

Economic, security issues open door to extremists

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Abolqasem Delfi, an expert on European affairs, says that economic and internal security problems have paved the way for the rise of far-right movements in some European countries.

According to him, even though extremists have enjoyed some success in Europe, the majority of European society is concerned about the empowerment of extremists. They associate it with the legacy of the disastrous World War II and the racist, supremacist views that sparked that war and do not want to return to that era. Delfi has previously served as Iran's ambassador to France, Belgium, and Serbia.



IRAN DAILY: Far-right movements in the Netherlands have achieved significant victories. Is right-wing extremism becoming a dominant force in Europe?

DELFI: Right-wing extremist ideologies in European politics are not new. Right-wing extremist movements in Europe have been discussed for decades. Their emergence has caused concern for some people, while others have welcomed them.

Perhaps the first significant case of right-wing extremism occurred in Austria in the late 1990s when far-right forces formed a coalition government with socialists. Europeans rallied, putting immense pressure on the Austrian government, to the point where Austria was on the brink of leaving the European Union. Ultimately, the coalition government collapsed under the pressure. The main reason for Europeans' concern about far-right movements stems from the fact that a number of wars in Europe were launched due to particularistic fervor. World War II was particularly fueled by racial supremacist ideologies adopted by right-wing and extremist nationalists.

Nazism in Germany and fascism in Italy emerged from elections. Now, far-right movements are winning more and more parliamentary seats in elections. Why do some Europeans vote for them despite the concerns you mentioned?

In European countries where the right wing has succeeded, the main reason why the public is inclined toward them is their unsatisfactory economic situation. The ruling governments, whether liberal or socialist, are incapable of solving economic problems, and this has allowed the right to exploit and link them to the issue of immigrants. Far-right nationalists say that immigrants have taken job opportunities and exacerbated economic problems. So, they urge the government to expel immigrants or severely curb immigration policies. They focus more on nationalist aspects, as evidenced by the 'America First' foreign policy approach that Donald Trump promoted in the US. Far-right movements have posed the greatest challenge, perhaps in France, where many African immigrants with collective memories of being the victims of colonialism live. According to French nationalists, these immigrants have taken up many job opportunities and brought with them racial hatred influenced by the colonial era, creating a crisis in France.

In Britain, far-right extremists believed that the European Union had limited the greatness and power of their country, and that by leaving the European Union, Britain would gain more power and better secure its interests. But in the end, Brexit deprived Britain of the benefits of the European Union.

Internal security is another issue that has given rise to right-wing movements in various European countries. Right-wing factions believe that immigration policies have endangered their internal security as well. This issue gained more prominence, especially after the emergence of Daesh. According to extremists, some migrants living in Europe were recruited by Daesh and undertook terrorist activities or participated in them. The debates surrounding this issue has been particularly heated in France. Therefore, focusing on unstable economic conditions and internal security and linking them to immigrants have prompted some segments of society to vote for far-right extremists.

Can we consider right-wing extremism a serious threat to Europe?

Right-wing extremism is a serious threat everywhere, including Europe. However, relative victories in some European countries do not necessarily mean the empowerment of extremists in Europe. They have succeeded in some countries, such as the Netherlands, Italy, and Hungary, and even formed a government in Italy. Still, their path to success has not been straightforward in other countries. Far-right extremists failed to win presidential elections in France, and German neo-Nazis didn't achieve success. Also, due to public concerns, extremists are forced to moderate their slogans and policies. Extremists have gained some popularity by exploiting economic problems and certain identity slogans. However, the European public is aware of the potential dangers of right-wing extremism. They haven't forgotten Europe's history before the union, which was marked by numerous wars and nationalistic ambitions in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Far-right nationalists emphasize shifting the focus inward and leaving the union, but Europeans are concerned that if the European Union collapses, it might lead to wars or severe conflicts over borders and national interests. The events that the more destructive far-right movements brought up in World War II have not been forgotten. Europeans are aware of the potential threat of far-right nationalism.

Therefore, in your opinion, have far-right extremists not reached a point where they would be a threat to the European Union?

Britain was one of the important countries in the European Union, and perhaps no one thought that London would one day leave the union. Nevertheless, the Brexit happened. So, another country may leave the EU in the future as well.

Despite the successes that the European Union has had, it is facing the reality that its 27 member states are feeling less and less motivated to stay in it. If the economic, military, and security conditions of European countries deteriorate, motivation to stay in the union naturally decrease. For example, Eastern European countries, which joined the union later and have geographical proximity to Russia, have security concerns. Although the European Union is an independent, influential economic superpower in the world, it is militarily and security-wise dependent on NATO and especially the United States. Ultimately, at present, there is no serious threat to the unity of Europe, but nevertheless, the European Union deals with internal challenges.

We are superior, so we kill

Israel worst case of right-wing extremism



By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

The successes of far-right extremists in elections in various European countries have sparked concerns among governments and the public across the continent. In a report, BBC Persian described the victory of the far-right Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, led by Geert Wilders, as a seismic event in Europe.

Previously, the far-right successfully formed a government in Italy. In France, the far-right strengthened its social base, with their candidate reaching the second round in the presidential elections, although facing defeat against Emmanuel Macron. Far-right or extremist nationalists in several other European countries have also achieved success. However, a significant portion of Europe, especially its public opinion, is worried about the rise of the far-right.

According to Abolqasem Delfi, former Iranian ambassador to France, Belgium, and Serbia, and Mehdi Zakerian, an international relations expert, Europeans are concerned about the supremacist and racist views of the far-right, which historically

contributed to World War II, the deadliest war in history. Statistics indicate that nearly 80 million people lost their lives during that war or later due to its consequences.

Far-right extremists advocate for harsh policies, particularly the expulsion of immigrants or the imposition of stricter restrictions against them. Far-right thinking is founded on emphasizing or considering one's race, language, culture, and national identity as superior. These thoughts are so narrow-minded that some far-right individuals in Europe went as far as demanding an exit from the European Union, rejecting the collective nature of the entity called Europe.

The Holocaust was the most heinous record of supremacist actions. Incidentally, the regime that claims it is securing the interests of Jews worldwide has turned into a clear manifestation of supremacist ideology. In fact, European concerns about the dangers of far-right extremists have reached greater heights in the case of Palestine. Presently, the Israeli regime's cabinet serves as a gathering place for far-right extremists led by Benjamin Netanyahu, and, according to some of its officials, is racism incarnate.



Polish far-right nationalists carry a banner with the White Power symbol at a march to mark Polish independence in Warsaw, Poland, on November 11, 2023. The banner reads: "Guardians of Independence".
REUTERS

