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# Is Europe on the Verge of a New Era for Far-Right Politics?



The rise of far right movements in recent elections in countries such as Germany, Holland and Poland in the wake of Britain's Brexit decision was recently followed by Austria. The People's Party (ÖVP), led by Sebastian Kurz, secured 31.5 percent of all votes, emerging as the victor of the elections. The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), notorious for its far-right and racist policies, secured 27.1 percent of the votes, followed by the Social Democrats with 25.9 percent.

ÖVP leader Sebastian Kurz is the child of an immigrant family who fled the war in Bosnia and settled in Austria. Therefore, his anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic populist discourse is distinctly contradictory with his own background. However, the fact that the far-right, racist, and fanatical nationalist policies being increasingly embraced by European voters, especially the young ones, is another factor that compels politicians to adopt such a discourse. In fact, Kurz is said to derive the largest support from young voters, in elections where the voting age was 16.

In order to secure the majority in the parliament, it seems Kurz will most likely seek to form a coalition with the far-right FPÖ, which promotes similar political views. In addition, the FPÖ is already accusing Kurz of poaching some of its far-right policies, making it more than likely that the two parties might find some common ground to cooperate.

If ÖVP-FPÖ coalition comes true, it will be the first time in 17 years that the FPÖ has taken part in the Austrian government. It is a well-known fact that with Kurz assuming the ÖVP's leadership last May, the center-right party has been on a rapid shift towards the far-right. In other words, if the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition happens, it will have formed a government in Austria, where the far-right is represented at the highest level.

This picture will no doubt be of most concern to the foreigners, immigrants and Muslims in the country. Many experts have noted that such a far-right government will prove extremely undesirable for the EU, as well. Furthermore, Austria will assume the presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2018.

The German elections of September 2017 saw a similar outcome. Compared to previous elections, Merkel's "CDU-CSU" and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) suffered 8.2 and 5.2 percent vote losses respectively, while the far-right and racist 'Alternative for Germany' Party had a substantial rise, increasing its vote share by some 8 percent and secured representation in the Bundestag with 94 members. According to reports, AfD secured the vast majority of its votes from young voters who were voting for the very first time. In other words, a significant segment of the young generation, who will represent Germany going forward, have also opted for the racist and far-right ideology.

Dr. Roy Karadag, Head of the Institute for Intercultural and International Studies at the University of Bremen, describes a far-right party such as AfD having strong representation in the Parliament as "terrifying".

It is believed that a CDU-FDP-Green Party coalition, which Merkel is expected to form, will not prove very long-lived. Therefore, it is quite probable that an early election will soon be on the horizon. This, in turn, may perhaps allow the rapidly rising far-right movement to even come to power in the near future. As a matter of fact, AfD leader Alexander Gauland's words that they "will keep chasing Merkel" and AfD co-Leader Jörg Meuthen's words that they "will put up a fierce opposition in the parliament" is an indication of their determination on the path to power.

What is even more dangerous than the votes being secured by the racist, far-right parties is mainstream parties adopting the same radical discourse out of their concern for winning over voters. As a matter of fact, Merkel's and CSU Leader Seehofer's post-election statements signaled such a trend, where they said, *"We have to win the AfD voters back by finding solutions to their problems, and taking their concerns and fears into consideration," "There is a right-wing deficit in the Christian Union. And now, it is time for us to eliminate it."*

These statements clearly show that far-right policies will be pursued by the new government in their quest to regain votes that were lost to the AfD. Among these policies, harsher immigration policies and the introduction of new migration laws will doubtlessly be among the priorities. This proves the fact that even if the AfD remains in the opposition for the foreseeable future, its radical ideas will soon find acceptance in the government.

As is well-known, the instigation of sentiments such as nationalism and patriotism to the point of exploitation throughout Europe in the pre-WW II era led to the rise of the far-right, racism and radical nationalism. This process, followed by the advent of fascist dictatorships, ultimately led to the greatest war and the most cold-blooded massacres ever seen in the history of the world. In other words, the fascist storm that tore through Europe eventually plunged the continent into an era of complete destruction.

Therefore, a continent that had been through disasters in the past, repeating the same mistake, even though unknowingly and gradually, would be a grave mistake. For this reason, it is absolutely vital that European intellectuals urgently warn their societies against this insidiously growing threat and bring a scientific and sociological clarification about the dangers that is likely to bring about. It is imperative to educate and raise the awareness of the impressionable young generations in particular who lack historical knowledge and experience.

Europe, which has been long recognized as the cradle of democracy, civilization, liberty and human rights, blatantly driving itself into another dreadful disaster will assuredly be the most undesirable scenario. Ideological vacuums and the presence of a materialistic world view are among the reasons that Europe is moving towards this horrendous outcome today. If the European countries are looking for a solution to the current state of affairs, they will need to thoroughly review the materialistic ideologies they have been following for years and reassess these blindly adopted notions.

***\*(Head of Austrian far right Freedom Party (FPÖ) Heinz-Christian Strache, September 29, 2013. Image credit: Gregor Tatschl/ flickr)***

Far-Right



## WRITER



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Adnan Oktar, who writes under the pen-name Harun Yahya, was born in Ankara in 1956. Since the 1980s, the author has published many books on faith-related, scientific and political issues.

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