



ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

AVRUPA'DA AŞIRI SAĞ PARTİLERİN YÜKSELİŞİ VE GÖÇ
POLİTİKALARINA ETKİLERİ

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Öz

Göç, son yıllarda Avrupanın siyasi gündeminde giderek daha belirgin bir yer edinmiştir. Bu durum, özellikle aşırı sağcı partilerin yükselişiyle doğrudan ilişkilidir; bu partiler, Avrupa genelinde göç politikalarının şekillenmesinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Fransa'da Ulusal Birlik ve Almanya'da Alternatif için Alternatif (AfD) gibi partiler, medyada göçmen karşıtı söylemler kullanarak, ciddi bir seçim başarısı elde etmiştir. Hollanda, Avusturya ve İtalya'nın yanın da neredeyse tüm önemli ülkelerde bu eğilimi destekleyen örnekler arasında yer almaktadır. Bu durum Avrupa siyasetinde göçmen karşıtı söylem ve politikaların toplum üzerindeki etkisini açıkça göstermektedir. Aşırı sağın yükselişi, Avrupa'da sınır kontrollerinin sıkılaşmasına ve göçmenlere karşı güvenlikleştirici politikaların artmasına neden olmaktadır. Bu süreç, Avrupa vatandaşlarının ekonomik ve güvenlik kaygılarıyla beslenmektedir. Örneğin, düşük ücretler ve iş bulmada rekabet, yerel vatandaşların endişelerini artırmaktadır. Ayrıca, terör saldırıları gibi güvenlik tehditleri, halkın göçmenlere yönelik olumsuz tutumunu pekiştirmekte ve bu durum, siyasi arenada göç konusunun daha da ön plana çıkmasına yol açmaktadır. Aşırı sağcı partiler, göç konusunu sürekli gündeme getirerek ana akım partilerin politikalarını şekillendirmekte ve bu partilerin sağa kaymasında belirleyici bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu 'kayma', çoğu durumda, göçmenlere yönelik daha sert ve kısıtlayıcı politikaların benimsenmesi ile sonuçlanmaktadır. Bu çalışma Avrupa'daki aşırı sağ partilerin göç politikaları üzerindeki etkisini ve bu etkinin ülkelerin iç politikaları üzerindeki dinamik değişimleri detaylı bir biçimde analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Aşırı sağcı partilerin seçmen tabanındaki büyüme, toplumsal kamplaşmayı artırmakta ve mevcut politikaların yeniden şekillenmesine neden olmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu süreçlerin, Avrupa'daki sosyal dokunun ve siyasi iklimin nasıl değiştiğini anlamak için derinlemesine incelenmesi gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aşırı Sağ Partiler, Avrupa'da Aşırı Sağ Partiler, Avrupa'da Göçmen Karşıtlığı, Avrupa'da Popülist Partiler, Aşırı Sağ Partilerin Göç Politikaları.

THE RISE OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES IN EUROPE AND THEIR IMPACT ON MIGRATION POLICIES

Abstract

Migration has gained an increasingly prominent place on the European political agenda in recent years. This is directly related to the rise of far-right parties, which play an important role in shaping migration policies across Europe. Parties such as the National Union in France and the Alternative for Alternative (AfD) in Germany have achieved significant electoral success by utilising anti-immigrant rhetoric in the media. In addition to the Netherlands, Austria, and Italy, almost all major countries support this trend. This situation clearly shows the impact of anti-immigrant discourse and policies in European politics on society. The rise of the far right has led to tighter border controls in Europe and increased securitising policies against migrants. This process is fuelled by the economic and security concerns of European citizens. For instance, low wages and competition for jobs increase the concerns of local citizens. Moreover, security threats, such as terrorist attacks, reinforce the public's negative attitude towards migrants, which leads to the issue of migration becoming more prominent in the political arena. By constantly raising the issue of migration, far-right parties shape the policies of mainstream parties and play a decisive role in shifting them to the right. This 'shift', in most cases, results in the adoption of harsher and more restrictive policies towards migrants. This study aims to analyse in detail the influence of far-right parties in Europe on migration policies and the dynamic changes this influence has on the domestic policies of countries. The growth in the electoral base of far-right parties increases social polarisation and leads to a reshaping of existing policies. Therefore, these processes need to be analysed in depth to understand how the social fabric and political climate in Europe are changing.

Keywords: Far-Right Parties, Far-Right Parties in Europe, Anti-Immigration in Europe, Populist Parties in Europe, Migration Policies of Far-Right Parties

INTRODUCTION

Far-right groups deliberately present themselves as defenders of the privileged, using social media tools to reach people dissatisfied with their lives and the governance of their country and bypass established media outlets. The collapse of traditional political groups and fragmented party systems has provided an ideal backdrop for the rise of the far right, offering an alternative to individuals who feel ignored by established political structures.

The influence of far-right parties (FRPs), which have gained immense popularity worldwide in the last 25 years, in European politics varies from country to country. While far-right electoral victories have been achieved in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, in Spain and the United Kingdom, there is still no far-right presence in national legislatures as a candidate for power or active opposition.

Case studies on the impact of the far right on migration policy reveal mixed results. For example, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has largely shaped the debate in Germany, resulting in tougher refugee policies and increased border restrictions. Likewise, the Austrian Freedom Party has influenced international relations by calling for stronger border controls and fewer refugees during the coalition government.

The position of the far right on migration is characterised by a specific rejection of strict border restrictions, cultural preservation and an emphasis on national identity. This nativist position distinguishes them from traditional political groups and their influence is growing as migration becomes more prominent in political debates in Europe.

The growth of far-right parties and their impact on migration concerns are seen as a harbinger of a new era in European politics. The electoral victories of these parties show a shift in political rhetoric fuelled by anti-immigrant anger. While their impact on migration policies varies, the challenge for European democracies is to navigate the complex dance between citizens' concerns and inclusive governance. Understanding the growth of the far right requires a

critical appraisal of historical, social, and political conditions and reveals the threads that weave this complex story in Europe's political fabric.

In European countries, the Far Right's approach to migration is characterized by a fundamental opposition to immigration and is based on a strong advocacy for strict border controls, the preservation of national identity, and the preservation of cultural homogeneity. This nativist ideology contrasts sharply with more traditional political positions that often balance migration with economic, humanitarian, and international obligations. The rise of far-right parties across Europe has significantly impacted the political landscape, largely due to increased migration and the subsequent backlash from segments of the population concerned about economic competition, cultural change, and security issues.

This approach focuses not only on reducing the number of migrants but also on questioning the integration of migrants into European societies. For far-right groups, migration is often framed as a cause of social tension, job loss, and even crime, creating fear in their voter base.

In this study, the literature review method was used and countries such as Germany, France and Italy, where far-right parties are rapidly rising, were selected as examples. The similarities and differences of these countries in the rise of far-right parties are presented in detail. In addition, considering that far-right parties are on the rise not only in these three countries but also in Europe in general, examples from other European countries are also included to support this situation. The reasons behind this situation, how far-right parties affect the general political atmosphere in Europe and how other mainstream parties and even more moderate left parties are shaped by the changes in the discourse on immigration policies are emphasized.

The study first presents the factors that paved the way for the electoral success of far-right parties in Europe. By revealing what these factors are, it also analyses in detail the impact of these parties on migration policies. In particular, it focuses on the concerns of far-right parties about migration and how these concerns have transformed the discourse of other mainstream parties in Europe. It also analyses how the phenomenon of migration has turned into a security issue through the perspectives of far-right parties and how the debates across Europe have been shaped in this context. In this framework, it can be said that the study provides important findings in terms of both understanding the current situation and predicting possible future developments. This holistic approach will make an important contribution to understanding the place of far-right parties in the political spectrum and the profound effects of their policies on social dynamics in Europe

1. GENERAL OUTLOOK OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES IN EUROPE

Far-right groups often exploit populist sentiment by presenting themselves as protectors of the people against perceived threats posed by globalization, immigration, and political elites. They use social media and online platforms alongside traditional media outlets to successfully communicate their ideas, gain sympathy, raise awareness, or advertise. The disintegration of established political blocs and the fragmentation of party structures have created opportunities for far-right forces to win elections. They can appeal to disaffected voters who feel unrepresented by mainstream groups (Anderson, 2019: 323).

The political success of the French National Rally, formerly known as the National Front, can be attributed to its ability to appeal to populist instincts. The organization capitalized on anti-establishment sentiment by presenting itself as the voice of the “forgotten” French people. They used social media to reach a wider audience and rally support. The National Rally's victory came at a time when traditional groups in France were facing internal divisions and a lack of public trust (Csanyi, 2020: 13). Immediately after its establishment in 1972, the National Rally first called for a reduction in immigration due to the economic and social problems caused by the

1973 Oil Crisis. However, the theme of excluding non-European immigrants was included in the party in 1978. Although it developed a more moderate image on immigration and Islam after the split in 1999, it continued to support the deportation of illegal, criminal, or unemployed immigrants. (Shields, 2007: 395).

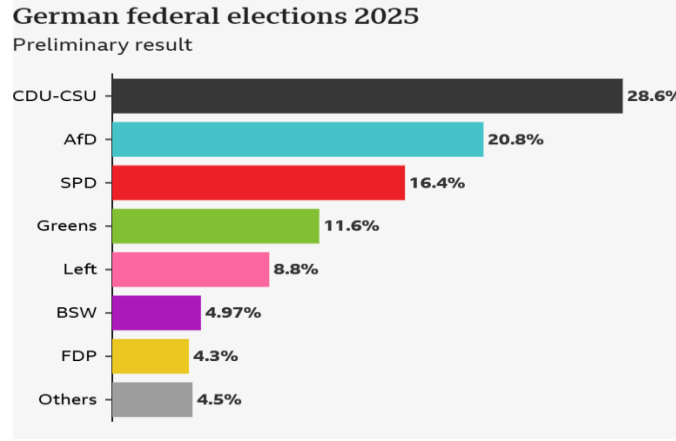
Following the Arab Spring in 2011, Marine Le Pen, especially in France, actively campaigned to stop the immigration of Tunisian and Algerian immigrants to Europe, a former colony, and constantly kept this issue on the agenda by criticizing France's acceptance of immigrants (Squires, 2011). On the other hand, Marine Le Pen put forward the idea of ending "family reunification" rights for foreigners with residence permits in 2022. He also called for a referendum on immigration policy in France. In addition, he proposed ending automatic citizenship for children born in France to foreigners living in France. He also supported a referendum on immigration policy (Samuel, 2022).

The National Rally stands out not only for its anti-immigration stance but also for its anti-Islam rhetoric. For example, in a speech in 2011, Marine Le Pen said that wearing the veil was the "tip of the iceberg" of the Islamization of French culture and re-proposed banning the wearing of the hijab (which covers the head but not the face) in public. However, Le Pen developed a very interesting discourse by saying, "I am against the visibility of Islam, but not against Islam itself." In contrast, the National Rally associates immigration with Islamist terrorism and is therefore considered an Islamophobic political movement (Belgacem, 2022).

While far-right groups have won elections in some European countries, they have faced opposition in others. In countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, strong democratic institutions, strong party systems, and commitment to liberal ideas have hindered the growth of far-right movements. The scope of far-right support varies considerably depending on the political and social conditions of each country (Lutz, 2019: 530).

For instance, the German Far Right party AfD has focused on interrelated concepts such as immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees within the framework of its strong political discourse on German culture and the "local" that it generally seeks to "reawaken". The AfD began its political life in September 2012 when a group of CDU members, including Konrad Adam (b. 1942), Alexander Gauland, and Bernd Lucke, founded a political action group called "Wahlalternative-Electoral Alternative 2013".

Considering the votes it received in the elections it participated in as a party founded in 2013 – 4.7% in the 2013 general elections and 7.1% in the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections – it is seen that it has grown steadily in the regions and has also organized rapidly (Berbuir, Lewandowsky and Siri, 2015, pp.154-155). In this context, it became the main opposition party after the CDU/CSU by receiving 20.8% of the votes in the parliamentary elections held on February 23, 2025, and won 152 seats in the 630-seat German National Assembly (Bundestag). Moreover, the AfD came first in the eastern states of Thuringia with 38.6%, in Saxony with 37.3%, in Saxony-Anhalt with 37.1%, in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with 35%, and in Brandenburg with 32.5%. (Başay, 2025)



Source: Kirby, 2025 <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx29wlje6dno>

Despite being the second party, the AfD is prevented from taking part in the next government by a "firewall" - or Brandmauer - operated by Germany's main parties, which have not cooperated with any party considered extremist since the end of World War II. (Kirby, 2025).

While the AfD states that it is against "migration to welfare systems", it stands out as the most conservative group in terms of immigration and social policies. In addition, the party constitutes an alternative to almost all political parties in terms of discourse (Berbair, Lewandowsky, & Siri, 2015, p. 167). It is seen that anti-refugee sentiment is also at the forefront of the AfD's discourse. The party stated that new rules were needed for refugees, that Germany needed educated refugees who wanted to integrate, and that the mass influx of people into the country should be stopped (Öner, 2016, p. 197). In this context, the party considered immigrants and refugees as a single category. As a result of the events that occurred in the context of the "refugee crisis" in 2015, the party shifted its discourse from economic themes to identity themes. It stands out with its approach centered on the perception that refugees coming to Germany pose a threat to "German values" and "core culture" (Rommel, 2017, pp. 137-138).

Although the current leader of the AfD, Alice Weidel, insists that it is a liberal, conservative movement, not a racist one, the statements and events that led to the huge increase in public support coincided with a series of attacks in the last nine months, all of which were allegedly carried out by immigrants. The AfD has adopted a rather broad policy called "return," which it defines as the deportation of immigrants who have committed crimes. However, this period could also refer to the mass deportation of immigrants and their descendants.

Polls show that AfD votes increased due to widespread concerns about the 2015 refugee crisis, Merkel's "open door policy," and terrorist attacks in France, Belgium, and Germany (Patton, 2017, p. 172). The party's success is also based on the public reaction to Merkel's "welcome" policy, especially for immigrants from Syria and other Arab countries. In the 2017 European election poll, voters in favor of restrictive immigration showed a strong tendency to favor the AfD. Public dissatisfaction plays a significant role in the AfD's electoral success. In the current situation, a sense of loss of control and the idea that the major players in German politics are not interested in the public's concerns are seen as important factors (Aras and Sağiroğlu, 2020: 38).

The far-right parties attempt to win support and mobilize their base by portraying migration as a danger to the values and security of society. In turn, the media plays a critical role in amplifying and disseminating these views to a larger audience. However, to discover any biases and agendas at work, it is vital to scrutinize the material provided by the media. To get a comprehensive understanding of the complicated issue of migration and to avoid the effects of populist speech, media literacy and a diverse variety of sources are essential (Csanyi, 2020: 15).

Gessler and Hunger's empirical study of immigration-related discourses from 120,000 press releases from all major parties published between 2013 and 2018 is significant in showing that the Migration Crisis has led mainstream parties to address the issue of immigration, regardless of its previous party-specific importance. Refugee numbers in Europe seem to have increased for all parties with the onset of the crisis. Consistent with previous research, it shows that radical right parties were the parties that addressed the issue of immigration the most during the crisis period. However, the increase in the importance of radical right parties is related to the immediate increase in the interest of mainstream parties in the issue of immigration. However, the same cannot be said for positions in mainstream parties, where the changes are not driven by radical-right parties (Gessler and Hunger, 2022: 525).

Far-right parties with an explicitly nationalist and anti-immigration stance have achieved varying degrees of success in different countries and over time, but have received significant electoral votes in Austria, Belgium, Switzerland and the Netherlands and are therefore important in political contests within parties. In contrast, no member of the far-right party family has been elected to the national parliament in Spain or the United Kingdom (Meyer, 2015: 8).

Unlike the countries mentioned earlier, far-right parties have no representation in the national legislatures of Spain or the United Kingdom. Despite the recent successes of far-right anti-immigration movements such as the British National Party (BNP) and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) at local and European levels, the UK's majority vote system benefits mainstream parties. Alongside Brexit, immigration is a major issue on their political agenda, with a particular emphasis on economic justifications for nationalist sentiment (Halikiopoulou et al., 2010). Similarly, far-right anti-immigration groups in Spain have recently become strong at the municipal level. Scholars believe that one factor contributing to their poor performance was their inability to separate themselves from the ideology of the Franco regime. The material also highlights the capacity of the popular Party (PP) to attract far-right followers (Ros & Morales, 2012).

2. THE RISE OF FAR-RIGHT MOVEMENTS IN EUROPE: AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Center-right parties have long been seen as carriers of stability and economic development in European democracies. However, multi-layered developments such as the economic effects of globalization, waves of migration, and the expansion of the European Union have shaken the legitimacy of these parties built on a homogeneous national identity and welfare state balance (Vieta & Poynting, 2016). Populism, along with the disintegration of this ground, has weakened the ideological coherence and political leadership of the center-right. Center-right parties have been dragged into an identity crisis as they have tried to approach the discourse framework of the far right, especially on issues such as nationalism, sovereignty, and immigration. This situation has led to fragmentation of the parties not only in the eyes of the voters but also within their own organizations (Mair, 2013).

The rise of far-right movements across Europe is driven by a complex interplay of economic, social, and political factors. These groups often express concerns regarding migration, economic insecurity, cultural preservation, and national sovereignty. Their rhetoric and policy proposals reflect deep-seated anxieties about globalization, demographic change, and the perceived failure of traditional political establishments to address public grievances. By analyzing these factors in depth, we can better understand the broader context in which far-right movements have gained traction.

2.1. Economic Concerns and the Impact of Globalization

Far-right parties have increasingly capitalized on economic insecurity as a central theme in their rise, particularly in the contexts of migration and globalization. This connection is particularly evident in their criticisms of immigration, which they argue exacerbates competition within the labor market. Many far-right groups contend that an influx of migrants creates unfair competition for low-skilled jobs, leading to job losses and stagnating wages for native workers (Csanyi, 2020: 17). This narrative is especially resonant in regions that have experienced deindustrialization, where local economies have been significantly impacted by global trade shifts and technological advancements such as automation.

In these areas, the effects of economic decline are acutely felt as traditional industries diminish and job opportunities dwindle. The resulting economic dislocation not only exacerbates feelings of insecurity but also fosters a perception that immigration is a primary driver of these challenges. This perception is further fueled by incidents of economic downturns, which can easily be linked to the presence of newcomers in the job market, regardless of the broader structural factors at play.

Beyond labor market dynamics, globalization has further deepened economic inequalities. The rapid expansion of free trade agreements, offshoring practices, and deregulation has often resulted in wage stagnation and job precarity, especially for working-class citizens. Many individuals feel marginalized by an economic system that appears to reward multinational corporations and the affluent while neglecting the needs of ordinary workers. This sentiment breeds resentment towards political elites—perceived as out of touch and more concerned with the interests of global capital than the struggles of their constituents.

Far-right parties have adeptly harnessed these grievances by promoting a platform centered on economic protectionism. They advocate for a range of policies designed to insulate domestic workers from the perceived threats posed by globalization, including trade restrictions that aim to shield local industries from foreign competition, stricter immigration controls to limit labor supply, and welfare programs that prioritize assistance for native citizens over migrants. Through this rhetoric, far-right movements position themselves as champions of economic justice for the "ordinary people," framing their agenda as a necessary response to a globalized economic order that they assert disproportionately benefits elites and foreigners. This resonates especially with voters who feel overlooked by mainstream politics and disenfranchised by the forces of globalization (Rodrik, 2018).

In summary, the rise of far-right parties is intricately linked to economic insecurity rooted in migration and globalization. Economic discontent, particularly in deindustrialized regions, creates fertile ground for these parties to gain traction by presenting themselves as defenders against an economic landscape perceived as unfavorable to native workers. By leveraging economic protectionism and tapping into feelings of exclusion and resentment, far-right groups effectively craft a narrative that appeals to those yearning for security and a return to a more insular economic framework. The challenge for more moderate political forces lies in addressing these economic concerns comprehensively, offering solutions that acknowledge the complexities of globalization while ensuring that the benefits of economic integration are shared more equitably across all segments of society.

2.2. Cultural and Demographic Fears

Cultural anxieties are a fundamental component in the ideological framework of far-right movements, complementing the economic concerns that often dominate discussions around their rise. These movements frequently articulate immigration as a significant threat to national and religious identity, positing that the presence of culturally diverse groups undermines

traditional values and societal cohesion. This narrative is particularly potent in the context of demographic changes, where fears surrounding the loss of a dominant ethnic or religious identity are prominently featured.

Far-right ideologies often hinge on the premise that high birth rates among immigrant communities, juxtaposed with declining birth rates among native populations, will precipitate a profound transformation of national identity (Anderson, 2019: 323). This framing not only amplifies fears of cultural displacement but also invokes a sense of urgency among supporters, suggesting that immediate action is necessary to safeguard the nation's future. The notion of demographic change is frequently manipulated to evoke a sense of impending crisis, compelling individuals to align with far-right narratives that promise to restore and protect a perceived threatened identity.

The rhetoric employed by far-right leaders often escalates these cultural anxieties into existential threats. They warn of a so-called "replacement" of native populations, a concept that has gained traction in various political discourses across Europe and beyond. This narrative serves to galvanize nationalist sentiments and anti-immigrant attitudes, fostering a collective identity rooted in the preservation of an imagined homogeneity. By framing immigration as a zero-sum game, far-right movements effectively position themselves as defenders of the nation against an encroaching, culturally alien force.

Moreover, the concerns surrounding cultural integration are particularly pronounced in discussions about Muslim communities within Europe. Many far-right groups argue that migrants from non-Western backgrounds bring with them values that are fundamentally incompatible with the secular, liberal frameworks of Western societies. This perspective is often steeped in Islamophobic rhetoric, which portrays Muslim communities as not only unwilling to assimilate but also as actively seeking to undermine societal norms. Such arguments are strategically employed to justify the implementation of restrictive immigration policies, as well as assimilationist measures aimed at preserving a national identity that is perceived to be under siege.

The interplay between cultural anxieties and far-right ideologies is further complicated by the broader context of globalization. As societies become increasingly interconnected, the rapid pace of cultural exchange can provoke backlash from segments of the population that feel threatened by these changes. Far-right movements exploit this backlash, framing their narratives in a way that resonates with those who perceive themselves as losing control over their cultural and national identity (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2004).

In summary, cultural anxieties are integral to the rise and persistence of far-right movements, shaping their ideologies and influencing their political strategies. By framing immigration as a threat to national and religious identity, these movements tap into deep-seated fears of cultural displacement and demographic change. Their rhetoric often escalates these fears into existential threats, further entrenching nationalist sentiments and justifying restrictive policies. As societies grapple with the challenges of integration and cultural diversity, addressing these anxieties constructively and inclusively becomes crucial to countering the narratives propagated by far-right groups and fostering social cohesion.

2.3. The Role of Political Disillusionment and Anti-Establishment Sentiment

Disillusionment with mainstream political parties has further contributed to the rise of the far right. Many voters perceive traditional political elites as detached from the struggles of ordinary citizens, accusing them of being overly bureaucratic, corrupt, or complicit in policies that undermine national interests (Georgi, 2019: 187). This perception has led to increasing support for far-right parties, which position themselves as populist, anti-establishment alternatives.

By framing political struggles as a conflict between "insiders" (native citizens) and "outsiders" (immigrants, elites, and international institutions), far-right parties cultivate a strong sense of group identity. This rhetoric not only strengthens their electoral base but also deepens societal divisions by promoting the idea that traditional political institutions have failed to protect the interests of native populations. Scandals and instances of corruption among mainstream parties further erode public trust, making far-right movements appear as more transparent, honest, and responsive to voter concerns.

2.4. National Sovereignty and Euroscepticism

Far-right movements have surged in recent years, driven by a complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors. A significant aspect of this rise is the opposition to supranational governance, with the European Union (EU) often in the crosshairs. Many far-right parties articulate a critique of the EU, arguing that its policies encroach upon national sovereignty and enforce regulations that are misaligned with the specific interests of individual nations. This sentiment resonates particularly in Central and Eastern European countries like Hungary and Poland, where far-right groups have capitalized on discontent towards EU-mandated migration policies, economic directives, and judicial oversight (Csanyi, 2020: 15).

The far-right's call for a restoration of national sovereignty reflects deeper anxieties about the loss of control over domestic affairs in an increasingly globalized world. These parties portray supranational entities as intruders that undermine the nation-state's authority and autonomy. Their rhetoric often emphasizes the perceived risks associated with globalization and European integration, portraying them as threats that dilute national identity and cultural homogeneity.

This anti-globalist perspective not only focuses on political sovereignty but also intertwines with economic concerns, particularly for voters who feel economically marginalized or threatened by international competition. Far-right movements champion the idea of reclaiming control over borders, legislation, and economic policies, appealing to those who fear that their livelihoods are jeopardized by external forces and economic migrants. Moreover, this rejection of EU influence serves as a rallying point. It fosters a sense of unity among supporters, who are encouraged to view themselves as part of a collective effort to protect their culture and way of life. The far-right's narrative often invokes a dichotomy between "us" (the native population) and "them" (foreigners, migrants, or bureaucrats in Brussels), simplifying complex issues into a battle for survival of the national identity against perceived external threats.

In essence, the rise of far-right movements can be understood as a reaction to the challenges posed by supranational governance, blending nationalism with an anti-globalization agenda. This combination not only mobilizes voters but also reflects a broader crisis in how citizens relate to national and international institutions, raising critical questions about the future of democracy, governance, and identity in the context of globalization.

2.5. Implications and Challenges for Mainstream Politics

The ongoing ascent of far-right movements poses a formidable challenge to mainstream political parties and democratic institutions across Europe. This phenomenon is not merely a fleeting trend; it signifies a profound and widespread dissatisfaction with current economic policies, cultural integration efforts, and the overall political representation afforded to various segments of society. To effectively counter this trend, a nuanced and multidimensional approach is essential—one that transcends mere denunciation of far-right ideologies.

At the core of this challenge lies a palpable economic discontent. Many individuals feel left behind by globalization, which has often benefited a select few while exacerbating inequality and job insecurity for others. Mainstream parties must respond to these economic grievances by

advocating for policies that not only aim to reduce inequality but also enhance job security and ensure that the benefits of globalization are equitably distributed. This could involve implementing progressive taxation, investing in education and vocational training, and supporting local industries to create sustainable jobs. By addressing these economic concerns, mainstream parties can begin to reclaim the narrative and demonstrate their commitment to the welfare of all citizens (Kriesi, 2014).

In addition to economic factors, social cohesion is another critical area that requires attention. Far-right movements frequently exploit cultural anxieties, framing issues of immigration and integration in a divisive manner that resonates with voters who feel their identities are threatened. To counteract this divisive rhetoric, mainstream parties must foster inclusive policies that promote social cohesion and constructive dialogue on cultural integration. This involves not only addressing the legitimate concerns of citizens regarding immigration but also actively promoting the benefits of diversity and multiculturalism. Initiatives that encourage community engagement and intercultural exchange can help to mitigate fears and build a more cohesive society.

Furthermore, the erosion of public trust in democratic institutions is a significant factor contributing to the rise of far-right movements. Many citizens perceive mainstream political parties as disconnected from their needs and concerns, leading to a growing disillusionment with the political process. To rebuild this trust, democratic institutions must prioritize transparency and responsiveness. This includes engaging citizens in decision-making processes, addressing political corruption vigorously, and ensuring that government actions are accountable to the electorate. By demonstrating a genuine commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law, mainstream parties can help restore faith in the political system (Pappas, 2019).

In conclusion, the rise of far-right movements in Europe is a complex phenomenon rooted in a combination of economic distress, cultural anxieties, political disillusionment, and nationalist sentiments. Their ability to garner widespread support underscores the urgent need for policymakers to confront the underlying socioeconomic and political issues that drive voter discontent. Ignoring these challenges risks further legitimizing far-right narratives, which could lead to deeper polarization and significant obstacles for democratic governance. Ultimately, a proactive and inclusive approach is essential for mainstream parties to effectively address the concerns of their constituents and safeguard the democratic values that underpin society.

2.6. Separation of Mainstream Right-wing Parties and Far-Right Parties

The distinction between “right” and “left” on the political spectrum is one of the most fundamental ideological categories that has historically existed since the French Revolution. This distinction has gained various layers of meaning over the centuries and has been the subject of multidimensional analyses in political science literature. In this context, the conceptual scale developed by political philosopher Norberto Bobbio on the right-left axis is an important reference source, especially in understanding the ideological foundations of right-wing politics. The conceptual scale developed by political philosopher Norberto Bobbio on the right-left axis is an important reference source, especially in understanding the ideological foundations of right-wing politics. Norberto Bobbio's work *Right and Left: The Significance of a Political Distinction*, published in 1994, is one of the most important studies that systematizes the right-left distinction at a philosophical level. According to Bobbio, the fundamental difference between the right and the left is shaped by the importance given to equality. According to Bobbio:

“While the left advocates progress towards equality, the right has an approach that accepts and legitimizes natural or social inequalities” (Bobbio, 1996, p. 60). On the other hand, in this approach, the basis of right-wing ideology is:

- The idea that inequality is inevitable and even desirable,
- The belief in hierarchical orders,
- The preservation of traditional values and authority.

Bobbio's right-left scale offers a framework that can be redefined in variable historical contexts rather than a fixed ideological alignment. In this respect, the positions of the political actors to be analyzed should be evaluated not only with economic policies but also with their stances on cultural and social issues.

Center-right parties represent the “moderate” and “modernized” forms of right-wing thought described by Bobbio. These parties:

- Freedom of individual initiative,
- Free market economy,
- They tend to protect the traditional elements of the social structure (family, religion, nation).

However, today's center-right parties do not directly defend the absolute inequality stance of the classical right; instead, they adopt more moderate policies such as the ideal of equal opportunities and the limitation of social assistance (Mair, 2007). For example:

- The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany,
- The Republicans (Les Républicains) in France,
- The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in Turkey,

parties such as these take pro-establishment, traditionalist but not radicalized positions on Bobbio's right scale. Center-right parties can shift to a more conservative rhetoric by taking into account public sensitivities on issues such as immigration, security, and national sovereignty, but they maintain their commitment to the fundamental principles of the democratic order (Aydın-Düzgüt & Keyman, 2020).

On the other hand, far-right parties carry the principle of inequality that Bobbio points out in his definition of the right to a normative ground, reinforcing it with social exclusion, ethnic discrimination, and authoritarian nationalism. The far-right does not only accept inequality; at the same time, it sees the demand for equality as a “danger”. This understanding is reflected in the discourses of many parties today:

- National Rally (formerly FN) in France
- Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany
- Lega Nord in Italy
- Fidesz in Hungary

These parties reproduce Bobbio's “anti-equality right” principle by combining it with cultural superiority, xenophobia and security policies (Wodak, 2015). The rise of the far-right coincides with the demand for the re-enforcement of the inegalitarian order as envisioned by Bobbio.

Although the line between center-right and far-right parties blurs from time to time, commonalities are striking in some political reactions. Although these reactions are in different tones on Bobbio's right-wing scale, the basic orientation is the same:

- Anti-immigration: The idea that social rights should only belong to citizens,
- Cultural protectionism: Homogenization of national identity,
- Regaining the sovereignty of the state: Anti-EU, criticism of globalization, etc.

These reactions can be considered as 21st century variations of the principle of “inequality is normal” in Bobbio's right-wing thought. While center-right parties develop more pragmatic and conciliatory policies in this vein, far-right parties come to the fore with their discourses that deepen inequality and polarize society. Although both groups are located on different planes on

Bobbio's right-wing scale developed against the concept of equality, they reproduce the principle of "natural inequality", which is the basic ideological core, in various ways. In this context, Bobbio's right-left distinction offers a vivid and explanatory frame of reference not only in terms of history but also in terms of contemporary politics.

3. APPROACHES AND DISCOURSES OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES ON IMMIGRATION

The expansion of far-right movements across Europe is rooted in concerns about immigration, national identity, security, and socioeconomic challenges. Far-right groups advocate for stricter immigration policies, emphasizing national culture and ethnic homogeneity while portraying migration as a threat to social cohesion (Lutz, 2019: 520). Their rhetoric often combines nationalism, populism, and economic protectionism to appeal to a broad electorate disillusioned with mainstream politics. By analyzing their strategies, policy proposals, and impact on political dynamics, we can better understand the rise and consolidation of far-right forces in Europe

3.1. Far-Right Opposition to Immigration: National Identity and Welfare Chauvinism

A defining characteristic of far-right politics is staunch opposition to immigration. These groups argue that large-scale migration erodes national identity, disrupts traditional values, and weakens social cohesion. Far-right movements portray migration as a cultural invasion, warning against the dilution of national traditions and the rise of multiculturalism, which they see as a threat to societal unity (Lutz, 2019: 520).

Beyond cultural concerns, far-right parties emphasize "welfare chauvinism," a policy approach that prioritizes the well-being of native-born citizens over migrants. Welfare chauvinism argues that social benefits should be restricted to the indigenous population while excluding immigrants, regardless of their economic contribution (Chen, 2022: 251). This perspective resonates particularly with working-class voters who perceive migrants as competitors for jobs, housing, and public services. By exploiting these fears, far-right parties strengthen their voter base, attracting disillusioned members from leftist and centrist parties.

Far-right rhetoric often exaggerates the economic burden of migration, claiming that immigrants strain social services and contribute to unemployment. While empirical studies indicate that migration can stimulate economic growth and alleviate labor shortages, far-right parties persistently frame immigration as a zero-sum game where benefits to migrants come at the expense of native citizens. This narrative fuels anti-immigrant sentiment, particularly during periods of economic stagnation and crisis

3.2. Law and Order: Linking Migration to Security and Terrorism

Another critical component of far-right ideology is the emphasis on law and order. These groups argue that immigration leads to increased crime rates, social unrest, and terrorism, portraying migrants—particularly those from Muslim-majority countries—as security threats (Anderson, 2019: 326). The far-right frequently capitalizes on terrorist attacks and violent incidents involving individuals of migrant backgrounds, using these cases to advocate for stringent border controls, deportation policies, and national security measures.

The securitization of migration, where immigration is framed as a security risk rather than a demographic or economic issue, has contributed to the growing appeal of far-right parties. Many far-right movements argue that weak border controls and inadequate vetting procedures have allowed extremists to infiltrate European societies. This fear-mongering strategy has been particularly effective in mobilizing support in the aftermath of high-profile terrorist attacks.

Moreover, far-right narratives frequently merge crime, terrorism, and migration into a single discourse of threat. By presenting migrants as potential criminals or radical elements, these parties justify policies such as border fortification, refugee bans, and increased surveillance. While statistical evidence does not support the claim that immigration leads to higher crime rates, the emotional appeal of security fears makes such narratives politically effective.

3.3. The Far-Right's Electoral Strategy: Populism, Nationalism, and Crisis Exploitation

Far-right parties employ a populist strategy that pits "ordinary citizens" against "corrupt elites" and "foreign outsiders." They claim that mainstream political establishments have failed to protect national interests, accusing traditional parties of being complicit in the decline of national sovereignty and identity (Mudde, 1999). This anti-establishment rhetoric has helped far-right movements attract voters disillusioned with traditional politics, particularly during periods of economic and social crisis.

The rise of far-right parties in the 1990s marked a shift in political competition. During this period, working-class voters, historically aligned with socialist and social democratic parties, began defecting to far-right parties due to concerns about immigration and economic inequality. This shift led to the development of what scholars describe as the far-right's "winning formula": a coalition of working-class anti-immigration voters and middle-class neoliberal sympathizers (Chen, 2022: 251).

As far-right parties gained electoral momentum, mainstream political parties, particularly center-right groups, began adopting more restrictive immigration policies to compete for votes. This process, known as the "contagion effect," has led to a broader normalization of anti-immigrant rhetoric in European politics. Even some center-left parties have adjusted their stance on migration to prevent further voter defections. This shift underscores the far-right's ability to influence mainstream discourse, even when they are not in power.

3.4. Mainstream Responses: Balancing Immigration and National Cohesion

In contrast to the far-right's rigid anti-immigration stance, mainstream European political parties generally adopt a more nuanced approach. They recognize the economic and demographic benefits of migration, such as filling labor shortages and mitigating aging population challenges, while also acknowledging the necessity of effective integration policies and border management (Anderson, 2019: 321).

Mainstream parties, particularly those aligned with liberal and social democratic traditions, emphasize policies that facilitate migrant integration, including language education, labor market access, and anti-discrimination measures. However, growing public pressure and electoral losses to far-right parties have compelled some mainstream parties to harden their stance on immigration, particularly concerning asylum policies and border controls. Despite these efforts, mainstream parties face challenges in countering far-right narratives. The far-right's simplistic framing of migration as a national threat is often more politically effective than complex policy discussions about integration and economic benefits. Consequently, mainstream parties must find ways to engage with public concerns about migration while promoting inclusive and evidence-based policies that do not concede ground to far-right extremism.

The rise of far-right parties in Europe is not merely a reaction to immigration but a broader response to economic uncertainty, political disillusionment, and security concerns. These movements have successfully leveraged anxieties about migration, national identity, and crime to expand their electoral base. By positioning themselves as defenders of the "native population" against external threats—whether migrants, elites, or international institutions—they have reshaped European political landscapes. Addressing the factors fueling far-right support requires a multi-dimensional approach. Economic policies that reduce inequality, strengthen labor

protections, and ensure fair access to social benefits can mitigate some of the economic grievances that far-right parties exploit. Similarly, fostering social cohesion through well-designed integration policies and combating misinformation about migration can help counter cultural fears.

Moreover, restoring public trust in democratic institutions is essential. Political corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and detachment from public concerns create fertile ground for far-right populism. Transparent governance, citizen engagement, and responsive policymaking can help rebuild confidence in mainstream political parties and weaken the far right's appeal. Ultimately, the far-right's growth serves as a warning signal about the failures of traditional political systems to address voter anxieties. Tackling these underlying issues directly—rather than merely condemning far-right ideologies—will be crucial in safeguarding democratic stability and social cohesion in Europe.

3.5. Security Concerns and the Politics of Fear

The rise of far-right movements in Europe has been fueled by concerns about security, economic competition, and national identity. These movements advocate for stricter immigration policies, tighter border controls, and the preservation of cultural homogeneity, positioning themselves as defenders of national interests. However, their rhetoric and policy proposals are deeply contested as they often rely on exaggerated fears and exclusionary narratives that risk stigmatizing entire communities. A more nuanced approach to these issues requires balancing legitimate security concerns with the principles of inclusivity, integration, and economic pragmatism (Lutz, 2019: 526).

Far-right groups often frame immigration as a security risk, arguing that increased migration leads to higher crime rates, social instability, and even terrorism. They promote a "tough on crime" stance, portraying themselves as the only political forces capable of restoring order and protecting citizens (Lutz, 2019: 526). This message resonates with voters who perceive rising crime levels or feel that existing governments have failed to ensure public safety. A core aspect of this narrative is the alleged link between migration and crime. Far-right parties frequently highlight isolated incidents involving migrants and use them as evidence of a broader pattern of lawlessness. While crime statistics do not consistently support the claim that migrants are responsible for increasing crime rates, the perception of insecurity—often shaped by selective media reporting—creates fertile ground for far-right rhetoric.

Additionally, far-right groups argue that weak border controls facilitate the entry of extremists, increasing the risk of terrorism. Following terrorist attacks in Europe, such as those in Paris (2015), Berlin (2016), and Vienna (2020), far-right parties have intensified their calls for restrictive immigration policies, linking migration to national security threats (Anderson, 2019: 326). However, research suggests that radicalization is often a domestic issue involving second- or third-generation migrants rather than newly arrived refugees. By focusing narrowly on immigration as the primary security threat, far-right narratives overlook the complex sociopolitical factors that contribute to radicalization, such as social exclusion and marginalization.

While security is a legitimate concern, an exclusive focus on restrictive policies may undermine social cohesion. Effective counterterrorism and crime prevention strategies require a balanced approach that includes integration policies, intelligence-sharing, and law enforcement measures targeting criminal networks rather than entire migrant populations.

3.6. Economic Anxiety: Job Competition and Wage Suppression

Economic concerns are another major theme in far-right discourse on migration. These groups argue that migrants, particularly low-skilled workers, create job competition for native

workers and drive down wages, leading to economic insecurity among the working class (Lutz, 2019: 525). This fear is particularly strong in countries experiencing high unemployment rates or economic stagnation. The Alternative for Germany (AfD), for example, has consistently expressed concerns about job market competition and wage suppression due to migration. The party argues that an influx of low-skilled workers limits employment opportunities for German citizens and depresses wages in key sectors (Csanyi, 2020: 17). In response, AfD advocates for stricter immigration controls to protect domestic labor markets.

However, economic research presents a more complex picture. While certain low-skilled jobs may face competition, migration also has positive economic effects. Migrants often fill labor shortages in industries that struggle to attract native workers, such as healthcare, agriculture, and construction. Moreover, immigration can stimulate economic growth by increasing consumer demand, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Studies indicate that, in the long term, migration tends to have a neutral or even positive effect on wages and employment for native workers, particularly in highly developed economies with aging populations.

Despite these findings, far-right parties continue to use economic anxiety as a mobilization tool. Their emphasis on "welfare chauvinism"—the belief that social benefits should be reserved for native citizens—resonates with voters who feel economically vulnerable. This approach enables far-right parties to attract support from both working-class voters who fear job competition and middle-class voters concerned about welfare expenditures on migrants. Addressing economic concerns related to migration requires policies that ensure fair labor conditions, invest in skills training for both migrants and native workers, and strengthen social safety nets to reduce economic insecurity. Simply restricting immigration is unlikely to resolve underlying economic inequalities.

3.7. National Identity and the Fear of Cultural Erosion

One of the most persistent themes in far-right ideology is the defense of national identity. These movements argue that globalization, multiculturalism, and mass migration threaten the cultural and historical fabric of their nations (Frieman et al., 2019: 529). They claim that increasing diversity leads to the erosion of traditional values, social fragmentation, and a loss of collective identity. The French National Front (now National Rally) has been one of the most vocal proponents of these ideas. The party has long advocated for tougher immigration laws, asserting that mass migration endangers social cohesion and undermines French national unity (Grande et al., 2019: 1446). To "protect French culture," the party calls for strict border controls, assimilation policies, and limitations on multicultural policies that promote diversity.

Far-right parties often frame their stance on national identity as a defense of social cohesion. They argue that a shared cultural background is necessary for social harmony and political stability. However, critics point out that these arguments often lead to exclusionary policies, discrimination, and the marginalization of ethnic and religious minorities (Günther et al., 2021: 3). Policies aimed at enforcing cultural homogeneity can create divisions rather than unity, as they often target specific communities and portray them as "outsiders" who must either assimilate or leave. A critical issue in this debate is the distinction between integration and assimilation. While integration policies aim to help migrants participate in society while maintaining elements of their cultural identity, assimilation policies demand complete cultural conformity. Far-right parties generally favor assimilation, insisting that newcomers adopt the dominant national culture while rejecting practices they deem incompatible. This rigid approach often ignores the dynamic nature of cultural identity and the historical reality that societies have always evolved through cultural exchange.

Promoting a cohesive society does not require cultural exclusion. Policies that encourage intercultural dialogue, mutual adaptation, and inclusive national identities can strengthen social

bonds without resorting to divisive rhetoric. Recognizing that national identity is not static but adaptive allows for a more constructive approach to the challenges posed by globalization and migration. Far-right narratives on security, economic competition, and national identity have gained traction by exploiting public anxieties and framing migration as a fundamental threat to European societies. However, these narratives often rely on oversimplification, fear-mongering, and exclusionary rhetoric that stigmatizes entire populations. While legitimate concerns about security and economic stability exist, addressing them requires evidence-based policies rather than reactionary measures.

A balanced approach to migration should incorporate both effective border management and humane integration policies. Governments must ensure that migration policies do not exacerbate social divisions but rather foster inclusion and economic contribution. Security strategies should target actual threats rather than scapegoating migrant communities. Economic policies should focus on job creation, fair labor practices, and education rather than merely restricting immigration.

The challenge for European democracies is to counter the rise of far-right extremism without dismissing the concerns that fuel its growth. By addressing security fears, economic anxieties, and identity debates through inclusive and pragmatic policies, mainstream political forces can provide viable alternatives to far-right solutions. This approach is essential for maintaining social cohesion, democratic integrity, and a forward-looking vision of European societies in an era of global mobility and change.

4. THE IMPACT OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES ON EUROPE'S MIGRATION POLICIES

Case studies of right-wing organizations and their influence on immigration laws in various European nations offer profound insights into the effectiveness and implications of their strategies. These case studies reveal how far-right movements not only shape public discourse surrounding immigration but also impact legislative processes and policies at national levels.

One notable example is the rise of the National Front (now National Rally) in France, which has significantly transformed the immigration debate over the past few decades. The party's platform has centered on national sovereignty and the perceived threats posed by immigration to French culture and identity. Their persistent advocacy for stricter immigration controls and the prioritization of national citizens in welfare provisions has forced mainstream political parties to adopt more hardline stances on immigration. This shift has resulted in legislative changes, such as more stringent border controls and immigration policies that align more closely with the party's rhetoric.

With its anti-immigrant attitude and populist message, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) has profoundly affected the national conversation on migration in Germany. As a result, the German government enacted tighter asylum procedures, including faster deportations and increased border restrictions. This policy shift has consequences for both migrants and society as a whole, resulting in a more rigorous approach to immigration and integration (Günther et al., 2021: 3).

Similarly, in Italy, the Lega Nord party has effectively utilized anti-immigration sentiment to gain political traction. After the 2018 elections, the party entered a coalition government and subsequently implemented policies that included increased border security, the closure of ports to rescue ships carrying migrants, and measures that targeted the regularization of undocumented migrants. The party's strong rhetoric against migration has not only influenced public opinion but has also led to a significant alteration in Italy's immigration policy, showcasing how right-wing organizations can achieve their objectives when they gain political power.

In Austria, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) has also played a crucial role in shaping immigration laws. The FPÖ's influence peaked during its coalition with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which allowed it to push through policies that restricted asylum applications and tightened laws against undocumented migrants. The party's framing of migration as a security issue has resonated with a substantial segment of the Austrian populace, leading to greater acceptance of restrictive policies that may have previously been considered too extreme by mainstream parties.

These case studies illustrate that right-wing organizations often utilize a combination of grassroots mobilization, strategic messaging, and political opportunism to influence immigration laws. They effectively capitalize on public fears and anxieties regarding cultural dilution, economic competition, and national security. By framing immigration not just as a policy issue but as a threat to national identity and social cohesion, these organizations succeed in steering the political narrative and setting the agenda for mainstream political discourse. Moreover, the outcomes and consequences of their strategies extend beyond immediate legislative changes. The normalization of far-right rhetoric within mainstream politics contributes to a broader societal shift in attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. This shift often results in increased stigmatization of immigrant communities and can lead to detrimental social consequences, including heightened xenophobia and discrimination.

The examination of case studies from various European nations highlights the significant impact that right-wing organizations have on immigration laws and policies. These organizations adeptly leverage cultural anxieties to reshape public discourse, influence legislative outcomes, and ultimately redefine the relationship between national identity and immigration. The implications of their strategies are profound, as they not only affect immigration policies but also contribute to shaping societal attitudes towards diversity and inclusion. These findings underscore the necessity for policymakers to address the root causes of public concern surrounding immigration and to engage in constructive dialogue that counters far-right narratives while advocating for fair and humane immigration practices.

Far-right Parties with a populist agenda have evolved into a permanent fixture in most party systems in Western Europe during the previous years. Their anti-immigrant, anti-multiculturalism position is essential to their electoral success (Lutz, 2019: 525). Their main issue is immigration, which is opposed by practically all far-right populist parties. Because the majority of European voters favor fewer immigrants and stricter immigration controls. When it comes to altering the migration restrictions in a more constrictive path, far-right populist parties possess enormous power. Even when the extreme right joins governing coalitions, many believe its policy effectiveness is limited (Muis et al., 2017: 919). Regardless of the far-right's political success, immigration and integration rules have tended to become more liberal during the previous three generations (De Haas et al., 2016: 342). The current research takes its conclusions mostly from subjective case studies and gives contradictory data on how far-right populist parties influence governments' migration policies (Mudde, 2013).

Scholars discuss the link of causality between far-right populist parties and restrictive immigration policies, arguing that restrictive immigration policies may have existed before forming far-right populist parties (Money, 1999). The impact of far-right populist parties' Migration policy differs per policy area; when in power, they effectively enforce stricter integration regulations; nevertheless, they have minimal influence on the broader liberalization trend in immigration policy. As a result, far-right populism is more likely than the overall number of immigrants to threaten immigrants' rights. The first element of FRP parties is populism. This concept is defined by Mudde as a "thin-centered ideology". Moreover, populism is almost always combined with one or more other ideological features. When populism is combined with nativism and authoritarianism, populist radical right parties emerge (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2011).

In this respect, the most important common feature of far-right populist parties is their nativist stance and desire for restrictive immigration policies. According to nativists, constant immigration weakens the homogenous nation-state. The party's strong anti-immigrant attitude sets it apart from others (Arzheimer, 2009: 262). In terms of immigration admission and integration, far-right populist groups advocate for stricter rules than are already in place (Akkerman, 2015: 58). Because migration policy is so important to the extreme right, assessing its overall success requires analyzing its influence on policy results in this area. With far-right populism electoral success as rivals to mainstream parties, as well as their presence in government in several European countries, one might anticipate their political agenda to affect policy. A party gains success in policy when it can modify public policies to its desired agenda as a result of its political dominance. As a result, as compared to the policy's absence, the far-right gains migration policy succeeds via its ability to enforce legislative constraints or avert policy liberalizations.

There are two fundamental pathways that political parties might use to ensure the success of policy. A party's effect on the government's decisions could be indirect, such as changing the main parties' policy aims, or direct, such as Acquiring authority as a member of the government. Any evaluation of policy effectiveness should evaluate both indirect and direct ways of policy effectiveness. Far-right populist parties have a considerable influence on electoral competitiveness by making immigration a key political issue and generating sentiments against immigrants (Davis, 2012: 26). The strong engagement of far-right populist parties opposing migrants prohibits mainstream parties from dismissing the constraining choices of the average voter, making liberal migration policies more electorally risky for them. As a result, to prevent losing supporters to the far-right opponent, major parties embrace more restrictive policies, and Mainstream parties support more restricted policy ideas and practices.

In addition to contesting elections, far-right populist parties showcase their alliance capability by joining governments as minor collaborators or supporting minority administrations in several European nations (Mudde, 2013; De Lange, 2012: 906). By boosting the size of the right-wing block as a whole, the political achievement of far-right populist ideologies presents a strategic chance, enabling mainstream-right parties to win positions in government. To establish a political coalition, mainstream-right parties may adopt increasingly restricted immigration policies.

Regardless of growing concern about the political ramifications of populist far-right parties' electoral victory, current research on policy achievement in their primary topic remains ambiguous. However, it is often assumed that they have minimal influence. The existing research relied almost entirely on descriptive research projects of individual parties, such as the Front National in France, the FPÖ in Austria, the Lega Nord in Italy, the Sweden Democrats in Sweden, or the Swiss People's Party in Switzerland, to make observations on the policy effects of far-right populist parties. These publications provide a detailed analysis of several far-right populist parties in various national contexts.

However, they provide contradicting evidence under the same conditions. Furthermore, case studies seek to assess if those few policy changes would have happened without the presence of a far-right populism. Researchers studying party policy perspectives underline that, in the absence of a far-right political danger, mainstream-right parties have a political electoral motive for adopting a more restrictive posture on migration (Akkerman, 2015: 56).

Similarly, some scholars believe that mainstream parties are to blame for the politics of immigration and that the far right's ability to establish agendas is restricted (Van der Brug et al., 2015: 2). This position contends that changes in limited migration policy may be the product of mainstream-right cabinet members and their preset policy aim rather than the co-optation of far-right adversaries (Money, 1999). In this respect, Far-right parties use populist rhetoric to

position themselves as defenders of "the common people" against elites, often framing their opponents as out-of-touch or corrupt. This populist approach appeals to people frustrated with traditional political discourse

5. THE DISCOURSES OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES IN EUROPE ON IMMIGRATION

Far-right political parties are entities that uphold nationalist, populist, and frequently anti-immigration doctrines. They frequently argue for tighter border controls and the protection of cultural heritage. Far-right groups are distinguished from other political groupings by their emphasis on ethnonationalism, which prioritizes the welfare and identity of a certain ethnic or national faction. This mindset can lead to restrictive policies and language that target minority populations and generate a sense of "us versus them" (Cohen, 2020: 663).

In this respect, globalization is seen as one of the main reasons for the rise of FRP parties in Europe. They were able to gain support because of the growing unrest in a pluralist, confrontational, multicultural, and globalizing society (Ignazi, 2003: 217). It is possible to argue that "one of the most striking features of globalization is the persistence of difference and the continuing centrality of 'us and them' in the construction of identity" (Beeson and Bellamy, 2003: 344). Similarly, PRR parties rely on the notions of 'us and them' or 'good and evil' in the construction of identity, values, interests, norms, and actions. For example, after the Nice attack, PVV leader Geert Wilders said, "This is a war. It will not stop until we close our borders to Islam and de-Islamize our societies. No more terror. No more Islam!" (New York Times, 2016a).

They believe that globalization has led to the transfer of traditional economic and political powers of states to international institutions, transnational corporations, and other non-state actors (Liang, 2016: 9). According to these parties, globalization threatens the purity and sovereignty of the nation-state. Immigration is associated with globalization by most FRP parties (Mudde, 2007: 189-197). Immigration, which has become an important issue in European politics since the 1980s, is said by FPR parties to lead to unemployment and economic stagnation. Immigrants have become the target of xenophobic accusations such as stealing jobs by these parties. For example, according to Marine Le Pen, French workers should be favored in the labor market. Le Pen argues that France's prosperity depends on ending globalization and replacing free trade with a "new patriotic model" of "smart protectionism" that radically reduces unemployment (Smith, 2017).

Traditional political groups, on the other hand, tend to incorporate a broader range of ideologies and prioritize a broader range of interests, such as social welfare, economic strategy, and international partnerships. While far-right groupings may agree on certain legislative positions, their specific concentration on ethno-nationalism, as well as their usually combative and inflammatory rhetoric, distinguishes them (Lutz, 2019: 527). This trait is particularly prominent in party propaganda, both in party newspapers and election pamphlets, rather than in electoral and party programs, which are more 'ideological'. Xenophobia means fear of 'foreigners' or anything that is 'foreign', and in practice, it is not only directed against 'foreigners', i.e., people who come from (or whose parents come from) other countries. Almost all ERPs fear the 'invasion of foreigners'. They associate them with all kinds of scourges (unemployment, crime, loss of values, traditions, etc.). However, their xenophobia is not limited to foreigners; anything related to their way of life and values is xenophobic. (Mudde, 1999: 188).

In recent years, a growing consensus has emerged among scholars on the essential elements of populism. As Canovan (1981: 294) observes, 'all forms of populism, without exception, involve in some way the glorification and appeal to the people, and all are anti-elitist in one sense or another'. This underpins Mudde's (2004: 544) oft-quoted definition of populism: 'an ideology that holds that society is ultimately divided into two homogeneous and hostile groups, the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elites', and that politics should be an expression of the *volonté*

générale (general will) of the people'. While this serves as a good minimum definition of populism, we would add that for right-wing populists, 'the people' are not only attacked from above by elites but also by the presence of 'others' in society (e.g. immigrants, welfare abusers, Indigenous citizens with special rights) who do not share the values of the people (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015: 5).

Whatever the ideological differences between populist parties, they all share the claim that democracy has been stolen from the sovereign 'people' by corrupt elites. Populists, therefore, present themselves as 'true' democrats. (Bowler et al., 2016: 72-73). However, in Europe, there are numerous notable far-right parties. Illustrations encompass the National Rally (National Front) in France, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), and Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany (Anderson, 2019: 325). These parties have garnered attention and backing by tapping into populist sentiments, addressing economic and immigration apprehensions, and challenging the conventional political landscape.

Table 1: Votes and Power Status of Far-Right Parties in Europe

Country Name	Name of Far-Right Party	Year with the Highest Number of Votes	Vote Share in the Elections	Forming a Government or Being in a Coalition
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)	2024	28.8 %	Yes
Belgium	Flemish Interest (VB)	2024	13.8 %	No
Denmark	Denmark Democrats (DP)	2022	8.1 %	No
France	National Rally (NFP)	2024	29.3 %	No
Germany	Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)	2025	20.8 %	No
Italy	Fratelli d'Italia (FDI)	2022	26.0 %	Yes
Netherlands	Party for Freedom (PVV)	2023	23.5 %	Yes
Norway	Progress Party	2009	22.9 %	No
Spain	Vox (VOX)	2019	15.1 %	No
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	2023	27.9 %	Yes
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (SD)	2022	20.5 %	No
United Kingdom	Reform UK (REFORM)	2024	14.3 %	No

Source: Compiled by the author from Parties and Elections in Europe <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/countries.html> (09.10.2025)

During World War 2, Europe, which experienced far-right ideologies such as National Socialism and Fascism and faced great destruction, saw far-right parties that came to the forefront with anti-refugee rhetoric as saviors responsible for the economic and political crises caused by the influx of refugees, especially after 2015.

As seen in Table 1 above, the recent preference for far-right parties by ordinary Europeans in many European countries, which have gained a reputation for emphasizing democratic values and universal human rights, poses an interesting dilemma. Far-right parties, based on an ideology that once set Europe on fire, are now partners in coalition governments in Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Moreover, as long as the political crises and economic depressions in Europe continue, it would not be surprising if these parties came to power on their own soon.

The loss of ground by the center-right has brought about serious changes not only at the institutional level but also in voter behavior. Voters are losing faith in the policies of the center-right, especially on issues such as economic uncertainty, unemployment, security

concerns, and immigration, and they believe that the far-right offers clearer, more radical, and more appealing solutions (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

This situation is creating a “politics of oscillation” on the right spectrum. While voters are looking for stability and institutionality in traditional right-wing parties on the one hand, they are finding identity, belonging, and protectionist economic promises in far-right parties on the other. Therefore, voter loyalty has weakened, and the fluidity within the right itself has become high (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018).

It is striking that especially young male voters, those in rural areas, and low-educated segments are turning to far-right parties. These groups do not find the “elitist” and “compromising” identity of center-right parties sufficiently representative; instead, it turns to more aggressive and determined actors (Rooduijn, 2018).

While the overall increase in salience is intriguing, it is also important to note that the salience of most major parties not only increased considerably but also declined virtually completely following the crisis. This suggests that once the immediate crisis strain eased, the parties may have altered their strategies and sought to downplay immigration. Contrary outcomes are dependent on media reports, such as during election seasons. (Grande et al., 2019: 1449) Suggests that, despite the parties' efforts to avoid the matter, the media may have over-reported the parties' immigration-related statements.

CONCLUSION

The emergence and growing influence of far-right parties across Europe since the late 1980s and early 1990s have significantly reshaped the continent's political landscape. Once considered fringe movements, these parties have gained electoral success, influenced policy decisions, and even entered government coalitions in various countries. Their appeal is rooted in a combination of economic anxiety, cultural backlash, and political disillusionment, which have intensified in the wake of global crises such as the 2008 financial collapse, the Arab Spring (2011), and the 2015 refugee influx.

The rise of these parties presents a critical challenge for European democracies, as they promote nativist and authoritarian ideologies that conflict with core democratic values such as pluralism, human rights, and the rule of law. This paper critically examines the key drivers behind the success of far-right populist radical right (PRR) parties, their political strategies, and their broader implications for European politics.

Far-right parties share several defining ideological traits, with nationalism, populism, and authoritarianism at their core. While there are national variations in their rhetoric and policies, they generally advocate for:

- **Nativism:** The belief that a nation should be preserved for its "native" population, often leading to hostility toward immigrants, ethnic minorities, and multiculturalism.
- **Populism:** The portrayal of politics as a struggle between the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite," where far-right parties position themselves as the true representatives of the ordinary citizen.
- **Authoritarianism:** A strong emphasis on law and order, strict immigration policies, and centralized control over national identity and culture.

These ideological foundations shape far-right parties' policies, including restrictive immigration laws, opposition to European Union (EU) governance, and a rejection of progressive social policies. They also fuel the creation of a binary distinction between "us" (the native population) and "them" (immigrants, minorities, and political elites), reinforcing social and political divisions.

One of the primary concerns regarding these parties is their challenge to liberal democratic principles. Empirical evidence suggests that where far-right parties gain influence, democratic norms such as judicial independence, media freedom, and minority rights are often undermined. Their rhetoric frequently targets marginalized communities, contributing to a climate of exclusion and polarization.

The electoral rise of far-right parties cannot be attributed to a single factor but rather to a confluence of economic, political, and cultural grievances. The global financial crisis of 2008 played a crucial role in accelerating support for far-right parties. The subsequent austerity measures, economic stagnation, and deindustrialization disproportionately affected working-class populations, creating widespread disillusionment with mainstream political parties. In addition to the economic crisis, the Neoliberal economic policies, including privatization and deregulation, deepened socioeconomic inequalities, leading many voters to feel abandoned by traditional left-wing and center-right parties. Far-right parties capitalized on these grievances by offering protectionist economic policies, including opposition to free trade agreements, job protections for native workers, and restrictions on foreign labor. For example, Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has argued that immigration depresses wages and increases job competition, particularly for low-skilled workers. Although economic research suggests that migrants can contribute positively to national economies by filling labor shortages and driving innovation, far-right rhetoric consistently frames migration as an economic burden rather than a benefit.

Beyond economic concerns, the far-right's rise is also driven by cultural anxieties about globalization, immigration, and shifting societal norms. Many far-right movements argue that mass migration—particularly from the Middle East and North Africa—threatens national identity, traditional values, and social cohesion. The 2015 European migrant crisis catalyzed far-right mobilization, reinforcing fears of demographic change and cultural erosion. In France, the National Rally (formerly the National Front) has positioned itself as a defender of French culture, advocating for stricter immigration controls and assimilation policies. Similarly, in Hungary, Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party has promoted an ethno-nationalist vision of Hungarian identity, rejecting multiculturalism and EU-imposed migration policies. This emphasis on cultural preservation manifests in policies that oppose multicultural initiatives, restrict religious freedoms (particularly for Muslim communities), and reinforce assimilationist narratives. Far-right parties argue that diversity undermines social cohesion, despite evidence suggesting that well-managed integration policies can enhance economic and cultural dynamism.

The weakening of mainstream parties—both center-left and center-right—has created a political vacuum that far-right parties have successfully exploited. The inability of traditional parties to address voter concerns about economic inequality, migration, and political corruption has eroded public trust in democratic institutions. Far-right movements present themselves as anti-establishment forces, claiming to be the voice of the "forgotten masses." They criticize mainstream politicians as detached elites who prioritize corporate interests, international organizations, and foreign aid over their citizens. This populist framing resonates particularly in regions experiencing economic stagnation and social discontent. Moreover, internal divisions within mainstream parties—such as the fragmentation of social democratic movements—have further weakened their ability to counter far-right narratives. Many center-right parties have also adopted stricter immigration policies in an attempt to regain voter support, inadvertently legitimizing far-right rhetoric and strengthening their appeal.

The rise of far-right parties represents a fundamental shift in European politics, challenging long-standing democratic norms and reshaping policy debates on migration, national identity, and governance. Their ability to capitalize on economic insecurity, cultural fears, and political disillusionment has enabled them to gain significant electoral ground. However, their success also raises critical concerns about the future of liberal democracy in Europe. The normalization

of far-right rhetoric has already influenced mainstream political discourse, leading to stricter immigration policies and nationalist economic agendas across the continent. If left unchecked, the continued rise of these movements could erode democratic institutions, weaken social cohesion, and heighten polarization.

To counteract this trend, mainstream political forces must address the root causes fueling far-right support. This includes implementing economic policies that reduce inequality, strengthening social integration efforts, and restoring public trust in democratic institutions. Rather than simply condemning far-right ideologies, policymakers must offer viable alternatives that address voter concerns while upholding democratic values. The trajectory of European politics will largely depend on how effectively mainstream parties respond to these challenges. Failure to engage with the grievances driving far-right support may result in their continued expansion, further altering the political and social fabric of Europe.

The rise of far-right populist parties in Europe has been driven by a combination of economic anxieties, cultural insecurities, and political disillusionment. At the core of their political rhetoric is a strong opposition to immigration, which they portray as a threat to national identity, economic stability, and social cohesion. By positioning themselves as the only political forces willing to challenge the political establishment, these parties have successfully mobilized public discontent, particularly among voters who feel left behind by globalization and marginalized by mainstream politics.

While far-right parties have gained electoral traction across Europe, their impact on actual migration policies remains a subject of debate. Despite their success in shifting political discourse toward stricter immigration controls, their ability to enact fundamental policy changes varies depending on national political contexts and institutional constraints. Understanding the broader implications of far-right populism on migration policies requires an in-depth exploration of its ideological foundations, electoral strategies, and policy influence.

Far-right parties' opposition to migration is rooted in three primary concerns: economic insecurity, cultural preservation, and demographic fears. These elements are central to their broader political appeal, allowing them to present themselves as defenders of national interests against perceived external threats. A major argument in far-right discourse is that migration exacerbates economic insecurity by increasing competition for jobs, particularly in low-skilled sectors. Many far-right parties claim that immigrants, especially those from non-European countries, depress wages and take jobs away from native workers. This fear is particularly strong in post-industrial regions that have experienced deindustrialization and labor market restructuring, where working-class voters feel abandoned by mainstream political parties.

Although economic research indicates that immigration can contribute to economic growth by filling labor shortages, stimulating innovation, and addressing aging population challenges, far-right rhetoric simplifies the issue into a zero-sum competition between "natives" and "outsiders." By doing so, these parties exploit economic grievances to strengthen their electoral appeal. Beyond economic anxieties, far-right movements frame migration as a fundamental threat to national identity and cultural homogeneity. They argue that multiculturalism weakens social cohesion and that large-scale immigration, particularly from Muslim-majority countries, challenges European cultural traditions. This cultural dimension of anti-immigration rhetoric is closely linked to the broader concept of nativism—the belief that a nation's culture should be preserved in its "original" form without external influence.

European politics, especially after the 2015 refugee crisis, has focused on the issue of the "other". This crisis was not only a foreign policy or humanitarian aid issue; it also served as a cultural, sociological and ideological rupture. The fact that center-right parties were squeezed between both humanitarian responsibility and internal security during this process made them

more profligate. The far-right, on the other hand, turned this situation into an opportunity; positioned the figure of the “other” as a threat and produced new areas of polarization through national identity, language, religion and culture. This line of contact deepened polarization in the political arena; and triggered reactions that threatened pluralism in the social arena. Thus, the political and social balance was damaged. The move away from multiculturalism and the desire for “cultural homogeneity” brought the center-right of Europe closer to the far-right.

Far-right leaders frequently use terms such as “cultural dilution” and “Islamization” to mobilize fears about demographic change. Their opposition to multiculturalism is not just about migration policy; it is also about resisting what they perceive as a broader ideological shift toward diversity and pluralism. By presenting themselves as defenders of traditional values, these parties appeal to voters who feel alienated by progressive social changes.

Demographic change is another major factor in far-right hostility toward migration. Many far-right groups argue that declining birth rates among native Europeans, combined with high immigration rates, will lead to the erosion of majority ethnic and religious identities. Some far-right politicians have openly promoted conspiracy theories such as the “Great Replacement”, which suggests that European elites are intentionally replacing native populations with migrants to weaken national sovereignty.

While demographic shifts are a natural aspect of globalization and economic mobility, far-right parties manipulate these trends to justify their calls for stricter border controls, deportations, and the prioritization of native-born citizens in social policies. These narratives are particularly effective in mobilizing voters who already feel that their national identity is under threat.

Far-right parties have successfully embedded themselves within European political systems, using migration as a focal point for mobilizing electoral support. Their ability to shape public discourse and exert pressure on mainstream parties has led to important shifts in migration policies across Europe. Far-right parties have moved from the political margins to the mainstream by capitalizing on public discontent with traditional parties. Their electoral victories have forced even centrist and leftist parties to adopt stricter stances on immigration to remain competitive. This process, known as the contagion effect, has led to a broader rightward shift in Europe. For example, in countries such as France, Germany, and Italy, mainstream political parties have toughened their migration policies in response to far-right electoral gains. Even governments that do not include far-right parties have introduced more restrictive asylum laws, increased deportations, and implemented border security measures to counter far-right narratives.

Despite their success in shaping political discourse, far-right parties face significant institutional barriers when it comes to directly implementing their migration policies. In countries with strong constitutional protections and independent judicial systems, extreme anti-immigration measures often face legal challenges. The European Union’s legal framework on human rights and refugee protection also acts as a constraint, preventing member states from adopting policies that violate international agreements. However, in countries where far-right parties have gained executive power—such as Hungary and Poland—migration policies have become increasingly restrictive. These governments have implemented border fortifications, refused to comply with EU refugee relocation programs, and pursued nationalist policies that prioritize “ethnic homogeneity” over multiculturalism. The impact of far-right migration policies is therefore uneven across Europe, depending on institutional checks and balances, coalition politics, and the extent to which mainstream parties resist or accommodate far-right demands.

Beyond policy influence, far-right parties have played a critical role in shaping public attitudes toward migration. Their framing of migration as a security crisis, economic threat, and

cultural invasion has contributed to the growing politicization of immigration in Europe. A key feature of far-right rhetoric is the claim that political elites, international organizations, and the media are betraying the interests of ordinary citizens by allowing mass migration. They present themselves as the "voice of the voiceless," standing against an out-of-touch establishment that allegedly prioritizes migrants over native citizens. This populist narrative strengthens their anti-establishment appeal and allows them to attract voters across different social classes.

The rise of far-right populist parties has fundamentally altered the European political landscape, making immigration one of the most contested issues of the 21st century. While their influence has led to stricter migration policies in some countries, their ability to implement extreme measures is limited by institutional constraints and international legal frameworks.

The clear rhetoric of far-right parties and the harsh solutions they offer in times of crisis attract the attention of center-right voters; this creates a serious oscillation dynamic on the right wing of the political spectrum. On the other hand, it is seen that the relationship established with the "other" on issues of immigration and identity leads to radicalization at the political level. This process is pushing the boundaries of democratic pluralism in Europe; it threatens the legitimacy and continuity of center politics. Therefore, it is of vital importance for the political stability of Europe that center-right parties develop policies that are resistant to populism, participatory and innovative.

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