublimation in this film.

As a matter of fact, the European continent is split into two visions, staged this time in a single film.

The West appears as a utopia: a dream of technique, beauty, and harmony, but only in Jiro's imagination.

The reality Jiro must face as he matures is that even the culture, he once admired is the first to submit to the logic of war and utilitarian modernity, the very same forces he so bitterly criticised in his Japan.

To conclude, in the films of Studio Ghibli, the dialogue between Europe and Japan becomes a vivid reality.

"Its 'interlocutor of the world' nature makes European civilisation both a model and a warning, posing as a culture that has as much to envy as to criticise."

Miyazaki's timeless fascination with Western history, culture, and customs often conceals a deeper critique of war, imperialism, and a society consumed by utilitarian progress.

In the end, the Europe portrayed in Miyazaki's cinema reaches a double vanishing point: it is both an ideal Japan longs to become, and a reality it must learn to escape.

Evolution before devolution - how empire continues to cast a grave shadow

Emma Bates

The last colony officially ceased to be only shortly before the end of the last millennium. Structures of extraction and exploitation that had operated continuously for centuries had suddenly ground to a halt - or so the international community believed. While Brunei declaring independence from the United Kingdom in 1984 marked the end of modern colonialism, it also marked the maturation of a shift in international dynamics, ushering in an age of adjusted power dynamics.

The reasons for the subjugation of other nations and peoples have always been numerous; one of the primary motives has been access to resources, whether human or material - and thus, wealth. For as long as there has been mobility between peoples, trade has existed, but unrecognisable in form to us today. Specialities were endemic not only to every country, but to every region, and merchants shuttled these precious commodities first to towns and then, if demand existed, slowly flowed through trade routes that veined the land. Essentially, there existed a greater equality of knowledge in trade; merchants knew both the real and fiat value of their goods and the price that could be exacted in both various currencies and other goods, with the amount of labour that went into commodities reflected in its price and few middlemen to artificially inflate or deflate it. Exploitation undeniably occurred, and when we speak of equality, we speak only of material goods, but the scarcity of products, particularly manufactured ones, remained at a relative constant and retained value. Today, that is not the case.

The recent tariff furor spreading from the American government to the rest of the world may have highlighted the amount of global trade that occurs daily, but it also asks this -

"Who exactly benefits from low-barrier trade?"

What has established the international trade routes that we take for granted? When we examine the countries that are recipients of new, higher tariffs, a pattern quickly emerges: they, with few exceptions, are developing countries with a colonial past. Where once, through direct routes fostered by state-sponsored trade companies, resources traveled to the economic core from the labour periphery, they now traverse the roads of globalisation and neoliberalism. It was only in the mid-twentieth century that this phenomenon was described by Raúl Prebisch, in a study of Latin American countries, noting the exploitative nature of the relationship between this region and developed countries: he called it Dependency theory. Through their geoeconomic and geopolitical power, developed nations reinforce uneven trade balances, profiting from lower wages and fewer environmental protections countries judged to be peripheral, on the outskirts from modern culture and society.

That the actions of one country - one man - has the power to impact the global economy speaks to the dependency that core, developed countries continue to exert on the periphery. Whether the bell of deindustrialisation can be unrung is unlikely, no matter how high the cost imposed on citizens on both ends of this economic warfare, but that it distills international relationships is undeniable. Where the global north has pursued industrial and trade policies that forced developing countries to provide them with discounted resources, labour, and landfills, it has also handed over the reins to its own material sovereignty, turning traditional dependency on its head. When the dust settles from this current crisis, we may find that certain countries, momentarily unable to follow business as usual, will have broken free from lingering colonial patterns.

The Good Guys and The Terrorists

Angèle Boleis

The other day, as I was waiting for the ferry to cross the Amstel, I saw a graffiti on a sign: "If you have to kill over 1.000 children to take it, it's probably not your land. - F. Albanese". I swiftly pushed my bike aside and reflected for a second about the UN Special rapporteur's words. I thought, "if this is true for Israel in Palestine, then it also is true for my France in Algeria".

Since I moved to the Netherlands, I find myself listening to the radio or watching television more often, a bit to keep me company when I wash the dishes or hang out the washing, but mostly to keep myself informed with what is happening in my home country. And because the news is less and less interesting each day since the media exhausts every subject until the very last drop, appalled by what I sometimes hear, I call my friends and family to get it off my chest. But, tired of listening to the same things over and over, they shut the transistor and the TV set months ago. If I do not hold it against them, I still need a place to express myself. Lately, the last on-trend topic has been…Algeria. Therefore, dearest readers, please don't be upset if I use this column for my vitriolic tribune. There is so much to say about this long and complex story, however I will content myself of haphazardly summarizing the thoughts I had during these past few months.

7 January 2025. "Jean-Marie Le Pen, dead at 96." As I learn the news, a slight grin appears on my face. At last, the monster is dead. But then a shiver runs down my spine. A torrent of words floods my mind. Suddenly I remember all his remarks on the gas chambers, the AIDS victims, Jews, women, immigrants, homosexuals, Arabs…and the vague memory of the torture he committed in Algeria as a voluntary paratrooper—a crime that he claimed for many years as a token of quality before denying everything when he realized that the sadist method and his scary eye patch could only attract a handful of birdbrained neo-nazis. Investigations have been made: his dagger has been found on a torture scene and countless testimonies have been collected. But nothing. Jean-Marie Le Pen was never convicted due to the 1968 amnesty. To this day, a great number of politicians and journalists refuse to acknowledge it, questioning the veracity of the victims' allegations.

1975. "The Arabs' testimony isn't worth as much as ours.", affirms fictional character Albert Schumacher in Yves Boisset's movie The Common Man when he and his fellow campers are suspected of killing an Algerian construction worker in a ratonnade (racist attack against North Africans). Throughout the film, largely inspired by the 1973 series of racist murders, the 'honnêtes Français' spout a compendium of xenophobic and racist words against the Algerian immigrants, at times accused of being lazy, or violent, and even capable of raping and murdering a young woman. In the end, to not scare the tourists away, we cover the racist murder into a settling of scores 'between them'. Why? Because, as the detective in charge of the investigation puts it: "lynching is for the Americans with blacks, but in France, lynching does not exist." In fact, I believe this film perfectly depicts the hypocrisy of French society when it comes to racism. There are multiple government organizations to fight this societal scourge, but to not make an enemy of the ignoramus in the case where they could vote for them, politicians don't stick their neck out and prefer to consent with the use of sociologically unfounded terms like 'anti-white racism' or simply criticize immigrants' cultures, when others even choose to make it their stock in trade. Before there was Jean-Marie Le Pen, now it seems that everyone is having a field day. Here is an example! This is what journalist and far-right politician Eric Zemmour said about French colonization: "When the Général Bugeaud [Governor-General of Algeria] arrives in Algeria, he massacres Muslims and even a few Jews. Well, today, I am siding with him. That's what being French is about!" Indeed, Zemmour perfectly summed it up: either you are French and you justify the massacre of colonized people, or you are what the Right now calls an 'islamo-leftist' (a variation of the antisemitic 'judeo-bolshevism').

On top of that, it is expected from the Algerians and other colonized people to be grateful. Thus, in André Téchiné's film Wild Reeds, when Algerian-born French exile Henri Mariani is asked to write a dissertation for his literature class, he constantly writes about the supposedly unjust situation of the Français d'Algérie "who fight to defend their land, their blood and their dignity". However, his teacher

asks him: "-Do you ever think of the Algerian people, Mariani? Doesn't it exist for you?" To which he responds with poise: "-We gave them everything. Without us they would starve to death." And if this 1994 film is purely fictitious, it perfectly sums up the mentality of the period: the Algerian War. The opposition between those in favour of independence and the others, the pieds noirs and the far-right partisans who see in the loss of this territory, the fall of France's grandeur. But things haven't changed. The French government continues to cultivate a sort of ambiguity when it comes to the history of colonization. In the same manner, in 2005, a law was voted in the Assemblée Nationale to impose on high-school teachers a requirement to teach the "positive values of French ruling overseas, particularly in North Africa". A revisionist argument that created a massive uproar from the left and historians. Thereby, current Minister of the Interior Bruno Retailleau described colonization as "dark hours, as well as good hours with helping [colonizers'] hands". These words perfectly enter into a logic of 'anti-repentance', a movement instigated by former President Nicolas Sarkozy that extols National myth over appeasement between peoples. According to this reasoning, France should not excuse itself to the countries it harmed in the past, but take pride in being a phantasmagoric 'uniform nation'.

In addition, France still hasn't ended with its neo-colonial vision of the African continent. Indeed, at the beginning of the year, President Emmanuel Macron declared before French ambassadors how "they [African leaders] forgot to say thank you [after the anti-djihadist military aid in the Sahel and Sahara]. This contempt is deeply rooted in the idea that Africa, particularly Algeria was "nothing before 1830" when "France 'brought civilization' to the 'barbarian' indigenous people of the region". Political appropriation, myths, internal and external tensions…

What have been called "événements d'Algérie" in history textbooks until 1999 can still be considered an open wound that continues bleeding into both countries, France and Algeria: the Algerian War (1954-1962).

There is something odd about this war. Depending on where and when you went to high school in France, and what you studied there, it is likely you didn't learn the same thing.

15 April 2025. I decided to interview my family about it: "-What did you learn in school? I asked. "In middle school, we were told by the teacher that the topic was 'too complicated' because we had the brevet des collèges at the end of the school year. We studied the Indian independence movement instead. And in high-school, I only had one class about it. But I remember the teacher talking about the atrocities committed by France in Algeria.", responded Alice, my sister, who obtained her baccalauréat général in 2021. I asked the same question to my mother who obtained her baccalauréat général in 1993 and she told me: "We didn't really talk about it. I vaguely recall studying the Evian Accords, how the Français d'Algérie felt betrayed by the Général de Gaulle. And in my faculty of history, the topic wasn't in the program." Lastly, my father who obtained his brevet professionnel agricole in 1988, said he "didn't study anything beyond the Second World War." And in all these testimonies, the topic had only been skimmed over. Certain events are missing: the Paris massacre of 1961, the Charonne subway massacre…in short, all the most embarrassing facts for the French government. However, the memorial policies aren't frozen. And in 2021, Emmanuel Macron ordered a report on "the memorial questions surrounding colonization and the Algerian War" where the historian Benjamin Stora formulated around thirty recommendations to the government, notably the opening of certain policiary and judiciary archives. Nonetheless, the French government still denies its responsibility in the massacre of October, 17 1961, when police officers drowned hundreds of pacific Algerian protesters against the curfew that was solely imposed on them, under the orders of Maurice Papon, Paris police prefect (appointed by the government) at the time. The number of victims was concealed until historian and communist Jean-Luc Einaudi revealed the extent of the massacre during 1998 Papon's trial for the arrest and deportation of 1,560 Jews under Nazi collaboration.

16 November 2024. Algerian novelist Boualem Sansal is arrested in Algiers. The news hit the headlines. French politicians, artists and journalists protest the Algerian government's judicial decision. Some even start to quote the Général de Gaulle: "We don't lock up Voltaire!" Intrigued by this sudden interest for the respect of human rights in Algeria where more than 260 people are still imprisoned for their participation in the Hirak, I decide to do some research on this author that some compare to the Lumières. Awarded to the Grand Prix

du roman de l'Académie Française, Sansal is mainly received in far-right media where his acerbic criticism of Islam and of Algeria delights the hosts who wave these two subjects like boogeymen. He is in a way a sort of token, a foil to the journalists that can legitimate their hateful speeches against immigrants and Muslims. Far be it from me to suggest that his arrest was warranted, or that this 75-year old man should face prison for expressing his opinion. However, I would like to note the magnitude of the affair's media coverage. This is how the crisis started: Algeria accusing a novelist of treason and passing intelligence to foreign parties, and France rising up against the Algerian judicial system.

3 January 2025. Three Algerian TikTok influencers residing in France have been arrested after proclaiming incentives to terrorism. Condemned to be deported back to Algeria, Abdelmadjid Tebboune's government refuses to accept the convicts on its territory. This decision buried the efforts initiated between the two countries to pacify their relations, after Emmanuel Macron had given his support to Morocco's positions on the Western Sahara when Algeria had been a long-term sponsor of the Polisario Front. The diplomatic incident provoked the indignation of Minister of Interior Bruno Retailleau who has been multiplying provocative declarations against the Algerian government, considering that this topic is an issue of "French people's pride who is tired of being humiliated by Algeria". According to him, Algeria uses the colonial past to obtain privileges, and he is even considering an upsurge of France in the balance of power by stopping the issue of visas to Algerian nationals. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Noël Barrot almost disappeared from the screens to give his diplomatic role to the candidate in the right-wing party Les Républicains primary elections. If we can easily criticize the Algerian position in the matter, we should also consider this political instrumentalization, this diplomatic war that he encourages each day for his personal endeavour.

Paris 1972. A jump back in time. Jean-Marie Le Pen founds the Front National (now Rassemblement National) along with members of the Organisation Armée Secrète (O.A.S), a neo-fascist paramilitary and terrorist organization opposed to Algerian independence. The same year, anti-militarist singer Maxime Le Forestier recorded Parachutiste, a folk song about a paratrooper that specializes in torture and learns during his service how to differentiate "the good guys from the terrorists" ("les gens biens et les terroristes"). But, who are the "good guys"? Who are the "terrorists"?

Sidi Fredj 1830. A French expedition lands to the west of Algiers, in the town of Sidi Fredj. The 37,000 troops quickly defeat the dey's army and enter the city of Algiers. Eager to colonize Algeria's coastal plains, the French army is faced with fierce resistance from the Arabs and Berbers who turn to Abd al-Qadir (1808-1883) an amir that would unite the tribes allied against French rule for over fifteen years. But even after initiating two peace treaties that were proved short-lived due to France's expansionist ambitions, the war continued until France unleashed extraordinary violence on the Algerian people. Ultimately, Abd al-Qadir surrendered his sword to the French. But, victory over the legendary military leader was only the beginning of French colonization of Algeria. Thousands of Europeans soon settled in the region. And according to American historian Eugene Rogan, "aside from the Zionist colonization of Palestine, there was to be no settler-colonialism in all the Middle East to match what the French achieved in Algeria". Since 1848, Algeria was no longer foreign soil but a French territory composed of three départements with French Algerian deputies to represent them in the Chamber. Algerian Muslims were not granted the same rights as the European settlers and actually came under a host of discriminatory legislation known as the Code de l'Indigénat. They were second-class citizens. However, at the same period, the French government started campaigns of propaganda to present the colonization of Algeria as a consensual victory for both Europeans and indigenous populations, with anniversary celebrations and patriotic monuments to the glory of the military. A message that seems to still infuse in the mind of many.

25 February 2025. "We [French people] committed thousands [of massacres like the one of Oradour-sur-Glane] in Algeria. [...] We did not behave like Nazis. It's the Nazis that behaved like us.", said political journalist Jean-Michel Apathie on radio, facing three incredulous anchormen and one right-wing politician Florence Portelli (Les Républicains) who seemed profoundly shocked. However, if at the right and far-right, his words are considered sacrilegious (he is excluded from the radio station), many of the historians who reacted either agree with him, or consider that it is a slight anachronism but that his comparison is still effective. Here is an example similar to the massacre committed by an SS division in the village of Oradour-sur-Glane where 642 inhabitants were killed in retaliation for a resistance action, locking up women and children in

the church before setting fire to the structure: 1845. Enfumades du Dahra. Officers of the French Expeditionary Corps exterminate tribes that had found shelter in caves by setting the place on fire at the entrance "pour les fumer comme des renards" according to the Général Bugeaud or in other words murder women and children by burns and suffocation. Nowadays, if we learn about colonization in French schools, what certainly is missing in the curriculum is the barbarity of these crimes against humanity. Everyone knows about Oradour-sur-Glane and the crimes committed by the Nazis, but almost no one about the torture, the rapes or massacres committed by France in Algeria. As a kid, we went to Normandy to see the American cemetery and Omaha Beach, the local Maquis de Saint Marcel, all the war memorials and the Mémorial de la Shoah, as it should be. But on colonization, there is only one memorial, in Paris, that combines all the victims of the independence conflict in North Africa, a mediocre tribute to the Harkis who were only acknowledged in 2001 by President Jacques Chirac.

17 September 1963. Ahmed Ben Bella is elected President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria after leading the National Liberation Front during the war of independence. To consolidate his power, Ben Bella does not hesitate to refer to his revolutionary past and depicts himself as the liberator of the nation, a method that would be adopted by many Algerian presidents following his imprisonment. The national myth of a united and homogeneous anti-colonial movement soon hides the tensions between other resistance groups, as well as the history of Harkis, that for many were not given the right to emigrate and were consequently massacred by the revolutionaries. These memorial conflicts will tarnish the already tense relations between France and Algeria: the first denying the crimes, and the latter overestimating the death tolls. The reconciliation is almost impossible.

After the Algerian War. Thousands of Algerians crossed the Mediterranean sea and immigrated to France, bringing with them their culture, their language and their history. And in 2011, French demograph Michèle Tribalat estimated that 2.5 million people living in France were originating from Algeria (over three generations), making up the biggest diaspora in France. Today, Algeria is everywhere: on the radio and on TV, in the streets and on the balconies, in textbooks and novels, in the kitchen and at the theater, in history classes and documentaries, at rallies and in stadiums…But this vague presence is always being challenged by those who see in multiculturalism the downfall of civilization, those who cry "La France aux Français!", those who think that immigrants should assimilate, those who think they should abandon their beliefs and their traditions, those who argue that they should not come at all…It seems that now everyday is a pretext to attack those who do not fit the preconceived idea of a white and Catholic France. Day after day, the dreams of reconciliation are dying. And the right is selling shovels for the government to dig the grave.

Static Silence: The End of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the Question of Europe's Voice

Rytis Gulbinas

"We couldn't shut them down, unfortunately, but America did so itself."

The remark, quoted in The Moscow Times after Trump's decision to defund Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), was made quietly by a Russian official — and is easy to dismiss as cynical. But it captures something much bigger: the symbolic closure of one of the United States' longest and most quietly impactful foreign policy projects in Europe. Although much has been written about the withdrawal of U.S. troops from conflict zones or the weaponisation of tariffs, the retreat of American soft power—especially in the realm of democratic media—has received far less attention. That retreat may prove just as consequential.

In his 2024 Munich speech, U.S. Senator J.D. Vance, standing before European leaders, sharply questioned whether Europe still values free speech. He delivered this while defending the defunding of one of the West's most effective tools of free expression behind the Iron Curtain is as ironic as it is telling.

RFE/RL was born from the Cold War's ideological battlefield, shaped by émigrés, dreamers, and policymakers like George Kennan, whose doctrine of containment saw the Cold War as a battle not just of borders but of information and ideas. My own parents, like many in Soviet Lithuania, remember crouching by their radios, adjusting wires and tuning dials to hear news that resembled reality more than propaganda. In towns where "local news" meant recycled party bulletins or factory announcements, RFE/RL was the only voice that felt like it was speaking to people, not down to them.

The project was never neutral—nor was it meant to be. As media scholar V. Slavtcheva-Petkova explains in her history of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, its mission was clear: to undermine Bolshevik rule and promote democratic self-determination. At first, its tone was aggressive, even triumphalist. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 exposed the dangers of this dynamic, when Radio Free Europe was blamed for giving false hope of U.S. military support — a case well documented by historian Michael Siefert in his analysis of Cold War-era radio diplomacy. From that point on, the station became more careful—less revolutionary, more responsible. And still, it remained a lifeline. Funded by the CIA but packaged as private, it walked the tightrope of credibility and secrecy until 1971, when that arrangement was publicly exposed and replaced by Congressional funding.

After the Cold War, RFE/RL could have faded into irrelevance. But a post-Soviet task force concluded that its mission was not over—it would shift from pushing regime change to supporting democratic transitions and pluralistic media. For a time, it worked. From Prague, its new base offered training, local partnerships, and regionally adapted journalism. But one by one, branches in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic closed as local media matured. The Russian service, however, remained—and became more vital than ever.

That is, until it didn't. Putin came to power with a clear understanding of the media's power, and he choked RFE/RL slowly: bureaucratically, legally, and culturally. In 2016, the station ended its shortwave broadcasts and went online-only. A year later, it was labelled a "foreign agent." But RFE/RL adapted. Its "Current Time" brand offered fresh Russian-language content from Prague. Its Ukrainian coverage dominated internal newsroom priorities. And yet, in 2025, with audiences growing in Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, the United States government quietly decided to let it go.

Why does this matter?

In one sense, RFE/RL was a Cold War tool. One could argue, with some force, that the world RFE/RL was built to confront no longer exists. The Soviet Union col-

lapsed over thirty years ago. Eastern Europe is now part of the EU and NATO. Even in authoritarian states, citizens can access global information with asmartphone and a VPN. Why should American taxpayers continue funding a Cold War-era broadcasteR when its original battlefield—state-controlled media monopolies—is gone? Perhaps it's not that RFE/RL failed, but that it succeeded and simply outlived its moment.

That, however, is precisely what makes the decision so significant. Ending RFE/RL isn't just a matter of saving money—it's a statement about priorities. It signals a quiet shift away from the idea that promoting democracy abroad is still part of the West's responsibility. Media, after all, isn't expensive compared to troops or tanks—but it's often where values are tested first.

For Europe, the deeper question is not what the U.S. is doing—but what Europe is not. Can Europe become the guardian of democratic media where the U.S. is stepping back? Can it be more than a market? In an age of algorithmic disinformation and illiberal turnarounds, it isn't just missile defence that matters. It's narrative defence. And right now, Europe doesn't have a plan.

Could Europe step in where the U.S. has stepped back? In theory, yes. The European Union has the financial resources and institutional capacity to either support RFE/RL directly or to build a comparable platform rooted in its own values. But so far, there's been little political appetite to take on that role.

RFE/RL's infrastructure, talent, and audience are already in place—reviving it with EU funding would be more effective than building something from scratch. Alternatively, the EU could develop a new, pan- European public media initiative focused on regions where disinformation thrives and independent journalism is under siege. But either path would require Europe to treat media not just as a cultural good but as a strategic tool of foreign policy—and that shift has yet to happen.

Europe is used to assuming the U.S. will tell its story for it. With RFE/RL gone, that assumption must end.

The airwaves are still open—but who will fill the silence?

SES Calendar

Think Tank III - June 10th

This is an opportunity for our members to share their thoughts on the association and discuss anything surrounding SES.

Active Members Weekend - June 13th-15th

As a token of appreciation to our active members, the Active Members Weekend is a tribute to them and all their hard work. A weekend filled with activities and loads of fun!

General Assembly III - June 17th

Before the end of the Academic Year, at the last GA, the association will review the annual report, vote on the candidate board and the Candidate Advisory Board, and review the year's budget.

Pride Borrel - June 17th

In honor of Pride month, the party committee throws the annual Pride borrel to auction off the board and the newly elected candidate board, and all proceeds will go towards an LGBT charity.

WANT TO WRITE FOR EUROVISIE?
SEND YOUR ARTICLE TO EUROVISIE@SES-UVA.NL