

Explainer: The European far right and ‘imported antisemitism’

Summary

Far-right political parties are resurgent across Europe, where they are either governing, providing parliamentary support, or polling strongly in [17 European countries](#). Their return to significant political power [has been driven by](#) geopolitical and economic instability, rising mis- and disinformation, and the scapegoating of immigrants and minorities. Liberal, centre-right, and even centre-left political parties have mainstreamed far-right policies and narratives on issues like immigration and community cohesion, accelerating the European far right’s ascendancy.

Europe has experienced major periods of immigration over the past two decades, particularly from Syria, Afghanistan, and other conflict zones. This trend peaked between 2015 and 2016, when German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s decision to welcome over 1 million asylum seekers stood as a high-water mark of pro-migration policy. Capitalising on the visibility of this so-called migrant crisis as well as the internal tensions and economic strains arising from austerity measures, the Covid pandemic, war in Ukraine, and broader regional instability, the European far-right has reframed migration as a primary threat to national identity and security. It then uses this narrative more widely to fuel moral panics that distract from government failings and systemic crises, while justifying repressive border, policing, and deportation regimes.

Far-right figures like the Netherlands’ [Geert Wilders](#) argue that migrants from Middle Eastern and North African countries threaten Jewish communities in Western countries through “imported antisemitism” — the false claim that antisemitic ideas, behaviours, and acts of violence have been introduced into Europe through Muslim or Arab migrants and refugees in recent decades (or, in countries with large postcolonial diaspora communities like the U.K., France, and Belgium, from citizens of former colonies and their descendants). Such claims of so-called imported antisemitism allow far-right actors to minimise or exonerate their own parties’ deadly historical and contemporary “home-grown” antisemitism, all while promoting exclusionary, Islamophobic, and racist policies aimed at surveilling, criminalising, and even deporting Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian populations. A similar line of argument is at work in far-right claims that immigrant communities are [importing homophobia](#), despite the European far right’s [well-documented hostility](#) toward LGBTQIA+ communities.

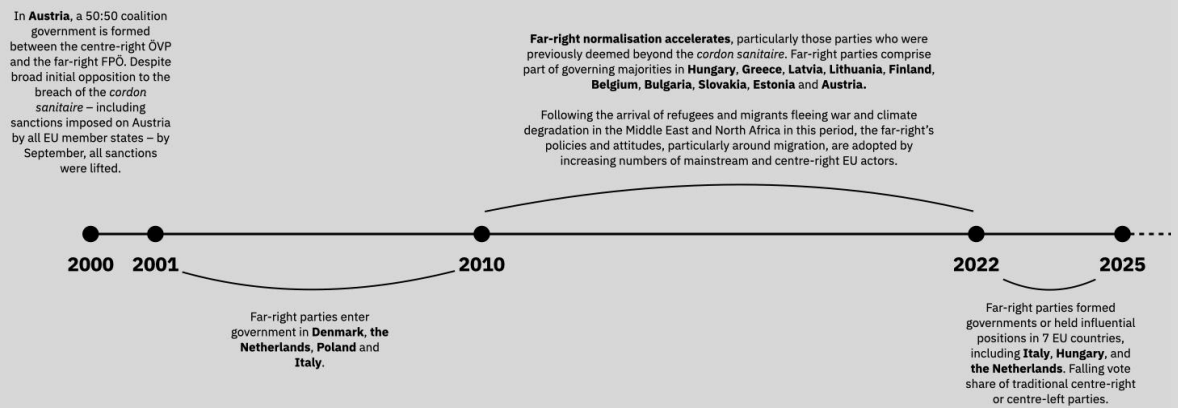
The “imported antisemitism” narrative has underpinned the far-right’s return to political significance, allowing such parties to distance themselves from their own antisemitism by [positioning themselves](#) as supposed defenders of Jews and Jewish life. In so doing, they have been able to gradually dismantle the *cordon sanitaire* that had previously kept the far right and their ideas at the margins of European politics, while also stoking Islamophobia and anti-migrant hostility. Moreover, the anti-democratic and divisive

policies proposed by far-right actors in the name of Jewish safety threaten to provoke popular antisemitism by casting Jews as the face of power and state violence in order to silence dissent.

This trajectory is not inevitable. Understanding and calling out the far right’s bad-faith distortions of antisemitism helps create the conditions for meaningful solidarity and safety, while strengthening efforts to defend civil liberties and democratic institutions. Rejecting narratives that vilify and exaggerate the role of Muslim and Arab communities in the name of fighting antisemitism will allow progressives to forge coalitions capable of confronting antisemitism in line with their own values, while resisting the threats posed to us all by the erosion of asylum rights, freedom of expression, and democratic accountability.

Background

The contemporary far-right has made significant electoral gains since the turn of the millennium.



In addition to countries where the far-right holds majority government power, far-right parties across Europe are also gaining strength in opposition, reshaping political agendas, and eroding democratic norms even without formally governing:

Governing Majorities

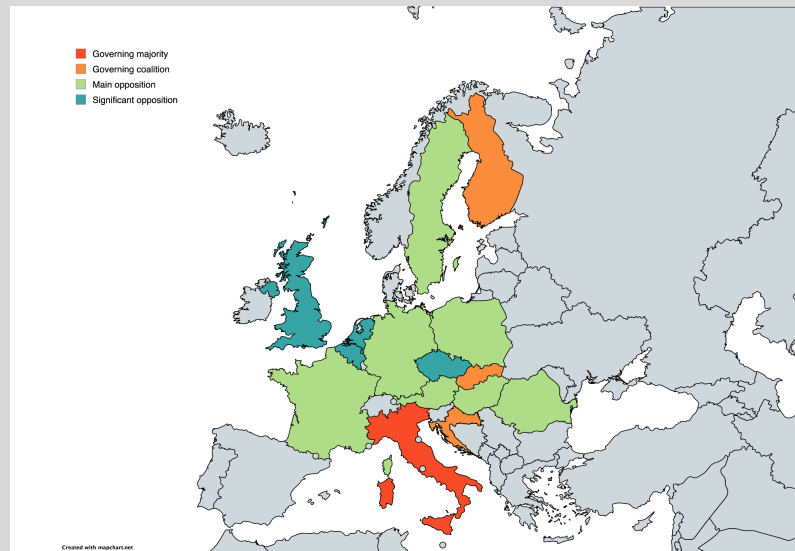
Italy: Since Oct 2022, the Fratelli d’Italia party has formed the government, with PM Giorgia Meloni at the helm. This is the first far-right-led coalition in Italy since WW2.

Governing Coalition

Finland: The far-right Finns Party has been part of the governing coalition since 2023, having placed second in elections.

Slovakia: The Slovak National Party has been part of the governing coalition since 2023.

Croatia: The Homeland Movement (DP) has been part of the governing coalition since 2024.



Main Opposition

France: Although Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) came third in the 2024 legislative elections following the formation of the left-wing Popular Front, RN have the most seats in the National Assembly and continue to poll very strongly ahead of the 2027 presidential elections.

Germany: Alternative for Germany (AfD) became the second-largest party and largest opposition party after the 2025 federal election. The centre-right CDU has previously relied on AfD votes to pass migration legislation, and AfD is poised to gain control of key parliamentary committees.

Poland: The Law and Justice (PiS) party has been in opposition since Donald Tusk's government took power in 2023. The radical Confederation party (KKP), led by Grzegorz Braun, remains outside government, and its future electoral strength is uncertain. In June 2025, Law and Justice's Karol Nawrocki became President of Poland, in part by [relying on votes](#) from Confederation's supporters.

Austria: The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) secured the most votes in the 2024 elections but failed to form a coalition government. FPÖ is now the largest opposition party.

Sweden: Since 2022, the far-right Sweden Democrats have provided confidence and support to the centre-right coalition, as the second largest party in parliament.

Hungary: Following Tisza party's landslide victory in the April 2026 parliamentary elections, Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party, which had held a supermajority in government from 2010, is now in opposition.

Romania: The far-right Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) leads polls at around 35 percent of the vote and is positioning itself to contest for power.

Significant Opposition

The Netherlands: In 2024, the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) entered government for the first time as part of the Schoof cabinet, which later collapsed after PVV withdrew over asylum policy. In the October 2025 elections, PVV won 26 seats, but internal splits have reduced them to 19 seats, leaving them in opposition.

Belgium: Vlaams Belang (VB) continues to exert significant influence, pushing the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) further to the right. VB remains high in the polls.

Czech Republic: While the governing Civic Democratic Party (ODS) holds the majority, the far-right Freedom and Direct Democracy party (SPD) remains a vocal opposition force, aligned with other European far-right movements like AfD and RN, though it is not currently polling as strongly.

United Kingdom: Reform UK received 14.3 percent of the voting share in the UK's 2024 election, though this didn't translate into proportional gains in Parliament. [Recent polling](#) predicts that Reform UK would be the main opposition challenger in a future UK election.

Key argument A **Far-right parties are returning to power across Europe through strategic alliances and narrative agenda-setting that have mainstreamed once-extremist positions.**

The far-right's influence is visible not only through its increased political power, but also through its role in reshaping the political centre.

- Through a combination of electoral strategising and cross-party policy alliances, far-right parties have shifted political norms by making ideas that were once radical – like so-called remigration or blanket bans on asylum – appear to be acceptable, everyday political discourse.
 - Far-right parties like Austria's FPÖ [advocate for](#) “remigration policies” that advance deportation of migrants deemed not to have integrated sufficiently into European culture. Such ideas have also been adopted by centre or centre-right figures, such as then-chancellor of Germany [Olaf Scholz](#) and U.K. Conservative leader [Kemi Badenoch](#).
 - In the Netherlands in 2025, the governing coalition – which included the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) – eventually broke down over the refusal of the centre-right parties to absorb PVV's extreme migration demands into government policy. In the subsequent elections, the overall share of far-right parties in parliament rose, while PVV's key anti-immigration messaging was [adopted](#) by parties across the political spectrum.
- Far-right parties have forged official and unofficial alliances with centre-right parties, which increasingly [rely on their support](#) to form coalitions or pass legislation – especially around migration and national security.
 - In Germany, the centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) relied on the far-right AfD's votes to pass new asylum legislation in 2024, breaking the “[firewall](#)” that was intended to keep far-right parties isolated.
- The boundaries between far-right and centre-right (and [in some cases](#), centre-left) parties have become increasingly blurred.
 - These shifts are part of what political scientist [Cas Mudde](#) calls the “fourth wave” of the postwar far right: a period marked by the far-right's mainstreaming, globalisation, and increasing heterogeneity (whereby different parties follow different strategies and models to rise to prominence).
 - Mudde [explains](#) how in many European countries, the idea of “the people” is now implicitly imagined in terms of the far-right voter, and who counts as a legitimate part of “the nation” is increasingly defined by far-right criteria of ethnicity, gender and cultural identity. This reorientation shapes which ideas are considered politically legitimate and pertinent – hardline proposals around immigration, asylum, and citizenship that were once

beyond the pale have become mainstream talking points across the political spectrum and in media discourse, fueling public acceptance of increasingly repressive and exclusionary policies.

Key argument B The European far right has deployed the false narrative of “imported antisemitism” to help support its xenophobic and Islamophobic agenda.

The far right has capitalised on the widely-circulated but empirically weak and Islamophobic narrative that “white” Europe has dealt with its antisemitism, and that antisemitism is now chiefly an imported problem originating with Muslim, Arab, and other MENA-background migrants. Data on antisemitism from across Europe doesn’t support the argument that the majority of antisemitic acts are committed by Muslims or MENA migrants. Instead, antisemitic beliefs and acts of violence most commonly originate from home-grown, far-right actors.

- The French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights’ (CNCDH)’s [2024 report](#) found that although antisemitic attitudes were on the rise among the far left, French Muslims, and those of non-European descent, the vast majority of antisemitism in France originated from non-Muslims, those with European ancestry, and particularly those on the right of the political spectrum.
- [Data from the U.K. spanning 2025](#) suggests that where the ethnicity of the offender of an antisemitic incident was reported, 52 percent (by far the largest share) of these offenders were described as being “white (North European)”, over double the proportion of those described as being Arab or North African.
- A [2018 study](#) of Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and the U.K. showed that, while MENA migrant populations do show higher antisemitic attitudes than the wider population, this finding comes with significant caveats. Sample sizes were small; the data did not account for other factors such as class and marginalisation that help explain those attitudes; and MENA migrant and Muslim populations were significantly small enough in each country that they do not meaningfully affect overall figures on antisemitic attitudes. Crucially, the report found these attitudes coexisted with “positive attitudes to democracy, equal rights and peaceful coexistence among Muslims, Christians and Jews” laying bare the essential point that antisemitic attitudes do not determine antisemitic actions. The report clarifies that “antisemitism ... stems from within the majority population and not only or mainly from minorities” – effectively debunking the “imported antisemitism” argument.

The narrative of “imported antisemitism” is a political tool used by far-right actors to justify exclusionary and racist policies, while simultaneously rehabilitating their own antisemitic histories and [absolving Europe](#) of its “home-grown” antisemitism.

- In 2024, Germany [introduced](#) new requirements to assess applicants’ views on Israel’s right to exist when determining whether or not to offer them citizenship.

- In at least 12 EU member states, pro-Palestine protests have been [banned](#) under the guise of preventing antisemitism, while criminalising political expression and [disproportionately policing](#) Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian communities.
- Antisemitism [persists](#) within far-right parties themselves, as revealed when, for example, members of Italian PM Giorgia Meloni’s Frattelli d’Italia youth wing [were recorded](#) making antisemitic remarks and performing the Roman salute in 2024.

Where antisemitic violence is committed by individuals from immigrant backgrounds — including the [assault](#) of the chief rabbi of Orléans and the deadly terror attacks in Manchester and Golders Green — far-right actors exaggerate and [capitalise on these incidents](#), in so doing misrepresenting the broader statistical reality of where antisemitism originates.

- The far right assigns to all Muslims or [all MENA immigrants collective responsibility](#) for terrorism by groups like Islamic State, as a means of justifying policies that target immigrant communities and stoke Islamophobia, while doing little to address the root causes of antisemitism or, indeed, terrorism.

Key argument C The “imported antisemitism” narrative threatens minoritised communities including Jewish communities, but especially Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim communities, while doing little to address rising antisemitism.

Anti-Jewish rhetoric, harassment, and acts of violence are rising in an unstable geopolitical climate. Recent [deadly attacks](#) on [Jewish communities](#) and [synagogues](#) have heightened [fear and social isolation](#) among Jewish communities.

While presenting themselves as defenders of Jewish life, far-right actors, and centrist or liberal figures who adopt their framing, exploit the fears of Jewish communities to legitimise [violence](#), [bigotry](#), and [discrimination](#) against other minoritised groups — particularly immigrants, Arabs, Muslims, and Palestinians, who already bear the brunt of repression, criminalisation, and surveillance infrastructures.

- These repression strategies on the one hand deepen Islamophobia and anti-migrant hostility, and on the other cast Jews as the face of power and state violence — which is liable to provoke antisemitic conspiracy theories. At the same time, antisemitism remains [embedded](#) in [far-right movements](#) and is often repackaged in conspiratorial or coded language.

Far-right politicians use the “imported antisemitism” narrative in order to telegraph concerns about Jewish safety as a partial front for dismantling democratic norms. For

example, far-right actors selectively use antisemitism accusations to silence dissent, particularly around European states' complicity in Israel's killing, displacement, and oppression of Palestinians.

- This dynamic has accelerated since October 7, with far-right actors in Europe, as well as [Israel advocates](#) and [Israeli government agencies](#), conflating criticism of Israeli state violence with antisemitism and even [support for terrorism](#). In this context, the “imported antisemitism” narrative can be understood as a xenophobic corollary to the longer-running concept of the “new antisemitism” — a decades-old politicized framing that emphasizes criticism of Israel as a form of antisemitism, and that has been accelerating since the early 2000s.

Key argument D This doesn't have to be destiny: By understanding these tactics, progressives can strengthen their ability to challenge them and address antisemitism in line with their own values, without pitting minority communities against one another.

There is still time to defend democracy and resist the authoritarianism creeping across Europe. The entrenchment of the far right is not a given — it is a political project that can be named, opposed, and reversed.

Building broad-based coalitions that centre solidarity between minoritised communities and reject the far right's divide-and-conquer tactics is an important component of efforts to challenge the far right's appeal. Understanding how mis-/disinformation narratives like “imported antisemitism” are mobilised to justify violence and repression is the first step to challenging their legitimacy.

Against a backdrop of increased xenophobia throughout much of Europe, strengthening progressive analyses of antisemitism and its political misuse will give progressives the analytical clarity and tools needed to challenge discourses of “imported antisemitism” in public debate, counter far-right framing in policy discussions, and advance alternative approaches to confronting antisemitism that prioritise the fundamental rights of all people.

Challenging the far right demands an active refusal of its narratives, solidarity across communities, and a defence of pluralism and democratic rights. That includes confronting antisemitism *and* Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism, without allowing the fight against one to be weaponised against or subsumed by the other.

Resources

Giovanna Coi, “[Mapped: Europe's rapidly rising Right](#)”, *Politico*, May 24, 2024

Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de L'Homme, “[Lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la xénophobie: la CNCDH publie son rapport 2024](#)”, June 17, 2025

David Feldman et al., [Antisemitism and Immigration in Western Europe Today: Is there a connection? Findings and recommendations from a five-nation study](#), 2018

Carmen Aguilar Garcia et al., [“How rightwing rhetoric has risen sharply in the UK parliament – an exclusive visual analysis”](#), *The Guardian*, February 25, 2026

Filipe Henriques, [“2000-2024: A short history of the European far-right...so far”](#), *EUObserver*, June 7, 2024

Jewish Policy Research, [“Two years after the October 7 attacks: British Jewish views on antisemitism, Israel and Jewish life”](#), October 6, 2025

Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today*, Polity, 2019

Esra Özyürek, *Subcontractors of Guilt: Holocaust Memory and Muslim Belonging in Postwar Germany*, Stanford University Press, 2023

Tim Ross, [“Europe’s center is barely holding – and Trump plans to blow it apart”](#), *Politico*, December 12, 2025

Armida van Rij et al., [“How will gains by the far right affect the European Parliament and EU?”](#), *Chatham House*, June 11, 2024

Simon Strick, [“No Wall. Only Fire”](#), *The Diasporist*, February 20, 2025