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**Who is Afraid of the 'New Europe'? Nationalism and the post-1989 project of European unity**

Abstract:

West European elites feel uneasy about the 'New Europe' in two senses of the term. Firstly, they fear the 'New Europe' as a Europe to come, which is bound to be very different from their pre-1989 ambitions and expectations. They bemoan the loss of the 'Old Europe' that was contained geographically by the cold war, which helped it to remain relatively cohesive. It is worth recalling that the European Union has more than doubled the number of member states since the collapse of communism. The Europe to come is marked by a higher degree of heterogeneity, which will make it more difficult to govern and reform. Secondly, West European elites are also fearful about certain tendencies in the 'New Europe', which they would have liked to see as consigned to the dustbin of history. Continuing concerns in the new member states about the preservation of national sovereignty and the electoral appeal of ethnocentric nationalism are seen as serious hurdles to Europe's unity, though it is often overlooked that such sentiments are not limited to the former Eastern bloc. This is a classic example of what Freud termed 'the Narcissism of minor differences': the Western fear of the 'barbarians' in the East is reinforced by the fear of 'barbarians' from within. While Euroscepticism and the rise of populist, ethnocentric politics in the West tend to be explained away merely as a temporary setback on the march towards an 'ever closer union', similar tendencies in Central and Eastern Europe tend to be seen as confirming preconceived notions about the backward East.

Why is populist politics so popular in Europe, both East *and* West? What is the best way to deal with it? My paper seeks to address the challenges of the post-1989 project of European unity by exposing the limitations of dominant discourses in the West. It will show that the attempt to move towards a more federalist Europe, 'The United States of Europe' (Habermas, 2006), underpinned by the ideal of post-national citizenship (Habermas, 2001) is both unrealistic and undesirable.

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