



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

# The European right sees strong support for Israel as an opportunity for its anti-migrant policy



The surprise victory of the ultra-right Party for Freedom in the recent parliamentary elections in the Netherlands could become the "new normal" in Europe, where a series of parliamentary and presidential elections will follow next year.

The election in the Netherlands was the first since the Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel and the military counter-intervention that followed, so its result may be an indication of a larger-than-usual rightward shift in European voters' political preferences.

The crisis in the Middle East has caused a new phenomenon in Europe: extreme right-wing forces are taking on the fight against antisemitism as their essential characteristic.

Seemingly paradoxical, many of them were known for strong anti-Semitic views not so long ago. However, Israel's war against Hamas has brought a sharp polarisation between pro-Palestinian and pro-Jewish supporters into European politics.

It seems the far right is starting to successfully capitalise and adapt to it with its support for Israel, which is paying off. At least for now, according to the experience from the Netherlands.

## Continuation of the anti-migrant policy

The pro-Israeli policies of the European ultra-right are, in fact, a logical continuation of their anti-migrant policy, one of the few points on which they agree, regardless of the country where they operate.

After October 7, some of the most prominent European advocates of a restrictive migration policy, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, French far-right leader Marine Le Pen and her Italian counterpart Matteo Salvini, visited and supported Israel in its fight against Hamas.

The Jewish population in Europe is small,

estimated at around 2 million people, with at least one Jewish parent, and it is not particularly significant to the right-wing parties as a direct source of votes.

**The right-wing shift towards Jewish voters is part of the strategy to take parts of the electorate away from the big, established parties**

However, the appreciation of their historical role in Europe and the traditionally positive sentiment towards the Jewish population make the far-right parties take on the pro-Jewish narrative as very significant for improving their image. Israel's intervention against Hamas made this tendency even more pronounced.

One of the reasons is pragmatically political. European Jews traditionally vote for moderate and mainstream parties, so the right-wing shift towards them is part of the right's general strategy to take parts of the electorate away from the big, established parties.

The second and even more significant is their desire to capitalise on their previous anti-migrant policies using the escalation in the Middle East, which has caused a change in European political preferences. This time, there was an unmistakable alliance with the Jews and Israel but against the Arab immigrants and their European supporters.



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The leader of the French Rassemblement National, Marine Le Pen, and her supporters **recently joined** the massive street support for Israel on the streets of Paris. It was supposed to represent the culmination of a long process of distancing herself from the extreme legacy of her father, Jean Marie Le Pen, including antisemitism.

"For me, the DNA of the far right is antisemitism. So when I see a big party abandoning antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and march towards the Republic's values, I'm glad", Serge Klarsfeld, French activist and Nazi-hunter, **told Le Figaro**.

The right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) has had its own Jewish faction for 5 years, called "Jews in the AfD", which was founded by only 19 Jews. At the time, it seemed like a political exotic to form a Jewish faction within a xenophobic party whose officials had anti-Semitic outbursts.

However, the AfD, currently the second dominant force in Germany, wanted to boost its high rating with a pro-Israel view. This is a very fertile ground for growth in Germany, given that the public feels a special historical responsibility regarding the Jews. The AfD counts on this to promote its strong pro-Israel and anti-immigrant policy.

## The right sees a chance in the 2024 election

As early as next year, a series of parliamentary and presidential elections will follow across Europe, where the new trend of growth of far-right policies and their support for Israel will probably spill over to the election results. The Netherlands has already given a strong hint in this respect.

Finland, Iceland, Romania, Slovakia, and Lithuania will hold presidential elections; Portugal, Belgium, Austria, Lithuania, and Croatia will hold parliamentary elections. The UK elections are also fairly definite despite the possibility that they will take place in early

2025.

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Some countries, like Portugal and Austria, have seen a nearly complete shift to the right in the state's political orientation. Also, the prospects for the survival of Spain's new socialist government are not particularly good, given the crisis due to its pact with Catalan separatists. The right-wing opposition and the majority of voters are against this.

The elections for the European Parliament next June will be the most significant pulse check. Given the changed circumstances, the right will seek a new chance to promote its priority, which is anti-migrant policy, in combination with its increasing pro-Jewish orientation.

With the passage of time and the indecisiveness of European governments regarding the conflict between Israel and Hamas, the chances of the far-right are increasing, in large part due to their decisive alignment with Israel.