

## **20. A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON POLITICAL MAJORITIES AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRESSIVE POLICIES - AGAINST THE GRAND COALITIONS**

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Since the neoliberal turn in western societies in the 1980s and 1990s the political systems in Europe have increasingly moved towards grand coalitions. While disagreeing on many social issues from women's rights or migration to LGBTIQ and environmental policies, there has been a broad agreement on the main direction of the development of the political economy in the European Union, in Europe and the world in general. This consensus on the focus of national competitiveness has been marked by stagnating or falling (real) wages, tax cuts and loopholes for multinational companies as well as the transformation of the welfare state. We have seen increasing deregulation of the financial sector, and the horrible outcome of said deregulation in shape of the crisis of 2008 and the human suffering caused by it. What we also witnessed was deindustrialisation of Europe following free trade agreements and the logic of competitiveness.

These developments were not imposed on the European peoples by conservative majorities - they are a result of socialist, social democratic and labour parties' joining of hands with conservatives (and liberals) on these economic issues - forming the grand coalition.

### **Political majorities in the age of austerity**

Aside from the coalitions in Parliament, it is also the task of social-democratic and socialist parties to have attention for what is happening in the streets and in civil society, the place our parties originate from. Our common struggle against neoliberal policies and austerity is more than just a parliamentary one. It is the essential task of a progressive and leftist party to hold into account the living conditions and interests of the working class.

After a strong phase in the early 2000s with a majority of countries of the EU having left-leaning governments, the implementation of neoliberal policies by our political family has led to the conservative comeback we can witness today. They now control all of the European Union's major positions.

We must not allow ourselves to be blackmailed by the conservatives over and over again, but instead formulate a political alternative. The crisis of 2008 and its aftermath has given rise to new political formations on the left and on the right, as well as developments in the established parties. Portugal can show us how to proceed here. Against all defamation and red scare, social democracy has joined hands with the left block and the democratic unity front, to fight the austerity policies of the old conservative governments and the EU.

While acknowledging, that there is a lot that separates different parties on the left, it is today more important than ever, to look for and find common ground and work towards building alternative political visions and majorities that can tackle austerity and create an economy that works for everyone not just the superrich.