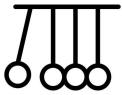


TURKEY'S UNHEARD VOICES

# **The Rightward Shift: Europe's Political Realignment in the 21st Century**

**POLITICS**

**Kaan Can Köseku**



## European Parliament

The 2024 European Parliament election was held within the European Union to elect a total of 720 members in order to represent more than 450 million Europeans across all 27 member states between the 6 and 9th of June 2024. Even though The European People's Party led by Ursula von der Leyen won the most seats in the Parliament, the pro-EU centrist, liberal, social democrat and environmentalist parties suffered losses, anti-EU right-wing populist parties made huge gains. The right-wing European Conservative Conservatives and Reformists group overtook the left-wing Renew Europe party and won the fourth most seats with 78 seats in the parliament. Another right-wing party, Patriots for Europe won the third most seats in the parliament with 84 seats. In addition a new far-right party was formed called European of Sovereign Nations. Even though it held the smallest number of seats it still held 25 seats. In total, 187 Members of the European Parliament (26% of Parliament) belonged to the right parties, which is more members than ever before in history.

## Austria

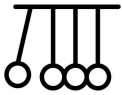
Austrian Legislative Elections were held on the 29th of September 2024 to elect the 28th National Council. The far-right Freedom Party of Austria secured first place, winning 28.8% of the vote. This election was the first time a far-right party to win the legislative elections after World War 2. The centre-left Social Democratic Party won just 21.2% marking its worst result ever in terms of percentages and rank occupied as they came in third. The right-wing Freedom Party of Austria campaigned under the slogan "Fortress Austria - Closing Borders, Guaranteeing Security." which clearly shows their political stance.

## Portugal

Portugal's elections were held on the 10th of March to elect all 230 members of the Assembly of the Republic. No party achieved an absolute majority of seats however the centre-right Democratic Alliance won 80 seats. Closely followed by the left-wing Socialist Party which considerably failed, losing the majority they gained in 2022. The election also resulted in the surge of the right-wing populist Chega party as the third party with the most seats. This election being the third in three years for Portuguese voters, marked a historic rightward shift.

## Poland

In June 2025, Karol Nawrocki, a conservative nationalist won the presidential election. In a victory for European conservatives inspired by U.S. President Donald Trump,



Nawrocki secured 50.89% of the vote. Though being narrow still the right candidate secured the win.

## The Netherlands

Early general elections were held in the Netherlands on the 22nd of November 2023 to elect the members of the House of Representatives. The elections had been expected to be held in 2025, but a snap election was called. In what was described as "one of the biggest political upsets in Dutch politics since World War II", the right-wing populist Party for Freedom(PVV), led by Geert Wilders, won 37 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives, becoming the largest party for the first time. All four parties of the incumbent coalition government suffered losses.

## Italy

The 2022 Italian general election was held on the 25th of September to elect all 400 chambers of deputies. The centre-right Brothers of Italy party won the elections with 119 seats. The centre-right parties overcame the centre-left parties by having 230 total seats and the centre-left party having only 84 seats. Nearly a third of the seats were won by the centre-right parties.

## France

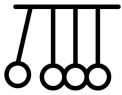
Legislative elections were held in France on the 30th of June and the 7th of July 2024 to elect all 577 members of the 17th National Assembly of the Fifth French Republic. In the first round of elections the right-wing party National Rally (RN) secured 33.21% of the vote becoming the party with the largest percentage.

## Germany

Germany has the largest economy and is the largest member of the European Union, making them one of the driving forces of Europe. With a dark and far-right past, Germany is one of the most dangerous countries to be ruled by a far-right party. Unfortunately that nightmare may come true, which raises the question: "Is history deemed to repeat itself?"

The 2025 German Elections:

Federal Elections of Germany were held on 23th of February to elect the 630 members of the 21st Bundestag which is Germany's parliament. The election took place seven months ahead of schedule due to the 2024 collapse of the incumbent governing coalition. This was the fourth early election in post-war German history, and the first since



2005. With 208 members in the parliament the union party of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU) came in first place. And the Social Democratic Party of Germany, the last government (2021-2024) came in third place with 120 members in the parliament, decreasing from 206 members in the last elections. The surprising factor here is that the far-right AfD Party came in second right after CDU/CSU. By increasing their members in the parliament by 69 members, they secured 152 members in the parliament. They were fifth in the last election and with nearly a %50 percent increase they came in second this election.

## The AfD Party

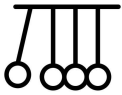
Alternative for Germany is a party founded in 2013, an anti-European Union party in response to the European Union's handling of the Eurozone financial crisis. Initially, the party's main purpose was to oppose the EU, particularly in economic policies and advocate for more anti-global and nationalist positions. However, over the years the party became an extremist, far-right party with anti-immigrant, anti-Islam, anti-NATO, anti-American views. As stated in its name this party serves as a far-right, extremist alternative to the German Parliament for people who feel isolated by mainstream political parties and their views on the economy and immigration. According to a 2023 report by the German Institute for Human Rights AfD's aim is "to eliminate the free democratic basic order,". The German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz or BfV), its domestic intelligence agency which monitors extremist threats to Germany's democracy, has listed AfD as an officially suspected extremist organization and classified its youth wing, "Young Alternative," as extremists in April 2023. Also, The Central Council of Jews in Germany, describes AfD as an "extremist party" that "embodies Nazi ideals,"

### Policies of the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland):

The AfD promotes strict anti-immigration policies. These include rejecting asylum applications, promoting "remigration" initiatives that deport foreign nationals, and cutting government spending on refugees. The party supports what it calls "negative immigration," which involves returning refugees in Germany to their countries of origin and removing constitutional rights that allow foreigners to seek asylum in Germany.

The AfD also seeks to restrict the influence of Islam in Germany. As the party holds strong anti-Muslim views—particularly targeting Syrian migrants who are predominantly Muslim—in 2016, it called for a ban on what it termed "Islamic symbols of power." This included minarets, public calls to prayer, and full-body veils.

Additionally, the AfD takes a strong anti-American and anti-EU stance, instead favoring closer ties with authoritarian regimes in the East, such as China and Russia. For example, in April 2024, an assistant to an AfD parliamentarian was accused of spying for China's Ministry of State Security. That same month, lead AfD candidate Maximilian Krah



was found to have received secret payments from both Russia and China. Another candidate, Petr Bystron, allegedly accepted €20,000 to promote pro-Russian propaganda.

Other AfD policies include major economic reforms, such as abandoning the euro and reintroducing the German mark, withdrawing from NATO, and reversing Germany's energy transition by dismantling wind turbines and returning to nuclear energy.

### Links to Nazi Ideology:

The party has repeatedly faced accusations of promoting or downplaying Nazi ideology. Björn Höcke, the AfD leader in Thuringia, has twice been fined for using banned Nazi slogans, including “Everything for Germany” (“Alles für Deutschland”), a motto of the Nazi SA. Alexander Gauland, AfD co-founder and former leader, has trivialized the Holocaust by calling Hitler and the Nazis “just a speck of bird poop in over 1,000 years of successful German history.” He also stated in 2017 that Germans should be “proud of the achievements of German soldiers in both world wars.”

While modern Germany is committed to confronting and distancing itself from its Nazi past, the AfD seems to show pride in aspects of it. The party has even threatened to deport German citizens of non-ethnic German background—such as Turks—despite their long-standing residence in the country.

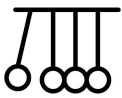
### Elon Musk's Support:

Elon Musk, who serves as a U.S. presidential advisor on government efficiency, has openly expressed support for the AfD and other right-wing politicians in Europe. Former German Chancellor Olaf Scholz condemned Musk's endorsement, calling it “disgusting.” On January 20, 2025, during a rally celebrating Donald Trump's second inauguration, Musk made a gesture interpreted by many as a Nazi or Roman fascist salute. The act went viral and sparked widespread backlash in the media. As a result, Tesla sales in Germany dropped by 59%, and many Tesla owners began placing stickers on their cars reading, “I bought this before Elon went crazy.”

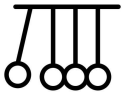
## Conclusion

Europe's political landscape is shifting sharply to the right, driven by growing discontent with centrist politics and rising fears around immigration and the loss of identity. The rise of far-right parties especially in the AfD raises serious concerns about the return of the extremist ideologies which all of the world is familiar with from World War 2. If these trends continue, Europe's risk of repeating the darkest parts of its history will increase day by day. Now more than ever, defending democracy and standing against extremism of any ideology is essential for a brighter future not just for Europe but the World.

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