

Italy Has A Far-Right Government, But The Real Danger Of Fascism Exists In The US



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At the present historical juncture, the danger of European societies becoming fascist is far less than the one facing the United States.

The victory of Giorgia Meloni's far-right coalition in Italy's election is yet the starkest evidence of the dramatic consequences that the neoliberal policies of the European Union (EU) are having on the member states. Indeed, the return of old demons in Italy and the spread of far-right movements and parties across Europe are directly linked to the reactionary economic dogmas and shallow integration strategies pursued by the euro masters in Brussels and Frankfurt.

Let me explain.

Following the end of World War II, certain visionary leaders in France and Germany proceeded with the creation of structures and institutions beyond the nation-state to ensure that Europeans would finally put an end to their favorite pastime: bloody warfare. This was the logic behind the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC), which was founded by the [Treaty of Rome](#) in 1957. It was a rather noble undertaking, and one that managed to build solid alliances among historical enemies that have lasted longer than any other time in European history, although other factors, such as the Cold War, played a significant role in the long period of peace that ensued in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

However, the EEC evolved over time into something beyond a regional trade regime with respect for democracy, national sovereignty and social rights. It was transformed into a corporate entity driven by the relentless desire to subjugate labor to the whims of capital and to impose "economic efficiency" in the

management of the welfare state through the gradual transfer of power from the demos to non-elected officials in Brussels. Ultimately, this vision was materialized with the [Maastricht Treaty](#) in 1992, the foundation treaty of the European Union. The Maastricht Treaty also paved the way for the creation of a single currency, but without putting into place a federal system of government.

In this sense, rather than being unique, the EU is in fact an oddity—a Frankenstein-like creation. With the adoption of a single currency, in particular, the space for national economic policymaking was severely constrained and, in the absence of a federal government, austerity became almost by default, an integral component of the new European political economy, providing a perfect match to labor flexibility and other anti-social reform measures—privatization, the commodification of health and education, pension reform—all of which are geared toward the marketization of society. Full employment, which prior to the creation of the EU political parties of all persuasion took seriously, was ditched in favor of flexible labor markets and equality was left to the “logic” of the market forces themselves.

The so-called “flawed” architecture of the EU was not due to oversight or technical errors. It stemmed from the very premises of the fundamental neoliberal dogmas that guided the mindset of the European economic elites and their corporate and financial allies. European policymakers had become obsessed with the belief that the critical variables for growth were to be found in trade openness and competition, deep financial integration, and the removal of all restrictions on capital movements. They understood very well that these were the conditions that would pave the way to more efficient business operations, lower unit labor costs, and increase profit margins for Europe’s multinational corporations.

Indeed, the Europeanization process that has been unleashed since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty is completely alien to the traditional vision of a social and democratic Europe, creating in the process fertile soil for the growth of authoritarian leaders who promise to take power away from the global elites, re-establish the supremacy of the nation-state, and return to the traditional social order in which national homogeneity and family values reign supreme.

It is due to the unsettling effects of the EU’s neoliberal policies that voters on the continent have shifted dramatically to the right, even in traditionally social democratic nations like Sweden and Finland, especially since the socialist and

social-democratic parties have abandoned any pretext of caring about the working class and have in fact been carrying out the mission of a neoliberal EU.

The euro crisis of 2010 brought to surface all the structural weakness of the EU and intensified the realignment of European voters over both social and cultural issues, with conservative and outright reactionary political parties and movements gaining the upper hand virtually throughout the continent, with Greece being a rare exception. But even in the land that founded democracy, the experiment with a “leftist” government was short-lived after [Syriza](#) engaged in a gigantic betrayal of the clear mandate that it had to shred into pieces the bailout agreements and do away with EU’s sadistic austerity measures.

The electoral victory of Brothers of Italy, led by Giorgia Meloni, a longtime admirer of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, comes therefore as no surprise. It is the price representative democracies are paying for allowing themselves to be controlled by outside forces with little if any political legitimacy. Indeed, lest we forget, the signing of the Maastricht Treaty was one of the most undemocratic procedures in the history of modern Europe. It was signed by presidents and prime ministers without any popular input, let alone consent.

Make no mistake about it. It is the undemocratic nature and the neoliberal policies of the European Union that are responsible for the revival of European fascism. And it is not just in Italy that the far-right has come to power. In Spain, the far-right also holds a share of power. Moreover, today’s conservatives in Europe have no objection working with the far-right in order to come to power. The cabinet of the current conservative government in Greece has scores of ministers who have had close ideological and political ties with the far-right.

Still, at the present historical juncture, the danger of European societies becoming fascist is far less than the one facing the United States. Europe’s multiparty systems make it difficult for any given party to gain clear majority support, thus political parties have to work in a coalition. Giorgia Meloni’s far-right Brothers of Italy won 26 percent of the vote, but both the anti-immigration League Party of Matteo Salvini and the right-wing Forza Italia party of former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi secured far less votes than they did in 2018. Italy’s far-right coalition did secure a clear majority in parliament but with less than 44 percent of the popular vote.

In the light of this and given that Italy will remain a member of the EU and of the eurozone, one should not expect to see radical changes in the way the new government will conduct itself on both the domestic and international fronts. Meloni has already indicated that her government will rule for all Italians. In practical terms, what this means is that her government will seek to ingratiate itself with both the business class and average citizens. According to the joint program of the coalition partners, Meloni's government will reduce taxes for business, families, and the self-employed alike, and use a greater portion of the \$200 billion euros that has been allotted to Italy by the EU's recovery plan in the wake of the Covid pandemic to support social programs. Unlike the far-right in the U.S., Europe's far-right parties favor certain aspects of the social state.

On the foreign policy front, Meloni's government will surely remain an obedient servant to EU rules and regulations, while making occasional noises about EU reform, will support NATO and its policies towards Ukraine, while backing initiatives for a peaceful solution to the conflict, but will most likely impose stricter border controls as immigration was a big component of Meloni's campaign.

Italy's far-right coalition has also said that it will fight against discrimination, including anti-Semitism, but will take a hard stance on Muslim fundamentalism.

There is nothing in the above policies that distinguishes Meloni's far-right government from the conservative governments in place today in other European countries.

Indeed, it's been rumored that outgoing prime minister Mario Draghi, who had also served as European Central Bank President, personally vouched for Giorgia Meloni to the euro masters. This is quite possible, and, in fact, it is highly unlikely that Italy's new prime minister will rock the boat. If she does, one of the coalition partners (most probably Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia) will most likely walk away and her government will collapse.

In this regard, [the celebrations on the part of the Trumpist camp](#) in the U.S. for the election of Giorgia Meloni may prove to be premature. Italy's far-right government does represent a clear setback for social and political progress, but the neo-fascist vision that inspires today's GOP isn't about to take form or shape in Italy. Both domestic (bureaucracy, organized labor, left-wing parties) and

external (EU) constraints will ensure that this doesn't happen.

Are we sure that such constraints exist in the "land of the free and the home of the brave" to prevent far-right extremism from destroying what is left of American democracy?

Source:

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/09/30/italy-has-far-right-government-real-danger-fascism-exists-us>

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