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Rise of the Far-Right in Europe

Introduction

Europe is widely seen as upholder of human rights, values of humanism, justice, rule of law, liberty, equality and its institutions widely represent those values. The rise of far-right or extreme-right is a threat to these values and ideals on which the Europe and its institutions are based. Ant In recent years, the growth of far-right political movements in Europe has become increasingly worrying. These movements are known for their anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-EU rhetoric, which has gained much traction in several European countries. This shift can be attributed to various factors such as economic uncertainty, rising inequality, and perceived threats to traditional cultural values. With the far-right gaining power, it poses a significant challenge to the democratic values that have long been the foundation of European society. In this article, we will explore the reasons behind the rise of the far-right in Europe and its potential consequences for the continent's future. The fringe elements of the far-right ideology have now asserted themselves in the dominant discourse of mainstream politics both on the national and the supranational or the European level.

Culture and identity are undoubtedly important facets of any society. In Europe, there is no single uniform identity or culture but rather a mosaic of diverse cultures. However, it is unfortunate that the far-right has been able to weaponize identity politics to advance their extreme agendas, including nationalism, ethnocentrism, and neo-fascism. The concept of identity is based on the idea of 'self' and 'other,' where the 'other' is often portrayed as unruly, disruptive, and a threat to the domestic electorate.

Examples include Mesut Ozil's experience - he was shamed for having a picture with the President of Turkey before the 2015 World Cup despite being a valuable member of the German football team. The portrayal of the 'Polish plumber' post the fall of the Berlin Wall - demonstrate the cultural clashes that arise when nations demand assimilation rather than incorporation. The Hofstede model of culture provides insight into the different cultural attributes of various nationalities, which could be a source of discontent among citizens.

It is concerning that far-right parties use populist rhetoric to further their propaganda, blaming the 'other' for issues such as unemployment instead of poor governance structures and policies. The far-right also use anti-Islamic sentiment to rally support. While strict immigration policies are necessary to manage the inflow of immigrants, it is not wise to take an extreme stance on immigration.

A pressing issue is the far-right's increasing influence on mainstream politics, capturing the youth electorate and exploiting perceived failures of the European Union and the establishment's inability to address these concerns. The 2015 migration crisis, the Eurozone crisis, the Russo-Ukrainian war, and the European energy crisis are some examples that have added fuel to the fire.

Far-right parties have gained momentum in countries like France, Germany, UK, Sweden, Italy, Austria, Netherlands, and Spain. The Alternative for Germany (AfD), National Rally in France, Brothers Sweden Democrats, and the Lega Nord in Italy are examples of far-right parties that have gained support by capitalizing on populist and anti-immigrant sentiments.

The AfD has gained considerable support in Germany, focusing on anti-immigration and Euroskepticism, and is now the main opposition party. Marine Le Pen's National Rally has gained considerable momentum in France, exploiting economic grievances and anti-immigrant sentiment to gain support.

Economic issues have also contributed to the rise of the far-right. Countries like Italy with the Brothers of Italy party and the UK with the UK Independence party led by Nigel Farage have leveraged Euroskepticism and anti-immigrant platforms to win elections. The ongoing economic crises in Greece and Spain have led to the rise of far-right parties like Golden Dawn and Vox, respectively.

It is critical to recognize that the far-right often moderates its extreme agendas to make them more acceptable to the electorate. The Identite and Democracy party, a coalition of far-right parties, now has considerable seats in the European Parliament, highlighting the far-right's growing influence.

While it is important to control immigration to avoid cultural clashes, denying immigration altogether is not the solution. The center-right should acknowledge the concerns of ordinary citizens and work towards addressing them while upholding democratic values and ensuring that far-right extremist agendas do not gain a foothold in mainstream politics.

The European Union has contributed to the rise of the far-right in Europe by failing to address the concerns of ordinary citizens effectively. The 2015 migration crisis was a significant

turning point that exposed the EU's inability to address the concerns of its citizens. The EU's handling of the crisis was seen as an example of the organization's failure to listen to the concerns of member states and prioritize their interests. It has led to Euroskepticism, a perception that the EU is out of touch with ordinary citizens' concerns.

Additionally, the failure of governments to address economic and social issues has also contributed to the rise of the far-right. High unemployment, economic inequality, and social unrest have made it easier for far-right parties to gain traction and support. For example, Italy's economic issues have contributed significantly to the rise of the Brothers of Italy party, which has leveraged Euroskepticism and anti-immigrant platforms to win elections.

Furthermore, the rise of far-right parties in Europe has been fueled by the failure of governments to provide adequate security measures. The Paris attacks in 2015 and other incidents of terrorism have led to the perception that governments are not doing enough to protect their citizens. This has created a fertile ground for far-right parties to exploit anti-Islam sentiments and rally support. The rise of the far-right in Europe can also be seen in recent elections. For example, in the 2022 French presidential election, far-right candidate Marine Le Pen made it to the second round of voting, ultimately losing to incumbent President Emmanuel Macron. Le Pen's campaign was marked by controversial proposals, including a referendum on reinstating capital punishment and a ban on wearing Muslim headscarves in public.

Similarly, far-right political parties have achieved significant success in other European countries. In Hungary, the far-right Fidesz party led by Viktor Orbán has been in power since 2010. It has implemented policies widely criticized for being anti-democratic and discriminatory against minority groups. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has become the third-largest party in the Bundestag, with a significant presence in state parliaments across the country. In Italy, the far-right League party led by Matteo Salvini has seen a surge in support in recent years, advocating for anti-immigrant policies and Euroskepticism.

In conclusion, the rise of the far-right in Europe is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. EU needs to address the concerns of its citizens, and work towards addressing the economic and social issues that have contributed to the rise of the far-right. Governments need to provide adequate security measures and address the concerns of their citizens effectively. It is critical to differentiate the far-right's extreme anti-immigration agenda from a center-right approach to immigration management.

Bibliography

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