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KEY POINTS

- 1. Nawrocki's win marks a further step in the **formalization of a digital far-right campaign model** deliberate, **scalable**, and operational.
- 2. What began as meme pages is now **a parallel media system**, capable of shaping political reality outside institutional journalism or party control.
- 3. This ecosystem produces candidates, not just voters. **Candidates that can emerge from obscurity, legitimized by algorithmic reach.**
- 4. The infrastructure is **diffuse and deniable**: influencers, Telegram groups, anonymous accounts—**no clear funding, no legal fingerprints.**
- 5. **Mainstream media is sidelined:** coverage only arrives after narratives are already viral, often amplifying disinformation in the process.
- 6. E**U regulatory tools like the DSA are reactive, not preventative** —unable to contend with cross-border, cross-platform dynamics.
- 7. This win fragments European political consensus—particularly around migration, Ukraine, climate, and judicial independence.
- 8. This is not a Polish or Romanian phenomenon—it is a template. The European far-right now has a proven, exportable model of digital power.
- 9. Shutting down or reforming recommender algorithms is critical: these systems—not individual posts—determine what content gets amplified, shaping political visibility, emotional salience, and ultimately, voter behavior.



Karol Nawrocki has won. His election signals a geopolitical shift not just in Poland, but across the entire European continent. With the Trump White House now back in power in Washington, this outcome gives the American far-right a direct lever into European policy. Poland, already a key player in EU defense and NATO posture, now stands to become a central force in shaping the ideological center of gravity of the European Union. Its weight in Brussels, its role in transatlantic strategy, and its influence in institutional debates around sovereignty, migration, and democratic norms have all increased significantly.

But Nawrocki's victory was not the result of traditional coalitionbuilding or a legacy party machine. It was the product of a digitally native, multilayered influence architecture—a structure that rewrites the rules of political campaigning in Europe.

A MULTI-LAYERED INFLUENCE MODEL

At the heart of this model sits the candidate—in this case, Nawrocki, who was largely unknown to the broader electorate as recently as 2024. Surrounding him is the party—primarily the Law and Justice (PiS) establishment—which originates the ideological content: nationalist, anti-globalist, anti-liberal, and aligned with a vision of Catholic identity politics.

But these messages do not spread through conventional party operatives or mainstream outlets. Instead, a layer of influencers, YouTubers, nationalist "microcelebrities," meme pages, and content creators take these themes and translate them into viral content. Crucially, most of these actors have no formal connection to the campaign. Their alignment is ideological, not contractual. They are selfappointed amplifiers whose platforms—from TikTok to Telegram allow for rapid and resonant rearticulation of party messaging.

Their output is then manipulated by bot networks whose function is not to persuade, but to deceive algorithms. These bots simulate engagement—likes, shares, reposts, comments—at massive scale. Their role is simple: force the recommender systems of platforms like YouTube, X, and Facebook to promote ideologically aligned content to a broader audience. At the outer layer sits the public, whose real engagement—after being seeded and guided by artificial boosts—completes the cycle. Once real users begin sharing and repeating content, the message becomes self-reinforcing. It appears organic, grassroots, and authentic—even though its initial distribution was anything but.



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A MULTI-LAYERED INFLUENCE MODEL

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The most powerful actor in this system is not a human being but an algorithm. Recommender systems reward volume, velocity, and engagement. By flooding platforms with high-performing but inauthentic signals, bots trick the algorithm into "believing" that a particular message or figure is popular.

This engineered virality is digital canvassing—an automated form of visibility that replaces physical mobilization. The old model of door-knocking has been replaced by trending tabs, suggested videos, and auto-populated timelines. Bots do not vote, but they decide what voters see.

This is not a bug—it is a feature of the current platform economy. Distribution is everything. The faster a message reaches the algorithm's thresholds for trending, the more likely it is to be shown to undecided, disengaged, or curious voters. That distribution is what transformed Nawrocki from a fringe figure into a household name.

Recent investigations, such as the May 2025 Global Witness report on TikTok's role in the Polish presidential election, show with chilling clarity how algorithmic systems are not merely passive reflectors of public interest but active amplifiers of political agendas. In controlled tests simulating neutral, undecided voters, TikTok's recommender system overwhelmingly promoted nationalist right content—showing users five times more material supporting far-right candidate Karol Nawrocki than centrist Rafal Trzaskowski, despite the latter's greater popularity on the platform. Even when both candidates were followed equally and their content was watched in balanced measure, the algorithmic output was unmistakably skewed. The findings echo earlier reports from Germany and Romania, suggesting a systemic tendency toward privileging content that is provocative, nationalist, or extreme —precisely because it is more likely to produce engagement. That TikTok's recommendation engine serves antisemitic posts and farright propaganda to undecided users in an election period—while claiming to uphold election integrity—is not simply a technical failure. It is a structural vulnerability built into the engagement-maximization logic that underpins the entire platform economy. TikTok has denied the methodology of the investigation, but it has offered no clear counter-evidence, nor has it provided public transparency on how its recommender system weighs political signals. This lack of accountability is especially troubling when the platform functions as a primary source of political information for younger voters. In the absence of regulatory oversight and algorithmic transparency, the For You page becomes a covert editorial operation—one that shapes voter perception not through argument or debate, but through repetition, affect, and the seductive logic of engagement.

THE PATTERN: GREGORESCU'S BOTS IN ROMANIA

Călin Georgescu's meteoric rise in Romania's 2024 presidential election serves as a stark illustration of how digital platforms can catapult obscure figures into political prominence. Initially polling at just 1% a month before the election, Georgescu was virtually unknown to the electorate. However, his campaign, heavily reliant on TikTok, saw his follower count surge from 30,000 to over 330,000 in a fortnight, with his videos amassing more than 4 million likes. This rapid growth was not organic; Romanian intelligence agencies later revealed that his campaign benefited from a coordinated social media effort, involving over 25,000 TikTok accounts, many of which had been dormant since 2016.

Despite reporting no official campaign expenditures, Georgescu's message of nationalism and anti-establishment sentiment resonated widely, particularly among younger voters disillusioned with traditional politics. His unexpected lead in the first round, securing 23% of the vote, prompted Romania's Constitutional Court to annul the election over concerns of foreign interference, marking an unprecedented move in the country's democratic process.

Pavel Popescu, vice president of Romania's National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications (ANCOM), has been vocal about his concerns regarding TikTok's role in the country's electoral processes. Following the unexpected surge of far-right candidate Călin Georgescu in the 2024 presidential election, Popescu called for the suspension of TikTok in Romania, citing potential manipulation of the electoral process. He stated, "I call for the TikTok platform to be suspended in Romania as of Nov. 28 until state institutions finalize an investigation concerning the manipulation of the electoral process"

CONCLUSION

Karol Nawrocki's victory is not simply a matter of domestic political recalibration—it is the product of a sophisticated, multi-agent digital ecosystem that can now be replicated across Europe. What began as fringe meme accounts and nationalist micro-influencers has evolved into an informal but effective campaign infrastructure. It is not illegal, and it is not necessarily coordinated. But it works—and it is spreading.

The implications for the EU are serious. This model of influence undermines efforts to regulate electoral integrity, challenges the enforcement capacity of legislation like the Digital Services Act, and injects volatile, anti-establishment energy into parliamentary systems that depend on consensus. With Nawrocki in power, Poland could once again obstruct EU-wide decisions on migration, climate, or rule-of-law mechanisms—joining other far-right actors in forming a reactive bloc within the Council and Parliament.

More broadly, these movements weaken NATO cohesion and transatlantic consensus by promoting nationalism, skepticism toward joint defense, and algorithmically-driven distrust. What they offer is not a traditional ideology but a method—one that reshapes the democratic process into a contest of virality, bypassing institutions entirely. Nawrocki's win, then, is not just Poland's problem. It is a European warning.

Let me know if you'd like a version that names specific policies or countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are 7 concrete recommendations to combat the far-right's algorithmic strategy—combining defensive dismantling and offensive replication:

1. Disable or Regulate Recommender Algorithms

Force platforms to turn off algorithmic feeds by default (e.g., YouTube autoplay, Facebook/Instagram reels, TikTok FYP). Users should opt into algorithmic curation, not be passively subjected to it. This one reform could drastically slow the viral pathways of far-right propaganda.

2. Build a Counter-Algorithmic Offensive

Create a parallel digital ecosystem that fights on the same turf: TikTok, Telegram, YouTube Shorts. Use humor, mockery, and memetic content —not institutional language—to inject counter-narratives into algorithmic pipelines. Think in terms of influence operations, not press releases.

3. Deploy Real-Time Monitoring Units

Establish agile digital monitoring cells modeled on open-source intelligence (OSINT) teams. These groups must track far-right virality patterns in real-time—particularly on TikTok and Telegram—and be equipped to deploy rapid counter-content within the same cycle (hours, not days).

4. Exploit Their Fragile Coalitions

Their appeal is broad but brittle: expose contradictions between nationalist factions (e.g., pro-Ukraine vs. pro-Russia; liberal-libertarian vs. Catholic-traditionalist). Create content designed to fragment and confuse, using the same platforms and formats. 5. Create 'Weaponized Trust' Influencers

Support creators who operate outside mainstream liberal branding but push back against far-right narratives in native internet dialects sarcasm, parody, gaming, youth slang. This is not about defending the EU; it's about making nationalism look lame and conspiracies sound old.

6. Make Infrastructure, Not Campaigns

Stop thinking in election cycles. The far-right built an enduring digital machine. Fund persistent networks: meme factories, TikTok creators, group chat moderators, short-form video producers. It's the infrastructure that wins, not the candidates.

7. Force Transparency on Messaging Ecosystems

Regulate closed messaging systems like Telegram and WhatsApp via metadata transparency laws—not to censor speech, but to trace amplification patterns. The machine works because it hides. Make it visible, and it becomes weaker.