Explaining eastern Europe

Imitation and its discontents

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For countries emerging from communism, the post-1989 imperative to ‘be like the West’ has generated discontent and even a ‘return of the repressed’, as the region feels old nationalist stirrings and new demographic pressures. The origins of illiberalism in central and eastern Europe are emotional and pre-ideological, rooted in rebellion at the humiliations that accompany a project requiring acknowledgment of a foreign culture as superior to one’s own.

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