

Call for Papers: Reexamining Central and Eastern Europe: Identities, Narratives, and the Shaping of European Boundaries

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Central and Eastern Europe is undergoing continuous transformation, with its identity and consciousness shaped by historical events and collective memory. As Geremek (1995) noted, the region represents both a challenge and a fundamental aspect of understanding reality. For decades, it was situated behind a "wall" that "froze or at least tried to freeze history" (Magris 2016). Today, the region is in a state of flux, with profound changes that, while rooted in history, carry revolutionary implications for the future.

The region's identity is deeply influenced by its shared history, which often complicates the present and prevents a stable sense of place. As Brodacka-Dwojak (2023) observes, the constant balancing act between redefining and retaining historical memory defines the region's ongoing transformation. Pomian highlights the vividness of memory in Eastern Europe, where history and politics are deeply intertwined, often in oppressive forms. The collapse of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union ushered in a new geopolitical order, but, paraphrasing Jacques Derrida, these events continue to haunt the region like specters, disrupting the present and challenging the understanding of identity (Derrida 1993). Milan Kundera argued that the experiences of Central Europeans, and the cultural entity of Central Europe, are crucial to understanding the broader European history.

The current identity of Central and Eastern Europe is a dynamic process shaped by external events, with the Berlin Wall symbolizing the ambiguous boundary between East and West. This boundary historically represented not only political division but also cultural and ideological otherness, as described by Magris (2016). Today, this division persists, with Eastern Europe viewed as alien by the West and vice versa. The collapse of communism left Eastern Europe with a narrative distinct from that of the West, which remained outside the "Iron Curtain" (Kořakowski 1990), deepening the divide between Eastern and Western Europe.

This ongoing process of transformation and reflection on identity challenges the region to reconcile its past with its future, as it navigates between competing historical narratives and evolving political realities.

Questions for Reflection and Submission:

- How does the historical experience of Central and Eastern Europe shape its current political and cultural identity, particularly in relation to Western Europe?
- What role does memory and historical narrative play in the ongoing transformation of the region?
- How do contemporary events, such as the war in Ukraine or the rise of populism, influence the region's search for identity?
- What are the challenges in reconciling the competing narratives of the East and West in Europe today?
- How does the shifting boundary between Eastern and Western Europe reflect deeper cultural, ideological, and historical divides?

We invite papers that explore these questions and offer fresh perspectives on the evolving identities and narratives of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as their implications for the shaping of European boundaries.