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7

Social Class and the Changing Welfare State Agenda of Radical Right Parties in Europe

Alexandre Afonso and Line Rennwald

7.1. Introduction

While the left generally stands for state redistribution and the right for lower taxes, it is difficult to capture the real view of the radical right as far as welfare and redistribution are concerned. While other party families based on long-standing divisions usually display a fair degree of consistency in their socio-economic policy positioning, the radical right party family seems to display a much greater level of variation across countries and across time (De Lange 2007; Rovny 2013; Ivarsflaten 2005). Indeed, the economic policies of radical right parties have ranged from libertarian to socialist, with different shades of welfare chauvinism in-between. The objective of this chapter is to assess the socio-economic positioning of radical right parties and to examine the determinants of their shift toward more pro-welfare state positions. We shed light on this mechanism by looking at the composition of their electorate, and the strategic context they find themselves in vis-à-vis other parties.

The ambiguity of the socio-economic positioning of the radical right appears regularly. In the lead-up to the European Parliament elections in June 2014, for instance, the UK Independence Party's (UKIP) Nigel Farage said that his party was very different from other parties also labeled as "far right" in Europe because they advocated "state socialist" ideologies while his party was in favor of limited government.[1] Indeed, while UKIP advocated an increase in tax-free allowances, a higher threshold for the highest income tax rate, and the abolition of inheritance tax in its manifesto for the British general election in 2015 (UK Independence Party 2015, 7), Marine Le Pen's *Front National* (FN) was proposing to *increase* the highest tax rate for high incomes to 46 percent (*Front National* 2012: 71). Her father, who had preceded

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her as party leader, had however presented himself in the early 1980s as a sort of "French Ronald Reagan" and denounced the French system of "fiscal inquisition comparable to the Gestapo" (Ivaldi 2013; *Le Monde* 2011).

This move away from neoliberal positions does not seem to be a "French exception" but instead increasingly appears to be a broader trend that requires attention within the radical right. The literature to date has mainly focused on the socio-cultural agenda of this party family. Rovny (2013) convincingly shows that these parties are particularly keen on blurring their socio-economic policy position so as to appeal to broader categories of voters. Conversely, as Morgan argues in Chapter 5, center-right parties may be willing to do the opposite and blur their position on socio-cultural issues to avoid alienating part of the centrist electorate. Since radical right parties primarily mobilize voters on the socio-cultural dimension of political competition, it is less important to capture their economic policy positioning, which at best plays a subordinate role to their nativist agenda (Mudde 2007). However, the alleged irrelevance of the economic agenda of these parties can be questioned on a number of counts. This is mainly because it is difficult for any party to position itself solely on one dimension of party competition once it has grown beyond the status of a niche party.

First, a few radical right parties—in Italy, Norway, Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, or Denmark—took part in government coalitions formally or informally (as support partners for ruling governments) in the 2000s (Afonso 2015; De Lange 2012). Being in government makes it harder for parties to "blur" their economic policy positions since they are required to either give or withhold concrete political support for policies proposed by other parties in domains beyond those typically "owned" by radical right parties. This is because it is difficult for parties to confine their agenda to one dimension only, as other contributions in this volume make clear. Even if they did not feature prominently on their agenda during electoral campaigns, socio-economic issues ultimately played important roles in the fate of these parties once they were in government (Afonso 2015).

Second, some of these parties, such as the FN (Ivaldi 2013), seem to have adopted a strategy of "normalization," seeking to shift their image from extremist marginal one-issue parties to more catch-all parties, which could make an accession to power more credible. Indeed, it may be difficult to become a convincing alternative to mainstream parties and obtain votes beyond a certain threshold without developing an agenda in a wider array of policy domains than those that the radical right traditionally "owns." This can be the case in particular for parties whose coalition potential is nonexistent because of a *cordon sanitaire* (exclusion strategy) by other parties, and who need to develop government credibility on their own. France seems to be a case in point here.

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Third, as emphasized in Chapter 1, the global financial and economic crisis of 2008 has made social and economic issues much more salient on the political agenda of all parties. Against the background of bank bailouts, fiscal constraints, and higher unemployment, it has become more difficult for parties to avoid a clear positioning on the socio-economic dimension of political competition. Logically, parties are under pressure to deliver policy propositions on job creation and welfare programs to the public, and especially to voters whose quality of life is impacted by the crisis. While this concerns all political parties, this is a challenge in particular for radical right parties that have attracted many working-class voters thanks to their positioning on issues such as immigration or European integration relating to the socio-cultural dimension of political competition (Oesch 2008; Ivarsflaten 2005). While in Chapter 5, Morgan documents how the "new" cultural dimension (e.g., immigration) has grown more salient in the agenda of mainstream parties, the challenge for the radical right has been to do the opposite, namely, to integrate "older" socio-economic issues.

While there has been a great deal of research on radical right parties, including on their economic policy agenda (De Lange 2007), we know relatively little about the factors that lead them to opt for either state-led redistribution or a low-tax minimal state regime, notably because it is not easy to derive economic policy positions from the nativist agenda of these parties. Recently, Lefkofridi and Michel (2017) have emphasized the shift to the left of these parties. We explore this question with a comparative framework, and a greater focus on the class basis of party electorates.

In this chapter, we explore the determinants of the socio-economic positioning of radical right parties across the four types of welfare democracies emphasized in this volume. We draw on the concept that party agendas are shaped strategically by party elites, taking into account voter preferences, party competition, and the salience of issues. We argue that the realignment of working-class voters, combined with an increasing significance of welfare state issues in the context of the economic crisis, has forced radical right parties to reconsider their position on social and economic policy issues. A more pro-welfare position has emerged as the best strategic option for radical right elites to accommodate the preferences of their growing number of working-class supporters. Hence, this is a case where the combination of a new "voter–party link" and the "strategic configuration of parties" has led to a restructuring of what parties have to offer in their campaign programs.

Our contribution to the literature is twofold. First, we aim to provide an updated picture of the evolution of the welfare agenda of radical right parties. Second, we seek to contribute to the understanding of the mechanisms of preference aggregation within radical right parties, namely, how voter preferences are mediated by other constraints to shape policy agendas. Here, our

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approach mirrors the analysis by Häusermann in Chapter 6 for social democratic parties, and addresses the relationship between the welfare state and electoral politics, the central concern of the present volume. A focus on this new party family is of great relevance to the existing body of welfare state literature. Indeed, one of its core assumptions has been that lower-income voters generally support redistribution, and have contributed to welfare expansion through their electoral support for social democratic parties. We explore how the significant electoral realignment of the working class toward these parties may shape welfare politics differently than in the past. In the following sections, we first assess changes in the welfare state agenda of the radical right, then examine three causes of change: votes, party competition, and issue salience.

7.2. The Changing Welfare State Agenda of Radical Right Parties

The first study to analyze the economic policy agenda of radical right parties was Kitschelt and McGann's (1995) *The Radical Right in Western Europe*. The authors argued that the "winning formula" of the radical right was a combination of authoritarianism (on the cultural dimension) and neoliberalism (on the economic dimension), used as a tool to occupy a political void not filled by center-right and center-left parties and to create a unique cross-class coalition of voters. In many ways, this corresponded to the actual positioning of a number of these parties in the 1980s and early 1990s. The French FN, with its early appeals to roll back the state was a case in point. This was a means of attracting different categories of voters with diverging economic preferences, namely, the anti-tax petite bourgeoisie and the authoritarian working class who were feeling threatened by increasing levels of low-skilled migration (Betz 1993). Kitschelt's initial hypothesis was that there had been a realignment of economic preferences of these two social groups along a free market agenda, enabling the combination of authoritarian and free market values. However, further research by Ivarsflaten (2005) has shown that working-class voters had not become more liberal economically. The dimensionality of politics discussed throughout this volume might explain this alliance: while working-class voters could be attracted by anti-immigration appeals on the socio-cultural dimension, the petite bourgeoisie could be convinced by appeals to roll back the state on the economic dimension without these two different groups actually agreeing. Subsequently, De Lange (2007) also questioned the stability of the "winning formula" argument, showing that a number of radical right parties had in fact converged toward more centrist positions in the 1990s and 2000s.

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More recently, Rovny (2013) has shown that the main common ground for radical right parties, rather than a left or right economic stance, is the low salience of their position on economic policy. Since they seek to appeal to broad categories of voters with heterogeneous socio-economic preferences, radical right parties are particularly keen on "blurring" their position on socio-economic issues, and making it explicit on immigration, law and order, and value-driven policies. Indeed, data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey suggest that radical right parties display the greatest degree of dispersion in their positions on redistribution, showing a higher level of heterogeneity in socio-economic positions than all other party families (see Table 7.1; Bakker et al. 2015). Similarly, the salience of redistribution in their agenda is also lower than for most other major party families.

While we agree with the general tenet of Rovny's analysis, namely, that it is illusory to look for a common economic agenda shared by all populist right-wing parties (PRWPs), we argue that is pertinent to explore the factors that explain diversity within them. Consequently, the statement that radical right parties only mobilize on neglected and value-driven issues no longer seems to hold if we look at recent developments in the agenda of radical right parties in the aftermath of the financial and Eurozone crises. For instance, the recent electoral success of the FN has been attributed to its renewed focus on redistribution—albeit reserved for French citizens—and national sovereignty in economic and monetary policy, notably with a retreat from the euro (Ivaldi 2013). Since the 1980s, we have also observed an increase in the salience of

Table 7.1. Positions on redistribution of party families, Chapel Hill Expert Survey, 1999–2014

Party family	Mean of redistribution position (0 = pro to 10 = against)	Standard deviation	Maximum	Minimum	Redistribution salience: mean
Radical right	**4.75**	**1.82**	**8.40**	**1.41**	4.95
Conservative	6.26	1.48	9.59	2.20	5.13
Liberal	5.92	1.48	9.00	2.36	5.68
Christian democrat	5.54	1.25	8.00	2.60	5.63
Socialist	3.03	0.95	5.75	0.36	6.82
Radical left	0.97	0.82	3.67	0.00	8.64
Green	3.08	1.32	7.00	1.00	5.86
Regionalist	4.43	1.62	8.00	1.67	5.07
Confessional	4.34	1.72	6.63	1.00	4.53
Agrarian/ center	4.08	1.36	6.22	1.40	5.39

Note: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey asks a panel of experts to place political parties on a scale between 0 (strongly opposes redistribution from rich to poor) and 10 (strongly favors redistribution from rich to poor). The data cover twenty-eight European countries.

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File, 1999–2014.

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issues linked to welfare and redistribution in the policy agenda of a number of PRWPs in various European countries (France, the Netherlands, Austria, and Italy).

Figure 7.1 shows a measure of the salience of welfare state positions of six western radical right parties drawing on the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), calculated by adding statements in the manifestos about welfare state expansion and retrenchment.[2] The data as a whole indicate a tendency for the total number of statements to increase over time, with a very clear trend in France in particular, as well as in Italy, Austria, and the Netherlands. Denmark is the only country that saw a decline of statements on welfare in the agenda of its *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People's Party, DF).

In the same figure, we also see a clear shift in the proportion of statements to expand the welfare state, signaling a shift from the market liberal stance described by the early literature to a more left-wing stance. While in France, Italy, and Austria, calls to cut back welfare were more common in the 1980s and early 1990s, radical right parties in these countries have become ever more supportive of welfare spending (with of course limitations as to who should access them). Statements asking for welfare retrenchment have also disappeared from the agenda of the DF. The only outlier seems to be the *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party, SVP) where the proportion of calls for welfare cuts clearly outweighs calls for expansion. The Swiss SVP is also an outlier in its evolution over time, as it seems to be the only party that has

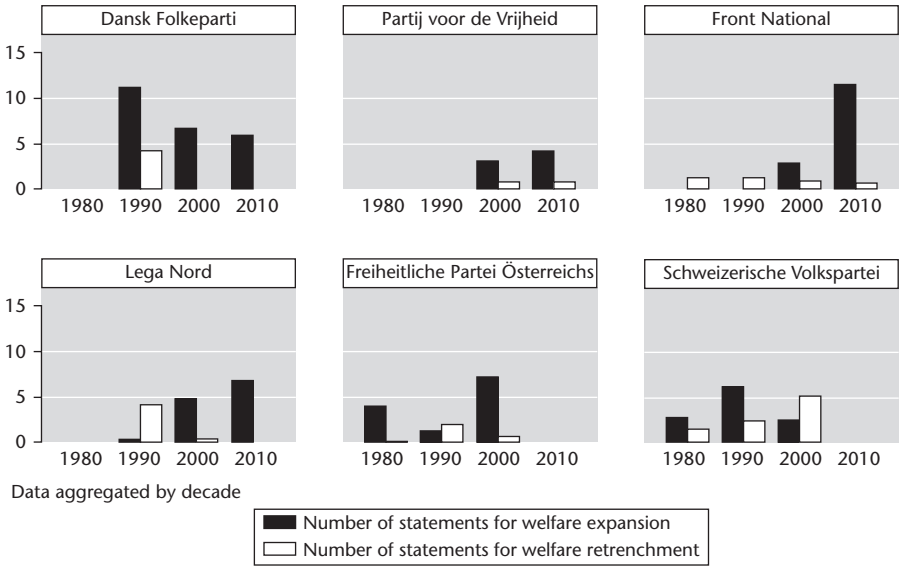

Figure 7.1. Number of manifesto statements on welfare in six countries, 1980–2015
Source: Comparative Manifesto Dataset

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become more hostile to welfare over time. Figure 7.2 uses the CMP's measure of welfare positions which subtracts the share of statements proposing to retrench welfare from those proposing to expand it: higher values indicate a more pro-welfare position. We see a clear trend among most parties toward a more supportive stance for welfare spending in all the countries observed except for Denmark and Switzerland.

Although it always combines an element of nativism and nationalism, a core element of radical right ideology, the welfare state agenda of radical right parties seems to be far from marginal, and to have gained ground. While it is true that immigration, as well as law and order, remain more prominent in their agenda than issues related to welfare, we can also argue that the greater salience of value-driven issues gives them more room to maneuver on economic issues. This is also a reason why they display so much variation as to their economic positioning.

This does not mean that welfare positions are exclusively determined by economic values, while identity or TAN (traditional-authoritarian-nationalist values) exclusively shape immigration positions. For instance, Afonso and Papadopoulos (2015) argue that the welfare agenda of the SVP can be linked to the ideological core of radical right parties (Mudde 2007), where the issues of authority and "deservingness" play major roles and shape party preferences in various welfare schemes: pensioners are seen as deserving, whereas the

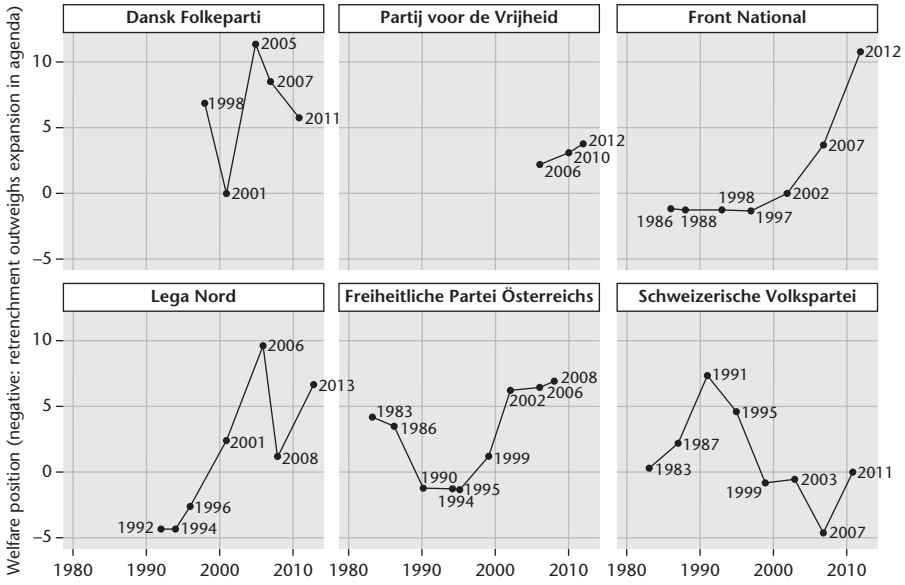

Figure 7.2. Welfare position of radical right parties in six countries, 1980–2015
Source: Comparative Manifesto Dataset

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unemployed are not. Another obvious link between the welfare and nativist agendas of radical right parties is "welfare chauvinism," whereby specific benefits should be restricted to citizens, or natives only (Schumacher and Kersbergen 2014).

However, the literature to date provides few arguments to explain the diversity in the socio-economic positioning of the radical right and, in particular, the growing tendency of this party family to advocate a state interventionist agenda. On the one hand, free market policies have been presented as a welcome alternative to the cozy elite relationships between political parties and interest groups that radical right parties denounce (Heinisch 2003). This logic revolves around the concept that since the state is controlled by a cartel of political elites against the people, the best way to limit the power of the cartel is to drastically roll back the state and restore market mechanisms. At the same time, many radical right parties have also voiced extensive criticism of markets ruled by international finance and US-dominated globalization challenging national sovereignty. We assume that this positioning is driven by strategic considerations led by either vote-seeking or office-seeking strategies. In Section 7.2.1, we explore three hypotheses based on voters, party competition, and issue salience in an attempt to explain these differences.

7.2.1. *Voters*

One possible explanation for different economic policy stances might be the class composition of the electorate. As outlined by Kitschelt and McGann (1995; McGann and Kitschelt 2005), radical right parties have been able to source voters from a cross-class electoral base, namely, from the petite bourgeoisie (for instance, shopkeepers and artisans) who traditionally voted for the right, as well as blue-collar workers who traditionally voted for the left. This is important because these two groups have tended to display opposite preferences on welfare issues. On the one hand, the working class constituted the core base of support for welfare expansion in the postwar period, while the petite bourgeoisie traditionally displayed a strong anti-tax and anti-regulation stance. While welfare preferences may not be automatically inferred from the class position of individuals, we know that there has not been a significant realignment of working-class social and economic preferences toward a more deregulatory agenda (Ivarsflaten 2005). The working class has remained relatively favorable to core welfare programs (see also Rennwald 2015). Generally, the move to the radical right by working-class voters has been interpreted as a consequence of major electoral realignments tied to globalization, namely, that globalization "losers" (either because of trade or immigration) create a new potential for mobilization by parties on the authoritarian right (Kriesi et al. 2008).

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Hence, one hypothesis that can be formulated is that the move toward more left-wing positions in the welfare domain by radical right parties could be tied to an increasing working-class composition of these parties ("proletarization"). While the "proletarization" thesis of radical right parties is extremely widespread in the literature, the empirical evidence on the scope of this phenomenon and its cross-national variation remains relatively thin. Existing studies tend to focus on single countries or single elections. The use of sophisticated class schemas together with a transparent operationalization appear to be requisite in any study dealing with the sociological basis of the parties' electorate, as decades of class voting research have shown (e.g. Evans 1999; Evans and Mellon 2016). In one of the rare comparative cross-temporal studies available, Arzheimer (2013) confirms the phenomenon of the "proletarization" of the radical right vote in western Europe, drawing on data from the Eurobarometer for the period 1980–2002. Arzheimer finds that the odds of working-class voters voting for the radical right have increased considerably over time.

In a cross-sectional study, Oesch (2008) demonstrates the importance of the working class for radical right parties, relying on data from the European Social Survey 2002. However, his study also indicates that the balance between the two core groups (petite bourgeoisie and working class) vary across radical right parties. The petite bourgeoisie still dominated the electorate of the radical right in Switzerland at the time of his analysis, while radical right parties in Belgium or France had become essentially working-class parties. Furthermore, Oesch (2008) shows that this support was driven more by concerns about identity than outright economic competition, and was certainly influenced more by trepidations about immigration than voters' stances on welfare. Linking our question with the types of welfare democracies outlined in Chapter 1, the radical right electorate tends to be constituted by social "insider" groups who are typically protected by traditional social insurance schemes in Bismarckian welfare systems and who may be afraid to extend these rights to "outsider" groups such as immigrants and women. Bismarckian welfare systems, with clearer divisions between "insiders" and "outsiders," can be understood as particularly prone to such appeals. The "welfare chauvinist" attitude is probably the most characteristic expression of this, but it is also consistent with the advocacy of a traditional "male breadwinner" model of society whereby social insurance schemes protect primarily the core male workforce. This electorate as a whole can be expected to defend the welfare status quo (Häusermann et al. 2013: 229). Given the current availability of data, however, it is difficult to test this hypothesis across types of welfare democracies and over many countries, as data on the social composition of electorates are very costly to gather. In the empirical section (Section 7.3.1), we will assess this using a smaller sample of countries.

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7.2.2. *Party Competition*

As already shown, radical right parties are generally considered to be right-wing parties yet the socio-economic background of their electorate is closer to that of left-wing parties, with a larger share of working-class voters. Nevertheless, since they mobilize primarily through the socio-cultural dimension, they may have more room to maneuver when it comes to socio-economic positions and they may base their position on other factors than the preferences of their core electorate on redistribution. Consequently, voters' socio-economic preferences, or their working-class composition, may not in fact be such a major constraint on their socio-economic policy positions. For instance, Afonso and Papadopoulos (2015) show that the policy positions of the SVP on pensions have been at odds with the positions defended by its own voters as expressed in referendum votes. Since the party's voters care primarily about immigration and less about their socio-economic policy agenda, the agenda on this issue—devised by party elites—might be dictated by factors other than voters' socio-economic characteristics. One potentially important element is the positioning of other parties, which can affect radical right agendas either positively (through imitation) or negatively (through differentiation). For instance, the French FN seems to adopt resolutely more left-wing economic positions than UKIP in the UK, but this may be because the economic positions of British parties in general are more economically liberal than French ones. Since radical right parties derive a large share of their voters from working-class backgrounds, one important source of inspiration is the positioning of its major left-wing opponent, understood as its main competitor for working-class votes. This hypothesis stands in contrast with the idea that radical right voters do not pay attention to economic issues.

One alternative, albeit contradictory, hypothesis still based on party competition is that radical right parties will attempt to improve their coalition-building potential by aligning their socio-economic policy position with that of their right-wing competitors, who have to date been the only ones willing to form coalition governments with them (Afonso 2015; De Lange 2012). Since, as argued already, in this scenario their voters attach less importance to their socio-economic policy position, they can afford to adopt positions that may be at odds with those of their voters in order to maximize their ability to form coalitions with—mostly liberal or conservative—parties. Such a stance was notably observed in Austria in 1999, when Jörg Haider's *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria, FPÖ) sought to come closer to Wolfgang Schüssel's *Österreichische Volkspartei* (Austrian People's Party, ÖVP) in the run-up to a coalition between the two parties (Heinisch 2003). Here, it is not the social democrats' position that is expected to explain the

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socio-economic positioning but rather that of their center-right opponent. In the empirical section (Section 7.3.2), we look at the link between the position on redistribution of radical right parties and that of social democratic and conservative parties, respectively.

7.2.3. *Issue Salience*

We have shown that the salience of welfare and redistribution, although still not the main issue emphasized by radical right parties, has nevertheless been gaining in importance in their electoral manifestos over the past few decades. A number of radical right parties have also shifted to more pro-welfare positions, or possibly welfare chauvinist ones. Due to the class composition of the electorate of radical right parties, we can expect these two developments to go hand in hand. If redistribution is not salient in their agenda, radical right parties can afford to adopt policy positions at odds with those of their electorate and they may have more room to maneuver than other parties. However, once it becomes more salient, they are spurred to move to more left-wing positions on redistribution because of their generally more working-class voter profile. As a result, we should expect increased salience to lead to more left-wing positions. We would not necessarily expect this to be the case for center-right parties since they can afford to adopt anti-welfare positions even if it features prominently in their program because their voters are not particularly supportive of redistribution.

7.3. Voters, Party Competition, and Issue Salience

We use different methods and empirical bases to explore the hypotheses about the class profile of parties, party competition, and salience. First, we examine the evolution of the class composition of the electorate in a small number of western European countries over a longer period of time, using national election surveys. As already argued, the nature of the (micro-level) data required to perform this type of analysis makes it difficult to cover a wide range of countries. We compensate this to some extent by offering a longitudinal approach to capture change over time. We aim to cover the four *types of welfare democracies* highlighted in Chapter 1. Second, we explore the role of party competition, and third, salience in shaping positions on welfare in a wider range of countries using data drawn from the CMP and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

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7.3.1. *The Changing Class Profile of Radical Right Parties*

First, we analyze the evolution of the class composition of radical right parties over several decades in seven countries clustered in different types of welfare democracies (Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands for the continental type of welfare democracy, Denmark for the Scandinavian one, France and Italy for the southern one, and the UK for the Anglo-Saxon one). If the data are available, we start the analysis in the years where these parties achieved their first electoral breakthrough. In the case of a transformation of existing parties into a radical right party (e.g. for the FPÖ in Austria or the SVP in Switzerland), we also cover elections before their ideological mutation. We use national election studies where possible—the best data for analyzing the actual parties' social basis and complete the series with other social surveys (the European Social Survey (ESS) or the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)). Table 7.A.1 in the Appendix published online lists all surveys used. For party choice, we use the voting choice recalled. Descriptive statistics are shown in Figure 7.3.

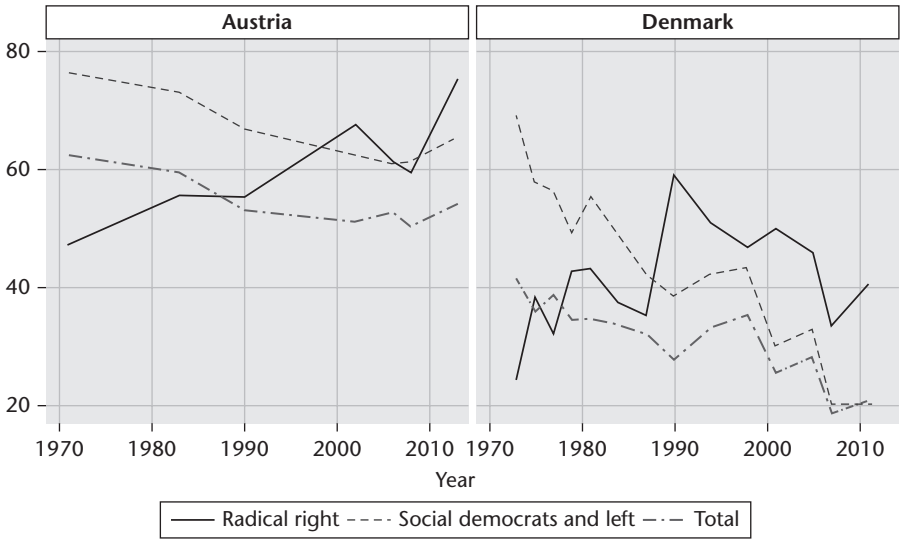

Figure 7.3. Share of working class voters within the electorate of radical right parties, of the left, and within the whole electorate

AQ1 Austria: N (Total): 1 021–2 130. N (FPÖ): 1971: 55, 1983: 45; otherwise: 71–311. Denmark: N (Total): 1973–77, 1981, 1990: less than 1 000; otherwise: 1 028–2 077. N (FrP/DF): 1973, 1981–84, 1990–94: less than 50; otherwise: 74–222. Left includes the Social democrats (S) and the Socialist People's Party (SF). France: N (Total): 1 863–3 377. N (FN): 194–428. Left includes the Socialist Party (PS) and the Communist Party (PC) (Left Front in 2012). Switzerland: N (Total): 1975: 585; otherwise: 1 725–3 468. N (SVP): 1975: 59, otherwise: 319–822. Netherlands: N (Total): 1 330–1 374. N (PVV): 61–188. PVV with Pim Fortuyn List in 2006. Left includes the Labour Party (PvdA) and the Socialist Party (SP). Italy: N (LN, Total): 114, 1 244. Left includes the Democratic Party (PD) and the Rainbow Left (SA). UK: N (UKIP, Total): 206, 1 923. Data weighted.

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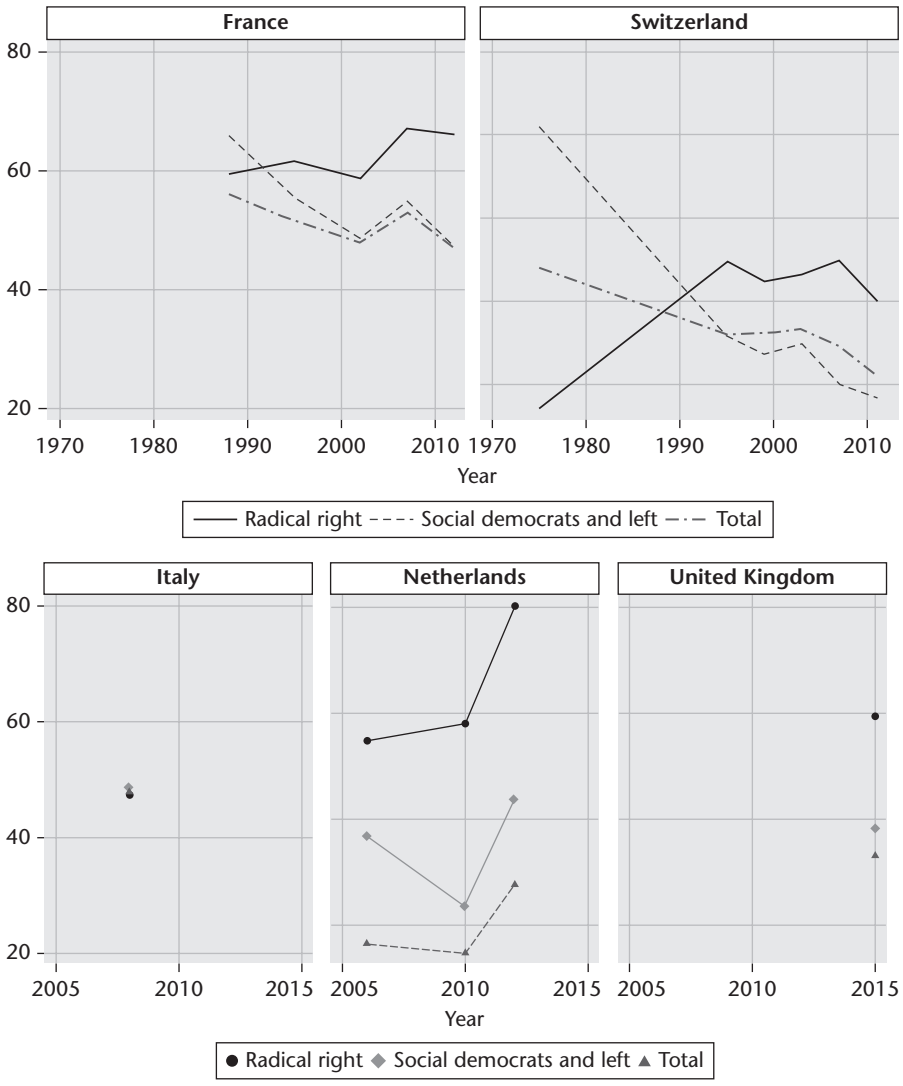

Figure 7.3. Continued

We use a broad definition of the working class and include not only those working in manufacturing and crafts but also those in the tertiary sector. In a study on social classes, Oesch (2006) has shown that workers—often female—in lower-skilled jobs in the service sector also occupy disadvantageous positions on the labor market. They even more frequently have precarious jobs than manual workers, who can rely on a longer tradition of union mobilization to improve their employment conditions. Based on Oesch's class schema (2006), we include all skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers in services,

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production, and office work (service workers, production workers, and office clerks) in the category of working class—that is, all salaried positions in the lower strata of his class schema.[3] Using three large classes, we compare the workers to the salaried middle classes—all the salaried positions in the higher strata of the class schema—and to the self-employed and employers. Section 7.A.1, "Construction of the Social Class Variable," in the Appendix to this chapter gives more information about the operationalization of social class.

The tendency toward the "proletarization" of radical right parties in the countries under observation is largely confirmed.[4] In almost all the countries analyzed, the proportion of working-class voters within the electorate of radical right parties has increased. At the end of the period, workers represent between 60 and 75 percent of the radical right's electorate in Austria, France, the Netherlands, and the UK, while they only represent between 44 and 54 percent of all voters (overrepresentation by a factor of 1.39 in Austria, 1.41 in France, 1.60 in the Netherlands, and 1.28 in the UK). There is also an overrepresentation of workers among the electorate of radical right parties in Denmark (1.96) and in Switzerland (1.29). In absolute terms, the share is lower in these two countries because workers account for a smaller proportion of the entire electorate. In Denmark, we use a more restrictive definition of the working class due to data availability, while in Switzerland non-citizens make up a large proportion of the working class (e.g. Rennwald 2015). Hence, at the end of the observation period, the overrepresentation of workers reaches its highest level in Denmark and the Netherlands, while it reaches its lowest level in the UK and Switzerland. *Lega Nord* in Italy[5] is one major exception. It is the only case where workers are not overrepresented within the electorate of radical right parties—only the self-employed are overrepresented.

A process of proletarization occurs because working-class voters were not overrepresented among the electorate of radical right parties at the beginning of the period. However, proletarization affects these parties differently because they varied in their initial class profile. In Denmark and Switzerland, the radical right parties had a clear middle-class profile with an overrepresentation of the self-employed. In Switzerland, for example, the SVP had one voter out of two from the petite bourgeoisie in 1975. In Denmark, the overrepresentation of workers among the *Fremskridtspartiet* (Progress Party) is discernible from 1979 onwards, while the overrepresentation of the self-employed has decreased without completely disappearing. In Switzerland, a clear difference between 1995 and 1975 can be observed—the inclusion of other elections would not make any difference (see Rennwald and Zimmermann 2016). As in Denmark, the self-employed continue to be overrepresented among the electorate of the SVP. The cross-class coalition of workers and self-employed highlighted by Kitschelt and McGann (1995) is the clearest in the case of Switzerland. It is also sometimes discernible in Denmark but rarely in the other countries. In Austria in

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the 1970s and 1980s, the FPÖ draws a disproportionate level of support from both the self-employed and the salaried middle classes, confirming the white-collar character of this party (e.g. Plasser and Ulram 2000: 230–1). From 2002, however, only the workers are overrepresented among the radical right electorate, while the self-employed become underrepresented. Finally, in France the FN did not have a distinct class profile in 1988. From 1995 onwards, there are clearly more workers in the FN electorate as compared to the entire electorate. Over time, and based on the small number of cases, we can relate the generally more supportive stance of radical right parties toward welfare to the increasing working-class composition of these parties.

The contrast with left parties—we show the social democratic/socialist/labor party together with the main radical left party if any—is also instructive. Over time, the proportion of working-class voters within left parties has declined (see also Häusermann in this volume). At the end of the observation period, radical right parties have become more oriented toward the working class in their voter composition than left parties in all countries. However, in several countries, workers continue also to be overrepresented among the electorate of the left (in Austria, in the Netherlands, and, to a lesser extent, in the UK), indicating persisting competition for working-class votes. We did not include center-right parties because workers are generally underrepresented in the electorate of these parties.

The "proletarization" of radical right parties occurs over a relatively long period of time. It is not the outcome of the economic crisis of the late 2000s. The process started much earlier, with the 1990s marking a turning point in all countries. Moreover, the process is uniform across all political economies so we cannot ascertain a distinct role for welfare regimes. With stronger social democratic parties, Scandinavian political economies are not immune to this phenomenon, as illustrated here by the Danish case. Only the southern political economies are distinct for the simple reason that the rise of radical right parties has been much more limited in these countries than elsewhere (see Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2016). *Lega Nord* is the only radical right party in our sample that does not draw a disproportionate support from working-class voters.

In many respects, the developments we document here reflect those emphasized by Häusermann in Chapter 6. She points out that social democratic parties have increasingly become the party of middle classes, leaving the working class to be represented by radical right parties. It is difficult, however, to match these developments closely to differences in party agendas. The French FN has seen the most spectacular change in its ideological transformation when it comes to welfare policies, even if the setup of its (working-class) electorate has remained relatively stable from 1995 onward. The electorate of the Danish People's Party has become more working-class based—this party

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even displays the highest overrepresentation of workers at the beginning of the 2010s—but there is a high level of fluctuation in its welfare positions. Despite its new gains among workers, the Swiss SVP has not moderated its neoliberal positions. As a whole, it is therefore difficult to find an automatic relationship between the class composition of parties and their welfare position.

7.3.2. *Party Competition*

In order to test our hypotheses about party competition, we use data from the CMP (Volkens et al. 2016). The data codes party documents drawing on the proportion of statements in favor or against the expansion of welfare programs. It includes data on a much longer timescale (for each election) than other sources such as the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (which does not contain enough observations to run our analyses), but there are also some issues with reliability.[6] It notably assumes that party positions can be derived directly from what is in their manifesto, and the measures are difficult to disentangle from the problem of salience. We have run exploratory analyses looking at the relationship between the welfare position of conservative, social democratic, and liberal parties and the position adopted by radical right parties. The ordinary least squares regressions are presented in Table 7.2. We find a clear correlation between the welfare position of conservative parties and the radical right, accounting for approximately 32 percent of the variance. In

Table 7.2. Relationship between welfare position of radical right parties and that of other party families (CMP data)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Radical right party policy positioning on welfare	Radical right party policy positioning on welfare	Party policy positioning on welfare
Conservative parties	0.569***		
	(0.181)		
Liberal parties		0.315*	
		(0.147)	
Social democratic parties			0.180
			(0.104)
Observations	42	53	107
R^2	0.323	0.099	0.032

Standardized beta coefficients; standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

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contrast, the relationship between the welfare position of the radical right and that of social democratic parties is not statistically significant. This confirms the initial presumption that the importance of socio-cultural issues for voters gives party elites the opportunity to subject their socio-economic platform to coalition considerations and would suggest that radical right parties look primarily to their right-wing counterparts rather than left-wing counterparts to determine their welfare policy position. The number of cases does not allow much more than simple bivariate regressions, and future research would certainly require the inclusion of control variables, and change over time, but there is some support for the idea that radical right parties craft their welfare position so as to align it with potential coalition partners among center-right parties.

7.3.3. *Salience*

The last factor we explore to attempt to explain the welfare state position of radical right parties is the salience of this issue in their agenda. For our analysis on the impact of issue salience on the welfare position of radical right parties, we rely only on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (1999–2014), which provides a separate measure of the salience for redistribution. (In contrast, the CMP dataset uses "welfare"; we use the two terms here as equivalents whereas they may capture slightly different concepts.) In order to compare the radical right with other party families, we run separate bivariate regressions for each party family to examine the link between salience (from 0, low salience, to 10, very high salience) and welfare positions, measured as scales from 0 (left) to 10 (right). The results in Table 7.3 and Figure 7.4 show that there is a strong link between the salience of redistribution and the party's substantive position in the case of the radical right, but not in the case of other center-right parties.

Table 7.3. Relationship between salience of redistribution and substantive position on redistribution among different party families (Chapel Hill Expert Survey)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Radical right	Conservative	Liberal	Christian democrat	Social democratic	Radical left	Green
Salience: redistribution	−1.014***	−0.0814	0.268	−0.449	−0.614***	−0.913***	−0.458***
	(0.220)	(0.272)	(0.309)	(0.385)	(0.106)	(0.0767)	(0.114)
Constant	9.929***	6.871***	4.169*	7.508**	7.171***	8.912***	5.339***
	(1.054)	(1.398)	(1.776)	(2.053)	(0.749)	(0.669)	(0.721)
N	25	21	35	20	33	34	24
R2	0.479	0.005	0.022	0.070	0.521	0.816	0.425

Standard errors in parentheses. Only parties in western Europe are included.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

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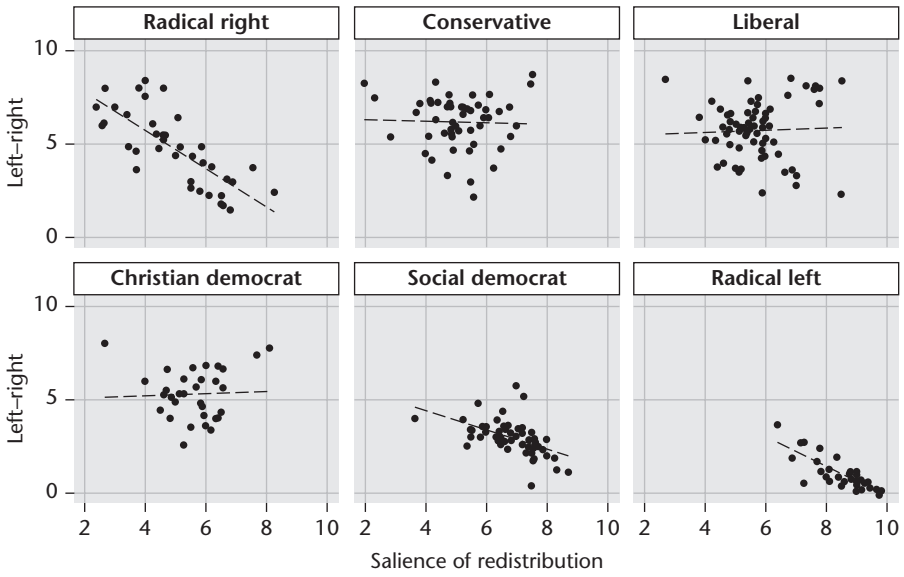

Figure 7.4. Relationship between salience of redistribution and substantive position on redistribution among different party families
Chapel Hill Expert Survey

The negative coefficient means that the more salient this issue is in their agenda, the more left-wing they are. This correlation is interesting because it cannot be observed for other right-wing parties. The association between salience and substantive positions is similar for social democratic parties and radical left parties.

If we link this to the evidence we have about the increasing working-class composition of those who vote for radical right parties, we could interpret these findings as follows: because they have a large working-class electorate, radical right parties cannot afford to adopt market liberal positions about welfare when this issue becomes salient (which liberal parties can, for instance). The more salient this issue becomes, the more they are spurred to align their positions with the perceived preferences of their working-class electorate, resulting in more pro-welfare positions. Consequently, their room for manoeuver on the issue of welfare is constrained by the class composition of their electorate in such a way that is substantially different from other right-wing party families.

7.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the changing welfare position of radical right parties on the issue of welfare. We have put forward a number of main

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findings. First, welfare issues have become more prominent in the agenda of radical right parties over time in a number of countries. Second, most of the parties we have included in our study have adopted more pro-welfare positions. The most emblematic case in this respect is the French FN, which shifted from a mildly anti-welfare positioning in the 1980s to a strong advocacy of welfare protection in recent years. Most parties have followed a similar trajectory, with the notable exception of the SVP (Afonso and Papadopoulos 2015). Third, we have shown that this move toward more pro-welfare positions has been concomitant to an increasing proletarization of the parties' electorate. While in the 1970s or 1980s many of these parties were dominated by petit bourgeois voters or did not have a distinct class basis compared to the general electorate, by the late 2000s the share of working-class voters among their electorate had increased to a level above that of their competing social democratic parties, who have increasingly sourced support from the "new middle classes" (teachers, academics, and other professionals). This change can be directly linked to the developments analyzed by Häusermann in this volume.

Fourth, we have found the class composition of the electorate of radical right parties to be more important than the positioning of other parties on the issue of welfare. While the welfare position of radical right parties is still relatively strongly correlated with that of conservative parties, the association with the agenda of social democratic parties cannot be observed. This is interesting as these parties have to reconcile a policy legacy shaped by right-wing ideas about welfare and an electorate that wants left-wing policies. The process of adjustment between these contradictory constraints may have to do with the composition of elites. The generational change within the FN between Jean-Marie Le Pen, who accessed power at a time when the electorate was essentially petit bourgeois, and his daughter more in line with the new working-class electorate, may be emblematic in this respect. Finally, we have found the salience of redistribution to be very strongly correlated with the substantial position of these parties on redistribution: the more salient this issue is, the more pro-welfare state their position is. This finding is interesting since it cannot be observed in the case of center-right parties and might act as an intervening variable between the class composition of parties and their welfare agenda: it is because their voters are mostly working class nowadays that they have to adopt more pro-welfare stances when this issue becomes salient, even if this position does not necessarily correspond to the prime preferences of party elites.

Based on the data we use, it is difficult to find a clear relationship between types of welfare democracies, a key topic in this volume, and the welfare position of parties. The "proletarization" of the parties and their shift toward more pro-welfare positions largely transcends types of welfare democracies—

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clearly the case in countries where radical right parties could establish themselves as competitors in the party system. Similarly, the pattern of class realignment that we find for radical right parties in virtually all the countries studied seems to be a phenomenon that transcends welfare systems. We have, however, suggested that the welfare system with an exclusionist stance advocated by radical right parties displays some affinities with Bismarckian welfare regimes based on an insider–outsider divide, and it remains to be seen whether the universalist understanding that underpinned both Scandinavian and Beveridgian models may become more precarious as radical right parties become stronger in the future.

Appendix

Table 7.A.1. Data used for the voters' analysis

Country	Election	Data, authors, and distribution
AT	1971	Political Action: An Eight Nation Study, 1973–6. Distributed by GESIS <https://www.gesis.org>, ZA0765
	1983, 1990	Sozialer Survey 1986, Sozialer Survey 1993, Soziologische Institute der Universitäten Wien, Linz und Graz. Distributed by the Wiener Institut für Sozialwissenschafltiche Dokumentation und Methodik, <http://www.wisdom.at/Datenarchiv>
	2002–13	European Social Survey, Rounds 1 (2002), 3 (2006), 4/5 (2008, 2010), 7 (2014), Norwegian Centre for Research Data, <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>
DK	1973–2011	Danish National Election Studies, for the investigators of each survey see the "Data Documentation for the Danish National Election Study 1971–2011," <http://cssr.surveybank.aau.dk/webview>
FR	1978–2012	Enquêtes post-électorales françaises, CEVIPOF. Distributed by the Centre de données socio-politiques, <http://cdsp.sciences-po.fr>
CH	1971	Attitudes et comportements politiques en Suisse 1972, Kerr et al.
	1975	Attitudes politiques 1975, Département de science politique de l'Université de Genève
	1995–2011	Swiss Electoral Studies (Selects) All data distributed by FORS, <http://forscenter.ch>
NL		European Social Survey, Rounds 4 (2008), 5 (2010), 6 (2012), Norwegian Centre for Research Data, <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>
UK	2015	British Election Study 2015 Face-to-face survey v3.0, Fieldhouse et al., <http://www.britishelectionstudy.com>
IT	2008	Italian National Election Studies 2008 (Itanes), Bellucci and Segatti, <http://www.itanes.org.

7.A.1. Construction of the Social Class Variable

In order to obtain the collapsed three-class schema, we first construct the eight-class Oesch schema and then combine the classes. We use the classification of occupations of

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the International Labour Organization in its different versions (ISCO68, ISCO88, or ISCO08) as well as the status of employment (workers vs. employers and self-employed). We normally use information on both the present and past occupation of a respondent (for retired people, for the unemployed, etc.).

In several countries, we depart from this construction. For France, we approximate the Oesch class schema with the "Catégories socio-professionnelles" available in the French election studies (see Rennwald 2015: 281 for the correspondence between both). For the UK, using the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification, we directly aggregate the occupational groups into the three classes. We allocate all intermediate occupations (mostly white-collar workers located hierarchically underneath the lower professionals) to the working class given the large definition used here.[7] For Denmark, there is some basic information available in each survey on the occupation of the respondent if he/she is currently active in the labor market. Unlike the other countries, the findings presented for Denmark exclude retired people or housebands/housewives. The classification (which varies across the surveys) is based on a blue-collar vs. white-collar division of labor. We allocate the skilled and unskilled workers to the working class, and the lower and higher salariat to the salaried middle classes. The implication is that the working-class category does not include many clerks and service workers and is a smaller group than that used for the other countries. Finally, for Italy, we use an existing variable on social class that is also based on a blue-collar vs. white-collar distinction. We allocate manual workers and routine non-manual employees to the working class, while we group higher or lower managers, teachers, and non-manual employees into the salaried middle class.

Notes

1. See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/website-archive/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=2211>.
2. Welfare state expansion is measured by the number of favorable mentions of a need to introduce, maintain, or expand any public social service or social security scheme. This includes, for example, government funding health care, child care, care or the elderly, pensions, and social housing. This category excludes education. Welfare state retrenchment is measured by the number of mentions proposing to limit state expenditure on social services or social security, as well as favorable mentions of the social subsidiary principle (i.e. private care before state care), see also Lindvall and Rueda in this volume on the development of the welfare state positions of center-left and center-right parties over time, using the same form of measurement.
3. The inclusion of office clerks in the category of working class is primarily for pragmatic reasons. In several cases, the data used do not allow us to distinguish between office clerks and individuals working in the service sector.
4. The conclusions would not be different with a more restrictive definition of the working class (e.g. by excluding office clerks). Quite the contrary, the trend of a "proletarization" would be even stronger. The office clerks generally display a lower

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propensity to support radical right-wing parties than other workers. It should be noted that those working in the service sector also have a higher than average level of support for these parties, not only blue-collar workers (Rennwald 2015).

5. In Italy, we focus on the 2008 election where *Lega Nord* obtained a sizeable share of the votes at national level (8.3 percent). In the 2013 general election, the corresponding figure was only half as high (4.1 percent), leaving us with too small a number of *Lega* voters in our sample. In the survey for the 2008 election, there are a considerable number of people who give no answer to the question on voting choice (around 30 percent), although they participated in the election.
6. Radical right parties are coded as "nationalist" in the manifesto data. The data cover Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The regressions include the welfare position (pro-welfare statements minus anti-welfare statements) of radical right parties as a dependent variable and, in turn, the welfare position of conservative, liberal, and social democratic parties in the same election.
7. The finding on the working class profile of the UKIP electorate is insensitive to this choice.

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