# Aditya Malpekar

## A Green Alternative to Darker Shades of Blue

As growth slows, inflation rises, heat waves and flash flood became routine, energy shortages loom, and a hot war in the immediate background, Europe witnesses a fundamental reshuffling and restructuring of its political landscape.

Having its origins in the global financial crisis of 2008, European politics have been tilting alarmingly to the right side of the political spectrum due to a tendency of voters across the continent to elect ultra-nationalists *aka* far-right political parties.

Evident from their anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic, anti-environmentalist, ethnocentric, anti-internationalist and protectionist stand, the far-right politics poses a grave threat to European values. Channelling social unrest to their advantage by reheating identities of race, religion and ethnicity, backing it up with retailing myths of past national greatness, a right-wing populist wave has engulfed Europe which can be evidently seen by the organized sizeable protests which are no longer occasional gatherings by few activists in small provincial towns but well-coordinated demonstrations signifying their growing electoral support and influence among the general masses.

The current rise in far-right wing politics, however is rooted in the ideology of **Third Position** in UK, *Troisième Voie* in France or *Terza Posizione* in Italy. Originating in Western Europe following the WWII and, in the context of Cold War, it developed its name through the claim that it represented a third position between capitalism of the Western Bloc and State Socialism of the Eastern Bloc, advocating themselves as "beyond left and right". While syncretizing ideas from each end of the political spectrum their proponents tend to have "reactionary right-wing cultural views and radical left-wing economic views". Descended from the most radical anti-capitalist wing of Hitler's Nazi Party with significant elements of fascism, their primary goal is to overthrow existing governments and replace them with monocultural nation states built around the idea of supremacist racial nationalism, propagating authoritarianism, nativism, misogyny, xenophobia and a staunch opposition to liberal democracy, parliamentarianism, Marxism, communism and socialism.

As opportunist as they are, creating and exploiting chaos is their primary weapon. In Germany for instance, a mainstream far right political party, *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) leveraged the pandemic to spread anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant and racist conspiracy theories. These opportunist and violent trends of mainstreaming far right voices can be seen in France's Front Nationale, Germany's AfD, UKIP in the UK, Italy's Lega Nord, Spain's Vox or Victor Orban in Hungary.

*"they are anti-climate, anti-being open to the world, anti-liberal, anti-gender...*
*We Greens personify everything they hate."*

said Reinhard Bütikofer, who co-led the Greens from 2002 to 2008 and is now a member of European Parliament representing the party.

As the political right has found a place in the reshuffled and restricted politics of Europe, so as **The Greens**. For all the attention focused on the rise of far-right parties, analysist have been slower to pick up an equally parallel trend - the rise of the Greens.

The Greens are not only posing a challenge to Europe's established political parties but represents an effective substitute, an answer to far-right populists that has threaten the continent's political institutions. The Greens currently is the largest party in the The Greens-European Free Alliance group, with 21 MEPs in the European Parliament. In 2019 Euroepan election, Alliance90/The Greens was the second largest party in Germany, winning 20.5% of votes. The party had 1,26,451 members in December 2022 making it the fourth largest party in Germany by membership. In France, The Greens have picked up to become the third largest party, ahead of traditional centre-right and centre-left parties. In Britain they beat PM Theresa May's Conservatives and came in just behind Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party. In Ireland, they came in third, ahead of Sinn Fein (Irish republican and democratic socialist political party). With this rise, the Greens have the potential to become kingmakers in the EU's most powerful jobs and bolster their policy goals of ambitious emission reduction targets, supporting continued EU integration and a more liberal and humane refugee policy.

*"The climate worry became extremely widespread. There is a sense of urgency in the public. This worry was able to be channeled in the Green Party,"* said Monica Frassoni, who served as a MEP and also co-chair of the European Green Party from 2009 to 2019. However, this is not just the explanation of the Greens' success, according to Sophia Besch, a fellow at the Centre for European Reform, *"There was also a sense that the two main parties just weren't giving answers anymore, and that wasn't where the European future was going to lie,"*, referring to the centre-right and centre-left parties that have traditionally dominated post war European politics at the national and pan-European level. Sven Giegold, who is a serving State Secretary in the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action in the coalition government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz since 2021, agreed that *"The coalition partners that were traditionally the guardians of a stronger Europe have lost courage to the extreme right,"* he further said, *"People are not reassured that the parties that originally were the fathers and mothers of Europe are still committed enough to Europe."* Thus, at a time of surge of extreme right-wing populism, threatening the very foundations of Europe, the Greens benefit from their staunch and unambiguous support for strong European integration.

On the most contested issue of refugee crisis and mainstreaming of the *pariahs*, the Greens reject xenophobia or the trend of the right wing to blame the 'other' but blame the damage done to the ecosystem leading to drought, war and famines in areas beyond Europe along with failed interventions by western nations pursuing control of fossil fuel resources in fragile areas of the world to be the direct cause of large scale of immigration.

Germany offers perfect examples: climate concerns pulled votes away from the far right *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) which scored worse than anticipated particularly becasue of the young people who are really shaped by climate protest, especially the "Fridays for Future" protests.

Equitable societies are healthier, happy and more likely to undertake changes to ensure sustainability. Extreme right-wing policies though look promising and provide simple, easy but short-term solutions to complex problems, Green politics aim to understand these complex issues in its entirety, bringing about an attitudinal change in European masses to respect and value the natural system on which the society is dependent, making it an effective and working substitute to extreme right wing politics.