

The Ongoing Surge of Europe's Far-Right: What It Means for Ukraine's Security

In recent years, Europe has witnessed a notable shift in political lines, with at least six European governments — Italian, Dutch, Finnish, Austrian, Swedish, Croatian — leaning toward more right-wing policies. May it signal a potential redefinition of the continent's political landscape?

The right-wing wave sweeping over Europe: glowing examples

In 2022, the Italian government faced a crisis that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Mario Draghi and dissolution of the parliament. In early elections radical right-wing party Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), with Georgia Meloni as its leader, won an absolute majority of the seats. Meloni's administration has been [described](#) as the "most right-wing" government in Italy since World War 2.

In July 2023, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's fourth cabinet collapsed, leading to snap parliamentary elections in which the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) won 37 of the 150 seats. PVV, led by [Geert Wilders](#), was [described](#) as "one of the biggest political upsets in Dutch politics since World War 2," as Wilders is best known for his anti-immigration viewpoints, opposition to Islam, and hard Euroscepticism.

As the rights gain momentum, Europe's liberals face fading public trust. Can be voters frustrated with the governments' lasting neglect of economic and social domestic issues and EU's capacity to address strategic security challenges?

What's fueling far-right upsurge and fading liberal endeavor?

Among the reasons driving voters away from liberal governments may be traditional left-wing priorities that can negatively affect the lives of common people today. These include prioritizing adherence to international agreements and partnerships, advancing development aid and fair integration within the EU, supporting social programs for immigrants, and, more recently, providing significant financial and military aid packages to Ukraine in the wake of Russia's invasion. The commitment to international solidarity often diverges with peoples' desire for governments to focus on economic stability, especially due to the energy crisis as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war and sanctions imposed on Russia. Starting in late 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, the situation was exacerbated after the beginning of the war, particularly in countries heavily reliant on Russian energy supplies, causing high inflation, soaring energy prices, rising housing costs, and stagnating wages. Furthermore, policies on asylum, integration, and social programs for immigrants have faced resistance from some of the EU citizens. The past 3 years have also highlighted divisions over Europe's approach to maintaining the continent's long-term [security](#). Those who believe Europe needs to take a more assertive stance in securing its borders and interests have criticized the reliance on NATO and the EU's slow-paced development of its defense capabilities. Many voters believe such reliance has also eroded national sovereignty, leaving their countries stuck to rules and decisions developed in Brussels. This belief is leading to a rise in Euroscepticism and notion that states' national prosperity is fading into the background in favor of broader global commitments.

All those developments led to political turbulence in several countries where we witnessed resignations of state leaders, collapses of ruling coalitions, or dissolutions of parliaments. Voters' frustration has been successfully used by right-wing parties in their promise to cherish national interests and deliver apparent benefits to ordinary citizens.

How the right-wing challenge the status quo

PVV repeatedly argued for Dutch withdrawal from the eurozone and EU (calling it “[Nexit](#)”) and stated that EU membership does not financially benefit the Dutch taxpayers and jeopardizes the domestic decision-making, democracy, and sovereignty. Still, the PVV [paused](#) its appeals for Nexit to achieve more favorable negotiations with partners during the 2023-2024 cabinet formation.

The same goes for the Brother of Italy, who aimed to transfer more sovereignty to European nations, as in the Confederation model, and amending Italy's constitution to prioritize Italian law over European law. The party eventually abandoned [Euroceptic](#) line during the election to win over voters.

As for war, solidarity with Ukraine is still widely upheld as a moral and strategic principle. Before the Russian full-scale invasion, Wilders attitude to Putin was regarded as positive, mainly in the context of cooperation against Islamic terrorism. He has kept a neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine war since 2014 and opposed Ukrainian membership in the EU. Since February 24, 2022, the PVV voted to [condemn](#) the invasion and called for an end to Russian aggression, but still expressed some [criticism](#) on the extent of Dutch military support, calling for an exclusively diplomatic solution to the conflict.

Brothers of Italy has similarly [condemned](#) the invasion at the very beginning and promised to send arms to Ukraine, although previously maintaining better relations with Russia. During the war, Meloni managed to move the party towards Atlantism.

A test for Ukraine’s closest European partners: political upheavals in France and Germany

In June 2024, President Emmanuel Macron [dissolved](#) the National Assembly due to the victory of the French far-right National Rally (NR) party in the European Parliament election in France. In snap election The New Popular Front — a broad left-wing alliance — gained 180 seats, and National Rally became third. However, [Marine Le Pen](#) — the party’s former leader and daughter of its founder, Jean-Marie Le Pen — together with NR’s current president, Jordan Bardella, significantly impacted French citizens, causing political turmoils inside the country.

The party historically criticizes the European Union, aims at revision of its treaties, reformation of customs borders, and decision-making framework within the organization. It argues that French laws should have primacy over EU laws. Although speaking out against the European Union, Jordan Bardella [removed](#) the point that France leave the Eurozone and the EU from the party's manifesto during the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. The National Rally believes the war in Ukraine has been provoked by the United States (as well as the Revolution of Dignity in late 2014). Marine Le Pen has been considered to have close [ties](#) with Vladimir Putin for years. Therefore, the party opposes anti-Russian feelings, sanctions against Russia, and claims that Europe has succumbed to Washington’s interests. However, Le Pen supported sending non-lethal defensive aid to Ukraine but not heavy [weapons](#), as she believes it may directly involve France in war. Bardella has repeatedly expressed [support](#) for defense equipment, ammunition, and logistical assistance to Ukraine but maintained opposition to providing long-range missiles or deploying French soldiers on the Ukrainian ground. He is also opposed to Ukrainian NATO membership.

Macron’s decision to dissolve the National Assembly was a risky resort to counter the rising influence of the far-right and an attempt to overcome the legislative deadlock. Nevertheless, the National Rally’s impact may be visible as a part of a more considerable far-right force in the European Parliament and amid the increasing popularity of right parties among EU voters.

In Germany state elections, which have already taken place in 2024 in Thuringia and Saxony, the far-right Alternative for Germany ([AfD](#)) party came first and second respectively.

This year Germany has also witnessed domestic political turmoil. On 16 December 2024, a vote of confidence to the ruling government of chancellor Olaf Scholz was lost. This situation hardened the German government [crisis](#), which started from the chancellor's dismissal of Christian Lindner — then-minister of finance and leader of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) — from his cabinet as a result of disputes in the three-party coalition. It caused the collapse of the alliance, and the FDP moved into the opposition. Snap federal elections will take place in February 2025, with reportedly a big chance Olaf Scholz losing the election.

The gaining momentum AfD is now calling for a return of powers from Brussels and more hardline policies against the EU collective decision-making. It opposes Western policy towards Russia and highlights its impacts on Germany, particularly energy challenges. AfD considers the Russia-Ukraine war an internal countries matter and that Germany should not get involved in it. In 2023, AfD politicians reportedly [got paid](#) by Moscow to initiate a constitutional complaint in Germany against the [supplies](#) of weapons for Ukraine. AfD delegates [boycotted](#) Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in June 2024 when he gave a speech to the Bundestag. The AfD has [called](#) anti-Russian stance detrimental to Germany's interests and appealed for distancing from the United States.

The rise of far-right across Europe marks a significant shift in the continent's political dynamics and poses certain challenges to Ukraine. Concerns over more restrained support could hinder Europe's unified stance on countering Russian aggression. However, it seems that the right are finally speaking loud what voters have been afraid to say for recent years. They use frustration of people and offer alternatives. The younger people are becoming more active in voting as they concern about whether they will be able to have a family, house, medical care, and other social goods. EU's steadfast support for Ukraine has strained national economies. Therefore, for many citizens, prioritizing international solidarity has triggered discontent and a desire to back those who promise to put "national interests first."

Solidarity keeps Europe united despite political turmoils

Although the nationalist agendas are at the hearing today, Ukraine continues to get sustained support from key European leaders who remain firm in their commitment to preserving Ukraine's sovereignty. For them such a political shift [signals](#) a need for more proactive diplomacy to maintain alliances, shared values, and remind European citizens of the importance of Ukraine's stability for broader European security.

Through President Macron, France has demonstrated an unwavering support despite the rising influence of far-right. His leadership has been crucial in consolidating and urging European states to provide more actively significant military aid to Ukraine. Although risky, Macron's dissolution of the National Assembly showed his [intent](#) to prevent further disruption of France's international commitments, especially to Ukraine. Furthermore, the National Rally remains constrained in pushing for drastic policy pivots while Macron remains in power.

In Italy, Giorgia Meloni's government demonstrates a fascinating contradiction. While her Brothers of Italy party historically embraced a more nationalist line, Meloni became one of Europe's most vocal supporters of Ukraine. She has managed tensions with some party members, like [Matteo Salvini](#), who had closer ties to Russia and opposed sanctions and arms supplies. She ensured that Italy maintained a pro-Ukraine stance with no chance of undermining her policy. Her government has consistently sent arms and called for tougher sanctions against Russia, aligning closely with [NATO](#) and EU allies. In particular, the country collaborated with France to provide air [defense systems](#) and freeze Russian assets.

In Germany, the rise of AfD in regional elections and could be a signal of potential threats. However, [Friedrich Merz](#), who will likely succeed Olaf Scholz as German Chancellor, offers reassurance. Merz has consistently [supported](#) military aid to Ukraine and advocates for a firm European defense policy. His potential leadership could stabilize Germany's role as a reliable partner for Ukraine, particularly in countering Russian influence.

In the Netherlands, the unexpected victory of Geert Wilders' party raises concerns. However, leader's softened tone on the EU during coalition negotiations suggests pragmatism may prevail over entrenched party ideology. Moreover, [Dick Schoof](#), the new prime minister, an independent candidate with ties to more centrist values, is likely to balance the government's foreign policy. Moreover, the Dutch public and political establishment, like Defense minister [Ruben Brekelmans](#) and Foreign Minister [Caspar Veldkamp](#), favor Ukraine.

Despite today's diverse European political environment, it is essential to recognize that even far-right face constraints when it comes to radically altering foreign policy. Moral values and strategic vision, paired with EU institutions and NATO commitments, in many countries still act as stabilizing factors. While the political winds in Europe may be shifting, the shared recognition of Ukraine's importance for European security possesses a crucial power.