

MOBILIZING WHITE PEOPLE



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There is a sort of default position in American political culture, that is there's always been a strong strain of populism in American history – and populism is exactly that: the suspicion of the elites. This populist strain never goes away. And it has become more prominent in the recent years because it can lend itself equally to the left or the right.

In the hands of the politically left, it attacks business, and with the right wing it's normally used in an attack upon what's called the liberal elites. And the Republican party has been pretty effective politically in the last twenty years in what is I think a kind of right wing populism that says that the greatest danger facing ordinary Americans comes from out-of-touch business groups, media figures, professors, and so on. And it had a strong impact.

The Tea Party movement has done a very effective job of mobilizing anti-elite sentiments. But the elite they attack is what we call the liberal elite. So it is fairly selective.

I don't feel that there is significant distrust of

society from the elites. This is what the Tea Party says – that the elite hates the masses – but I don't think that the Tea Party is correct about that. I think that everyone in American politics tries to appeal to the masses.

I think that the elite consider themselves, generally speaking, as a group that shares a very strong obligation to the common good, to do something in the interests of all. I think there is a serious effort on the part of people we would generally consider to be a part of elite to govern the country and to govern the country well.

Hate towards the elites is primarily about race, because the United States are becoming more and more a multiracial society and there are some predictions that within twenty years white people will be a minority; and maybe in California white people are already a minority. So **the effort to mobilize anger against the elite is an effort to mobilize views of white people who feel that the privileges they've always had have been taken away as the United States has and continues to become more multicultural.** ■

EUROPEAN STABILITY



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During the financial crisis there were some warring sides of social anger and discontent, of unhappiness among people, but this unhappiness or this alarmist mood in society was never translated into any major protests. In reality, there's still very little interest in Western society directed towards overthrowing the existing system.

People are living comfortably in the social market system of Europe and there are few alternatives to such a system at the moment. I don't see any kind of real revolutionary force which would try to change things through explosions and gunfire. If there are protests against the elites, they usually either come from anarchic groups on the Left or rightist nationalist groups in society and rarely have popular support. I don't think this will remain the case forever but it's how things seem right now.

I don't think that attitudes are too arrogant at the top. The elites still have leverage through clever social economic policies, which, in a country like Germany, have proved quite effective. Prior to elections a government may deliver some kind of social payment to the populace or issue pensions to make people feel more secure. Such strategies for the moment are enough to stabilize and prevent any

situations from spiraling out of control.

Since life is relatively comfortable in Europe there are few chances for new political powers to emerge. I'm not saying that they will never come up – in Germany, for example, the Green Party has emerged as a new political player concerned with ecological issues – but it is a rare phenomenon. During the financial crisis there were fears that some nationalist groups would emerge and claim power but nothing happened.

The power race between the elites and the people for the moment remains relatively stable. Those in power are comfortable right now, they know how to donate money to the lower classes and how to satisfy them.

The Left is vanishing, and the ideology of socialism is disappearing. Protests have become less organized than they were during the times of the Social Democratic Party. But, of course, the problems of rich and poor, and of justice in society still remain. So, it would be interesting to see what kind of force could renew the Left, and how it could bring about new possibilities for change. For now, this new force seems far off. But I think that maybe in about ten years time there could be important new political actors to emerge from different spheres in society. ■