

Europe seems to be losing popularity amongst its citizens, especially the younger citizens. The data on voter turnout from elections reveals this point. The trend overall has been steadily declining with just 43% [1] turnout amongst all citizens in the last poll held in 2009. Moreover, the turnout of youth aged 18-24 was only 29% [2] down 4% from the 2004 elections.

Coming from India which comprises of a group of states that have different languages and are culturally and demographically different [3], I would argue that what Europe lacks is a distinct European identity. In India, there is a distinct Indian identity that binds all the differences together. For example, India has national sporting teams, a shared heritage of a freedom struggle, a religious identity that cuts across multiple states and common languages that cut across state boundaries.

Europe by contrast was created mostly for economic reasons [4] with little thought given to a European cultural identity. A similar view from the youth itself, came forth in the "EUROPEAN YOUNG LEADERS: '40 UNDER 40'" session held in Paris as early as 2011 [5]. In addition, today, not just in Europe but around the world, there is rising dissatisfaction with increased inequality between [6] the rich and the poor and what the majority (the 99%) sees as the exploitative nature of capitalism. This leads to the argument that youth of today, in addition to the basic yearning for economic equality is also possibly looking towards greater common good. Though the youth of today are enjoying the benefits and comforts of increased economic gains, they also have to deal with more economic instability and unemployment [7]. They also live in an increasingly connected world where the corruption and greed of large corporates and ruling class seem to be making popular news.

All this makes me think that while a stable economic setup is a basic necessity, the youth is also looking for greater good that goes beyond just plain economics. A similar view was aired in the articles of debating Europe where a question of European identity was being raised [8] and MEP from **Slovenia**, Ivo Vajgl, concurs. Again, going back to my roots, the formation of India through a union of many culturally distinct princely states in 1947 was built on the core principle of Swaraj [9] more than on the necessity for economic independence. Similarly the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. in The United States was built around gaining civil rights and equality and was not just about economic independence. While culturally the core needs of these movements were fundamentally different, in both cases they led to improved economic conditions [10]. I would use this to argue that the greater cause (self-rule and civil equality) significantly helped in creating a core identity which then led to economic prosperity and progress in other areas.

Hence it would help Europe to look beyond economics and to identify what can bind its member states and people together. This will create a greater engagement across all classes, including the youth and lead to economic and cultural prosperity.

## References

[1] Lecture 1-8, European paradox: <https://class.coursera.org/europe-001/lecture/19>

[2], [5]

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2011/110206/LDM\\_BRI\(2011\)110206\\_REV1\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2011/110206/LDM_BRI(2011)110206_REV1_EN.pdf)

[3] [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India)

[4] birth of Europe : <https://class.coursera.org/europe-001/lecture/21>

[6] [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We\\_are\\_the\\_99%25](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_are_the_99%25)

[7] <http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/youth/2013/lang-en/index.htm>

[8] <http://www.debatingeurope.eu/2013/10/29/feel-part-common-european-identity/>

[9] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swaraj>

[10] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_India)