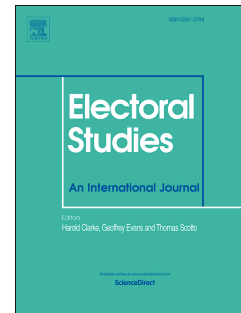


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Centre right and radical right party competition in Europe: Strategic emphasis on immigration, anti-incumbency, and economic crisis

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Title: Centre Right and Radical Right Party Competition in Europe: Strategic Emphasis on Immigration, Anti-Incumbency, and Economic Crisis

Abstract: We examine centre right and radical right party competition. We argue that centre right parties – particularly non-incumbents - recognise economic crises as electoral opportunities for radical right parties and respond with the *strategic emphasis* of immigration in mass appeals. To test this, we merge party performance data with expert surveys across 24 European Union countries to examine parties' electoral performances during the 2008 economic crisis. We find that non-incumbent centre right parties benefited from emphasising immigration, performing better than radical right parties. Second, incumbent centre right parties that did not emphasise immigration lost out electorally, providing an opportunity for far-right parties to benefit from immigration in this economic context. Qualitative case studies further suggest that while these effects appear to be more pronounced in Western Europe, the results are consistent across the East and West. The findings suggest a reconsideration of immigration as an exclusive issue for far-right electoral success.

Keywords: Centre Right Parties; Radical Right Parties; Strategic Emphasis; Economic Crisis; Party Competition; Anti-incumbency Effects

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