

Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe and the Rise of Illiberalism: An Exploration of Causes and Impacts

Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has witnessed a resurgence of illiberalism in recent years. This trend has raised concerns among scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike, as it undermines democratic values and institutions that have been painstakingly built since the fall of communism in 1989.

In this article, we will explore the causes and impacts of the rise of illiberalism in CEE. We will examine the historical, political, and economic factors that have contributed to this trend, and analyze the consequences it has had on democratic governance, civil liberties, and the rule of law in the region.



Mastering the Past: Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe and the Rise of Illiberalism by Emma Bamford

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Historical and Political Context

CEE has a long and complex history marked by authoritarian rule and foreign domination. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many countries in the region embarked on a path of democratization and economic reform. However, this transition was not without its challenges.

One of the challenges was the legacy of communism. Communist regimes in CEE had left behind a culture of authoritarianism and a weak civil society. This made it difficult for democratic institutions to take root and flourish.

Another challenge was the rise of nationalist and populist movements, particularly in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. These movements tapped into popular discontent with the economic and political establishment, and offered simple solutions to complex problems. Some of these movements were led by charismatic leaders who appealed to voters' emotions and exploited fears and insecurities.

Economic Factors

Economic factors have also played a role in the rise of illiberalism in CEE. The region has experienced significant economic growth in recent years, but this growth has not been evenly distributed. Inequalities have widened, and many people feel left behind.

This economic inequality has led to social unrest and a loss of trust in the political establishment. Illiberal leaders have capitalized on this discontent

by promising to protect the interests of the "common people" and to restore national pride.

Erosion of Democratic Institutions

The rise of illiberalism in CEE has led to the erosion of democratic institutions. Illiberal governments have weakened the independence of the judiciary, curtailed media freedoms, and suppressed civil society organizations.

One of the most common tactics used by illiberal governments is to undermine the rule of law. They do this by packing the courts with political appointees, pressuring judges, and limiting judicial oversight of government actions.

Illiberal governments also often restrict media freedoms. They may pass laws limiting freedom of speech and expression, or they may pressure media outlets to toe the government line.

Finally, illiberal governments often target civil society organizations. They may restrict the registration of NGOs, limit their funding, or subject them to excessive regulation.

Impacts on Civil Liberties

The erosion of democratic institutions has had a significant impact on civil liberties in CEE. Illiberal governments have cracked down on dissent, curtailed freedom of assembly, and restricted the right to privacy.

One of the most concerning trends in CEE is the rise of "anti-extremism" laws. These laws are often vague and can be used to target political

opponents.

Illiberal governments have also used surveillance technologies to monitor their citizens. This has led to concerns about the privacy of communications and the chilling effect it has on free speech.

Consequences for the Future of Democracy in CEE

The rise of illiberalism in CEE poses a serious threat to the future of democracy in the region. Illiberal governments are undermining democratic institutions, curtailing civil liberties, and promoting a culture of fear and intolerance.

If this trend continues, it is likely to have a negative impact on the region's economy, stability, and international reputation. It could also lead to a resurgence of authoritarianism in CEE.

The rise of illiberalism in CEE is a complex issue with deep historical, political, and economic roots. Illiberal governments have eroded democratic institutions, curtailed civil liberties, and promoted a culture of fear and intolerance.

It is important to understand the causes and impacts of this trend in order to develop effective strategies to counter it. The future of democracy in CEE depends on our ability to defend democratic values and institutions, promote civil society, and foster an inclusive and tolerant society.

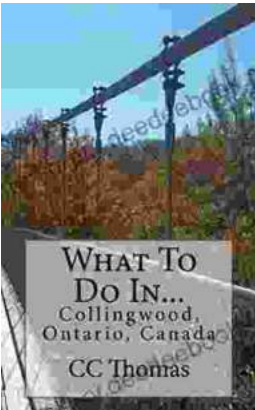
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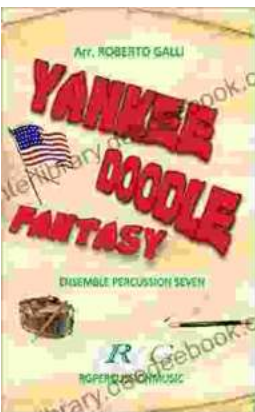


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