

A Civic Turn in Europe's Radical Right?: Political Discourse, Euroskepticism, and the Rise of Radical Right Parties (with Alina Polyakova)

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In Europe's most prosperous economies, radical right parties with a euroskeptic and anti-immigrant agenda are winning their largest share of votes to date. We propose that the most successful radical right parties in Switzerland, France, and Hungary have found a new winning formula by combining a civic and euroskeptic discourse. This winning formula has been most effective in winning votes since the 2008 financial crisis.

The project's main goal is to analyze the relationships between electoral support for radical right parties, euroskepticism, and civic discourse from 2000 to 2014. To do this, we use both quantitative and qualitative methods: discourse analysis of party produced materials, interviews with party leaders, and a big picture quantitative model to examine the relationship between euroskeptic attitudes and support for the radical right. Our aim is to show that ethnic based frames – the traditional “bread-and-butter” of the radical right – are not effective in mobilizing support. Rather, it is the radical right's use of traditional liberal rhetoric – a so-called civic view of national belonging – that has been adopted by the most successful radical right parties.

The project's innovative theoretical approach to the study of radical right parties will likely be of interest to social scientists in the field of party politics, the EU, political sociology, nationalism, discourse analysis, immigration, and European integration.