



Trump's foreign policy divides the transatlantic far-right

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Summary

As the US-Israeli war on Iran escalates, divisions are not only [deepening between the US and longstanding allies](#) like Spain and the UK, but also erupting within [the “new transatlantic alliance”](#) of the far-right. Despite the MAGA movement's [success in strengthening relations with their European counterparts](#), disagreements over Trump's foreign policy may increasingly be making the American president [a liability for Europe's far-right](#). Even as both see the Iranian regime as a foreign adversary, the response from far-right leaders in France, Germany and Italy so far has [signalled considerable uneasiness](#) with Trump's approach. This is [part of a growing trend](#) over the past year, where far-right allies in Europe are increasingly withdrawing their outright support for Trump as his foreign policy grows more contradictory to their own nationalist aims. Still, the transatlantic far-right may yet overcome present divisions and regain momentum, especially if mainstream parties in Europe and the US fail to articulate compelling foreign policy alternatives of their own.

A new transatlantic relationship under Trump 2.0

Following Trump's return to office, there is [a growing consensus amongst experts](#) that the old transatlantic relationship has been irrevocably altered, with some even [declaring its demise](#). Moments like [the scolding of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#) at the Oval Office and [US Vice President JD Vance's contentious speech](#) at the Munich Security Conference were all early signs of a new American approach. After a year of Trump threatening to [violate the sovereignty of European territories](#),

impose [tariffs tantamount to a trade war](#), and [withdraw all military support for Ukraine](#), his already low popularity amongst Europeans [has plummeted](#). Even so, European leaders have [remained largely cordial and composed](#) in their transatlantic dealings. Indeed, when US Secretary of State Marco Rubio returned to this year's Munich conference, his more amiable address was [met with a standing ovation](#) from the European security community.

However, [as experts quickly warned](#), the transatlantic relationship outlined in Rubio's speech was not that of the old liberal order but of [the “new” far-right](#). Like Vance a year



before him, [Rubio argued](#) that Europe must do more to protect “Western civilization” against the alleged threat posed by immigration, progressive policies, and other remnants of the liberal order. This is [the message at the heart of the transatlantic far-right](#), to which the Trump administration belongs. In Europe, the same sentiment [is found amongst far-right allies such as](#) Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, leader of Reform UK Nigel Farage, France’s Marine Le Pen of the National Rally party, and Germany’s Alice Weidel of the Alternative for Deutschland party. Like in the US, their movements have made [significant political strides](#) over the past decade. In part, this is due to [the tremendous effort to organize joint](#) networking forums, political campaigning, fundraising efforts, and knowledge sharing across the Atlantic. Indeed, transforming the European far-right in the image of MAGA has become [a central strategy of the American far-right](#), drawing their movements ever closer.

Far-right divisions over Trump’s foreign policy

Even so, as Trump has reshaped American foreign policy over the past year, [divisions have also begun to deepen within the transatlantic far-right](#). Despite their [continued alignment on “culture war” issues](#) like migration, gender ideology, and climate policy, European far-right leaders are now both [quietly and openly distancing themselves](#) from the American president on issues like trade and security. In France, National Rally leader Jordan Bardella has shifted between [praising Trump](#) as a “wind of freedom, of national pride blowing all over

Western democracies” to [denouncing his tariff threats](#) as “blackmail” and even endorsing the use of the EU’s “trade bazooka” in line with political rival Emmanuel Macron. Similar criticisms [have been raised by Weidel in Germany](#), whose base also [harbours anti-American sentiments](#) similar to those found amongst National Rally voters. Even Farage, [whose supporters hold some of the most favourable views of Trump](#), has [carefully criticised](#) the president’s approach to Ukraine. Perhaps the most resounding and unified criticism of Trump by European far-right allies [came after his threats against Greenland](#), which triggered public condemnation by leaders like Bardella, Weidel and Farage.

When Trump launched his military operation in Iran, European far-right leaders once again [showed themselves divided](#) on whether to endorse the American position, [perhaps to the surprise of allies in Washington](#). To be sure, there is no love lost between Europe’s far-right and the Iranian regime. Most have long allied themselves with the US and Israel in the fight against the “Islamist threat” posed by states like Iran. Nevertheless, as [Trump struggles to justify his reasoning behind the war](#), far-right leaders in France, Germany and Italy have responded with both [careful concern and outright criticism](#). Their objections centre on the domestic risks of endorsing another American war in the Middle East, which could prompt massive challenges for Europe, including rising energy costs, faltering security commitments, and increased migration flows. Even leaders like Farage, who openly support Trump’s war with Iran, [have begun to raise these concerns](#). Beyond the material costs, Europe’s far-right leaders will also have to



contend with the political contradiction of claiming to put the sovereignty of their nations first, while becoming entangled in a foreign war at the behest of another foreign nation, even an allied nation like the US.

More fundamentally, these divisions seem to stem from an inherent tension within the transatlantic far-right, as a transnational network of, first and foremost, nationalist movements. In the American context, similar tensions between Trump and MAGA have been much less pronounced. [Recent polling shows](#) that the president still has a great deal of support for his war in Iran amongst both his base and republican party officials. However, if the war prolongs and gas prices continue to rise, markets grow more volatile, and more American soldiers are killed, [even this could change](#). Already, prominent MAGA figures like Tucker Carlson and Marjorie Taylor Greene [are opposing the war](#) on the basis that Trump should put “America first, not Israel first” – a sentiment that reflects [a growing divide between the president and his base](#) over the issue of Israel. Even for supporters as loyal as MAGA, there may be a limit to how many military threats, interventions, and wars [the self-described “peace president”](#) can pursue.

The enemy of my enemy is (still) my friend

Altogether, these deepening divisions constitute a definite headache for far-right leaders in Europe and the US. Even so, they do not seem to surmount [their continued](#)

[alignment on the “culture war” issues](#) that have long defined the far-right’s success. Also, far-right movements [have often been successful in](#) deflecting criticism of their own conflicts and failures by redirecting public resentment towards the alleged threat of a common enemy (like immigrants, liberals, and progressives). If the threat of these “enemies” can be made to seem greater than their own divisions, the transatlantic far-right could overcome current disagreements and regain momentum. This would [deal another blow to mainstream transatlantic relations](#) based on international agreements of cooperation, peace and justice, which the far-right contests.

So far, mainstream parties in Europe and the US have also failed to offer their own foreign policy alternatives to the far-right’s fractured approach to Iran. Indeed, while Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez [declared a resounding “no to war”](#) in early March, European leaders like UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz have been [inconsistent, disjointed, and hesitant in their support for the war](#). In the US, Democrats have revealed their own fractures as [members crossed party lines to defeat a resolution](#) to halt strikes against Iran, despite [overwhelming support from the base](#). Even as [the UN Secretary-General calls for an immediate end to the war](#), it seems [mainstream political leaders across the Atlantic are as divided](#) as the far-right on how to deal with Trump’s foreign policy as it grows ever more aggressive, erratic, and conflicting.



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