# Conservative nationalism’s future hangs on Poland’s tense presidential run-off



This week has marked a troubling moment for the conservative political landscape in Europe, dominated by gatherings of factions that cling to divisive nationalism and outdated values. Central to this misguided movement is the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), which has drawn attention in Poland and Hungary amid the critical presidential election run-off in Poland. The stakes of this election are soaring, not just for Poland but for the whole spectrum of populist politics across Europe, as conservative forces rally behind Karol Nawrocki, the misguided candidate backed by CPAC and the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS), who faces off against the more progressive and forward-thinking Rafal Trzaskowski.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a troubling figure in the camp of right-wing nationalism, has overtly framed the narrative around these gatherings as a battle for the soul of Western civilization. His remarks branding President Donald Trump as a "truth serum" are nothing short of alarming, suggesting that Trump's regressive ideologies resonate deeply within this faction of European politics, embodying a chaotic vision they call the “Age of Patriots.” Orban's fierce criticisms of the European Union's progressive policies, particularly concerning immigration and social issues, position them as threats to national identity, yet this mindset only breeds division and isolation. Echoes of Orban’s rhetoric have been amplified by other extreme figures, like Alice Weidel from Germany’s far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Geert Wilders of the Freedom Party in the Netherlands, demonstrating a concerning alignment against sensible liberal governance.

As the campaign intensifies, the implications of Nawrocki's candidacy extend dangerously beyond Poland's borders. US officials, including Kristi Noem, Secretary of Homeland Security, have inexplicably endorsed Nawrocki, asserting that his success would somehow strengthen US-Poland relations and bolster military support. This reflects a troubling trend where American nationalism entwines with European right-wing movements, forming a global network that champions regressive, anti-globalist sentiments. Speakers at CPAC have been disturbingly outspoken in promoting an “international nationalist movement,” attempting to treat the Polish elections as a litmus test for similar misguided right-leaning initiatives throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

However, the newfound confidence among European conservatives is overshadowed by significant challenges. Recent electoral outcomes in Romania and shifts in Austria underscore a precarious balance; nationalist movements are still facing troubling setbacks, indicating that their momentum is far more fragile than it appears. Analysts are right to warn that a defeat for Nawrocki could extinguish the flickering enthusiasm for nationalist forces, creating ripples of uncertainty that would affect upcoming elections in Hungary and beyond. As Orban himself gears up for a forbidding electoral landscape, he must confront the unsettling reality that his divisive message may not resonate as powerfully at home as it does in international circles.

Framing this moment as pivotal for global conservatism only emphasizes the precariousness of this approach. The success or failure of candidates like Nawrocki could ultimately reshape alliances and strategies among right-wing parties across Europe. As these factions wrestle with narratives surrounding identity, safety, and sovereignty, they must reckon with the more progressive sentiments emerging within key voter bases. This dynamic enhances the complexity surrounding the anticipated results of the Polish elections; the responses from both the electorate and the broader European landscape will inevitably shape the controversial future of conservatism on the continent.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8e65w8877yo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/f08b1870-3bf2-490b-a659-74c7e232fa2d> - Poland's upcoming presidential runoff has become a pivotal moment for the global populist right and supporters of Donald Trump's 'Maga' agenda. The conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party's candidate, Karol Nawrocki, is locked in a tight race with pro-EU Warsaw mayor Rafał Trzaskowski, backed by Prime Minister Donald Tusk’s centrist coalition. Republican allies, including Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, rallied at CPAC Poland to endorse Nawrocki, warning that a Trzaskowski victory could weaken conservative and nationalist momentum in Europe following recent setbacks in Romania and Canada. Analysts believe the outcome could influence next year’s elections in Hungary and the future of nationalist forces across Central and Eastern Europe.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/65809f2f278f7430cbdfe313e312e9f4> - Poland is set for a tightly contested presidential runoff election between liberal, pro-European Warsaw Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski and conservative nationalist Karol Nawrocki. The election holds significant domestic and international implications, with U.S. President Donald Trump openly supporting Nawrocki and promising enhanced military ties in exchange for a win. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has also endorsed Nawrocki, intensifying the geopolitical stake due to ongoing concerns over Russia’s war in Ukraine.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/hungarys-orban-backs-polish-nationalist-presidential-candidate-nawrocki-cpac-2025-05-29/> - At the CPAC Hungary conference, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban voiced his support for Polish nationalist presidential candidate Karol Nawrocki, expressing strong political solidarity just days before Poland's second-round presidential election. Orban used the platform to unveil a conservative 'patriotic plan' aimed at transforming the European Union. He advocated for Christian cultural values, national sovereignty, and expressed opposition to EU-wide initiatives such as joint taxation, borrowing, and Ukraine's membership in the bloc. Orban's address also included a sharp nationalist tone, calling to 'take Europe back from migrants' and promote education rooted in national principles. U.S. former President Donald Trump, an ally of Orban, praised him in a video message at the event. The conference highlighted Orban's alignment with other European populist leaders, including endorsements for Czech populist Andrej Babis and planned appearances by Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. Orban is gearing up for a challenging election year himself, reinforcing his conservative base with strong anti-media and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/da2fe440738cf967b2951f1e344770bc> - The Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), a major U.S. conservative gathering, held its first meeting in Poland on May 27, 2025, just days before the Polish presidential election. The event took place in Jasionka, a conservative region near Rzeszow, and featured key figures such as U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and CPAC Chairman Matt Schlapp. Noem strongly endorsed Karol Nawrocki, a conservative historian supported by the Law and Justice party and U.S. President Donald Trump, over the pro-EU liberal candidate, Warsaw Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski. Noem argued that Nawrocki would bolster U.S.-Poland relations, enhance national defense, and promote conservative values akin to Trump’s leadership. Schlapp framed the election as part of a global conservative struggle against 'globalists,' emphasizing the significance of such outcomes for global freedom. The event also featured John Eastman, who characterized the election as a critical frontline in defending Western civilization. CPAC has increasingly aligned with Trump's populist movement and has expanded globally with gatherings in countries like Hungary, Japan, and Israel. The presence of U.S. troops and military cooperation was also underscored as a key element of the strategic alliance between the U.S. and Poland.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe-is-crisis-polish-nationalist-presidential-candidate-tells-conservative-2025-05-27/> - Polish nationalist presidential candidate Karol Nawrocki addressed the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Rzeszow, Poland, emphasizing that Europe is in crisis and that Poland must play a leading role in revitalizing it. During his campaign speech ahead of the decisive second round of Poland's presidential election, Nawrocki positioned himself as a conservative voice inspired by U.S. President Donald Trump and touted strong transatlantic ties with Washington over alignment with Brussels. Supported by the main opposition party Law and Justice (PiS), Nawrocki trails slightly behind liberal candidate Rafal Trzaskowski in polls. He highlighted a recent visit to the White House and pledged to make Poland a leader within the EU in maintaining strong U.S.-EU relations. He also criticized a proposed hate speech act aimed at expanding protections based on sexual orientation, gender, age, and disability, asserting it would infringe on free speech. The CPAC event in Rzeszow marks only the second time the prominent U.S. conservative conference has convened in Europe, previously meeting in Hungary in 2022.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/maga-goes-east-romanias-presidential-frontrunner-rides-hard-right-wave-2025-05-14/> - A political shift toward the hard right is unfolding in Central Europe, with George Simion, a nationalist Romanian lawmaker and admirer of Donald Trump, leading the presidential race ahead of the May 18 runoff. Simion, who campaigns under a 'Make Romania Great Again' banner, opposes EU leadership and military aid to Ukraine. His potential victory could destabilize Romania's relations with the EU and NATO, and align the country more closely with hard-right leaders like Hungary's Viktor Orban and Slovakia's Robert Fico. This bloc could further expand if eurosceptic Andrej Babis wins upcoming elections in the Czech Republic.