NEO-NATIONALISM IN WESTERN EUROPE


The increasing popularity of radical right parties in Western Europe has received widespread attention. Despite a rather large literature on parties with explicitly anti-immigrant platforms, there is surprisingly little consensus about the underlying political ideology of this party family and its supporters. Particularly lacking is cross-national research that maps party positions in two-dimensional political space over time. Using Manifesto Project Data (1970–2010), we analyse election platforms of parties the literature has identified as radical right and show that they have qualitatively changed between 1970 and 2010. Current parties differ fundamentally from their predecessors in that nationalist claims are paramount. We use the European Social Survey (2002–2010) to confirm that voters’ attitudes are consistent with contemporary parties' platforms. Our results point to a coherent political ideology, which may partially explain these parties’ recent electoral successes. Based on our combined analyses, we conclude that contemporary anti-immigrant parties constitute a new and distinct party family, which we term neo-nationalist.