

The publication of the European Journal of Geography (EJG) is based on the European Association of Geographers' goal to make European Geography a worldwide reference and standard. Thus, the scope of the EJG is to publish original and innovative papers that will substantially improve, in a theoretical, conceptual, or empirical way the quality of research, learning, teaching, and applying geography, as well as in promoting the significance of geography as a discipline. Submissions are encouraged to have a European dimension. The European Journal of Geography is a peer-reviewed open access journal and is published quarterly.

**Received:** 09/09/2025

**Revised:** 16/01/2026

**Revised:** 27/03/2026

**Accepted:** 29/03/2026

**Published:** 03/04/2026

**Editor:**

Dr. Alexandros Bartzokas-Tsiompras

**Research Article**

# Right-Wing Rearticulations of Europe: Contested Geographical Imaginaries in German and French Parliamentary Social Media

 Hannah Lena Boettcher <sup>1</sup>✉ &  Georg Glasze <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Geography (Cultural Geography), Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany

<sup>2</sup> Chair of Geography (Cultural Geography), Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany

✉ Correspondence: [hannah.boettcher@fau.de](mailto:hannah.boettcher@fau.de)

**Abstract:** Since the late 2010s, Europe as a political and spatial project has become increasingly contested in political discourse. This contestation has unfolded amid overlapping crises such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2019 European elections. Right-wing populist actors have played a central role in reshaping political narratives about Europe. This study examines how hegemonic geographical imaginaries of Europe are challenged in parliamentary discourse between 2019 and 2022, a period marked by a qualitative shift in Euroscepticism towards its normalisation. Focusing on Germany and France, two central yet distinct reference points of European integration, we analyse tweets by members of the German Bundestag and the French Assemblée Nationale, with particular attention to the right-wing parties Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Rassemblement National (RN). Drawing on lexicometric corpus analysis of Twitter communication, we examine how competing geographical imaginaries of Europe are articulated, stabilised, and contested. The analysis shows that mainstream parliamentary discourse continues to frame Europe primarily as an institutional and normative space. By contrast, AfD and RN mobilise counter-hegemonic imaginaries centred on borders, migration, and sovereignty, selectively appropriating core European vocabularies. Although German and French parliamentary discourse differ in their broader spatial orientations—towards Eastern Europe and global power relations in Germany, and towards national and post-colonial contexts in France—right-wing actors in both cases converge on a markedly nationalised and exclusionary spatial re-articulation of Europe. These findings highlight how social media facilitate the diffusion and normalisation of exclusionary geographical imaginaries and contribute to their cross-national alignment.

**Keywords:** geographical imaginaries; Europe; right-wing populism; parliamentary discourse; social media; computer-aided discourse analysis

DOI: 10.48088/ejg.h.boe.17.1.139.159

ISSN: 1792-1341

E-ISSN: 2410-7433



**Copyright:** © 2026 by the authors.

Licensee European Association of Geographers (EUROGEO). This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license.



**Highlights:**

- Right-wing populist actors normalise exclusionary geographical imaginaries of Europe.
- AfD and RN appropriate European vocabularies to legitimise nationalist spatial narratives.
- Despite national differences, right-wing parties converge on a nationalised spatial narrative of Europe.

## 1. Introduction: Europe in Times of Multiple Crises – Contested Geographical Imaginaries

For much of the post-war period, Europe was discursively stabilised as a political and normative project associated with peace, cooperation, and economic prosperity. Within this hegemonic imaginary, European integration appeared as a largely teleological process, underpinned by shared values such as democracy, solidarity, and the rule of law. Since

the late 2010s, this hegemonic imaginary has been increasingly destabilised. A series of overlapping crises—including the Eurozone crisis, the 2015 migration events, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and renewed geopolitical conflict following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine—has transformed Europe into a highly contested political and spatial signifier.

From a political-geographical perspective, these crises do not merely disrupt existing narratives but function as productive moments of geopolitical sense-making. They open discursive spaces in which borders are reimagined, responsibilities rescaled, and Europe's spatial, political, and moral boundaries renegotiated. As a result, struggles over Europe increasingly unfold through competing geographical imaginaries that define what Europe is, where it begins and ends, and who legitimately belongs to it.

Right-wing populist actors have played a particularly prominent role in these processes. While Euroscepticism is not new, the period between 2019 and 2022 marks a qualitative shift in its articulation. During this phase, Eurosceptic and exclusionary imaginaries increasingly entered political arenas, including national parliaments and digital platforms. Rather than positioning themselves solely in opposition to Europe, right-wing actors contribute to the normalisation of counter-hegemonic imaginaries by selectively appropriating established European vocabularies such as freedom, security, and sovereignty, and rearticulating them within nationalist and exclusionary spatial narratives.

This paper examines these dynamics through a comparative analysis of parliamentary discourse in Germany and France. Both countries occupy a central yet historically distinct position within the European integration project and have long functioned as reference points in debates about Europe's political and spatial order. While German discourse has often articulated Europe through an institutional and geopolitically outward-looking lens, French discourse has traditionally emphasised sovereignty, statehood, and Europe's positioning within broader historical and post-colonial contexts. These differences render Germany and France particularly instructive cases for analysing how specific national political geographies of Europe are structured—and how they are reworked by right-wing actors.

Empirically, the study analyses tweets by members of the German Bundestag and the French Assemblée Nationale, with particular attention to the right-wing parties Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Rassemblement National (RN). National parliamentarians are key actors at the intersection of national and European politics, combining institutional authority with discursive visibility. Twitter/X is examined as a central arena of political communication during the period under study, enabling parliamentarians to circulate geopolitical narratives beyond traditional media and to align discourses across national contexts.

By applying lexicometric methods to parliamentary Twitter discourse, this paper investigates how competing geographical imaginaries of Europe are produced, stabilised, and contested. Focusing on right-wing populist actors, it shows how nationally distinct political geographies of Europe coexist with a growing convergence of exclusionary spatial narratives by right-wing actors. In doing so, the study contributes to a political geography of Europe by demonstrating how Europe's meaning is negotiated.

## 2. Geographical Imaginaries and the Making of Political Space in the Age of Social Media

Geographical imaginaries have become a central concept in political geography for analysing how spatial meanings are produced, stabilised, and contested through discourse and practice. Rather than treating space as a neutral backdrop to political processes, research on geographical imaginaries foregrounds the ways in which spatial understandings actively shape political identities, power relations, and geopolitical strategies. This perspective is particularly relevant for analysing Europe as a comparatively recent and evolving political project, whose spatial boundaries, meanings, and internal hierarchies are neither fixed nor stable, but continuously contested and redefined.

This chapter situates the present study at the intersection of two interrelated strands of scholarship. First, it draws on debates in political geography and critical geopolitics that conceptualise geographical imaginaries as performative, relational, and deeply entangled with power. Second, it argues that contemporary struggles over Europe's meaning increasingly unfold within digital communication environments—particularly social media—which have become key arenas for the production and circulation of geographical imaginaries and therefore demand systematic attention from political-geographical research.

The first part of the chapter (Section 2.1) introduces geographical imaginaries as a key concept in political geography, drawing on post-structuralist and performative approaches to discourse. Geographical imaginaries are understood as practices through which spatial orders are produced, contested, and rendered politically meaningful. Building on this conceptual foundation, Section 2.2 focuses on social media as contemporary arenas of geopolitical meaning-making.

Since the late 2010s, platforms such as Twitter/X have become central sites of political communication for parliamentary actors, particularly right-wing populist parties. From a political-geographical perspective, social media are treated not merely as channels of expression, but as socio-technical environments that shape the circulation, visibility, and alignment of geographical imaginaries across national contexts. Together, these sections provide the conceptual and analytical groundwork for examining how parliamentary actors negotiate geographical imaginaries of Europe in times of crisis.

### 2.1. *The performativity of geographical imaginaries*

From a post-structuralist perspective, geographical imaginaries are understood as performative constructs that actively participate in the production of socio-spatial realities. Rather than merely reflecting space, they are embedded in political narratives and shape political debates as well as material practices over time (Bialasiewicz et al. 2007; Acton 2023). As Watkins (2015:509) notes, spatial imaginaries are “stories and ways of talking about places and spaces that transcend language as embodied performances in the material world”. Building on this tradition, this paper conceptualises geographical imaginaries as inherently performative, drawing on Gregory (2004), Bialasiewicz et al. (2007), and more recent contributions (Acton 2023; Brankamp et al. 2023; Sykes 2018).

Within political geography and critical geopolitics, geographical imaginaries play a central role in discursive world-making (Bialasiewicz 2011). They function as collective frameworks through which socio-spatial relations are interpreted and normalised. Emerging at the intersection of discourse and practice, they are disseminated through narratives, visual representations, and increasingly through digital infrastructures. Closely intertwined with power relations, geographical imaginaries constitute sites of contestation that shape political action and spatial ordering (Davoudi et al. 2018). As Brankamp et al. (2023:3) show, imaginaries gain political traction through discursive accumulation that renders them increasingly “implementable”.

A defining feature of geographical imaginaries is their flexibility and apparent self-evidence. Similar imaginaries can be mobilised by different actors to support divergent territorial narratives, enabled by their “unquestioned acceptance and generalisability” (Acton 2023:1126). Through such narratives, places are ascribed specific characteristics, simultaneously producing spatial Others and forms of political self-positioning (Gregory 2004:4).

Geographical imaginaries do not simply describe spatial realities; they enact them. Their performative power lies in the reciprocal relationship between discourse and practice: imaginaries legitimise political action, while material practices stabilise or transform imaginaries (Watkins 2015; Davoudi et al. 2018; Carpentier 2021). This helps explain both their durability and their susceptibility to change, particularly in moments of political contestation.

Following Watkins’ (2015:512-513) typology of geographical imaginaries as places, idealised spaces, or spatial transformations, this study focuses on geographical imaginaries of Europe as idealised supranational spaces. Analysing how French and German parliamentarians mobilise such idealised spatial imaginaries allows us to examine how Europe’s territorial coherence, boundaries, and external relations are discursively negotiated while simultaneously acknowledging the attributed characteristics as part of broader narratives. By linking the performative character of geographical imaginaries to parliamentary and digital political discourse, this paper advances political-geographical research on Europe by showing how geographical imaginaries are mobilised to stabilise or challenge dominant spatial narratives in times of crisis.

### 2.2. *The materiality and practices of discourse on Twitter/X*

Social media have fundamentally transformed political communication by reshaping how political actors articulate, circulate, and contest meanings. Rather than functioning merely as additional channels, platforms such as Twitter/X constitute distinct discursive arenas whose specific mediality shapes political discourse in systematic ways (Norris, 2003; Stromer-Galley, 2014). This implies that spatial imaginaries are not only communicated through social media, but are actively co-produced by platform-specific techniques and practices.

During the period under study, Twitter emerged as a central arena for public parliamentary communication, enabling politicians to bypass traditional media gatekeepers. This shift has been particularly consequential for right-wing populist actors, who have strategically leveraged platform logics associated with what has been described as “Populism 2.0” (Gerbaudo, 2014). Algorithmic amplification, metrics of visibility, and the privileging of affective, simplified, and polarising content favour communicative styles that resonate strongly with populist narratives. As a result, social media

environments tend to amplify discourses centred on crisis, threat, and antagonism—core elements of right-wing populist narratives.

Building on recent work on the mediality of social media, we conceptualise Twitter as a socio-technical assemblage in which techniques (e.g., hashtags, retweets, character limits, metrics) and institutionalised practices (e.g. networking, coordination, affective mobilisation) fundamentally shape discursive formations (Schuhn et al., 2026). From this perspective, Twitter does not simply host political discourse but actively structures its form, reach, and resonance. These characteristics enable the circulation and stabilisation of spatial imaginaries that contest hegemonic representations of Europe.

Empirical research has shown that right-wing populist parties across Europe—including the Rassemblement National and the Alternative für Deutschland—have been particularly effective in exploiting these platform-specific affordances. Coordinated online strategies, transnational networking, and the mobilisation of emotionally charged narratives around issues such as migration, sovereignty, security, and the COVID-19 pandemic have allowed these actors to gain disproportionate visibility relative to their parliamentary strength (Pérez-Curiel, 2020; Carral et al., 2023; Serrano et al., 2019). In this sense, Twitter facilitates not only national but also transnational convergence of right-wing populist discourses.

For the analysis of geographical imaginaries of Europe, this has important methodological implications. The platform's mediality necessitates approaches that account for both the quantitative structuring of discourse (e.g. frequency, co-occurrence, visibility) and the qualitative organisation of meaning (e.g. narratives, value structures, spatial metaphors). By analysing parliamentary discourse on Twitter/X, this study responds to calls to systematically integrate social media into discourse-oriented political-geographical research (Ash et al., 2018; Wiertz & Schopper, 2022; Schuhn et al., 2026). It thereby demonstrates how digital platforms have become key sites in which Europe's geographical imaginaries are stabilised, contested, and reconfigured.

### 3. Data and Analytical Approach

This study investigates how geographical imaginaries of Europe are discursively produced by German and French parliamentarians, with a particular focus on right-wing counter-hegemonic narratives articulated by the Alternative für Deutschland and the Rassemblement National. Building on a post-structuralist understanding of discourse as performative practice, the analysis treats parliamentary communication on social media not merely as an expression of opinion but as a site in which spatial meanings of Europe are actively negotiated and normalised.

From this perspective, geographical imaginaries are operationalised as recurring and stabilised patterns of spatial reference, including toponyms, spatial metaphors, and semantically clustered vocabularies that structure how Europe is imagined as a political and territorial space. Rather than analysing individual statements in isolation, the study focuses on discursive regularities that emerge across large corpora of parliamentary tweets. Lexicometric methods are particularly suited to capturing such regularities, as they allow for the identification of patterns of meaning.

#### 3.1. Data collection

Empirically, the analysis draws on tweets published by all members of the German Bundestag and the French Assemblée Nationale. Parliamentarians constitute a strategically important group of actors at the intersection of national and European politics, combining institutional authority with discursive visibility. Twitter is analysed as a central arena of parliamentary communication in which political actors articulate spatial narratives of Europe beyond traditional media channels, shaped by platform-specific logics of visibility, circulation, and amplification.

The period 2019–2022 was selected because it represents a phase of intensified political contestation in which geographical imaginaries of Europe became particularly salient. This period encompasses the 2019 European Parliament elections, the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, and the COVID-19 pandemic, all of which triggered debates over European solidarity, sovereignty, borders, and governance. At the same time, it marks a phase in which right-wing populist actors became increasingly normalised within parliamentary arenas and digital public spheres. Analysing discourse during this period therefore allows for the examination of how established imaginaries of Europe were challenged, reworked, and selectively appropriated under conditions of crisis.

#### 3.2. Corpus construction

All existing Twitter accounts of parliamentarians in the period under study were identified and their tweets downloaded via the former official Twitter API. Prior to analysis, meta-information not required for textual analysis was removed. URLs, and special characters were deleted.

The German and French tweets were organised as corpora and linguistically pre-processed. Each word was part-of-speech tagged, meaning that it was assigned its grammatical category (e.g. noun, verb, adjective). For example, in the phrase “European cooperation strengthens Europe”, “European” is tagged as an adjective, “cooperation” as a noun, and “strengthens” as a verb. In addition, the text was lemmatised, meaning that different inflected forms of a word were reduced to a common base form. For instance, “Europe”, “European”, and “Europeans” are linked to a shared lexical root, and forms such as “migrant”, “migrants”, and “migration” are treated as related terms. This procedure ensures that different grammatical forms of the same word are analysed as a single lexical unit, allowing us to identify recurring vocabularies that structure how Europe is referenced in parliamentary discourse.

To identify discourses explicitly referring to Europe, a corpus-based approach was employed. Tweets containing the character string *europ\** were extracted to form subcorpora for each parliament and for the right-wing parties AfD and RN. This filter captures references to Europe and its linguistic derivatives across both German and French (e.g. Europa, europäisch, Europe, européen), allowing for systematic comparison between national corpora. The approach enables an overview of similarities and differences in how Europe is spatially referenced across national and political contexts (Dammann et al., 2021). To clearly distinguish the hegemonical *europ\** narrative from its right-wing populist counter-narrative, the AfD and RN accounts were excluded from the overall parliamentary corpora.

To contextualise discursive patterns, the share of tweets produced by right-wing parties was compared with their respective shares of parliamentary seats. This comparison allows for a critical assessment of the disproportionalities between institutional representation and discursive visibility in online arenas. The analysed period corresponds to the 19th legislative period of the German Bundestag (2017–2021) and the 15th legislature of the French Fifth Republic (2017–2022), ensuring institutional continuity while capturing moments of discursive transformation.

In the 19th legislative period, the Bundestag comprised 709 members. This period also marked the first time a right-wing party was elected to the Bundestag since 1957. A comparison of the proportion of AfD members in the Bundestag and the number of tweets they have posted reveals that the figures are almost identical (Table 1). This suggests that they are effectively utilising social media communication. However, when it comes to the topic of Europe, MPs from the AfD seem to participate less in the discourse as the respective share of tweets drops. This could be attributed to a more nationally focused communication by their MPs. After the federal elections, the AfD won 94 seats in the Bundestag. All MPs who left the party during the research period are represented in the corpus until their departure.

**Table 1.** Share of AfD on tweets and seats.\*

	<b>Tweets total</b>	<b>Tweets europ*</b>	<b>Seats in parliament</b>
Bundestag	484,448	17,333	709
Alternative für Deutschland	61,468	1,339	94 (86)
	12.69%	7.73%	13.26% (12.13%)

\* Note. Author’s own compilation based on data from Bundeswahlleiter (2017).

During the 15th legislature of the Assemblée Nationale, the parliament had 577 politicians (Table 2). The RN had a smaller share of parliamentary seats and of tweets than their German counterparts. Simultaneously, RN parliamentarians have a larger share of tweets, both in general and in the subcorpus, as their share of seats in parliament would suggest. This indicates disproportionalities between actual political influence in parliament and online discursive reach and, hence, publicity for the party’s political agenda, partly attributable to institutional factors such as the electoral system. The RN MPs are represented in the corpus for the duration of their time in parliament and within the party.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unlike the German Bundestag, which is elected through a proportional representation system, the French AN is elected via a two-round majoritarian system in single-member constituencies. This system structurally disadvantages smaller parties and can lead to a discrepancy between vote share and seat share, suggesting that the RN’s parliamentary representation may underestimate its broader political support at the time (Blais & Loewen 2009).

**Table 2.** Share of AfD on tweets and seats.\*

	Tweets total	Tweets europ*	Seats in parliament
Assemblée Nationale	972,717	49,452	577
Rassemblement Nationale	19,465	1,072	7 (6)
	2%	2.17%	1.21% (1.04%)

\* Note. Author’s own compilation based on data from Assemblée Nationale (2022).

### 3.3. Frequency and significance analysis

We applied frequency analysis to identify the words that occur most frequently within the corpus and to detect recurring vocabularies that structure how Europe is referenced within parliamentary discourse. Subcorpora were formed from all tweets containing the lemma europ\* to calculate the absolute and relative frequency per million tokens (pMW) and to identify terms that occur disproportionately often in discourses referring to Europe. Because the resulting subcorpora differ in size from the reference corpus, absolute frequencies were normalised as relative frequencies per million words (pMW), enabling systematic comparison between corpora. Relative frequencies therefore provide an initial indication of the discursive salience of particular terms within the corpus (Keibel, 2009, p. 2ff.).

The significances for the subcorpora were calculated using the Chi<sup>2</sup>-test. This statistical test evaluates whether the observed distribution of words between corpora differs significantly from what would be expected by chance. If the calculated value exceeds the critical threshold, the null hypothesis of a random distribution can be rejected. A p-value of 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 1 was assumed, which sets the critical value for Chi<sup>2</sup> at 3.84. This means that toponyms with a result of 3.84 or higher are significant for the corpus with a 95% probability (Bubenhofer, 2006–2024). In the context of this study, this procedure helps identify (spatial) references to Europe that are particularly characteristic of specific political actors or subcorpora.

### 3.4. Topic Modelling

Since initial results of the frequency analyses indicate thematic similarities and parallels between the overall parliamentary europ\* corpus and its right-wing counterpart for both Germany and France, we further applied topic modelling for each corpus to identify prevalent issues of discussion. Topic modelling allows clusters of co-occurring terms to be identified, thereby revealing recurring thematic patterns within large text corpora (for topic modelling on political discourse see Miller 2019, Achmann and Wolff 2023 or Hellwig et al. 2024). Following the BERTopic workflow introduced by Grootendorst (2022), we analysed thematic structures within the right-wing corpora in comparison with the broader parliamentary discourse on Europe.

The resulting topics are visualised using the most frequent key words. For all corpora, the share of outliers (tweets that could not be matched to a specific topic) is below 40%, which is within the range for heterogeneous data sets such as tweet postings. Outliers can be attributed to noise in the data, including the short length of tweets or frequent use of emojis and other digital artifacts (Grootendorst, 2022, p. 3).

### 3.5. Cartographic Visualisation of Toponyms

Following this quantitative overview, we visualised the spatial distribution of toponyms in Europe-related discourse using cartograms. In these maps, the area of each country is distorted in proportion to its frequency within the respective Europe subcorpus. Countries that are referred to more often therefore appear enlarged, whereas countries that are mentioned less frequently appear smaller. States that are not mentioned at all appear as blank spaces. To facilitate orientation and interpretation, each cartogram is displayed alongside an undistorted outline map. This makes it possible to identify patterns of over- and underrepresentation, as well as discursive absences where states are not mentioned. To allow for direct comparison between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic geographical imaginaries, cartograms were constructed both for the overall parliamentary Europe subcorpora and for the corresponding right-wing populist subcorpora (AfD and RN). They should therefore not be interpreted as representations of physical territory, but rather as “value-by-area” maps based on toponym frequencies that reveal which states are amplified, marginalised, or entirely

absent in parliamentary Twitter communication. However, for the RN europ\* corpus the absolute frequencies of toponyms were rather low. Therefore, we abstain from producing a cartogram for this case and instead report the toponyms in tabular form in comparison to the AN's results, while cautioning that these values are based on very small underlying counts and should therefore be interpreted with care.

Taken together, the combination of frequency analysis, significance testing, topic modelling, and cartographic visualisation allows the study to identify recurring discursive and spatial patterns and interpret how competing geographical imaginaries of Europe are articulated within parliamentary social media communication.

#### 4. Case Study: Geographical Imaginaries in French and German Parliaments

This case study examines how Europe is discursively imagined in parliamentary Twitter communication in Germany and France and how these hegemonic imaginaries are contested by their respective right-wing populist parties. Drawing on computer-aided corpus-linguistic methods and spatial mapping, it shows that Europe functions as a shared but contested geographical imaginary. While mainstream parliamentary actors largely reproduce hegemonic representations of Europe as an institutional, normative, and cooperative political space, far-right parties such as the AfD and the Rassemblement National selectively appropriate these imaginaries and rearticulate them around sovereignty, borders, and cultural homogeneity. This section first outlines the hegemonic geographical imaginaries of Europe articulated by members of the Bundestag and the Assemblée Nationale. In a second step, we analyse the geographical imaginaries of the right-wing (populist) parliamentarians against the BT's and AN's results and how they correlate with existing research on right-wing narratives of Europe. In doing so, the analysis highlights how competing political actors mobilise different spatial narratives and geographical imaginaries of Europe within parliamentary social media communication.

##### 4.1. Germany and France – Europe as a liberal institution

In the Bundestag-wide discourse, Europe is predominantly imagined as an institutional and geopolitical space embedded in multilevel governance and global power relations. This imaginary emerges across both the significance analysis and the topic modelling results. At the level of lexical salience, Europe is strongly associated with institutional and legal lemmata such as “gerichtshof” [court], “brüssel” [Brussels], and “rechtsstaatlichkeit” [rule of law], alongside normative references to peace and human rights (Table A1). These recurrent attributions stabilise a hegemonic imaginary of Europe as a legitimate site of political authority beyond the nation-state.

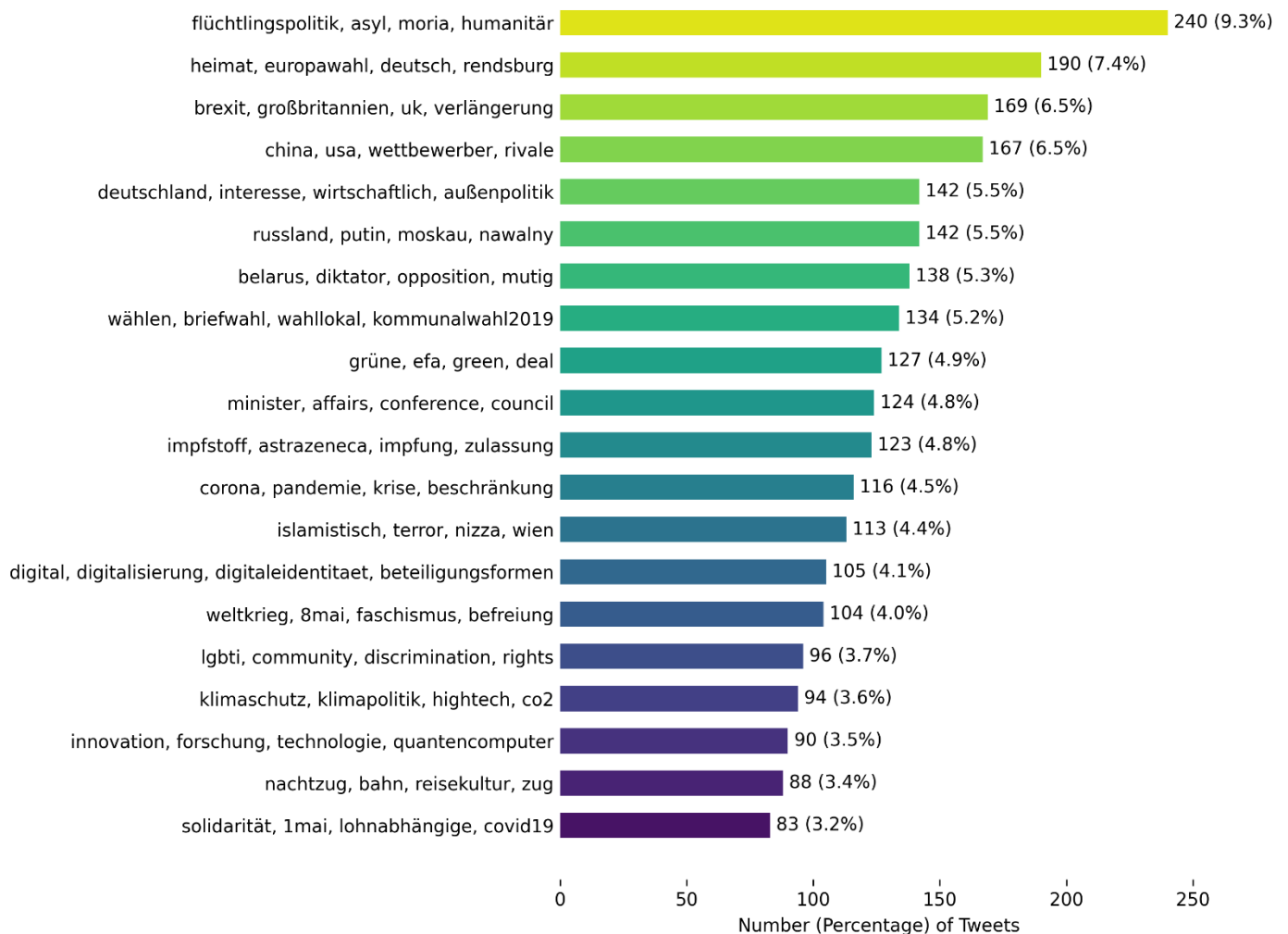
The topic modelling results further specify this institutional imaginary (Figure 1). Across the most prominent Bundestag topics, Europe is repeatedly embedded within thematic constellations centred on EU governance, regulatory coordination, and procedural decision-making, including European councils, vaccination procurement, and electoral frameworks. Rather than appearing as an abstract idea, Europe functions within these topics as a coordinating political space in which collective action and responsibility are located. The repetition of these institutional themes contributes to normalising Europe as a dominant scale of governance, supporting a narrative of Europe as an institutional order.

A comparable but nationally inflected configuration emerges in the French case. In the Assemblée Nationale, Europe is predominantly seen as an institutional and political framework. Europe is closely associated with lemmata such as “union”, “ue” [EU], “parlement”, “présidence”, and “strasbourg”, anchoring Europe in formal decision-making processes and identifiable political arenas (Table A3). Europe thus appears not as an abstract or cultural entity, but as a structured political space of governance.

The topic modelling reinforces this institutional imaginary. Europe is embedded within concrete policy domains such as migration, climate policy, health, and economic coordination (Figure 2). Within these topics, Europe functions as a regulatory and normative actor, tasked with coordinating responses to transnational challenges. Climate-related topics, for instance, consistently enact Europe as a progressive political project whose legitimacy rests on collective regulation and long-term responsibility.

Especially in the French case, both analytical approaches highlight the persistent entanglement of Europe with national spatial imaginaries. The significance of lemmata such as “france”, “souveraineté” [sovereignty], “renaissance”, and “puissance” [power] indicates that Europe is articulated as a political scale through which national leadership and geopolitical ambition are negotiated. Topic modelling complements this by embedding Europe within themes of bilateral relations, particularly with Germany, and broader geopolitical coordination. Europe is thus enacted as a supranational space that remains anchored in national agency.

Top-20 Topics – Bundestag

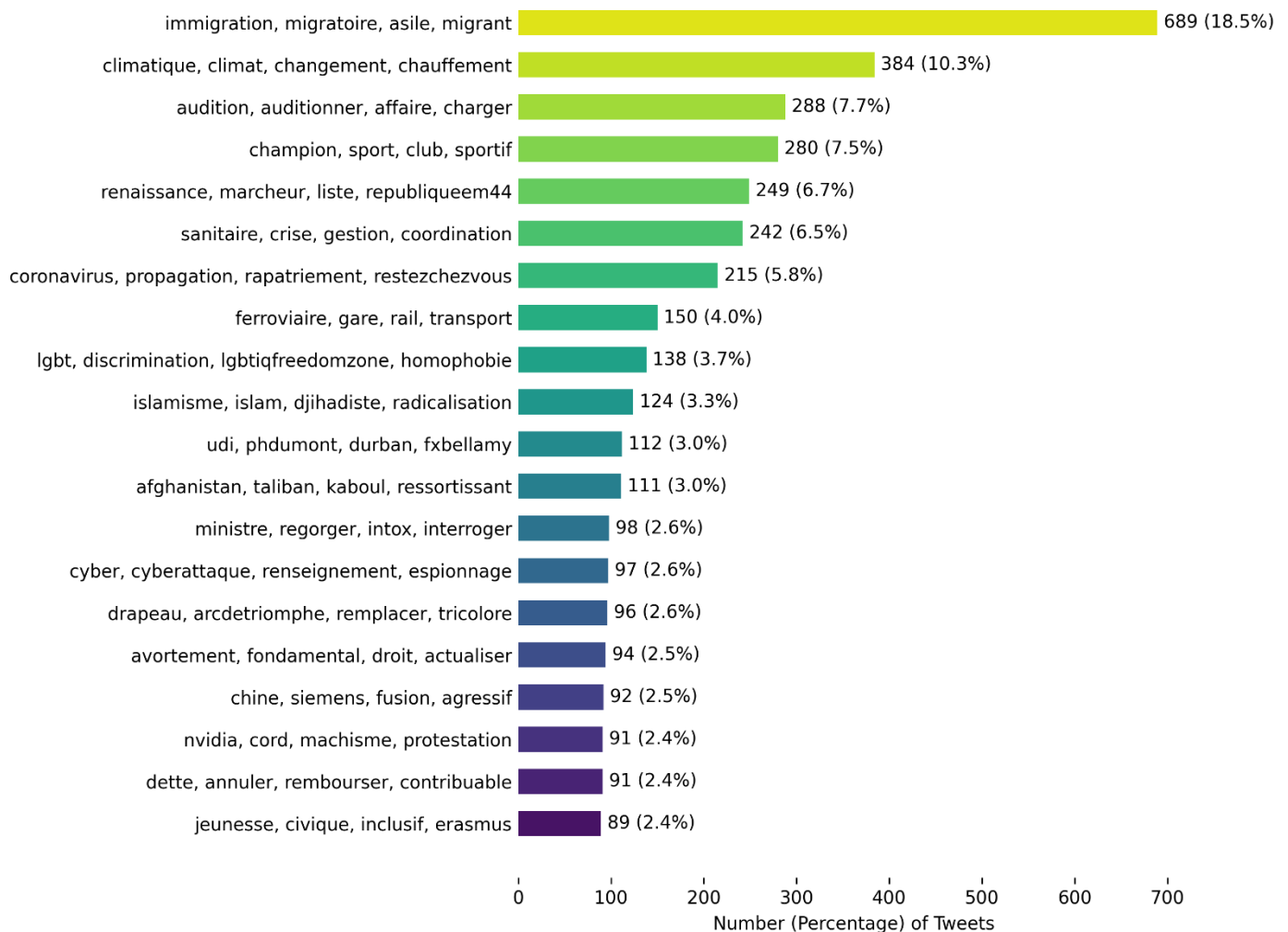


**Figure 1.** Bar chart top-20 topics in the europ\* corpus of Bundestag. Note. Author’s own illustration.<sup>2</sup>

Migration constitutes a further shared thematic axis. In the Bundestag corpus, Europe is associated with external borders, indicating that Europe is frequently invoked in relation to spatial delimitation. The topic modelling complements this by situating Europe within broader thematic clusters on asylum, humanitarian crises, and border governance. Europe functions as a space of political responsibility, where migration is framed as a collective challenge requiring coordination beyond the nation-state. While evaluative framing cannot be inferred directly, the consistent embedding of Europe in these imaginaries contributes to a narrative of Europe as a central arena for managing migration and humanitarian obligations.

<sup>2</sup> Translation of the topic keywords: 1) refugee policy, asylum, moria, humanitarian; 2) homeland, European elections, german, Rendsburg; 3) Brexit, Great Britain, UK, extension; 4) China, USA, competitor, rival; 5) Germany, interest/demand, economic, foreign affairs; 6) Russia, Putin, Moscow, Nawalny; 7) Belarus, dictator, opposition, brave; 8) to elect, postal vote, poll site, municipal election; 9) Greens [members of the Green Party], EFA [European Free Alliance], green, deal; 10) minister, affairs, conference, council; 11) vaccine, astrazeneca, vaccination, admission; 12) corona, pandemic, crisis, restraint; 13) Islamist, terror, Nizza, Wien; 14) digital, digitisation, digital identity, methods of participation; 15) world war, 8<sup>th</sup> may, fascism, liberation; 16) LGBTI, community, discrimination, rights; 17) climate protection, climate politics, high-tech, CO<sub>2</sub>; 18) innovation, research, technology, quantum computer; 19) night train, railway, travel culture, train; 20) solidarity, 1<sup>st</sup> may, wage earners, covid19.

Top-20 Topics – Assemblée Nationale

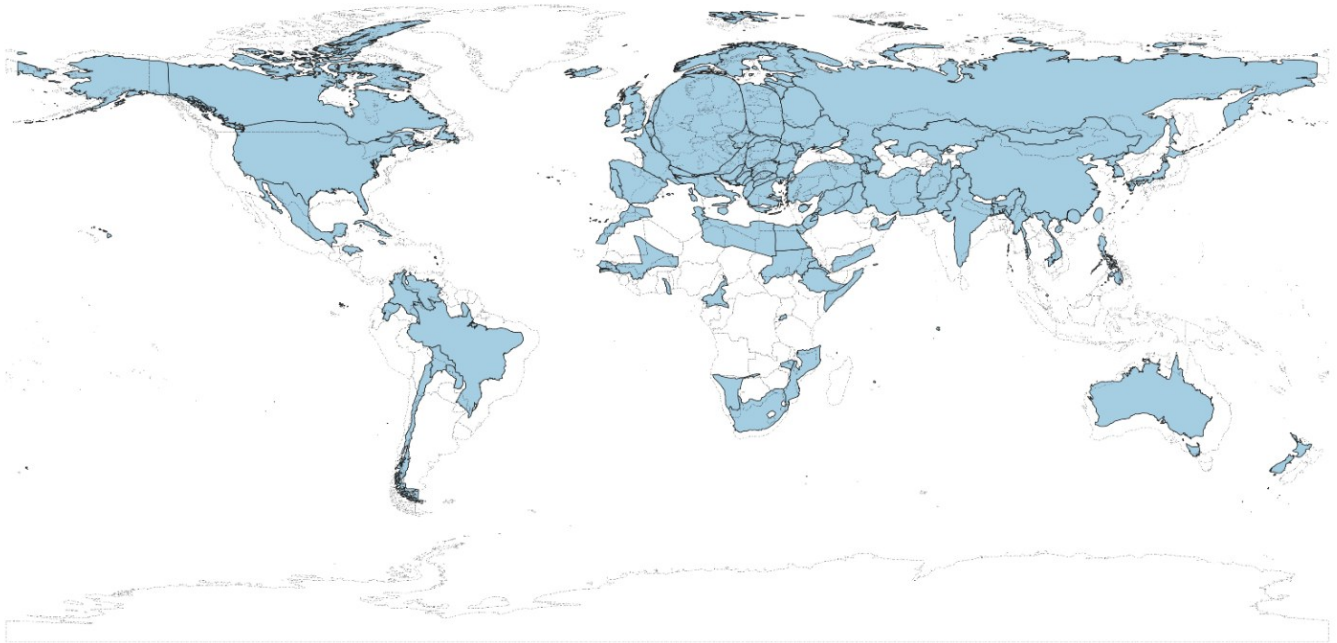


**Figure 2.** Bar chart top-20 topics in the europ\* corpus of Assemblée Nationale. Note. Author’s own illustration.<sup>3</sup>

Migration again emerges in the French parliamentary corpus. In the significance analysis, “frontière” [border] situates Europe in relation to territorial delimitation. The topic modelling complements this by clustering Europe within policy-oriented migration and asylum topics. Within these clusters, Europe appears as a space of governance and coordination. Migration is framed as a political challenge to be managed at the European level, reinforcing a hegemonic imaginary of Europe as a problem-solving arena.

<sup>3</sup> Translation of the topic keywords: 1) immigration, migratory, asylum, migrant; 2) climatic, climate, change, warming; 3) audition, to audition, affair/crisis, to charge; 4) champion, sport, club, sporty; 5) revival, marcher, list, RepubliqueEM44 [Twitter account *La République En Marche! Loire-Atlantique (44)*]; 6) sanitary, crisis, management, coordination; 7) coronavirus, dissemination, repatriation, stayathome; 8) railway, train station, rail, transport; 9) LGBT, discrimination, LGBTQI freedom zone, homophobia; 10) Islamism, Islam, Jihadist, radicalisation; 11) UDI [Union des démocrates et indépendants], phdumont [Twitter account of Pierre-Henri Dumont, MP, Les Républicains], Durban, fxbellamy [Twitter account of François-Xavier Bellamy, MEP, Les Républicains]; 12) Afghanistan, Taliban, Kabul, national; 13) minister, to be packed with sth., hoax, interrogate; 14) cyber, cyber-attack, information/intelligence, espionnage; 15) flag, Arc de Triomphe, to replace, tricolore [flag of France]; 16) abortion, fundamental, right, update; 17) China, Siemens, merger, agressif; 18) NVIDIA, cord, machismo, protest; 19) debt, to cancel, to refund, taxpayer; 20) youth, civic, inclusive, Erasmus.

## Mentions by MPs of the Bundestag 2019-2021



**Figure 3.** Mentions by MPs of the Bundestag 2019-2021. Cartogram distorted according to the toponym's frequency. Note. Author's own illustration.

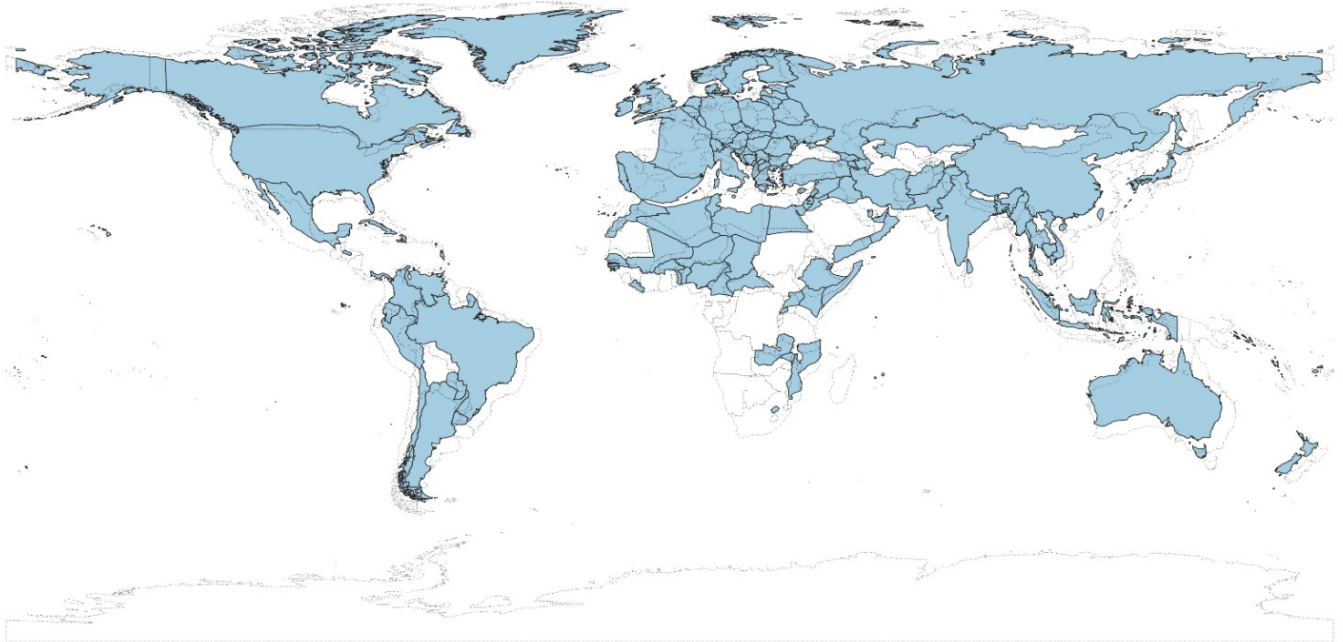
Another dimension that emerges across both analytical approaches in the Bundestag's corpus concerns Europe's geopolitical relationality (Figure 3). The prominence of toponyms referring to EU member states and global actors such as the USA, Russia, and China situates Europe within a wider international power constellation. These spatial markers are not neutral: they frame Europe in relation to external "Others" and thereby position it as a geopolitical actor. Topic modelling reinforces this reading. Several topics cluster around relations with China, the USA, Russia, Belarus, and the United Kingdom, representing Europe as a relational space whose meaning is constituted through rivalry, cooperation, and normative differentiation. Particularly the recurring focus on Eastern Europe—Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, and Hungary—anchors Europe in ongoing geopolitical tensions at its eastern borders and reinforces an imaginary of Europe as a geopolitical actor defined through its relations with neighbouring regions and global powers.

Additional regional clusters, such as Western Asia (e.g., Syria, Israel, Palestine) and parts of Northeast Africa, appear primarily in the context of conflict and instability. The relative absence of references to large parts of Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America points to discursive blind spots, suggesting that the Bundestag's Europe is lexically oriented toward perceived centres of geopolitical relevance and risk, rather than toward a globally inclusive spatial horizon.

For the French parliament, both analytical approaches highlight the persistent entanglement of Europe with national spatial imaginaries. The significance of lemmata such as "france", "souveraineté" [sovereignty], "renaissance", and "puissance" [power] indicates that Europe is not articulated as a post-national alternative, but as a political scale through which national leadership and geopolitical ambition are negotiated. Topic modelling complements this reading by embedding Europe within themes of bilateral relations, particularly with "allemagne" [Germany], and broader geopolitical coordination. Europe is thus enacted as a supranational space that remains firmly anchored in national agency.

The analysis of toponyms further sharpens these distinctions (Figure 4). In the AN discourse, Europe is embedded within a comparatively broad geopolitical horizon. References extend across EU member states, Eastern Europe, and major global actors such as the "états-unis" [United States], "russie" [Russia], and "chine" [China]. In addition, the recurring mention of North African countries situates Europe within a Mediterranean and postcolonial spatial imaginary, reflecting France's historical entanglements beyond the European continent. These toponyms function less as neutral place names than as markers through which Europe is positioned within global power relations.

## Mentions by MPs of the Assemblée Nationale 2019-2021



**Figure 4.** Cartogram distorted according to the toponym's frequency. Note. Author's own illustration.

Together, these findings suggest that Europe in French parliamentary Twitter discourse is not a singular fixed object, but a contested geographical imaginary that is continuously enacted through competing thematic articulations.

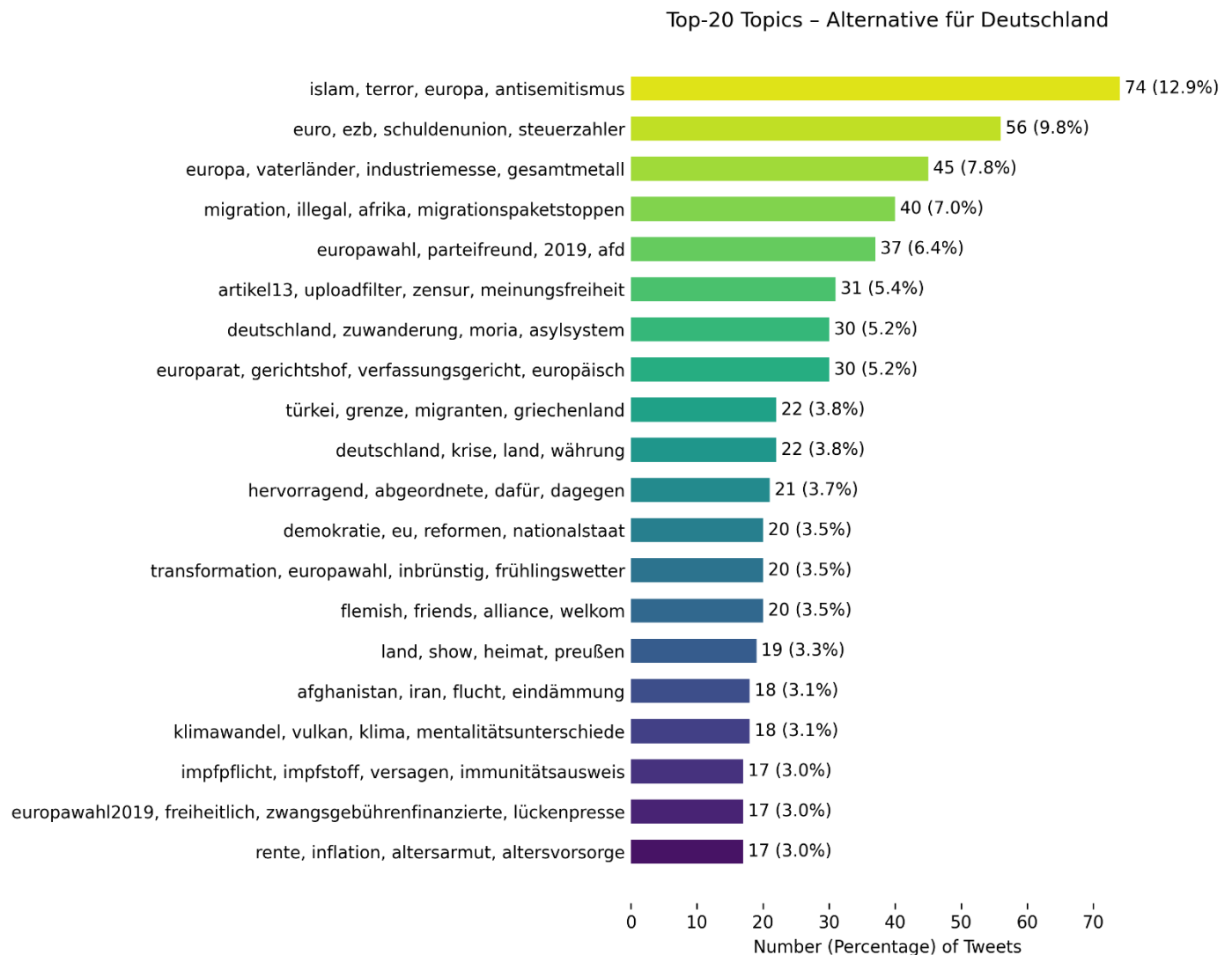
### 4.2. Contesting Europe – right-wing populist counter-hegemonic imaginaries of Europe

The AfD discourse engages with the hegemonic reference points but rearticulates them in a markedly different way. At the level of significance analysis (Table A2), lemmata such as “nationalstaat” [nation state] and “vaterländer” [fatherlands] presuppose Europe as a meaningful spatial frame while redefining it as a composite of sovereign national units. Europe is thus not rejected, but reordered according to a nationalist spatial logic.

At the same time, the AfD selectively appropriates European vocabulary within these contexts. Concepts such as democracy, freedom, and sovereignty recur in topics that emphasise national autonomy and critique supranational authority (Figure 5). This indicates a counter-hegemonic narrative; Europe remains present, but its institutional and cooperative dimensions recede in favour of an imaginary centred on borders, sovereignty, and cultural demarcation.

The Rassemblement National rearticulates this spatial configuration in ways that closely parallel the AfD. Lemmata such as “nation”, “peuple” [people], and “patriote” situate Europe within a strongly nationalised frame (Table A4). Topic modelling further sharpens this rearticulation by highlighting recurring themes related to sovereignty and references to other European authoritarian actors.

Similar to the AfD, the Rassemblement National advances a narrative of Europe that centres on sovereignty, borders, and cultural homogeneity. Despite the distinct national context, these narratives reveal striking similarities in how Europe is spatially redefined. Across both significance analysis and topic modelling, Europe is selectively reworked through themes of threat, migration, and national identity.



**Figure 5.** Bar chart top-20 topics in the europ\* corpus of AfD-members in Bundestag. Note. Author’s own illustration.<sup>4</sup>

Accompanied by the significant mention of migrants, the most prominent RN topics cluster around immigration, Islamism, terrorism, and borders, consistently embedding Europe within narratives of danger, loss of control, and cultural threat (Figure 6). Europe is enacted as a bounded territorial space under pressure.

This parallels the results for the AfD. Not only are lemmata like migrants, migration, and refugees significant for their online discourse, but the most prominent topics centre on migration, Islam, terrorism, and borders (Figure 3). Again, Europe is imagined less as a coordinating political space than as a territory under threat. Migration-related lemmata such as “migranten” [migrants], “flüchtling” [refugee], and “schlepper” [smuggler] personalise and securitise Europe’s borders, shifting the spatial role of Europe from governance to exposure.

<sup>4</sup> Translation of the topic keywords: 1) Islam, terror, Europe, antisemitism; 2) Euro, ECB, debt union, taxpayer; 3) Europe, fatherlands, industrial fair, Gesamtmetall [General Association of Employers' Associations in the Metal and Electrical Industry]; 4) migration, illegal, Africa, stop the migration package; 5) European election, fellow party member, 2019, AfD; 6) Article 13, upload filter, censorship, free speech; 7) Germany, immigration, Moria, asylum system; 8) European council, court of justice, constitutional court, European; 9) Turkey, border, migrants, Greece; 10) Germany, crisis, country, currency; 11) outstanding, delegates, pro, contra; 12) democracy, EU, reforms, nation state; 13) transformation, European election, ardent, spring weather; 14) Flemish, friends, alliance, welkom; 15) country, show, homeland, Prussia; 16) Afghanistan, Iran, escape, containment; 17) climate change, volcano, climate, differences in mentality; 18) compulsory vaccination, vaccine, failure, immunity certificate; 19) European election 2019, liberal, financed by compulsory fees, gap press; 20) pension, inflation, old-age poverty, pension plan.

Top-20 Topics - Rassemblement National

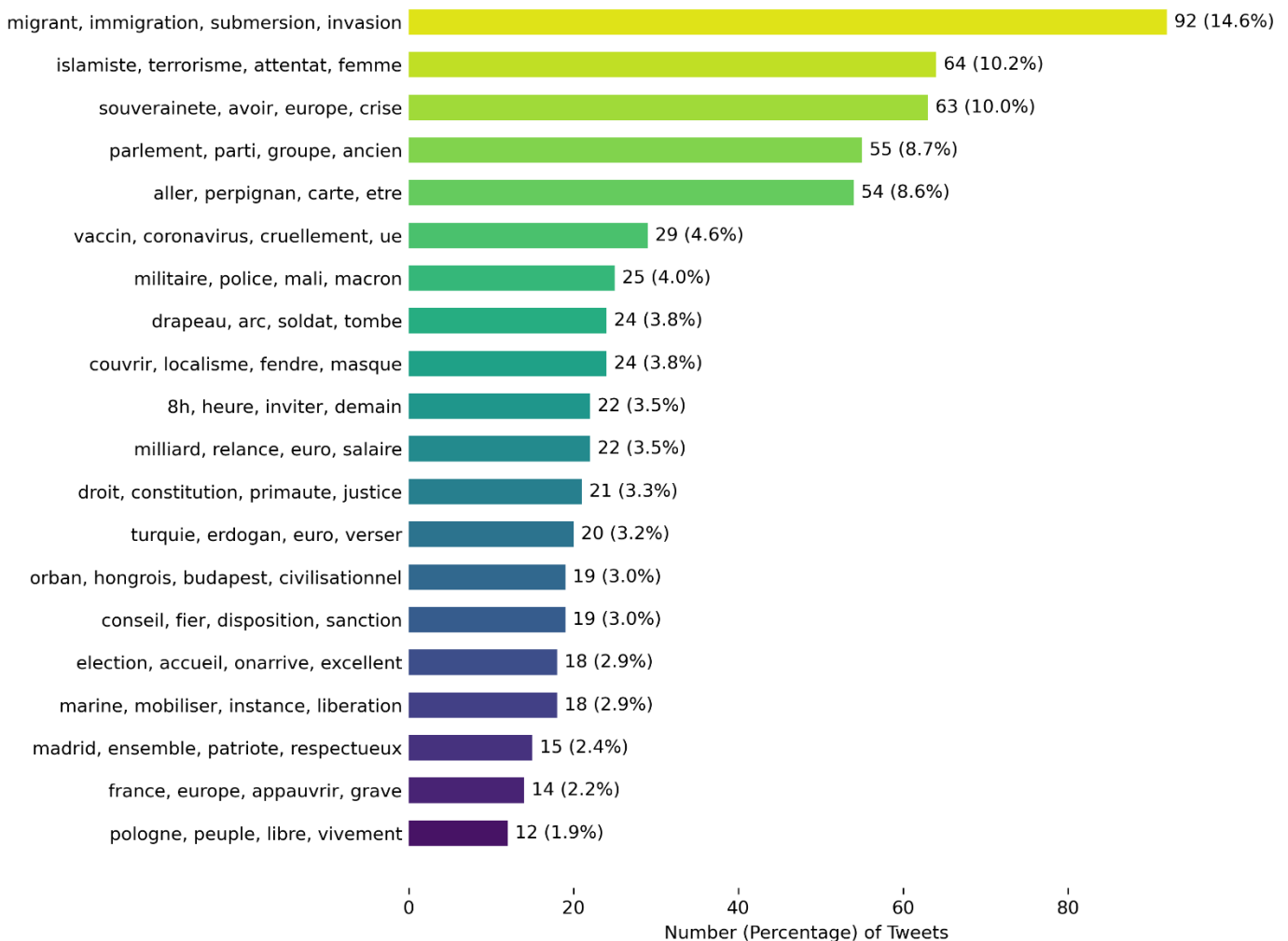


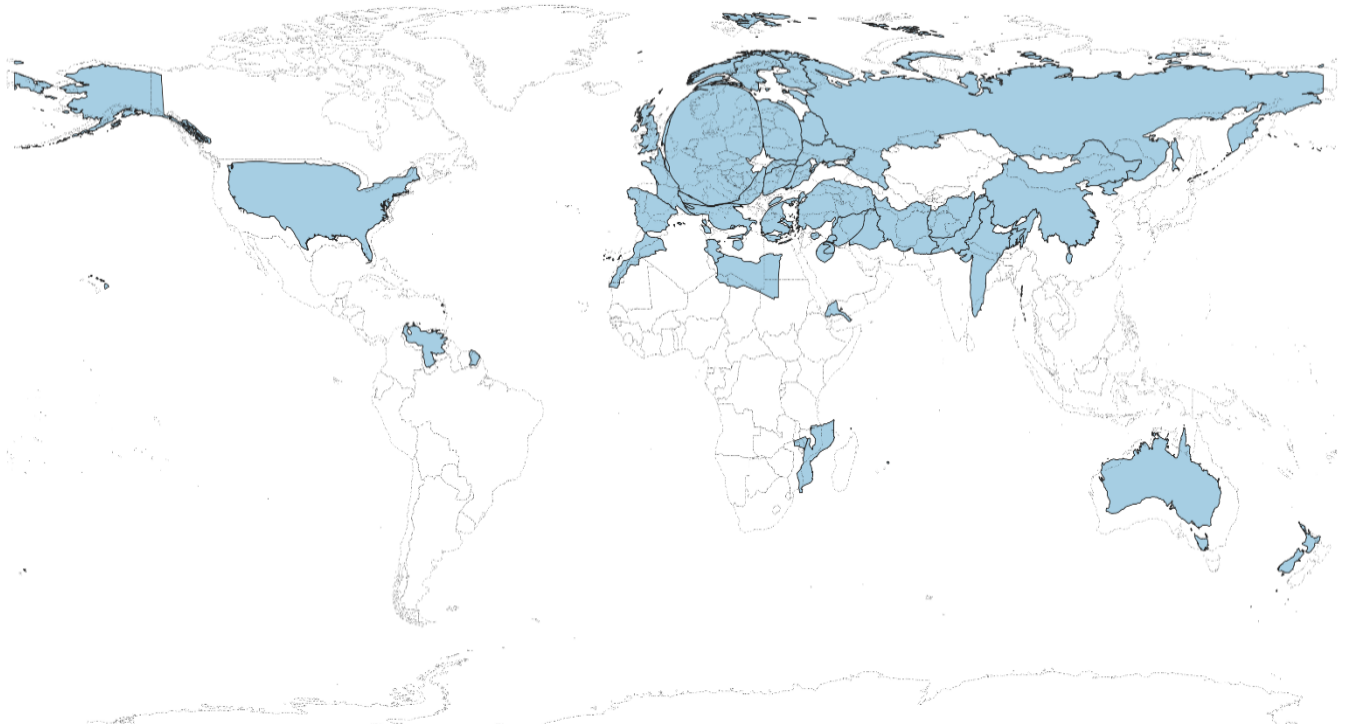
Figure 6. Bar chart top-20 topics in the europ\* corpus of Rassemblement National. Note. Author’s own illustration.<sup>5</sup>

The AfD cartogram (Figure 7) displays a markedly different spatial configuration than the Bundestag. Germany emerges as the central reference point, with Europe largely articulated through EU member states and selected external actors, predominantly located in the Global North. This spatial concentration aligns with a protectionist imaginary of a Europe of Nations, in which Europe’s role is primarily defined through internal cohesion and external demarcation rather than global engagement. Compared to the Bundestag corpus, the AfD discourse exhibits limited lexical engagement with complex international relations beyond migration- and security-related contexts.

In comparison to the Assemblée Nationale, the RN discourse displays a more selective and narrowed spatial orientation (Table 3). Since the results for the toponym filtering for the RN europ\* corpus were mainly below an absolute frequency of five, they are displayed as relative frequency but are not visualised on the map. The table should be read as indicative only, since the RN results are strongly inflated.

<sup>5</sup> Translation of the topic keywords: 1) migrant, immigration, flooding, invasion; 2) Islamist, terrorism, attack, woman; 3) sovereignty, to have, Europe, crisis; 4) parliament, party, group, ancient; 5) to go, Perpignan, map, to be; 6) vaccine, Corona virus, cruelly, EU; 7) military, police, Mali, Macron; 8) flag, arch, soldier, grave; 9) to cover, localism, to split, mask; 10) 8h, hour, to invite, tomorrow; 11) billion, upsurge, Euro, wage; 12) right/law, constitution, precedence, justice; 13) Turkey, Erdogan, Euro, to pay; 14) Orban, Hungarian, Budapest, civilisational; 15) council, proud, disposition, sanction; 16) election, reception, we are coming, excellent; 17) Marine, to mobilise, instance, liberation; 18) Madrid, together, patriot, respectful; 19) France, Europe, to impoverish, serious; 20) Poland, people, free, strongly.

## Mentions by AfD-MPs of the Bundestag 2019-2021



**Figure 7.** Cartogram distorted according to the toponym’s frequency in the AfD corpus. Note. Author’s own illustration.

Although fewer toponyms reach statistical significance, the prominence of “pologne” [Poland], “hongrie” [Hungary], “turquie” [Turkey], and “algérie” [Algeria] is indicative. These references point to a geopolitical imaginary centred on sovereignty-oriented allies, migration-related border spaces, and historically charged national relationships. Europe is thus referenced through a restricted set of spatial points that foreground identity, security, and cultural boundary-marking, reinforcing a counter-hegemonic geographical imaginary in which Europe is primarily defined through borders, identity, and perceived external threats.

**Table 3.** Results of significance analysis comparing the RN and AN corpora filtered by europ\* filtered by toponyms.\*\*<sup>6</sup>

Lemma	Frequency pMW RN europ*	Frequency pMW AN europ*
hongrie	1448	93
pologne	1975	225
turquie	987	190
algérie	263	20
europa	14124	18573
mali	197	41
grande-bretagne	98	15
mexique	65	7

<sup>6</sup> Translation of the lemmata: 1) Hungary, 2) Poland, 3) Turkey, 4) Algeria, 5) Europe, 6) Mali, 7) Great Britain, 8) Mexico, 9) Spain, 10) Albania.

---

españa	65	9
albanie	98	22

---

\*\* Note. Author's own illustration.

## 5. Discussion

Across both national contexts, the analysis reveals two competing narrative constructions of Europe. Established parliamentary actors predominantly reproduce a narrative of Europe as a liberal institutional and problem-solving project, grounded in cooperation, regulation, and shared norms. The findings for both German and French parliamentarians' hegemonic imaginary of a Europe as liberal institutional order corresponds with research findings that mark both German chancellor Merkel and French president Macron as actors of an Europhil geopolitical imaginary that correlates Europe with an "established liberal democratic vision of the EU" (Arya, 2023, p. 1830). In contrast, right-wing populist actors advance a counter-narrative that reimagines Europe as a culturally and territorially threatened confederation of sovereign states, whose survival depends on borders, sovereignty, and exclusion.

Geographically, our analysis indicates that the Bundestag's discourse exhibits a spatial orientation towards Eastern Europe and global powers, reflecting its geopolitical interests and historical ties. Meanwhile, the Assemblée Nationale is more strongly focused on France itself and North Africa, highlighting its distinct historical and cultural connections within the region. Furthermore, parliamentarians from right-wing populist parties exhibit a significantly stronger focus on national perspectives and states with authoritarian tendencies in East-Central Europe, such as Poland and Hungary. In their discourse, Europe is scarcely discussed within a global context. Despite persistent national differences in hegemonic parliamentary imaginaries, right-wing populist actors in Germany and France exhibit a notable convergence in how they spatially rearticulate Europe.

The significance analysis, supplemented by spatial mapping and topic modelling, suggests that competing geographical imaginaries of Europe are not expressed through entirely separate discourses, but through divergent thematic embeddings of shared spatial references. While the Bundestag-wide discourse predominantly situates Europe within institutional, geopolitical, and coordinative contexts, the AfD discourse foregrounds themes of threat, borders, and sovereignty.

In the French case, the Assemblée Nationale predominantly performs Europe as an institutional, policy-oriented, and value-based political space; the RN advances a different thematic configuration. Similar to the AfD, the RN promotes a counter-hegemonic imaginary of Europe centred on sovereignty, borders, and migration. Despite differing national contexts, the resulting narratives reveal striking parallels in how Europe is spatially redefined as a bounded, threatened, and culturally homogeneous space by right-wing populist actors. This is consistent with existing research on right-wing media that demonstrates how right-wing Euroscepticism often intertwines anti-establishment rhetoric with anti-migrant and nativist imaginaries (Pavan & Caiani, 2017; Rydgren, 2017; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019).

Across the German and French cases, the discourses of the AfD and the RN display striking similarities in how Europe is geographically imagined and performed. In both corpora, Europe is repeatedly enacted as a bounded spatial entity, structured through references to borders, migration, and external or internal threats. Rather than articulating Europe as a space of coordination or governance, both actors foreground Europe as a site of exposure, loss of control, and cultural endangerment. This convergence becomes particularly visible in the thematic clustering of migration, Islam, and security, where Europe functions less as a political project than as a territory in need of protection. Tweets by both AfD and RN reveal a significant focus on Islam and Muslims as constitutive others, which is a common discursive strategy among European right-wing parties (Oztig, 2023, p. 238). In line with Bialasiewicz's (2011) argument that imaginaries function as discursive frameworks of world-making, these recurring associations contribute to the normalisation of Europe as a territory under external threat. This in turn benefits the agenda-setting endeavours by right-wing actors across public discourse.

The similarities between AfD and RN point to a broader pattern in right-wing populist engagements with Europe: across national contexts, Europe is enacted as a space whose legitimacy is conditional, whose borders are central, and whose values are selectively invoked. These counter-hegemonic imaginaries draw on shared crisis narratives and circulate transnationally, even as they remain anchored in national political arenas. A perspective on the discursive importance of crisis narratives offers Schilk (2025, p. 2) by arguing that "the far right is performing the very crises it laments" as a political strategy. These crisis narratives are successful because they function as "epistemic frames" that

can be applied in a low-threshold versatile manner, and are hard to counter with fact-based arguments, as it is almost impossible to distinguish whether an external crisis has actually occurred or whether stereotypical frames and semantics have simply been applied to any situation (Schilk, 2025, pp. 2, 6). The selective mobilisation of European values, such as security or freedom, illustrates how geographical imaginaries can be reworked to support divergent political narratives, confirming their flexibility and apparent self-evidence as described by Acton (2023). This convergence further supports Brankamp et al.'s (2023) claim that imaginaries gain political traction through discursive accumulation that renders them increasingly implementable. Once normalised, such imaginaries can travel across national contexts, especially when facilitated by shared crisis narratives around migration, security, and perceived civilizational decline. These narratives of a Europe under external threat and crisis are characteristic of the (far) right-wing populist trope of a Europe of Nations (Ganesh & Froio, 2020, p. 727).

Despite its core function in the contemporary far right (Hinterleitner et. al, 2023; Krzyżanowski & Krzyżanowska, 2022), crises narratives as a discursive tool are not limited to right-wing actors, but rather open up the way for various alliances across the political spectrum (Schilk, 2025, p. 17). This is where right-wing politics become most effective in mainstreaming their agenda and also might explain the semantic similarities of the parliamentary reference corpora in certain respects: far-right narratives are continually entering mainstream discourse. Given that the period under investigation lies in the midst of perceived crises, it stands to reason that certain right-wing populist crisis narratives were already being received by the broader political public at that time (Schilk, 2025, p. 17). Further research could provide a more granular temporal perspective.

This is consistent with Arya's (2023) findings in that the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic imaginaries of Europe are not radically different but rather two sides of the same coin, employing similar narratives in contrasting ways (Arya, 2023, p. 1834). By demonstrating how both the French and German parliamentary imaginaries are contested from within by right-wing populist parties, this study further supports Arya's claim that a clear delineation of member states into Eurosceptic and pro-European has analytical weaknesses.

The role of social media is central to this process. In line with Gerbaudo's (2014) notion of "Populism 2.0", Twitter/X emerges not merely as a channel of expression but as an active environment shaping the form, visibility, and affective intensity of geographical imaginaries. Platform-specific affordances favour simplified, antagonistic, and crisis-oriented spatial narratives. As a result, counter-hegemonic imaginaries of Europe articulated by far-right actors gain disproportionate visibility and resonance within central parliamentary arenas.

Taken together, the analysis shows that while hegemonic parliamentary imaginaries of Europe remain nationally differentiated, right-wing populist actors increasingly converge in their counter-hegemonic rearticulations of Europe. Through social media, these imaginaries gain visibility and normalisation within political arenas and the public.

## 6. Conclusion

This study contributes to a political geography of Europe by demonstrating how geographical imaginaries are negotiated within parliamentary social media discourse and how right-wing populist actors increasingly normalise counter-hegemonic spatial narratives. More specifically, by tracing how geographical imaginaries of Europe are articulated within parliamentary social media communication, the study contributes to political-geographical debates on the discursive production of political space under conditions of digitalisation and crisis.

In this study, we examined how hegemonic geographical imaginaries of Europe are constructed and negotiated within parliamentary discourse, particularly in the face of challenges posed by right-wing and authoritarian actors. The period under study marks a phase in which contestation over Europe shifted from the margins into central parliamentary arenas. By focusing on Germany and France, two central actors within the European Union, the study highlights differing national articulations of Europe and the political dynamics through which they are contested. Drawing on tweets from members of the German Bundestag and the French Assemblée Nationale, with particular emphasis on the right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Rassemblement National (RN), we show how Europe is discursively spatialised in social media communication.

Our methodological approach, combining lexicometric corpus analysis with visual tools such as cartograms, has demonstrated how social media serve as arenas for disseminating spatial imaginaries. The findings reveal that hegemonic narratives emphasise core EU institutions and values such as solidarity, freedom, and human rights. By contrast, far-right actors mobilise a counter-hegemonic imaginaries of Europe centred on borders, migration, sovereignty, and national identity, thereby constructing a narrative of Europe as a territory in need of protection rather than as a political

project. German and French parliamentary discourse differ in their broader spatial orientations—towards Eastern Europe and global power relations in Germany, and national and post-colonial contexts in France. At the same time, AfD and RN converge on a markedly nationalised and exclusionary spatial re-articulation of Europe. Importantly, while we analytically distinguish between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic imaginaries, our findings indicate that these imaginaries are not mutually exclusive but partially overlap, particularly in their shared reference to migration, security, and geopolitical relations. This overlap suggests, on the one hand, that similar discursive references can be mobilised to support divergent political positions (e.g. “sovereignty” within our study has been linked to ideas of a supranational European authority but also to ideas of national autonomy). On the other hand, it points to the capacity of right-wing actors to successfully rearticulate and reframe these shared spatial elements, thereby contributing to shifts in agenda-setting within parliamentary discourse. These findings underscore the role of discourse in shaping contested imaginaries of Europe and provide valuable insights into the political and social dynamics that define European identity. They further demonstrate how digital communication environments have become key sites in which geopolitical imaginaries are stabilised, contested, and reconfigured. For future research, it would be of interest to track the evolution of these discourses over a longer period and investigate how the use of social media by political actors continues to develop. Additionally, a deeper analysis of the networks and interactions between different political actors on social media could offer further insights into the mechanisms of discourse formation and dissemination, and the transnational circulation of geographical imaginaries.

**Funding:** This research was part of the project “In the Mirror of the European Neighbourhood (Policy): Mapping Macro-Regional Imaginations” funded by Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) and Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), grant number ANR-19-FRAL-011-01.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data used in this study were obtained from the social media platform Twitter via its official API. Due to Twitter’s Terms of Service, we are not permitted to share the raw data publicly. No new datasets were generated or made publicly available during this study.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors want to thank Laura Schuhn and Finn Dammann for their valuable support in corpus compilation and methodological guidance.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results

## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Results of significance analysis of the Bundestag’s europ\* corpus compared to the overall BT corpus.

Lemma	Chi <sup>2</sup>	p-value	Frequency pMW europ*	Frequency pMW total
eu	8783.24	0	6504.51	1222.32
ep2019	2184.67	0	512.413	27.7037
ratspräsidentenschaft	1506.84	0	570.974	57.2288
council	1443.27	0	445.486	35.085
eu2020de	1348.41	3.41776e-295	476.858	44.1917
chancennutzen	930.521	2.27516e-204	238.429	14.5708
gerichtshof	870.33	2.7544e-191	221.697	13.4205
gemeinsam	865.704	2.80252e-190	2237.89	894.092
brexit	696.462	1.75805e-153	614.896	131.521
euco	684.286	7.81401e-151	236.337	21.1852
parlament	678.175	1.66623e-149	286.533	32.1133
rußland	669.705	1.15829e-147	778.031	201.116

brüssel	661.645	6.55663e-146	403.656	64.2266
rechtsstaatlichkeit	586.07	1.79361e-129	382.741	64.5142
usa	570.274	4.89355e-126	1014.37	337.046
souveränität	565.965	4.23716e-125	273.984	35.1808
außengrenze	556.51	4.82787e-123	248.886	29.5251
kontinent	550.75	8.64656e-122	184.05	15.817
menschenrecht	539.646	2.25104e-119	882.605	280.105
frieden	513.648	1.01987e-113	167.373	627.444

**Table A2.** Results of significance analysis of the AfD europ\*-corpus compared to the BT europ\*-corpus.

Lemma	Chi <sup>2</sup>	p-value	Frequency pMW AfD eu-rop*	Frequency pMW BT eu-rop*
afd	2680.12	0	15336.8	1468.22
migranten	285.987	3.72296e-64	1568.84	138.038
afdwählen	230.374	4.93943e-52	1163.11	89.9337
afdwirkt	208.352	3.14425e-47	1054.91	81.5678
afdimbundestag	180.825	3.20048e-41	919.665	71.1104
vaterländer	158.807	2.06226e-36	811.469	62.7444
islam	125.761	3.46882e-29	784.42	79.4763
illegal	115.011	7.82723e-27	1109.01	181.959
migration	110.231	8.71955e-26	1487.69	326.271
merkel	89.2847	3.41896e-21	2190.97	715.287
euwahl2019	80.6127	2.74594e-19	540.979	58.5615
2015	79.4044	5.06142e-19	757.371	121.306
islamisch	78.43	8.25167e-19	432.783	35.5552
riesa	77.7618	1.16244e-18	459.832	41.8296
flüchtling	76.9552	1.74881e-18	1000.81	211.24
grenze	76.7866	1.90465e-18	2136.87	746.659
nationalstaat	73.0832	1.24299e-17	513.93	58.5615
altpartei	70.7818	3.9901e-17	378.685	29.2807
schlepper	67.49	2.11754e-16	378.685	31.3722
scharia	59.7928	1.05389e-14	324.588	25.0978

**Table A3.** Results of significance analysis of the AN's europ\* corpus compared to the overall AN corpus.

Lemma	Chi <sup>2</sup>	p-value	Frequency pMW europ*	Frequency pMW total
renaissance	27881	0	3304.12	266.67
union	18541.1	0	2564.27	250.593
ue	8037.01	0	1401.55	176.475
parlement	7055.12	0	1905.49	357.484

pfue2022	6364.45	0	730.354	56.3927
liste	4591.78	0	1715.6	410.785
présidence	4177.23	0	901.987	139.498
france	3803.3	0	6112.33	3047.23
brexit	3779.39	0	773.445	113.816
strasbourg	3592.47	0	658.779	87.1861
souveraineté	3521.96	0	950.921	178.247
frontière	2881.72	0	723.781	127.749
26mai	2670.71	0	288.49	20.4465
continent	2586.66	0	383.436	40.4807
souverain	2528.62	0	376.863	40.0273
accord	2395.93	0	1306.6	397.923
relance	2370.18	0	1375.99	434.364
allemagne	2292.42	0	574.058	101.037
puissance	2143.22	0	499.562	82.6516

**Table A4.** Results of significance analysis of the RN’s europ\* corpus compared to the AN europ\* corpus.

Lemma	Chi <sup>2</sup>	p-value	Frequency pMW RN eu-rop*	Frequency pMW AN eu-rop*
nation	1560.18	0	5300	358
onarrive	990.714	1.87379e-217	1712	46
m lafrance	825.102	1.88181e-181	1251	26
src	802.783	1.33973e-176	1218	26
madrid	579.203	5.59083e-128	1284	50
viktor	530.693	1.99574e-117	1185	46
macron	447.107	3.07382e-99	4510	820
hongrie	437.933	3.05017e-97	1448	93
peuple	411.101	2.11123e-91	3588	583
quellesemaine	401.13	3.12569e-89	625	13
submersion	381.485	5.91022e-85	658	16
varsovie	354.379	4.71612e-79	790	30
patriote	346.207	2.83946e-77	1415	93
pologne	341.033	3.80172e-76	1975	225
islamiste	339.056	1.02438e-75	1251	90
migrant	312.767	5.45e-70	1613	164
orbán	292.195	1.65321e-65	987	64
perpignan	277.461	2.6842e-62	625	24
erdogan	276.203	5.04612e-62	1119	88

## References

- Acton, L. (2023). Politicizing the “unknown”: Territorial narratives, shared spatial imaginaries, and Bermuda’s oceans. *EPC: Politics and Space*, 41(6), 1113–1131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544231174115>
- Achmann, M., & Wolff, C. (2023). Policy issues vs. documentation: Using BERTopic to gain insight into political communication in Instagram stories and posts during the 2021 German federal election campaign. *Digital Humanities in the Nordic and Baltic Countries Publications*, 5(1), 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.5617/dhnpub.10647>
- Arya, N. (2023). Intraregional Geopolitical Imaginaries in Europe: Hungary and Poland vs. France and Germany. *Geopolitics*, 28(5), 1807–1842. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2022.2078708>
- Ash, J., Kitchin, R., & Leszczynski, A. (2018). Digital turn, digital geographies? *Progress in Human Geography*, 42(1), 25–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516664800>
- Assemblée Nationale. (2022). *Assemblée nationale de la 15ème législature*. [https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/instances/resume/OMC\\_PO717460?force](https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/instances/resume/OMC_PO717460?force)
- Bialasiewicz, L., Campbell, D., Elden, S., Graham, S., Jeffrey, A., & Williams, A. J. (2007). Performing security: The imaginative geographies of current US strategy. *Political Geography*, 26, 405–422. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2006.12.002>
- Bialasiewicz, L. (2011). Introduction: Europe in the world? In L. Bialasiewicz (Ed.), *Europe in the world: EU geopolitics and the making of European space* (pp. 1–16). Ashgate.
- Blais, A., & Loewen, P. (2009). The French electoral system and its effects. *West European Politics*, 32, 345–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380802670651>
- Brankamp, H., de Jong, S., Mackinder, S., & Devenney, K. (2023). The camp as market frontier: Refugees and the spatial imaginaries of capitalist prospecting in Kenya. *Geoforum*, 145, 103843. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2023.103843>
- Bubenhof, N. (2006–2024). *Introduction to corpus linguistics: Practical basics and tools*. <https://www.bubenhof.com/korpuslinguistik/>
- Bundeswahlleiter. (2017). *2017 federal election: Results of the election to the 19th German Bundestag*. [https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de/dam/jcr/e2023a6b-6535-4ec4-af93-29b4af9a056c/btw17\\_ergebnisse\\_flyer.pdf](https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de/dam/jcr/e2023a6b-6535-4ec4-af93-29b4af9a056c/btw17_ergebnisse_flyer.pdf)
- Carpentier, N. (2021). The European assemblage: A discursive-material analysis of European identity, Europeanity and Europeanisation. *Filosofija. Sociologija*, 32(3), 231–239. <https://doi.org/10.6001/fil-soc.v32i3.4495>
- Carral, U., Tuñón, J., & Elías, C. (2023). Populism, cyberdemocracy and disinformation: Analysis of the social media strategies of the French extreme right in the 2014 and 2019 European elections. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01507-2>
- Dammann, F., Dzudzek, I., Glasze, G., Mattissek, A., & Schirmel, H. (2021). Methods of lexicometric-computational linguistic text analysis. In G. Glasze & A. Mattissek (Eds.), *Handbook discourse and space* (3rd rev. ed., pp. 313–344). transcript. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839432181-019>
- Davoudi, S., Crawford, J., Raynor, R., Reid, B., Sykes, O. & Shaw, D. (2018). Policy and Practice – Spatial imaginaries: tyrannies or transformations? *Town Planning Review*, 89(2), 97–124. <https://doi.org/10.3828/tpr.2018.7>
- Ganesh, B. & Froio, C. (2020). A “Europe des Nations”: far right imaginative geographies and the politicization of cultural crisis on Twitter in Western Europe. *Journal of European Integration*, 42(5), 715–732, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1792462>
- Gerbaudo, P. (2014). Populism 2.0. In D. Trottier & C. Fuchs (Eds.), *Social media, politics and the state* (pp. 67–87). Routledge.
- Gregory, D. (2004). *The colonial present*. Blackwell.
- Grootendorst, M. (2022). BERTopic: Neural topic modeling with a class-based TF-IDF procedure. *arXiv*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2203.05794>
- Hellwig, N. C., Fehle, J., Bink, M., Schmidt, T., & Wolff, C. (2024). Exploring Twitter discourse with BERTopic. *International Journal of Speech Technology*, 27, 901–921. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10772-024-10142-4>
- Hinterleitner, M., Kammermeier, V., & Moffitt, B. (2023). How the populist radical right exploits crisis: Comparing the role of proximity in the COVID-19 and refugee crises in Germany. *West European Politics*, 47(7), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2023.2275892>

- Hutter, S., & Kriesi, H. (2019). Politicizing Europe in Times of Crisis. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(7), 996–1017. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1619801>
- Keibel, H. (2009). *Mathematical frequency measures in corpus linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.14618/ids-pub-11586>
- Krzyżanowski, M., & Krzyżanowska, N. (2022). Narrating the ‘new normal’ or pre-legitimising media control? COVID-19 and the discursive shifts in the Far-Right imaginary of ‘crisis’ as a normalisation strategy. *Discourse & Society*, 33(6), 805–818. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265221095420>
- Miller, D. T. (2019). Topics and emotions in Russian Twitter propaganda. *First Monday*, 24(5–6). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v24i5.9638>
- Norris, P. (2003). Preaching to the converted? *Party Politics*, 9(1), 21–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135406880391003>
- Oztig, L. I. (2023). Islamophobic Discourse of European Right-Wing Parties: A Narrative Policy Analysis. *Social Currents*, 10(3), 225–244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23294965221139852>
- Pavan, E., & Caiani, M. (2017). ‘Not in My Europe’: Extreme Right Online Networks and Their Contestation of EU Legitimacy. In M. Caiani & S. Guerra (Eds.), *Euroscepticism, democracy and the media: communicating Europe, contesting Europe* (pp. 169–193). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pérez-Curiel, C. (2020). Trend towards extreme right-wing populism on Twitter. *Communication & Society*, 33(2), 175–192. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.33.2.175-192>
- Rydgren, J. (2017). Radical Right-wing Parties in Europe. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16(4), 485–496. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17024.ryd>
- Schilk, F. (2025). The metapolitics of crises: how the new right weaponises narratives of mainstream far-right ideology. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-025-09519-3>
- Schuhn, L., Glasze, G., & Boettcher, H. (2025). The mediality of social media as a conceptual and methodological challenge. *Zeitschrift für Diskursforschung*, 13(1), 120–148. <https://doi.org/10.3262/ZFD2501120>
- Serrano, J. C. M., Shahrezaye, M., Papakyriakopoulos, O., & Hegelich, S. (2019). The rise of Germany’s AfD. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Social Media and Society (SMSociety '19)* (pp. 214–223). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3328529.3328562>
- Stromer-Galley, J. (2014). *Presidential campaigning in the Internet age*. Oxford University Press.
- Sykes, O. (2018). Post-geography worlds and Brexit imaginaries. *Space and Polity*, 22(2), 137–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2018.1531699>
- Watkins, J. (2015). Spatial imaginaries research in geography. *Geography Compass*, 9(9), 508–522. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12228>
- Wiertz, T., & Schopper, T. (2019). Discourse research in digital space. *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 107(4), 254–281. <https://doi.org/10.25162/gz-2019-0008>

**Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of EUROGEO and/or the editor(s). EUROGEO and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.