
Europe, Even Further On The Right

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The extreme right has just quadrupled its number of votes in the parliamentary elections held in Portugal, so the Portuguese country will have a government of that kind, taking advantage of the early call in this regard, for alleged crimes of corruption, influence peddling and prevarication that made Prime Minister Antonio Costa, of the Socialist Party (PS), resign after eight years in power.

Until November 7, Costa governed relatively comfortably, with an absolute majority in the Assembly of the Republic. However, he was linked by the prosecution in such crimes, which were then practically dismissed by the judges of the process, but he insisted on resigning from his position and caused President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa to call the elections for this March 10.

With 99.01% of the votes counted, the PS obtained 28.66% of the votes (77 seats) against Democratic Action (AD), which obtained 28.63% of the votes, adding up to 0.86% achieved by the parties that make up that right-wing alliance in Madeira, reaching 79 seats.

This is joined by the far-right Chega, with 18.06% of the votes (48 seats), followed by the Liberal Initiative, which achieved 5.08% of the votes (8 seats).

Behind them are the Left Bloc, with 4.46% of the votes and five seats; the alliance of communists and greens, CDU-PCP, with 3.30% of the vote and four seats; the environmentalist Livre, with 3.26% and four deputies; and the animalist PAN, with 1.9% and one seat.

The leader of the PS, Pedro Nuno Santos, came out to grant victory to AD and announced that he would lead the opposition:

"Despite the tangential difference between us and AD without underestimating the votes of the electoral circles of our communities (abroad), everything indicates that the result will not allow the PS to be the party with the most votes."

DANGEROUS MARCH

The extreme right continues to gain strength. While the trend is clearly global in scope, stretching from New Delhi to Washington, there's one continent that has seen a surprisingly unified drift toward it: Europe.

The drift towards the extreme right in Europe inevitably invites historical comparisons. One of the main ones has been that the continent is returning to the 1930s, a time of the rise of extremist forces. However, the comparison lacks force on many fronts. European fascists, for example, came to power in a period of intense social confrontation: Hitler and Mussolini prevailed after labor movements tried to spark revolutions. Today the strong proletariat is conspicuous by its absence on the European scene, mortally wounded by deindustrialization and the laxity of labor markets.

Unlike the 1930s, when fascist violence flourished in the streets, the contemporary far right thrives on demobilization:

Meloni's party won the majority of votes in an election in which almost four out of 10 Italians stayed home, with turnout down almost 10% compared to the previous election.

In France, Le Pen's National Rally party has long obtained its best results in the areas of the country with the highest abstention rates.

And in Poland, the Kaczynski family of the Law and Justice party governs a country where less than 1% of citizens are members of a political party.

There's also another critical difference. Hitler and Mussolini promised their national elites the equivalent of the colonial empires that their French and British competitors had long since acquired. Today's far right has an alternative vision of the world. Instead of expanding outwards, their main desire is to shield Europe from the rest of the world. They have accepted that the continent will no longer be a protagonist in the 21st century; the best one can hope for is protection from the hordes.

The international strategy of the extreme right, starting with the European Union, is characterized by its limited ambitions. For decades, far-right parties focused their anger on the bloc's undemocratic limitations and even advocated leaving the union. That challenge no longer exists. Their politicians continue to attack immigration laws, but they do not talk as much about their countries' dependence on European funds.

On the other hand, the European Union is increasingly dependent on the United States in geopolitical terms and its industry is losing ground to China. While Hitler sought to disrupt the Anglo-American order and staked his claim for global dominance, Europe's new authoritarians are content to occupy a spot within the existing power structure. The goal is to adapt to the decline, not reverse it.

AND NOW PORTUGAL

In 18 of the 27 countries of the Union, the main ultra-conservative and right-wing populist formations increased the votes received in the last elections, reaching levels of power that seemed impossible a decade ago. In 17 they exceed double digits in votes. The mirage is already an oasis for the so-called reactionary international.

The ultra spearhead on the continent rises from Hungary and Poland, the only two countries in which the extreme right has governed for years with overwhelming majorities, although Orbán disagrees with measures that unconditionally support the fascist Ukrainian government - outside the EU - in the confrontation with Russia.

Other countries where the extreme right governs as minority coalition partners are Estonia, Latvia, and Slovakia, the only EU member that also has a neo-Nazi presence in its parliament. They all share a nationalist position. In 2013, the then Estonian ultra leader Martin Helme summed up his immigration policy this way: "If you are black, leave."

Sweden has already joined this list, always in accordance with the anti-Russian policy. The ultra Swedish Democrats party is present in the Executive.

In Germany, the extreme right broke into the federal parliament in 2017 for the first time since reunification, but has since deflated after a cordon sanitaire was applied to isolate the group.

In Spain, Vox has managed in just three years to become the third parliamentary force, reach the autonomous government of Castilla y León, further force the turn to the right of its partner, the Popular Party, and influence the national political agenda.

In Finland and Slovenia, the far right has already surpassed the Christian Democrats and leads the opposition. In Belgium it's the second largest force. In Denmark and Austria they have regressed and are third, but only after the Danish Social Democrats and the Austrian Christian Democrats, both in power, mimicked their discourse. In the Czech Republic and the Netherlands, they remain above 10% surrounded by liberal-conservative parties. In Croatia and Romania, new ultra formations were catapulted in the last elections and are already the alternative to traditional ones.

Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Luxembourg are the countries where the extreme right occupies a lower position in their parliaments. Even so, governing is not the only way for these policies anchored in the past to return to the present, since their influence has served to shift the balance of what's politically acceptable to the right. Without any ultra MPs, Lithuania, Malta and Ireland are the rare exceptions to this increasingly strong reactionary rise in the EU.

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