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Politized Coalitions: Social Affinity and the Politics of Redistribution

Abstract

Does the structure of inequality in a society matter for the amount of redistribution from rich to poor? New, groundbreaking research indicates this to be the case: Where the market income of the middle class is comparably close to that of the poor, a cross-class coalition between the two groups emerges. This cross-class coalition will tend to favor a generous welfare state and extensive redistribution. We add to this in two ways. First, we complement the theoretical framework by highlighting the role of the politicization of multiculturalism. We posit that the social affinity between the middle class and the poor is lower when multiculturalism becomes politicized. Second, we provide new information on the mechanism by which social affinity affects redistribution. When the income of the middle class is comparatively close to the income of the poor, more people vote for left-leaning parties; yet as multiculturalism becomes politicized, this effect disappears.

Keywords

Welfare state; redistribution; inequality; social affinity; politicization; skew

Does the structure of inequality in a society matter for the amount of redistribution from rich to poor? New, groundbreaking research by Lupu and Pontusson (2011) indicates this to be the case: Where the market income of the middle class is comparably close to that of the poor, a cross-class coalition emerges between the two groups. This cross-class coalition will tend to favor a generous welfare state and extensive redistribution. The argument, with associated empirical testing covering 18 Western democracies over several decades, helps explain why some countries redistribute more than others.

By emphasizing the importance of income-based social affinity between the middle class and the poor, Lupu and Pontusson's work constitutes a major advance on previous research on the politics of redistribution. We add to this in two ways. First, we complement the theoretical framework by highlighting the role of the politicization of multiculturalism. Most Western countries are home to large numbers of immigrants and other minorities, but multiculturalism is not a political issue in all of them (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008). We posit that the social affinity between the middle class and the poor will be lower when multiculturalism is politicized, because immigrants – by far the most visible ethnic and religious minority in modern-day Western societies – everywhere are over-represented among the poor (i.e., no matter the actual proportion of immigrants). Second, we provide new information on the mechanism by which social affinity affects redistribution, something Lupu and Pontusson only very briefly touch upon. We show that when middle-class income is comparatively close to the income of the poor, the vote share of the Left goes up. Yet we also show that as multiculturalism becomes politicized, this effect disappears.

The next section reviews the existing work on the role of economic inequality for redistribution, beginning with the classic proposition made by Meltzer and Richard (1981) and ending with the novel re-formulation by Lupu and Pontusson. After that follows our argument about how the politicization of multiculturalism can condition the effect of social affinity together with a discussion of the mechanism

by which the two – highly aggregated – phenomena of the structure of inequality and redistribution are related. The empirical part of the paper relies, firstly, on a re-analysis of Lupu and Pontusson’s findings supplemented with a set of measures of vote and cabinet share. In addition, we present an in-depth case study of Denmark that allows us to further explore the mechanism. We end the paper with a discussion of the implications of our results.

1. The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution

The Meltzer and Richard article on the relationship between the structure of inequality and the amount of redistribution in democratic societies is one of the most well-known pieces in political economy (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). They argue that the median voter’s preference for redistribution is a function of the distance between the income of the median voter and the mean of the income distribution. The greater that distance, the more the median voter stands to gain from redistribution, because redistribution, *ceteris paribus*, will increase the income of the median voter, shifting it closer to the mean. On the other hand, if the income of the median voter is relatively close to the mean, there is relatively little to gain from redistribution – and perhaps nothing at all given that there are substantial transaction costs related to administering the redistribution. The observable implication of Meltzer and Richard’s argument is that the more unequal a society is in terms of pre-tax and transfer earnings, the greater the amount of redistribution. Although highly intuitive, the argument has been met with considerable criticism. By far the most damaging is that countries with high levels of inequality *do not* redistribute more than those with low levels of inequality; in fact, the relationship in all likelihood is the reverse (e.g., Alesina and Glaeser, 2004, 57–60).

Lupu and Pontusson (2011) present a fresh perspective on the old and much-debated question of whether or not the structure of inequality influences the degree of redistribution. In an article published

in the *American Political Science Review*, they propose that what determines the preference of the median voter (or, middle class more broadly) is not so much the absolute distance to the mean income in society but rather the relative position of the median voter compared to the poor and rich. In a nutshell, when the middle class is relatively closer to the poor than to the rich, they develop a sense of *social affinity* with the poor and, hence, become more willing to enter into a cross-class coalition to redistribute wealth from the rich. Since the middle class contains the median voter, this coalition will tend to be highly successful in achieving its political objectives. In contrast, if the middle class is relative close to the affluent, they will be less inclined to support redistribution.

The argument seems intuitively plausible. Quoting Lupu and Pontusson (ibid, 318), '[m]iddle-income voters empathize with the poor (or affluent) when they perceive the poor (or affluent) as living lives similar to their own.' An important component of the explanation is presumably the prospect of either upwards or downwards social mobility, because '[w]hen the distance between the poor and the middle-income group is small, members of the middle-income group face a greater probability of becoming poor (or having children with low incomes), and this, we hypothesize, reinforces their affinity with the poor.' Concretely, Lupu and Pontusson construct a measure of the position of the middle class relative to the poor and the rich, a measure they call *skew*. Skew is calculated as the ratio between the earnings of the 90th and 50th percentiles (referred to in the literature as the 90:50 ratio) divided by the ratio between the earnings of the 50th and 10th percentiles (the 50:10 ratio). Within a country, the higher the skew, the closer the middle class is to the poor. Lupu and Pontusson offer a set of exhaustive empirical tests documenting a strong positive relationship between skew and redistribution across 18 West-

ern countries from the 1970s until today, the details of which are discussed below.¹ Moreover, they provide some empirical indication that the mechanism through which this takes place is a shift to the left in government composition. In other words, where skew is high, voters tend to support center-left governments who, in turn, introduce redistributive policies.

2. Social Affinity and Politicization of Multiculturalism

The Lupu and Pontusson argument explicitly concerns material affinity; that is, proximity based on income. We suggest that this basic relationship depends upon the extent to which multiculturalism is politicized; that is, is a salient part of the political agenda. The logic is simple: a high level of skew makes voters more left-leaning, which subsequently leads to more redistribution as parliaments implement generous social policies and progressive taxation. Yet when ethnic and religious divisions become politicized, voters will tend to vote for center-right parties, because these parties offer more conservative policies. As a by-product, however, the voters also get parliaments that tend to be less supportive of generous social policies and progressive taxation; effectively reducing the effect of skew on redistribution.

The concept of social affinity, as used by Lupu and Pontusson, originates in studies of the role of racial and ethnic fractionalization and the politics of redistribution. Most famously, Alesina and Glaeser (2004) argue that redistribution tends to decrease as ethnic and religious fractionalization increases. The reason is, supposedly, that ‘[s]ignificant numbers of minorities among the poor’ entail that ‘the majority population can be roused against transferring money to people who are different from themselves’ (ibid: 134). Obviously, this is an alternative way of saying that the social affinity between

¹ Note that skew can change for two reasons that may carry different theoretical meaning. It can decrease (increase) either because the gap between the rich and the middle class gets smaller (bigger), or because the gap between the middle class and the poor gets bigger (smaller).

the majority (which by definition must include the median voter) and the poor grows strained. When the poor are believed to be different from the median voter in terms of ethnicity or religion, there is less basis for a cross-class coalition – despite a high degree of skew (for a similar argument, see Luttmer, 2001).

This point would appear fairly straightforward: social affinity consists of both a material and an immaterial dimension, and a cross-class coalition can only emerge if social affinity exists on both. Yet things are a little more complicated than that. By itself, a large share of immigrants does not reduce the prospects for a cross-class coalition. Some countries are home to fairly substantial numbers of immigrants without this meaning that multiculturalism becomes an important political issue. Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008) argue that for this to happen, the topic must be integrated into the everyday competition between political parties, which only occurs in some countries. They exemplify the point with recent developments in Denmark and Sweden, two countries with roughly equal proportions and composition of immigrants,² but with very different degrees of politicization. In Denmark, multiculturalism has been high on the agenda since the mid-1990s as a way for the center-right to maximize their vote share, whereas the need to please their coalition partners has meant that the center-right in Sweden has been unable to exploit the issue strategically. Consequently, multiculturalism in Sweden has been characterized by a high degree of consensus among the political parties advocating almost identical policies. The point is valid beyond these two Scandinavian cases. Across the 18 countries analyzed below, the correlation between the proportion of immigrants and level of politicization, measured as the share of party manifestos devoted to multiculturalism, is a modest .40 (the variables are presented in greater

² Sweden, in fact, has more immigrants than Denmark, meaning that, if anything, politicization should logically be more pronounced there. In both Denmark and Sweden, the non-European immigration population is overwhelmingly Muslim.

detail below). That is, although multiculturalism tends to be prominent in countries with many immigrants, the relationship is far from deterministic.

Politicization between political parties is important for how citizens perceive politics. Several studies document, unsurprisingly, how citizens regard the issues highlighted by elite actors like politicians as particularly salient (Iyengar et al, 1982; Iyengar and Simon, 1993; Nelson and Oxley, 1999). This is important, because issue salience plays an influential role in vote choice. Bélanger and Meguid (2008) find that parties believed to be competent handling certain issues increase their vote share when these particular issues are high on the agenda. Indeed, this is the very reason why parties fight hard to push their favorite issues as high on the agenda as possible (Carmines 1991). When it comes to the specific issue of multiculturalism, it is the center-right that is likely to gain from such politicization: Vernby and Finseraas (2010) show that party politicization on the issue of multiculturalism makes xenophobic individuals more likely to vote center-right.

It follows from this that we should expect a high degree of politicization to affect the electoral fortune of left-wing parties negatively. If we assume that the findings of Lupu and Pontusson regarding the causal mechanism of how skew influences redistribution are correct – namely via a stronger presence of the left-wing in office – then we may expect the politicization of multiculturalism to depress this positive effect. As Lupu and Pontusson admit, their empirical evidence on the causal mechanism is ‘far from definitive’ (Lupu and Pontusson, 2011, 317), because they are unable to fully disentangle the effect of government partisanship from the effect of skew. Our discussion reveals two aspects that might help improve on this. First, government partisanship may not be the correct measure, given that it is the vote choice of the electorate that is affected by politicization and only indirectly who will form the government. We know that a strong opposition (i.e., one with a large vote share) can pressure a government to adopt a consensus-seeking approach (Hicks and Swank, 1992; Jensen and Seeborg,

2014). Likewise, the degree to which a certain vote share is translated into a government position can depend on the electoral system. Iversen and Soskice (2006) at least argue that center parties tend to be keener on entering government coalitions with the left in countries with proportional representation. This, too, suggests that the vote share of parties is a better place to begin looking for the causal mechanism connecting skew with redistribution. As we now have argued at length, the second aspect is simply that the effect of skew is likely to depend on the degree of the politicization of multiculturalism.

Summing up, our argument can be distilled into two main propositions. First, that the overall relationship between skew and redistribution is conditioned by the politicization of multiculturalism. When politicization is high, the effect of skew will be small. Second, this overall effect is caused by voters shifting to the right, leading to a stronger presence of right-wing parties in parliament and, possibly but not necessarily, also in government. The remainder of the paper will test these two basic mechanisms, beginning with a quantitative analysis and then moving on to an in-depth case study of Denmark.

Methodology

The backbone of the analyses reported below comes directly from Lupu and Pontusson (2011, 319–325). This is done for the obvious reason that we want to maximize the transparency of the new empirical elements we add to the original work. The primary dependent variable is redistribution, which is measured as the percentage change when moving from pre-tax and transfer inequality to post-tax and transfer inequality (measuring inequality with the Gini coefficient). This is the standard measure of redistribution also used by, e.g., Bradley et al (2003). As noted, the primary explanatory variable, skew, is measured as the ratio between the 90:50 and 50:10 ratios and constructed so that a large skew signifies that the middle class is comparatively close to the poor. Data comes from the Luxembourg Income

Study, which is known for its high quality, but which is only collected at irregular intervals. In combination with the need for data on the independent variables, we end up with a total of 60 observations from 14 countries.

The politicization of the multiculturalism issue is measured with data from the Comparative Party Manifesto Database (Volkens et al, 2012). This database contains information on the issues emphasized by political parties during election campaigns. There are five categories in the database that are relevant for us: (1) Positive and (2) negative mentions of multiculturalism, (3) positive and (4) negative mentions of national ways of life, and (5) mention of groups such as refugees and immigrants. This is the same coding that several other authors use when exploring the effects of the politicization of multiculturalism (e.g., Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008; Jensen and Thomsen, 2013). It is worth mentioning, though, that we can reproduce our results using a more directional measure as well; i.e., when leaving out positive mentions of multiculturalism and negative mentions of national way of life. Figure 1 displays the distribution of the variable measuring politicization, with the percentage of manifestos dedicated to multiculturalism listed on the horizontal axis and the density on the vertical axis; i.e., the proportion of manifestos that have allocated a given percentage to multiculturalism. Obviously, there is considerable variance: A substantial number of manifestos include very little about the issue; a large proportion of the manifestos allocate 2–6 percent of their space to the issue; and a smaller subset allocate up to 12 percent.

[Figure 1 about here]

Like Lupu and Pontusson, we linearly interpolate data to missing years. In addition, a series of control variables are included. The 90:10 ratio is intended to control for the effect of overall inequality. The

number of immigrants is also included as a measure of the objective ‘problem pressure.’ From our perspective, this is clearly a very important control since we want to study the effect of politicization disregarding the actual number of immigrants in a country. The proportionality of the electoral system, voter turnout, female labor force participation, unemployment rate, unionization and extensiveness of vocational training are also included. These are the exact same controls Lupu and Pontusson use.

For the analysis of the electoral mechanism by which skew affects redistribution, we rely on different measures. For starters, we use Lupu and Pontusson’s measure of the center of gravity of governments, which combines a measure of the proportion of left-wing parties in a cabinet with a proxy for their ideological position. This is one of two standard measures of government ideology, the other being the ‘raw’ cabinet share of left-wing parties (which do not venture into the very tricky business of trying to pinpoint the exact ideological position of a party, but rather group parties according to their party family). As presented below, our results replicate across these two different measures. We also employ a measure of the vote share of left-wing parties to test if voter preferences are translated into redistributive policies via the increased parliamentary strength of the left wing (these two alternative measures are taken from Armingeon et al., 2011).

Although we begin by relying on the same measurement choices as Lupu and Pontusson, we add to their empirical strategy in one crucial respect in this part of the analysis. Whereas they estimate 5-year moving averages for the independent variables and interpolate the dependent variable to missing years (Lupu and Pontusson, 2011, 330), we especially focus on election years. This is because vote and cabinet shares do not change between elections, meaning that they should not be treated as variables with missing information normally are; that is, linearly interpolate the data to years without data. In other words, the independent variable can only meaningfully be said to affect the dependent variables during election years and it therefore makes little sense to estimate the joint effect of skew and politici-

zation in years where it is impossible for them to play a role (i.e., when there is no election). This choice reduces the number of observations, but is still preferable because it, in our view, better captures the reality of the phenomenon we want to study.

We adhere to the Lupu and Pontusson estimation strategy. The main things to note are that all models are estimated with a lagged dependent variable and panel-corrected standard errors, both of which have been an industry standard since Beck and Katz' (1995) seminal article on time-series cross-section regression models. Due to data limitations, it is not possible to include fixed effects in these particular models when also including the controls and the lagged dependent variable. In their article, Lupu and Pontusson demonstrate that they are able to reproduce their results with fixed effects when excluding these other variables. We can do the same thing with our new results reported below, but keep to the baseline model because Lupu and Pontusson prefer doing so. When we move to the results on vote and cabinet share, where the data is much more readily available, we include fixed effects as an extra control in the models we report (although we do not have to in order to obtain significant results). It should also be noted, and this is especially the case for our estimations of vote shares, that we make no formal claims of capturing causality. The reason is quite simply that we must assume that each party's decision to emphasize specific issues happens in an interactive process where the choice of one party affects the choice of the other ones. Essentially, however, this is another reason for zooming-in on the dynamics of a single country as we do after the quantitative analysis.

Quantitative Findings

Table 1 reports the findings from the first set of analyses. Model 1 displays the original results from Lupu and Pontusson, showing that we are able to re-produce their findings: Skew has a strong positive effect on redistribution that is highly statistically significant. Model 2 includes the interaction term be-

tween skew and politicization of multiculturalism. It is evidently highly significant and with the coefficient of the interaction term signed in the right direction. The results in Model 2 provide evidence that skew has a positive effect on redistribution when there is no emphasis on multiculturalism that is around three times greater than the effect in Model 1 that examined the average effect of skew (32.473 versus 9.625). Given the distribution of the skew variable, this implies that a one standard deviation in skew leads to an approximately 3.5 percentage point change in redistribution. As political parties begin to emphasize multiculturalism, we can also tell that this positive effect begins to decrease. To obtain a better sense of the substantial effect of the decrease, Figure 1 displays the marginal effects of skew as various levels of politicization. Figure 1 shows how the depressing effect of politicization is quite important in substantial terms. On average, when 6% of the manifestos are dedicated to multiculturalism, the positive effect of skew is reduced by 50% (the regression coefficient is approximately 15), and when 9% of the manifestos deal with the topic, the positive effect is altogether gone (the confidence intervals include 0). In sum, there is little doubt that there really is a strong conditional effect of politicization on skew.

Like Lupu and Pontusson (2011, 328) we have also rerun all our analyses without outliers; that is, leaving out those nine observations that are more than 1.5 standard residuals from the mean. It does not change the results substantially. Likewise, we have re-estimated the models reported in Table 1 using social spending as a percentage of GDP as the dependent variable. This entails that we get a much bigger number of observations than when looking at redistribution, namely 234 country-years. Again, this does not affect the substantial conclusions reached. The social spending regressions can also be estimated without outliers (23 observations) without changing the results substantially.

[Tables 1–2 and Figures 2–3 about here]

Next, we move to the mechanism connecting the aggregated phenomena of skew and the politicization of multiculturalism to redistribution. Model 3 in Table 2 replicates the main findings from Lupu and Pontusson's article. Note that we reverse the center of gravity variable so that a positive correlation indicates a more left-leaning government. This is done to make it fit the other dependent variables in the table more intuitively. Model 4 includes the interaction between skew and the politicization of multiculturalism, while Panel A in Figure 3 displays the associated marginal effects. No moderating effect is found. As mentioned above, we are less convinced by the estimation choices in this part of Lupu and Pontusson's analysis than the rest, notably the choice not to zero-in on election years, where the dependent variable is most likely to change. We also want to study the effect on vote choice because we believe this is the most likely channel through which public demand will manifest itself, whereas cabinets are impacted by a multitude of factors above and beyond the electoral success of parties (e.g., electoral system, party system etc.). Model 5 therefore reports the findings from a regression with the vote share of left-wing parties in election years, and Panel B in Figure 3 displays the associated marginal effects. There turns out to be a very strong moderating effect of politicization. At relatively modest levels of politicization (a little above 2% of manifestos), the positive effect of skew disappears. This is very substantial since it entails that, according to these estimates, skew in fact only has a positive effect on left-wing vote share in around 25% of the country-years that we have data on. The fact that vote share is the proper place to look for the depressing effect of politicization can be gauged from Model 6 and the associated marginal effects in Panel C in Figure 3. Here, we use the cabinet share measure that captures the proportion of cabinet members from a left-wing party, again only focusing on election years. And once again, politicization proves not to have a moderating effect. In combination with the other results, this indicates to us that skew and the politicization of multiculturalism work via the vote

share of left-wing parties. Yet how this plays itself out more exactly is difficult to determine based on the statistical analyses of this section. Instead, we must move to a more qualitatively oriented case study.

A Case Study of the Effect of the Politicization of Multiculturalism

The case we choose for our study is Denmark, a country renowned for its low levels of inequality and historical coalition between the middle and working classes (Esping-Andersen, 1985, 1990; Korpi and Palme 1998). This is mirrored in a high skew – among the highest in the group of countries analyzed above – reflecting that the pre-tax and transfer earnings of the Danish middle class are comparatively closer to the poor than to the rich. In many ways, this is an ideal example of the logic proposed by Lupu and Pontusson. Not only has the coalition between the middle class and the poorer working class led to extensive redistribution from the rich to the poor, it also appears to have happened via the pervasive electoral success of the Social Democratic Party. The Social Democrats dominated Danish politics from the 1930s until the early 1980s. Yet the Danish case is also exemplary because it suggests how relatively fragile the old coalition is when multiculturalism becomes politicized.

Traditionally – that is, before the 1990s – multiculturalism in general and immigration in specific has not been a prominent political issue in Denmark. Throughout most of the 1980s, the populist Progress Party (*Fremskridtspartiet*) was the only party willing to talk about the issue. The two mainstream right-wing parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, constituted the core of a government that depended on several small centrist parties to remain in power. These centrist parties, the Social Liberals in particular, were fiercely multicultural and stopped the two mainstream right-wing parties from addressing the issue, let alone adopting a more right-leaning policy position. The urge to please the parliamentary support base dominated the urge to begin emphasizing the issue – even though the elec-

torate in general held a much more right-leaning position than the Social Liberals. All of this changed in 1993, when the small centrist parties switched sides and entered into a government with the Social Democrats. The shift removed the need for the mainstream right-wing parties to please the centrist parties. Instead, it now made perfect sense to begin emphasizing the multiculturalism issue. Given that the majority of voters favored a more right-leaning policy on the area than the current law of the land, talking about the issue was almost certain to embarrass the new government, while making the right-wing opposition look better in the eyes of the voters (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008; Green-Pedersen 2011, 84-92).

In the run-up to the 2001 election, multiculturalism became the key campaign issue. Since many blue-collar workers traditionally voting for the Social Democrats were skeptical of the multicultural tendencies in Danish society, while the Social Liberals and many Social Democrat MPs were much more open, the left-wing government essentially was unable to develop a sufficient response. The 2001 election became a landslide victory for the right wing, which no longer needed the centrist parties to form a majority. The multiculturalism issue was exactly what made many traditionally leftist voters change party (Andersen, 2003). The 2005 and 2007 elections were reruns of 2001, with many voters suspicious of the left in terms of their inability to handle the multiculturalism issue. Only with the Great Recession did the issue move down the agenda, allowing the left-wing opposition to score a victory in the 2011 election (Stubager et al, 2013).

The right-wing government that entered office in 2001 pursued a two-pronged social policy agenda. On the one hand, the government pledged itself to uphold and even expand core middle-class programs such as health care, elderly care and education – and did so in the subsequent years. On the other hand, the government introduced a series of tax reforms that gradually altered the redistributive effect of the tax system. Simultaneously, a number of reforms were introduced to cut the benefits en-

joyed by immigrants. In 2002, for instance, the so-called Start Help was introduced, entailing that if a person had not lived in Denmark for 7 of the last 8 years, the social assistance they could receive would be reduced by 35%. Another initiative meant that couples had to work 300 hours in the last 2 years or else one of the spouses' social assistance would be terminated. Both of the rules were not specifically aimed at immigrants, which would be illegal, but were crafted in such a manner that they hit this group disproportionately hard: 81% of those affected by the Start Help were immigrants, while a full 93% of those affected by the 300-hour rule were immigrants (Pedersen, 2011; Jensen, 2014). The effect of the two-pronged strategy has been marked. While public spending has increased on programs like health care and Denmark generally remains one of the top global spenders on the welfare state, the redistributive effect has declined markedly in recent years (OECD, 2011). Tellingly, the coalition between the middle and working classes appears to have been broken permanently. With the return of the Social Democrats to power in 2011 the policies of targeting welfare towards the middle class on account of the working class continued. A series of cuts have been made in programs such as social assistance and disability pensions in order to maintain and even expand spending core middle-class programs like health care and education. This is in many ways what one would expect if the policies in the aggregate are driven by the demands of a middle class that no longer feels particularly aligned with the less well-off.

Importantly, there is little indication that this transformation happened because of changing preferences among the voters of the left-wing. Over the period 1990 to 2005 pro-welfare preferences in general were rather stable and even had a tendency towards increasing among these voters. Indeed, pro-welfare attitudes increased among voters of the right-wing as well, meaning that the whole political spectrum moved a bit in the left-leaning direction on this issue (Brugge & Voss 2007, 131). Additionally, while the 2001 election was about multiculturalism, the voters most likely to leave the leftist camp

were those unhappy with the (unpopular) reform of the early retirement scheme that the social democratic-led government introduced in the late 1990s (Arndt 2012). In other words, even though immigration emerged as a central issue, the attitudes of left-leaning voters remained distinctly in favor of the welfare state. This also explains the relative success of the Danish People's Party, the parliamentary support party of the right-wing government in office 2011-2011, that has been able to offer an attractive package of pro-welfare and anti-immigration policies; a package that fits otherwise cross-pressured voters.

Discussion

The likelihood that middle-class citizens will support parties pursuing redistributive policies depends crucially upon the degree of social affinity they feel with poorer groups in society. The main point that we want to emphasize in the conclusion is that social affinity is somewhat of a social construction in the sense that political parties, and presumably other elite actors as well, can influence it substantially. Simply talking about multiculturalism seems to evoke strong feelings of resentment among the electorate. Our statistical analysis suggests that the left-wing vote share is reduced substantially when multiculturalism is on the agenda. The reason is fairly straightforward: In the vast majority of countries, voters are, on average, much better aligned with the right than the left on this particular issue. As we saw with the Danish example, this does not necessarily mean that a right-wing government has *carte blanche* to cut the welfare state to the bone. Rather, the very same groups that are singled-out by the right wing in campaigns on the multiculturalism issue are also those targeted by welfare state cutbacks. Whether this is true for other countries remain to be studied.

Another point worth noticing is that the average level of politization of multiculturalism is increasing over time: from around 3% in the early 1960s to 6% in the mid-2000s. This fits with both the

case study and the general impression from public debate, namely that the issue of immigration has become a much more central issue than it used to be. This raises an interesting prospect: that the positive effect of social affinity (or, skew) on redistribution mostly has been a historic phenomenon. One may wonder if the preconditions for a middle class-working class coalition simple were things of the past.

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Figure 1. Distribution of manifesto emphasis

Table 1. Determinants of redistribution

	<u>Redistribution</u>	<u>Redistribution</u>
	(1)	(2)
Skew	9.625** (4.580)	32.473*** (8.682)
Politicization of multiculturalism		4.533*** (1.254)
Skew $\times$ politicization of multiculturalism		-4.057*** (1.138)
90–10 ratio	-0.0626 (1.386)	-1.492 (1.246)
Immigration	-0.181* (0.103)	-0.289*** (0.0965)
Proportionality	2.708 (2.171)	4.172** (1.893)
Voter turnout	0.185*** (0.0491)	0.183*** (0.0411)
Female labor	0.204** (0.0877)	0.161** (0.0782)
Unemployment	0.397** (0.201)	0.412** (0.185)
Unionization	0.061 (0.0469)	0.0293 (0.0407)
Vocational training	-0.000618 (0.0487)	-0.0725 (0.0552)
Lagged dependent variable	0.327** (0.131)	0.331*** (0.116)
Constant	-24.488* (12.939)	-40.333*** (14.495)
Observations	60	60
Countries	14	14
R ²	0.887	0.913
Rho	0.0389	-0.0302

Note: Model 1 is a replication of Lupu and Pontusson model 17 (2011, 328). Two-sided hypotheses test. Panel-corrected standard errors in brackets. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

Figure 2. Marginal effects of skew conditional on the politicization of multiculturalism

Note: Full line indicates the marginal effect of skew. The dashed lines indicate the 90% confidence intervals.

Table 2: Determinants of center of gravity, vote share and cabinet share

	<u>Center of gravity</u>	<u>Center of gravity</u>	<u>Vote share</u>	<u>Cabinet share</u>
	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Skew	0.523*** (0.186)	0.984** (0.421)	33.523* (17.825)	−232.886* (120.191)
Politicization of multiculturalism		0.0809 (0.0540)	4.380** (2.113)	−0.868 (10.009)
Skew $\times$ politicization of multiculturalism		−0.0601 (0.0517)	−4.084** (1.963)	0.679 (10.343)
Proportionality	0.0203 (0.0656)	0.0665 (0.0742)	5.081 (6.598)	53.963** (26.243)
Immigration	0.00303 (0.00318)	0.00211 (0.00349)	−0.330 (0.664)	1.502 (7.468)
Globalization	0.00841*** (0.00166)	0.00794*** (0.00181)	−0.159* (0.0891)	2.284*** (0.702)
Voter turnout	−0.000760 (0.000862)	−0.000243 (0.00101)	−0.0727 (0.201)	−0.153 (0.865)
Constant	−1.560*** (0.197)	2.159*** (0.459)	28.079 (34.999)	73.196 (219.30)
Observations	238	230	95	95
Countries	18	18	18	18
R ²	0.164	0.200	0.878	0.424
Fixed effects	No	No	Yes	Yes
Rho			−0.200	−0.034

Note: Model 3 is a replication of Lupu and Pontusson model 23 (2011, 331). The dependent variable values in models 3–4 have been reversed (compared to Lupu and Pontusson); higher values thus indicate a more left-leaning cabinet gravity. This also means that the coefficients of the control variables are reversed. Two-sided hypotheses test. Panel-corrected standard errors in brackets. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

Figure 3. Marginal effects of skew on cabinet and vote share at various levels of the politicization of multiculturalism

Panel A: Centre of gravity

Panel B: Vote share

Panel C: Cabinet share

Note: Full lines indicate the marginal effects of skew. The dashed lines indicate the 90% confidence intervals. Panel A based on Model 4, Panel B based on Model 5, Panel C based on Model 6. All reported in Table 2.