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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The makers get it all? The coalitional welfare politics of Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe. *The case studies of Austria and Italy*

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Abstract

The article investigates whether and to what extent the welfare policies of Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) vary in diverse government coalitions. Relying on a multidimensional framework differentiating coalitional politics along the welfare size and deservingness dimension, we conduct a comparative case study analysing welfare reforms of the 'standard' centre-right/PRRP government coalition ÖVP-FPÖ in Austria and the 'new' populist government coalition M5S-Lega in Italy. We find that both PRRPs do not promote pro-welfare policies in general, but rather opt for selective expansion of benefits for 'makers', while aiming at retrenching benefits for 'takers'. This welfare strategy includes pensioners and male breadwinner families but excludes migrants or long-term unemployed. The analysis furthermore shows that the central line of conflict with the centre-right ÖVP is mostly about the size of welfare policies, especially for 'deserving' citizens, while with the socially more left-leaning M5S it is rather centred around the deservingness dimension, e.g., benefits for takers. These results offer a more fine-grained understanding of the PRRPs' welfare agenda and their coalitional welfare politics in office.

Keywords: Radical Right; populism; social policy; coalition governments; welfare deservingness; welfare chauvinism

Introduction

In the last two decades, the increasing participation of Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) within government coalitions in the European Union (EU) has stimulated research on their impact on policy reforms. The bulk of studies on PRRPs in government has focussed on traditional issues within 'PRRPs' domains,' such as migration (Akkerman and de Lange, 2012). However, the recent electoral success of PRRPs has also been linked to their new pro-welfare formula. While there is a growing body of literature on PRRPs' new welfare agenda and its (alleged) pro-welfare shift (Afonso, 2015; Afonso and Rennwald, 2018; Rathgeb, 2021), the coalitional politics of PRRPs welfare policy is less examined and calls for further research (Rathgeb and Busemeyer, 2022). Two aspects are of central relevance in this context.

Firstly, the literature has predominately investigated PRRPs welfare ideology relying on analysing their party manifestos (e.g., Pinggera, 2020; Busemeyer *et al.*, 2022; Enggist and Pinggera, 2022). How PRRPs act and what welfare reforms are promoted and adopted when they are part of the government have been a minor area of research (Afonso, 2015; Röth *et al.*, 2018; Chueri, 2021; Rathgeb, 2021). In the course of the normalisation of PRRPs' participation in government over the past two decades in Europe (see Online Appendix, Figure A), this is an increasingly relevant field of research.

Secondly, we still know little about which welfare agenda PRRPs promote in different coalition governments. Until recently, coalitions with right-wing conservative or liberal parties were considered the only possible governing coalition for PRRPs (Afonso, 2015). We define such 'right-leaning' coalitions as *standard coalitions*. However, in recent years new types of governing coalitions with PRRPs have emerged – for example, with the populist Five Star Movement in Italy or with the Radical Left Syriza in Greece. Such *new coalitions* diverge from the standard ones since they comprise political parties that – when considering the welfare state realm – hold more *leftist* positions compared to those displayed by the mainstream right. Therefore, depending on the type of coalition partner, PRRPs will have different constraints and incentives to implement their welfare agenda. In other words, the specific composition of coalition governments joined by the Radical Right matters and deserves to be analysed in more detail.

Based on these observations, in this article we answer the following research questions:

How and to what extent do welfare reforms vary when considering different government coalitions with a PRRP as a coalition partner? Rearticulated, how does coalitional politics (specifically, the ideology of the coalition partner) affect the type of welfare state policies supported by PRRP when in office?

To investigate these issues, we have conducted a comparative case study of two Western European PRRPs' government coalitions. Following Mudde (2007), we define PRRPs as parties sharing three core elements: populism, nativism and authoritarianism. As we focus on the effect that different coalition partners with different welfare stances have on welfare reforms supported by PRRPs, we opt for a most similar case study design. The case studies are the 'standard coalition' (centre-right/PRRP) of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) in Austria (2017–2019) and the 'new coalition' (populist government) of Five Star Movement (M5S) and the League (Lega) in Italy (2018–2019). Our goal is to understand the welfare reforms that coalition governments involving PRRPs have implemented. That means scrutinising the government reforms and assessing what measure PRRPs try to enforce and are willing to support once in government.

We assume that PRRPs bargain with their partners to pass specific reforms that are important for them (Akkerman and de Lange, 2012). This bargaining will be re-adapted depending on the ideological orientation of their coalition partners. By looking at the reforms adopted compared to the ideal position of PRRPs and their coalition partners, we identify the PRRPs influence on government reforms. Furthermore, we can trace back the central lines of conflict that emerge during the negotiations with different parties of the political spectrum.

We argue that the conflict in coalitional welfare politics with PRRP is multi-dimensional: it concerns the *size dimension* – i.e., expansion or retrenchment of social policies/welfare state – and the *deservingness dimension* – i.e., who deserves to be protected by the welfare state and who should be excluded from social benefits and rights (see Attewell, 2021). Thus, we argue that the widely diagnosed PRRPs pro-welfare shift is conditional and selective in its nature: PRRPs do not generally want to expand the welfare state but focus on expanding policy programmes to the benefits of the *deserving makers*, e.g., pensioners, employers and male-breadwinner families, while at the same time offensively promoting the retrenchment of social rights and benefits for the *undeserving takers,* e.g., migrants, long-term unemployed or the 'corrupt elite' (Rathgeb, 2021).

However, the extent to which this peculiar 'new welfare formula' of PRRPs can be concretely implemented is affected by the nature of the government coalition they are part of. In line with the existing research literature (e.g., Afonso, 2015), we show that conflict about welfare reforms in *standard coalitions* is more along the *welfare-size dimension* than the *welfare-deservingness dimension*: while the ÖVP/FPÖ coalition mostly agreed on whom to punish, they diverged on welfare policies related to the deserving citizens, especially regarding the FPÖs core welfare stances on pension policy. On the contrary, we show, that in *new coalitions* with socially more left-leaning

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parties, the line of conflict shifts from the welfare size towards the targets of the social policies: while the Lega/M5S coalition holds a rather expansionary view of welfare reforms, they tended to have stronger disagreements on the welfare beneficiaries, especially for those Lega defines as 'undeserving people'.

To our knowledge, we apply, for the first time, this kind of tailored framework for analysing and explaining the coalitional welfare politics of PRRPs in different government coalitions. We do so by presenting novel empirical data analysing the two different governing coalitions in core areas of social policy, namely labour market, pension and family policy. The comparison between the Austrian and Italian cases is currently the best possible way to empirically detect coalition effects of *standard* and *new* coalitions. Beyond gathering specific knowledge in comparing both cases, the study broadens our general knowledge about what kind of social policy reforms and strategies PRRPs presumably pursue once in office.

The remainder of this article is organised as follows: the following two sections introduce the theoretical framework, the methods and the data for the empirical analysis. This is followed by the two case studies analysing the reforms of pension, labour market and family policy by the recent PRRP coalition governments in Austria and Italy. The final section is dedicated to the comparative discussion of the empirical findings and the concluding remarks.

Theoretical framework

How to study the coalitional politics of PRRPs?

The rise of PRRPs over the last decades has mainly been explained by referring to driving forces related to issues belonging to the socio-cultural dimension of political conflict, while their positions on the socio-economic dimension have received less attention (Mudde, 2007). When being addressed by Kitschelt and McGann (1995), the combination of authoritarian ideology with neoliberal economic policies was identified as the PRRPs' *winning formula*. In the wake of the recent electoral success of PRRPs, this diagnosis has been called into question. Research has demonstrated that economic and cultural explanations for the Radical Right's success are more complementary than mutually exclusive (Rathgeb and Busemeyer, 2022). Structural economic and social changes over the last decades have opened up the likelihood for specific social groups to vote for the PRRPs (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018).

PRRPs have re-aligned their electoral position and dropped their welfare critical stances to appeal to a broader electorate of (self-perceived) losers of modernisation (e.g., Kriesi *et al.*, 2008; Oesch and Rennwald, 2018). In various cases, PRRPs have challenged the Left over parts of their pro-distribution electorate and the centre-right over its traditional base of pro-business petite bourgeoise (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018). It follows that PRRPs would have two potential constituencies with divergent economic and welfare policies but similar cultural (anti-immigration, law and order) preferences. In this regard, Rovny (2013: 5) made the influential argument that PRRPs engage in 'positioning blurring', that is, taking 'vague, contradictory, or ambiguous positions' and deliberately de-emphasising socio-economic issues.

However, 'position blurring' ceases to be a successful option as soon as PRRPs are in government: firstly, because economic and social policy are central issues for all other parties (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022), and secondly, once in office, PRRPs 'must explicitly give or withdraw its support to the policies of other parties in the coalition' (Afonso, 2015: 273). Accordingly, several alternatives to explain the PRRPs' welfare agenda have been provided by the literature.

Many scholars refer to the concept of *welfare chauvinism* when characterising PRRP welfare preferences (e.g., Schumacher and Van Kersbergen, 2016). PRRPs are said to take pro-welfare stances but restrict redistributive policies and benefit entitlements to natives at the expense of migrants. Social policy positions are thus connected to the PRRPs' anti-migrants agenda. In opposition to *position-blurring*, the concept of welfare chauvinism acknowledges that PRRPs *do* take a

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position concerning welfare policies. Reforms are negotiated with coalition partners along a cultural conflict, thus implying moral judgments regarding *whom to include* (natives) and *whom to exclude* (migrants). However, the framework has two main shortcomings. First, it has a *narrow scope*. While the welfare-migration nexus is increasingly relevant within coalition governments, welfare positions are not restricted to aspects of migrants' welfare entitlements only but cover a broad range of social policy issues. Second, it conceives political conflict as *mono-dimensional*. While the framework identifies the conflict regarding the reform *targets* (natives vs. migrants), it does not conceptualise conflicts with respect to the *size* of the welfare state, i.e., to what extent rights and benefits should be expanded or retrenched.

The literature on the recalibration of the welfare state (e.g., Häusermann, 2010) offers such a multidimensional perspective. Political conflict in advanced economies is conceptualised about the general size (first dimension) and the prioritisation of specific goals (second dimension) of the welfare state (Häusermann *et al.*, 2022; Enggist and Pinggera, 2022). Reforms thus imply the expansion and/or the retrenchment of two different kinds of policies: social consumption policies (SC), on the one hand, and social investment policies (SI), on the other (Beramendi *et al.*, 2015; Häusermann *et al.*, 2022). This literature considers the implications of socio-cultural preferences in welfare reforms, postulating that attitudes towards SC/SI policies are connected to moral judgments about *deservingness* (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022). Research has highlighted that PRRPs favour SC policies over SI policies (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022; Busemeyer *et al.*, 2022; Meardi and Guardiancich, 2022). The preference for SC policies is traced back to the PRRPs strong electoral affinity to blue-collar workers and petty bourgeoisie – both social groups who are typically male, labour market insiders, and protected by classic social insurance schemes. SI policies contradict this preference as they tend by design to benefit all groups, regardless of their specific social contribution, with a special focus on improving the situation of the labour market outsiders (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022). However, recent research shows that PRRPs' welfare stances do not neatly align with this distinction (Attewell, 2021). For instance, PRRPs prefer a workfare approach to employment, which implies strict conditionality measures for unemployed benefits and labour market deregulation policies. Thus, despite the relative preference for SC over SI policies, this preference is selective, conditional and policy-field related. It is therefore questionable to what extent the SC/SI prioritization represents a central line of conflict in coalition governments with PRRPs.

This article builds on recent literature which conceptualises *deservingness* – conceived as perceptions that welfare state beneficiaries are or are not worthy of receiving welfare state benefits and rights (Attewell, 2021) – as the second key dimension next to the general support for the welfare state and inequality reduction (welfare size dimension). According to this literature, the PRRPs' welfare agenda follows a group-oriented account based on populism, authoritarianism, and nativism (Rathgeb, 2021). Creating and guiding differentiations between the *in* and *out-group* and defining the *deserving vs.* the *non-deserving* citizens are at the core of PRRPs' welfare ideology. Such a dimension detects the *targets* of welfare reforms but goes beyond the narrow dichotomy of *native vs. migrants* postulated by the welfare chauvinism framework.

Expansion for makers, retrenchment for takers: PRRPs welfare reform priorities

Following Rathgeb (2021), we argue that PRRPs promote welfare policies that benefit the *deserving makers* (see also Cheuri, 2021). On the contrary, they restrict or dismantle welfare programs and policies that are beneficial to the *undeserving takers* (ibid.).

The *makers* include the 'hard-working', native citizens, first of all, employers, pensioners and those employees with long and stable working careers – the so-called *insiders* of the labour market, e.g., primarily the blue-collar workers. Being framed by PRRPs as *the people magnifying the wealth of the nation*, makers deserve to be generously protected by the welfare state, both in terms of social rights and social benefits. In this regard, the expansion of pensions is the most prominent

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issue of the PRRPs' welfare agenda (Enggist and Pinggera, 2022). Pensions are indeed a clear policy area where it is easy to identify the 'hard-working' people who have contributed to the country's wealth. In most advanced economies, retirement schemes are financed by contributions paid by the workers during their job careers, making pensions a core policy realm for the PRRPs (Ennser-Jedenastik, 2020). The maintenance or improvement of pro-elderly measures such as raising pension benefits or early retirement can be seen as a way to defend the acquired rights of *deserving* groups (Chueri, 2021). Even the maintenance of labour market protection (e.g., labour market regulation) for blue-collar workers and programs for those workers who become unemployed after long periods of paid employment – such as unemployment benefits or short-term work arrangements – can be seen as a core element of the PRRP's agenda (Rathgeb, 2021; Bergman, 2022). In the same vein, in family policy, PRRPs are supposed to design social benefits according to a familistic approach, supporting the traditional male-breadwinner model (Giuliani, 2022; Meardi and Guardiancich, 2022).

The *takers* are considered by PRRPs as *self-serving free riders jeopardizing the wealth of the nation* – first of all, migrants, minorities, citizens living in economically-depressed regions, employees with unstable and fragmented working employment biographies (especially those working in the low-skilled service sector). Takers are the targets of retrenching reforms since they are perceived as not deserving welfare state protection. PRRPs thus will favour a general cut of social assistance programs, such as minimum income or social pension, which go to the benefit of these groups. Benefits for migrant families may be restricted or not improved. Simultaneously, programs that are beneficial for dual-earner families – such as childcare or activation measures for mothers – may be retrenched or limited only to natives. PRRPs adopt a *selective workfare approach* to employment, which implies strict conditionality measures for the long-term unemployed, opposition to trade unions and targeted deregulation of the labour market to the detriment of those service workers employed in atypical jobs (Bergman, 2022; Busemeyer *et al.*, 2022).[1]

Thus, the theoretical approach applied in this study is multidimensional and related to the positioning of political actors regarding *welfare size* (first dimension) and *welfare deservingness* (second dimension). Coalition partners, formulate and bargain on reform packages in which policies for makers and takers are both at stake. This leads to four ideal-typical reforms options: a) general *expansion*, b) general *retrenchment* of welfare policies for both makers and takers, *c*) expansion for makers and retrenchment for makers and d) expansion for takers and retrenchment for makers (see Figure B in the online Appendix).

PRRPs welfare policies in office: the implications of the 'coalition effect'

What welfare policies are to be expected from PRRPs in government under different coalitions? We hypothesise that PRRPs' welfare politics significantly differ when being in government with different parties of the political spectrum as said parties' general welfare stances vary.

Being the 'standard case', PRRPs normally take part in government coalitions led by conservative or liberal parties (Akkerman and de Lange, 2012). In this case, the coalition partners share common preferences related to the deservingness dimension, mostly to the dismantling of welfare policies for the undeserving takers, e.g., migrants, long-term unemployed or non-traditional families (Rathgeb, 2021). However, their position may vary regarding the size of the welfare state and with that the question of how to actually treat the deserving makers. Often right-leaning parties will have more retrenchment-oriented preferences, in particular when it comes down to cost-intensive policies such as pensions (Afonso, 2015), which makes it difficult for PRRPs to implement their preferred welfare agenda. Still, should the PRRPs back reforms to retrench these policies, their working-class electorate might punish them.

[1]See Supplementary material for further information.

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Most likely, PRRPs will follow two strategies to avoid electoral punishment and remain in power (ibid.): The first one implies that they convince their coalition partners to further focus retrenchment towards policies where recipients are perceived as 'undeserving'. This means shifting retrenchment policies from pro-elderly and male breadwinner-orientated policies towards the takers, i.e., for long-term unemployed or migrants. The second strategy implies a refocus of retrenchment from passive measures to (labour market) deregulation. Deregulation – under certain circumstances – may be the common ground for the PRRPs and their centre-right partners. The latter have always wanted to make the labour market more flexible, while the former have shown a general hostility to organised interests, especially trade unions as part of the 'corrupt elite' (Röth *et al.*, 2018; Rathgeb, 2021). Furthermore, while PRRPs promote protection for the 'hard-working' male breadwinners – and, consequently, do not openly back labour market deregulation that penalises their (old male) blue-collar electorate – they can support a selected labour market de-regulation– i.e., what is known as deregulation at the margins (Bergman, 2022) – that mostly hits the takers working in the low-skilled service sector. Selective deregulation – together with a reduction of trade unions' power – can please both the centre-right's traditional bourgeois electorate and the small business owners voting for the Radical Right.

Recent years showed that PRRPs may also form 'new coalitions' with socially more left-leaning parties. In comparison to the centre-right, these parties have a (more) pro-welfare view and profound redistribution preferences. Nevertheless, while they share similarities with PRRPs regarding their position on welfare size, they may vary based on their priorities regarding the deservingness dimension. Literature hypothesises that government coalitions with more left-leaning parties centre around a common core of deserving citizens. This includes agreeing on the targeted expansion of social benefits for the 'hard-working people', especially in the area of pensions, but also for labour market insiders and families (Rathgeb and Busemeyer, 2022).

However, socially more left-leaning parties might also emphasise cultural liberalism, universalism and socially progressive values (Häusermann, 2010; Häusermann *et al.*, 2022). Thus, positions regarding what PRRPs perceive as undeserving takers might significantly differ, for instance regarding support for labour market outsiders. In theory, these new coalitions could simply agree on generous spending and protection for their common and diverse pool of deserving electorate, but in times of 'permanent austerity' pro-welfare stances create manifest prioritisation conflicts. Therefore, we assume that the line of conflict in "new government coalitions" will shift from the welfare size towards recipient prioritisation. PRRPs will focus on expanding social benefits and protection for the "deserving" electorate while minimising redistributive and protective policies for takers. Thus, a central line of conflict regards how to do welfare policy for the undeserving. Not without reason, these coalitional options are seen as rather fragile (Rathgeb and Busemeyer, 2022). Indeed, the common ground between the coalition partners is on the subordinate economic dimension, while there is latent conflict on the cultural dimension due to a limited consensus on deservingness.

To summarise: we assume that conflict about welfare reforms in 'standard coalitions' with conservative/liberal parties is more along the *welfare-size dimension*, while in a 'new coalition' with more socially left-leaning parties, conflicts shift towards the *welfare-deservingness* dimension. Furthermore, not all policy fields count the same way. PRRPs, once in government, will prioritise the expansion of pension policy as their core trademark. On the contrary, they will be more open to concessions in other non-core policy areas such as labour market policy or family policy.

Empirical research design: methods and data

To investigate welfare reform strategies of PRRPs in office, we opt for a most-similar research design by comparing the 'standard coalition' of ÖVP/FPÖ in Austria and the 'new coalition' of M5S/Lega in Italy. Both cases share significant similarities. Their welfare state regimes developed during the *Trente Glorieuses* and have similar features typical of the Bismarckian tradition.

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Furthermore, in both countries, the relative strength of the PRRPs in the coalition government was quite similar. Finally, both parties represent ideological pioneers of the populist radical right in government (in the early 2000s) and belong to the few cases that managed to re-enter government after longer periods of opposition.

At the same time, these cases differ in the kind of coalitions that emerged. In Austria, we find a typical coalition of a mainstream, right-leaning party ÖVP and the Radical Right FPÖ. On the contrary, in Italy, the Lega formed a coalition with the M5S. Though the party can't be considered leftist in the traditional – social democratic – sense (Hooghe and Oser, 2016) – it includes crucial left-leaning positions (Di Virgilio *et al.*, 2015). Empirical data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (see online Appendix) shows that when considering socio-economic issues, the M5S tends to be left-leaning – a position different from that displayed by centre-right parties, which are commonly understood as the standard coalition partners of the PRRPs.

Labour market policy, family policy and pension policy as core social policy areas were selected to analyse the welfare reform strategies in both case studies. These have been significant fields of welfare state reform policies over the last decades (Häusermann, 2010; Beramendi *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, political conflicts are particularly significant in these policy fields due to demographic change, transformations of the labour market and changing family models (Häusermann, 2010: 19–22).

For the empirical analysis of the policy strategies, we collected data on all welfare reforms of the two PRRP coalition governments in the three policy fields during their office term. Based on a comprehensive collection of primary and secondary data on the reforms, we coded each reform regarding our theoretical framework. As welfare reforms are often formulated as policy packages, we distinguished every reform into individual reform issues (Häusermann, 2010: 11). These reform issues were the core analytical unit for the coding.

The coding was carried out according to the following procedure (see Appendix for detailed info): first, each reform issue was coded in relation to the targeted group differentiating between *makers* and *takers*. We then assigned numerical values to each reform element: +1 if it expands, 0 if it does not affect, or −1 if it retrenches the respective social policy (Bürgisser, 2022). To consider the different importance of reform issues, we weighted the reform issues. We then summed the values assigned to each reform element belonging to the same deservingness dimension (*makers* or *takers*) to obtain the final score in that dimension. We plot the two final positions on the makers and takers-dimensions in a Cartesian diagram to locate the joint coalition government's position. We executed this procedure for all three policy realms.

To understand the ideal-typical position of the FPÖ and Lega – and that of their coalition partners ÖVP and the M5S – we analysed their election manifestos, respectively, at the 2017 and 2018 elections. Our idea is that election manifestos represent the best instrument to detect the ideal positions taken by the parties without the *interference* of other factors, such as coalition bargaining. Methodologically, we adopted the same strategy for analysing the government's final policy reforms. In this case, however, our unit of analysis was the reform claim.

The mapping of the policy reforms is embedded in a qualitative tracing of the processes, the issues at stake, and coalition partners' motivations and strategies to properly interpret the coalitional politics of both governments (Häusermann, 2010: 232). This qualitative analysis is based on a broad range of primary and secondary data such as government press releases, legislation, party documents, newspaper articles and existing research.

Empirical analysis

Austria: ÖVP/FPÖ

The return of the FPÖ to power was the result of an incremental normalisation of the FPÖ's right-wing populist claims over the years (Reinfeldt, 2018). In this context, the realignment of the ÖVP

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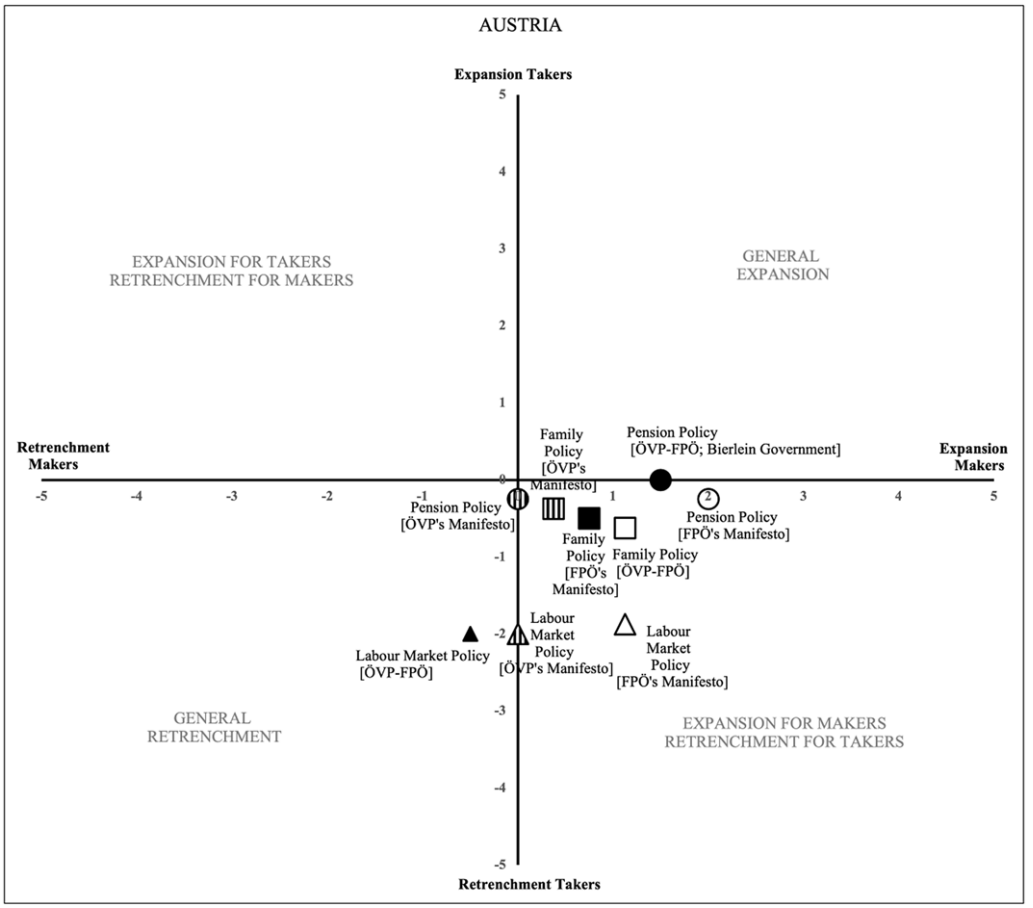

Figure 1. Election Manifestos and ÖVP/FPÖ Coalition Government positions.
Note: regarding pension reforms, these were implemented under the Bierlein government (technocratic government), after the breakup of ÖVP/FPÖ coalition. Nevertheless, the reforms mainly passed thanks to the votes of the two parties and thus can be considered as an output of the ÖVP/FPÖ government

under the later chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, was central to the renewed coalition formation. Kurz rebranded the ÖVP and positioned it to the right in terms of immigration and asylum policies (Reinfeldt, 2018: 66; Rathgeb, 2021: 651). In line with that, the ÖVP also echoed the FPÖ's welfare-chauvinist and populist claims (Ennser-Jedenastik, 2020: 8–9). With this course, both parties emerged as clear winners from the 2017 election and together managed to garner 57.5 % of the votes (ÖVP 31.5% and FPÖ 26%). The ministries for labour, social affairs, health and consumer protection, and the interior went to the FPÖ. The coalition collapsed in 2019 in the wake of the so-called 'Ibiza affair'.

Figure 1 shows the ideal-typical positions of the FPÖ and the ÖVP according to their election manifestos and the final coalition government's positions concerning the three policy fields along the multidimensional makers/takers reform space.

Labour market

In the election manifesto, the FPÖ promoted an unambiguous *pro-takers/anti-makers strategy* located in the lower right quadrant (Figure 1). The FPÖ promoted restrictive access to the

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Mindestsicherung (needs-oriented minimum income scheme), the restriction of access to social benefits for non-citizens (i.e., only after at least 5 years of contributions), and the sectoral closure of the labour market for EU foreigners. Furthermore, retrenchment claims were directed at the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS). On the other hand, the FPÖ wanted to fight the 'cold progression' by automatically adjusting tax brackets to the inflation rate and demanded consolidations in taxation and social insurance contributions 'to the benefit of the top performers and the families' (FPÖ, 2017, own translation). Other reform claims concerned the creation of additional company apprenticeships (Blum Bonus New), the payment for trainees and the introduction of a minimum wage of 1.500 Euro per month, which, however, largely corresponded to an already decided compromise between the social partners (see Appendix). The reform claims had two objectives (Rathgeb, 2021): on the one hand, it prioritised labour market insiders and restricted benefits for migrants, the poor and the unemployed. On the other hand, the FPÖ also aimed to weaken trade unions' role in wage bargaining and reduce the relevance of the AMS for labour market policies.

The labour market claims of the ÖVP partially followed a similar strategy located in between the two lower quadrants. The ÖVP also opted for reforming the Austrian tax system aiming to stop the cold progression and to reduce the unemployment insurance contribution for low incomes. Like the FPÖ, the ÖVP formulated various measures to restrict access to social benefits for migrants, among others a Mindestsicherung light. Furthermore, it promised to revise the labour market policy goals and control the activities of the AMS. However, the ÖVP pursued a neoliberal approach with the claims to deregulate the Working Hours Act and cap the Mindestsicherung to a maximum of 1500 euros per family, which targeted part of what – in the view of the FPÖ – belonged to the deserving makers.

The approach of the ÖVP guided the government actions: In the area of labour market policy, *a general retrenchment strategy* is visible. The reform of the needs-oriented minimum income scheme aimed to stop 'welfare immigration'. Yet, the reform did not only restrict the access for migrants through a variety of policy measures (including a degressive calculation for the benefit entitlement per child and the reduction of benefits due to a lack of language skills[2]), it also profoundly reshaped the goal of the policy from avoiding poverty and social exclusion to 'punishing the poor' through benefit retrenchment and sanction-oriented activation (Atzmüller *et al.*, 2020: 535–539). The working time reform deregulated, under the motto of 'flexibilisation', the existing working time restrictions and increased the maximum working hours to 12 hours per day and the maximum weekly working time to 60 hours. However, on the contrary, the reform of unemployment contributions reduced contributions for low-wage earners and was the only relevant expansionary reform that nevertheless only slightly benefitted people in the low-wage sector or in part-time employment.

Furthermore, the coalition significantly reduced the ALMP budget by around 20% between 2017 and 2019 (Atzmüller *et al.*, 2020: 542). It roughly halved the training allowance for young adults in inter-company training (ÜBA) and suspended the program '20.000', which aimed to reintegrate 20.000 unemployed people over 50 years old into the labour market. In addition, the labour market regulations for migrant and asylum-seeking young people became more restrictive. Furthermore, these groups were particularly hit hard by the ALMP cuts (Knecht and Bodenstein, 2019).

While the FPÖ, in its party manifesto, formulated several policy measures benefiting the 'hard working' Austrians, the government policy was characterised by a firm retrenchment policy for takers *and* makers (Atzmüller *et al.*, 2020). These reforms were also directed against labour market insiders and were therefore difficult to reconcile with the new welfare profile of the FPÖ. The Working Time Act, in particular, created strong political pressure on the FPÖ, which had previously positioned itself as an opponent of this deregulation measure and now had to make a U-turn

[2]Both measures were declared unconstitutional by the Austrian Constitutional Court in December 2019.

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(Taz, 2018). In the case of the minimum income scheme, the FPÖ mainly focussed on emphasising the restrictive measures for foreigners and migrants and stressed individual successes in the negotiations with the ÖVP, such as implementing restricted access to assets of benefit recipients (Oswald, 2018).

Pensions

In its manifesto, the FPÖ promoted generous and expansionist measures for pensioners as their core 'deserving' electorate through the introduction of a minimum pension and the reintroduction of the Hackler regulation for blue-collar workers. The latter reform claim envisioned that anyone who had worked 45 years or 540 months above the marginal earnings limit should be able to retire without any pension deductions – even if they retired before the standard retirement age. During the election campaign, these were central claims under the motto: 'Austrians deserve fairness' (FPÖ, 2017). Retrenchment claims were limited to the abolition of so-called 'luxury pensions' for public sector employees.

In contrast, the ÖVP did not reward the pensioner but rather pursued a *productivist* strategy based on increasing the actual retirement age and the abolition of special pensions. While the latter measure had symbolic character (abolishing 'luxury pensions'), the former meant a de facto pension reduction, which would be achieved through lower, collectively agreed salary increases, as these would motivate employees to work longer and entrepreneurs to hire 'cheaper' older people. In addition, activating measures for an extended working period in the course of the 'corridor pensions' was formulated (e.g., suspending the pension insurance contribution).

In pension policy, no relevant reforms were carried out during the coalition period itself; nevertheless, the draft for a minimum pension (Ausgleichszulage) was presented jointly by the ÖVP and the FPÖ only a few days after the coalition ended. Furthermore, during the interim period of the technocratic Bierlein government, two pension reforms were passed with the votes of both the ÖVP and FPÖ (Austrian Parliament 2019). On the one hand, an extracurricular pension increase for 2020 was decided upon, and the marginal earnings threshold for early retirees was slightly increased (see Appendix). On the other hand, the Hackler pension was reintroduced for long-term insured workers so that workers with 45 years of insurance would be able to retire at 62 without deductions, whereby women were credited with up to 5 years of child-raising periods. The Hackler regulation was pushed through by the Austrian Social Democrats (SPÖ) and supported by FPÖ against the ÖVP (Bachner and Zaunbauer, 2019). The ÖVP agreed reluctantly to the reform package because otherwise, it would also have had to vote against its pension increase reform.

Although there is a great deal of overlap between the demands of the FPÖ and the reforms passed during the election period (see Figure 1), it is important to consider that these were passed mainly under the play of free forces after the end of the coalition. This fact points to the simmering conflict between the two parties around the issue of rewarding the makers, as the ÖVP, despite some concessions to the FPÖ, pursued a productivist approach to later retirement and longer working lives.

Family policy

In family policy, the FPÖ election manifesto again foresaw a *pro-makers/anti-takers-inspired agenda* located in the lower right quadrant. Expansionary measures for makers included a tax reform with a lower burden for Austrian families. In return, the indexation of family benefits for non-Austrian children living abroad was a central claim directed against the so-called takers. A few other minor reform claims were promoted without clear targeting of specific groups, such as expanding childcare places.

Most of these reform claims corresponded to the position of the ÖVP, which also promoted indexing child benefits and implemented a tax reform for families. Here, the ÖVP and the FPÖ

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were already programmatically close in their election programmes (see Figure 1), so their reform ideas could be implemented without further ado (Ennser-Jedenastik, 2020: 6–7).

In family policy, the coalition's policy was characterised by a *tempered pro-makers approach* directed towards (traditional) Austrian families. The Family Bonus Plus reform contained 1,500 euros of tax deduction per child. In return, the child allowance and tax-deductibility of childcare costs were abolished. Even though low-income earners also benefitted from the reform, the tax relief only takes full effect from an income of 1,700 euros gross per month – thus mainly benefitting male breadwinners and citizens with higher income (Brait and Krannawetter, 2018: 62–63). The Family Bonus Plus provided for an additional child allowance of up to 250 euros for all single parents and single earners and thus, to a certain extent, also addresses new social risks of changed family situations.

A highly political reform concerned the indexation of the child allowance for non-Austrians. This shows how selectively PRRPs support family policies based on deservingness claims. The family allowance (Familienbeihilfe) and the child tax credit (Familienbonus) were adjusted to the cost of living in the child's country of residence for citizens of an EU member state who work in Austria and have children that live permanently in another EU or EEA member state. This explicitly welfare-chauvinistic family policy led to an infringement procedure, and the European Commission took Austria to court in May 2020. The update of the childcare agreement – benefiting makers and takers likewise – between the federal government and the states for the years 2018/19–2021/22 was carried out mainly as a continuation of the previous government without any notable increases in capacity. Here, the coalition focussed mainly on symbolic politics, such as the headscarf ban in kindergardens.

Discussion

In the government program, the coalition partners ÖVP and FPÖ promised to focus on social policy reforms for Austrians and for people who contributed to the Austrian social system (Atzmüller *et al.*, 2020). Thus, they appealed to the PRRPs' 'textbook' narrative of deservingness. In office, the coalition pursued reforms which did not neatly fit into this narrative. In family policy, the coalition mostly pursued welfare chauvinist and familialistic policy reforms. However, labour market policy reforms followed a retrenchment strategy under the populist banner of an encrusted labour market (Atzmüller *et al.*, 2020; Rathgeb, 2021: 651). Although rewarding pensioners, all relevant pension reforms were only adopted after the coalition had formally ended. The mapping of the party positions and government policy shows (see Figure 1), that the FPÖ had to make concessions in the coalition with the ÖVP in the labour market area but was able to implement central election promises in pension and family policy.

As assumed in the theoretical chapter, conflicts in the coalition were along the welfare size rather than along the prioritisation based on different notions of 'deservingness'. This can be seen in Figure 1, since the positions of the coalition partners are only located in the two lower quadrants, i.e., the positions of the FPÖ and ÖVP differ primarily with regard to the generosity of rewarding makers, but not with regard to the retrenchment of benefits for takers. Both coalition partners agreed on retrenchment policies for what they perceive as undeserving takers, such as long-term unemployed, migrants, or the AMS as part of the "corrupt elite". Here, the FPÖ was largely able to push through authoritarian and welfare chauvinist stances in the coalition with the ÖVP. 'Stopping migration into the social systems' was a central policy claim of both governing parties during the 2017 election campaign (Ennser-Jedenastik, 2020). Accordingly, measures such as the reform of needs-oriented minimum income or the indexation of family benefits were primarily adopted by consensus and defended against criticism from the media, civil society and political opponents (Kazim, 2019).

However, the Hackler regulation or the Working Time reform show the welfare size as the prevalent line of conflict within the coalition. As shown in Figure 1, the FPÖ is positioned in

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the lower right quadrant promoting the (limited) expansion of pension and labour market policies for the makers. On the contrary, the ÖVP holds a blurred or retrenchment position, also *against the makers*, in the lower left quadrant. While the ÖVP pursued a profound neoliberal and workfare social policy and made use of welfare chauvinist and populist elements when it was opportune, the FPÖ focussed on the selective expansion of policies especially in the area of pensions, and cuts for migrants, while retrenchment in labour market policies (e.g., working time reform) was sold to their own electorate as a concession to the ÖVP.

Italy: M5S/Lega

The 2018 Italian elections were a political earthquake. The mainstream parties from the Left and Right recorded a striking drop in consensus to the benefit of the *new challengers*. The M5S received more than 30% of the votes, while the Lega reached 17% of the votes. Concerning the Lega, their leader, Matteo Salvini, completed the party's transition from an ethnic-regionalist party to a PRRP with a national political strategy. The M5S presented a program characterised by a strong anti-establishment sentiment – typical of the *pure* populist parties – mixed with a more left-leaning socio-economic agenda (Di Virgilio *et al.*, 2015). After two months, a coalition government between the Lega and the M5S was formed. The ministries were equally assigned and reflected the re-distribution of the competencies. Salvini obtained the Home Affairs Ministry and the Family and Disability Ministry. The M5S' leader – Luigi Di Maio – was appointed minister of the Labour and Social Policies. The government was short-lived, and in August 2019, it fell after the political crisis triggered by the Lega at the beginning of the summer.

Figure 2 shows the Lega and M5S' ideal-typical positions and the final coalition government's positions concerning the three policy fields in the multidimensional makers/takers reform space.

Labour market

The content analysis of the 2018 Lega's manifesto shows that the party aimed at punishing the undeserving citizens while providing some rewards to the deserving ones – especially in terms of lower wage taxes. The party indeed is located in the bottom right quadrant, thus supporting retrenchment for the takers without touching the rights of the makers. They adopted a sort of selective *workfare* approach. It upheld higher conditionality for those receiving unemployment benefits as well as deregulation measures – in terms of limiting the role of the trade unions. At first sight, this workfare approach was softened by the support for introducing a minimum wage – something that, at least on paper, could be beneficial to the takers. Nevertheless, the proposal was very general, and no specific actions were discussed in the program. At the same time, the party was not interested in activation measures – especially in those promoting upskilling. To summarize, the Lega mostly adopted a *retrenching strategy* targeting the *undeserving takers*, primarily, the unemployed.

The M5S' position was diametrically opposed to that of the Lega, as shown by its location in Figure 2. The party strongly supported policy expansion targeting the undeserving takers, in particular, the unemployed. The core proposal foresaw the introduction of a minimum income – the Citizenship Income (RdC) – that was to the benefit of the *outsiders of the labour market*. Alongside the RdC, the party also backed labour market re-regulation, even though the proposal remained rather abstract in the manifesto.[3]

Therefore, the coalition partners had two divergent positions, firstly concerning the deservingness dimension of the welfare. Once in office, however, the M5S' stances prevailed. As shown in Figure 2, the Lega-M5S government is positioned very close to the M5S, in the expansionary

[3]In its manifesto, the M5S also attacked the trade unions, portraying them as part of the corrupted elite. Such a position reflects the populist background of the M5S and its difference with social-democratic parties.

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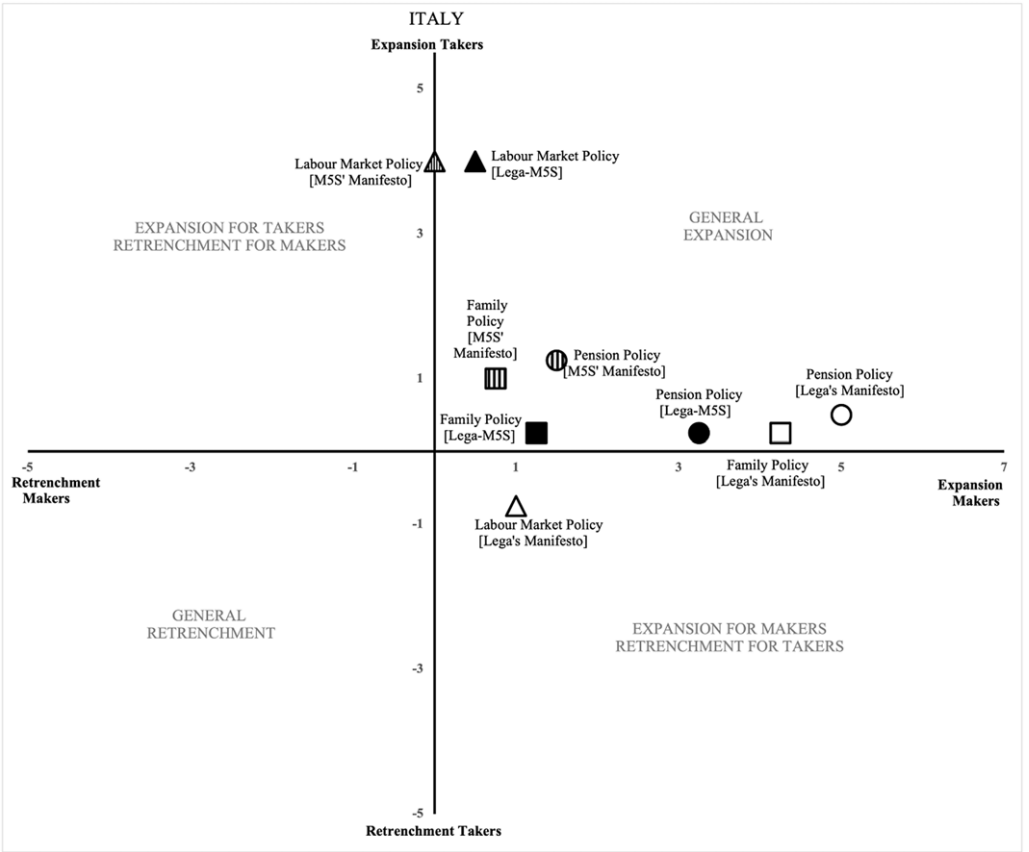

Figure 2. Election Manifestos and M5S/Lega Coalition Government positions.

quadrant, mostly rewarding the *undeserving group*. On the one hand, the government adopted a re-regulation strategy through the Dignity Decree, which made fixed-term contracts more challenging for employers to use – to the benefit of the precarious workers. On the other, it approved the RdC – a crucial measure for the long-term unemployed. This new policy instrument was hybrid since it mixed cash transfers for the needy with activation measures. Yet, the expansion of activation measures was more limited and met difficulties in the implementation phase. Furthermore, the entitlement to the benefit was limited only to those with a 10-year residency. This led to excluding a significant group of potential beneficiaries.[4]

The labour market policy represents a clear example of how the Lega had to reconsider its original positions in terms of who deserves to be protected by the welfare state. Indeed, the Dignity Decree and the RdC were the M5S' *workhorses*. However, their approval remained very problematic for the Lega. Concerning the Dignity Decree, a re-regulation of fixed-term contracts was detrimental to one of its core *maker constituencies*: the small and medium entrepreneurs of the northern regions. The Decree was a bitter pill to swallow for the Lega and, to tone down its possible side effects, the party imposed a transition period of four months. Moreover, in the summer of 2019, the Lega presented a law proposal to the Committee on Employment in Parliament

[4]According to ISTAT, compared to 1 million and 400 thousand foreigners in absolute poverty, only 260 thousand non-EU citizens have received these benefits.

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to widen the specific conditions under which fixed-term contracts could be used. Initial discussions of this legislation began in July, but the debate was interrupted soon after when the government fell in August.

The RdC approval was a considerable weight for the Lega too. Historically, the party always opposed introducing a nationwide minimum income guarantee. In its regionalist rhetoric, such an assistance measure would have gone to the benefits of the *undeserving* poor of the Southern regions while maintained by the hard-working taxpayers of Northern Italy. On the contrary, the electoral support for the M5S was primarily concentrated in the South (Chiaramonte *et al.*, 2020: 6–7). Therefore, the RdC was a key measure for the movement, and its approval was a *condicio sine qua non* for forming a coalition government. However, compared to the M5S' original proposal, the resources allocated were more limited (Corriere della Sera, 2018) due to pressure from the Lega. Furthermore, the Lega managed to introduce a welfare-chauvinist element in the reform, thus excluding a sub-group of takers – i.e., migrants – from the benefit.

Pensions

In the 2018 Lega's manifesto, pension policy represents the key element in the party's social policy agenda. The Lega strongly advocated for the abolishment of the 2011 pension reform – the Fornero reform, which had cut pension benefits and rights of the deserving makers – and supported the re-introduction of the early retirement pension. Additionally, the party also backed some small measures to improve atypical workers' pensions. As displayed in Figure 2, the Lega is located in the *expansive* quadrant, thus promoting policy expansion for both makers and takers. However, the position is biased toward the former.

The position of the M5S did not substantially differ from that of the Lega, as shown in Figure 2. In its manifesto, the M5S had a general expansive position, backing the launch of a new early retirement pension. Yet, the support was less pronounced than the Lega, and pensions appeared not to be a core programmatic area for the M5S.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the two parties decided to implement an expansionary pension policy once in office. In other words, they both agreed on the size dimension of the welfare reform. The bulk of the resources was allocated to *Quota 100* – a new early retirement scheme– which allowed workers to retire at age 62 with 38 years of contributions (Jessoula, 2019). The government also financed a need-based measure, the citizenship pension, PdC, which represented the equivalent of the RdC for those aged 67 and above. Access to this benefit was based on residency criteria.

Contrary to the Dignity Decree and the RdC, Quota 100 was not a controversial issue within the coalition. The measure represented Lega's workhorse. This is not surprising since the party always supported early retirement measures to benefit its *deserving*, hard-working (male) electorate of the North (Jessoula, 2019: 157). Even the M5S endorsed such a measure in its manifesto, so a clash did not emerge. At the same time, the approval of the PdC was a clear goal of the M5S since it was included within the *RdC* policy package. The measure goes essentially to the benefit of those elderly who did not have sufficient contributions to rely on a contributory-based pension – and thus could be considered as *undeserving takers*. However, it was easier to digest for the Lega since, compared to RdC, the program involved only a limited number of households[5] and the party managed to limit the access to the natives. As shown in Figure 2, the M5S/Lega government support in terms of *expansion* for takers remains marginal.

[5]According to INPS, in March 2022, 1.5 million of households obtained the RdC, while only 98.000 households were the beneficiaries of the PdC.

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Family policy

Regarding the family policy field, the Lega's electoral manifesto promoted a very traditional vision of the family and gender roles. Accordingly, as shown in Figure 2, the bulk of the proposals was biased towards makers – mostly, male breadwinner families. The expansion of cash benefits for a newborn was coupled with strict eligibility criteria based on residency – thus excluding migrants. Interestingly, childcare was supported, but services were restricted to the native population.

The M5S proposal was more balanced, backing expansionary policies for both makers and takers, though measures to the benefit of the latter were promoted to a – slight – higher extent. Contrary to the Lega, the party did not display a clear, traditionalist family vision but neither open support for the dual-earner family model. In general terms, the policy remained little debated, and the proposals were quite vague.

Once in government, the two parties implemented a modest expansion of both policies for makers and takers, mainly in continuity with the measures adopted by the previous centre-left government (Solera, 2019: 150). The government position was closer to that of the M5S' manifesto, while it was quite distant from the Lega's original positions in terms of expansion for makers. All the cash-transfer measures were confirmed, together with childcare and leave programs. Only a specific leave measure – the Voucher babysitting/Kindergarten – was abolished. It implied the quick re-entrance of mothers into their places of work after maternity leave. Such a measure can be considered as an anti-takers approach, since it penalised dual-earner families.[6] Interestingly, in this field, the coalition did not add new restrictive measures to limit services and cash transfers to non-natives. Family policy reforms remained marginal, and no considerable controversy rose between the partners in *distributive* terms.

However, tensions within the coalition occurred more on a *cultural* basis. The Lega continued to support very conservative positions regarding family composition and reproductive rights. In March, the party took part in the 13th international conference of the Christian right and anti-LGBT, anti-feminist World Congress of Families in Verona. The Lega's endorsement triggered a reaction from the M5S that openly criticised the congress and stated that those values would never be part of the government program (Agi, 2019).

Discussion

The empirical analysis of the Italian case study shows that the central conflict line between the M5S and the Lega did not regard the general *size* of the Welfare State. As shown by Figure 2, in the pension and family policy realm, both the parties are located in the upper-right quadrant, thus agreeing on *expanding* rights and benefits – though at a very different level. The key source of tension between the two coalition partners concerned the deservingness dimension, that is, who the beneficiaries of the reforms were supposed to be. This was evident in the labour market policy arena, where the Lega struggled to 'digest' the M5S' pro-takers measures, which contrasted with its workfare and deserving-oriented ideological preferences.

The Lega ended up accepting to pass measures rewarding the undeserving takers – i.e., the Dignity Decree and the RdC – in exchange for the M5S' approval of other reforms, even beyond the welfare state realm, such as the Security Decrees that tightened the migration law. The policy outcome of the M5S/Lega government was a sort of 'upside compromise', where benefits and rights were generally expanded for both makers and takers. Nevertheless, such a compromise remained weak. The conflict on deservingness was indeed never solved. On the contrary, it remained active during the short legislation term until the early dissolution of the government.

The Lega confirmed that, for the Radical Right, cash transfers and rights could only be expanded when targeting the hard-working- and *thus deserving* – people with long contribution

[6]We use here a wide definition of *takers* which goes beyond the *productivist* approach. Dual-earner families –more specifically: working mothers – can be perceived as "taking away" traditional family values.

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records in social insurance – or when helping to reinforce the male-breadwinner family model. On the contrary, need-based and labour market re-regulation programs – which represent the core points of the M5S' populist, ambivalent left-leaning welfare agenda – were problematic since they addressed the risks and needs of the undeserving groups e.g., long-term unemployed from the Southern regions. However, the Italian case shows that the deservingness conflict – while remaining latent – can be toned down for a short period in order to implement reforms that are crucial for the Radical Right.

Comparative discussion and concluding remarks

Relying on a multidimensional makers/takers theoretical framework, this article explored the dynamics of 'coalitional politics' of PRRPs in office with different coalition partners, thus assessing how the reform outcomes may differ depending on the political composition of government coalitions. To answer these questions, we conducted a comparative case study analysing the 'standard case' of the Austrian conservative-PRRPs' ÖVP/FPÖ coalition and the 'new coalition' of the Italian Populist M5S/Lega.

The empirical analysis led to two central results:

First, both FPÖ and Lega followed a pro-makers/anti-takers approach in their manifestos and once they were in office – though to a different extent. As expected, policy reform claims followed a selective logic based on PRRPs' core ideology: expansion for the deserving groups, especially pensioners or traditional family models, retrenchment for migrants, long-term unemployed and representatives of the 'corrupt elite', such as trade unions. Accordingly, expansionary measures were formulated and driven forward in office, especially in pension and – with some reservations – family policies. In contrast, as demonstrated by the case studies, PRRPs are keen to promote a workfare approach considering the labour market policy, even if this is not always implemented in government – as for the Italian case. The deservingness argument played a central role as legitimation for a retrenchment strategy in this field not only targeting migrants through welfare chauvinist measures, but also labour market outsiders.

Second, the analysis shows that different coalitions with PRRPs' participation produce significant diverse outcomes. The central line of conflict in Austria and Italy was different. In the standard case of the ÖVP/FPÖ government, the conflict revolved more around the *size* of the welfare state. In contrast, in the new M5S/Lega coalition, the conflict was generally more about *welfare deservingness*. While there was broad agreement on the policies to be retrenched in Austria, interests diverged (to a limited extent) concerning the expansion of benefits and the protection of the makers. The ÖVP pursued a neoliberal approach to the labour market and pension policy, while the FPÖ wanted to reward its core electorate, as in the case of the *Hacker regulation*, where the FPÖ joined the SPÖ to build an alliance for 'hard-working people' explicitly against the ÖVP. In Italy, the case of the M5S/Lega government confirms that a coalition between an PRRP and a socially left-leaning party tends to agree more on the *welfare size*. Despite this, the approval of M5S' core reforms produced discontent over the Lega's welfare priorities. This ideological conflict was put on hold as long as the Lega was able to push through its major reform issues but re-emerged quickly. The upside compromise reached by the M5S/Lega government was therefore only temporary.

Finally, the mapping of policy positions indicates that the cohesion of the coalition government concerning welfare reforms varies. The welfare positions taken by the ÖVP and the FPÖ showed more similarities than those taken by the M5S and the Lega. The *standard* coalition of the Austrian ÖVP/FPÖ seems, therefore, to be more ideologically cohesive than the Italian case, since, though conflicts exist, they are weaker compared to those that emerged in the M5S-Lega *new* coalition. The analysis thus would suggest that, when the conflict is firstly on deservingness,

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the coalition government's solidity is more at risk compared to the cases where the conflict regards mostly the welfare size.

Our research contributes to the advancement of the general knowledge regarding the PRRPs' welfare agenda in Europe.

First, the dominant position in the literature that PRRPs advocate for SC and oppose SI needs to be refined. Based on their ideological core, PRRPs pursue a selective, group-based promotion of policies directed towards 'deserving groups', which varies significantly between individual policy fields. Therefore, the distinction between the size and the deservingness dimension is fundamental for understanding PRRPs' welfare stances. While pension policy – and the implicit pro-takers notion – is their main priority area, their position is much more heterogeneous regarding other policy fields. In family policy, they promote the traditional male-breadwinner model, while they tend to adopt a workfare approach in the labour market field. Finally, although welfare chauvinism remains an essential aspect of PRRPs' agenda, it becomes less relevant when these parties are in office, since such policies do not re-distribute substantial material resources to the PRRPs' constituency and create only limited cost-containment (see Meardi and Guardiancich, 2022).

Second, it can be assumed that reform policies differ between standard coalitions of centre-right/PRRP parties and new coalitions with socially left-leaning parties in terms of the central line of conflict and policy outcomes. In standard coalitions, PRRPs may accept partial retrenchment for makers in other policy areas than pensions (downside compromise), while in new coalitions PRRPs may accept partial expansion for takers in other policy areas than pension policy (upside compromise). Furthermore, it can be assumed that the areas of compromise for welfare reforms in new coalition formats are generally smaller, which makes these governments less likely and coalition politics more conflictual.

That being said, future research should widen the scope of comparative research on PRRPs' welfare policies in office both theoretically and empirically.

Theoretically, a further integration between the literature on the multidimensionality of the policy reforms and PRRPs' welfare policies is welcomed. While it is crucial to analyse PRRPs' welfare agenda in multidimensional terms, especially once in office, their positions need to be further qualified. Beyond the deservingness narrative around makers and takers, their agenda is intended to radically *challenge* and *change* how welfare institutions and democratic politics, in general, operate. Though these parties increasingly obtain governing roles, they remain (anti-system) challenger parties. This different quality of anti-system, illiberal politics is shown, among other things, by the fact that several reforms of the Austrian government ended up in court at the national or European level and were declared unconstitutional.

Empirically, further case studies from the Scandinavian countries or Central Eastern Europe should be investigated to shed light on a (possible) variation of PRRPs' social policies once in office. It would be helpful to better understand the welfare regime effect (Ennser-Jedenastik, 2020) and, in countries that do not rely on a Bismarckian logic – primarily, the Scandinavian ones – whether deservingness-driven reforms are more likely to be emphasised and implemented. In addition, the welfare agenda of PRRPs in different government coalitions should be further investigated. Because of the limited cases at hand, it might be interesting to investigate, more systematically, variations across the same type of coalition government as well as cases of different government coalitions at the subnational or regional level. Furthermore, other areas of social policy such as healthcare, social housing or youth policy, could be examined to get a more comprehensive picture of PRRPs' welfare policies in office.

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