



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Has the migration issue become an unbridgeable divide in Europe?



Less than a year after its formation, Dick Schoof's cabinet **collapsed** in the Netherlands on 3 June. The news of the far-right Party for Freedom's exit from the governing coalition due to a dispute over migration policy reverberated across Europe.

At a time when Europe is preparing for major security and institutional **challenges**, the collapse of one of the continent's most far-right governments raises important questions about the future of right-wing populism, the stability of coalition models and institutional resilience within the EU.

Geert Wilders, the leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV), the party that won a landslide **victory** in the November 2023 elections, decided to withdraw support for the cabinet when his latest proposals on migration policy were not accepted by the other coalition partners.

It is a set of measures that, according to Wilders, should introduce "full border control and reduce the number of asylum applications by 90 per cent".

A central point of contention was his proposal to immediately reject asylum applications from "safe countries", thereby setting a legal and political precedent.

Partners from the centrist New Social Contract (NSC) and the agrarian-orientated Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB) deemed this unacceptable, both in a legal sense and from a human rights perspective.

Migration as a pivotal issue

Wilders' move was not unexpected. Over the past three months, he has clearly announced that he will topple the government if he does not receive full support for the migration reform.

Prime Minister Schoof, a non-partisan figure with a strong bureaucratic background, did not have the political strength to stop him.

Initially, his position was defined as a compromise, and the delicate balance between the hard right and centrist currents proved untenable at the first major test.

Wilders is above all a political opportunist, skilfully exploiting an issue that divides the electorate

Migration has **emerged** as a pivotal issue in European politics, influencing not only the Netherlands but also France, Germany, Italy, and the Nordic countries.

Wilders is above all a political opportunist, skilfully exploiting an issue that divides the electorate.

At a time when the number of migrants arriving via the Mediterranean and the Balkan route is increasing again, public opinion in many countries is becoming receptive to radical solutions.

Wilders' aim was not only to implement the policy but also to provoke the collapse of the coalition and thus prepare the ground for new elections in which he will try to win an absolute majority.

Unstable government in The Hague

The tactic of toppling one's own government to increase one's own electoral capital is nothing new in European politics.

Matteo Salvini used a similar model in Italy in 2019 when he toppled his own coalition with the Five Star Movement.

In Wilders' case, the plan is more sophisticated because he knows from the outset that pragmatic parties such as the VVD and the New Social Contract (NSC) need a majority to implement tax and energy reforms.

If they reject his demands, they will be politically destabilised and forced into a

situation where they have to choose between political self-preservation and institutional responsibility.

A technical government without a full mandate will host the NATO summit at the end of June

The government's resignation comes at a very unfavourable time. The Netherlands is **hosting** the NATO summit at the end of June, and the role of host is now being taken over by a technical government without a full mandate.

On a diplomatic level, this could undermine the perception of stability within the Northern European bloc, especially as the Netherlands plays an important role in the collective defence structures.

At the same time, the European Council is **preparing** decisive steps in asylum policy and the reform of the Dublin Regulation. An unstable government in The Hague reduces the EU's ability to agree on a unified approach and gives Hungary and Slovakia additional room for **manoeuvring** to block common solidarity mechanisms.

Power without limits

Reactions in Brussels have been cautious but clear. Several sources in the European Commission warned that such political manoeuvring could spread to other member states.

A report circulating in the EU Council mentions that the collapse of the Dutch government could trigger similar moves in Finland and Belgium, where the right-wing blocs have also entered into coalition agreements with the centrists.

Wilders' political future is uncertain, but his current strength is clear. He has a stable electorate and dominance in the right-wing spectrum, and he is now using this momentum to present himself as the only consistent voice

opposing the "Brussels dictatorship."



The centrists and liberals must now redefine their approach to migration. Ignoring the issue has proven to be the wrong strategy - Dick Schoof

Considering the sentiments of a segment of the public, the Party for Freedom's (PVV) new campaign could emphasise a direct confrontation with the EU regarding asylum policies, freedom of movement, and national sovereignty.

If he manages to maintain control of the narrative, it is quite possible that it will exceed the 40 per cent support in the following elections, which would open up space for it to form a government without coalition compromises.

On the other hand, the centrists and liberals must now redefine their approach to migration. Ignoring the issue has proven to be the wrong strategy.

Instead, the EU will probably have to propose mechanisms that both control migration flows and protect fundamental rights. If they fail to do so, populists with quick, radical solutions will occupy the space, offering not institutional security but political instability.

The Dutch case is a clear signal. Coalitions involving the hard right can only endure if the centrists acknowledge the inevitable threat of blackmail.

The sustainability of such arrangements depends on whether the parties are willing to defend legal order and EU standards or if they sacrifice principles in favour of short-term

survival in power.

It is now clear that Wilders did not want power for the sake of compromise but power without limits. And that is why the government had to collapse.