

Redistributive preferences: Does perceived corruption matter?

Martin Alberdi, Dirck de Kleer, Paula Dümpelmann and Ludwig Schulze

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Preliminary Research Question

Does perceived corruption moderate individual predispositions to support or oppose redistribution? If yes, how? Using a novel survey data set gathered by Ferroni, Fisman and Golden, our research aims to untangle whether perceptions of corruption either weaken or strengthen the rationale for redistribution based on material and religious considerations.

To address these aims, we pose two key research questions:

1. How do perceptions of corruption moderate the relationship between religiosity and redistributive preferences?

We anticipate that, in line with the social underpinnings of Catholic doctrine, religious practitioners will be more inclined to support redistribution. Furthermore, we posit that (1) religious practitioners will express support for redistribution irrespective of their perceptions of corruption, driven by the moral aspect of religious practice.

Conversely, individuals who advocate for the inclusion of religion in politics are more likely to exhibit tolerance for corruption and oppose redistribution. If the integration of religion into politics aligns with the pursuit of personal interests through public means, (2) these individuals are likely to normalize corruption and shy away from preferences that promote the welfare of “impersonal” others, such as redistribution.

2. How do perceptions of corruption moderate the relationship between income and redistributive preferences?

Individuals hailing from lower-income backgrounds often face greater exposure to social risks suggesting that they have more to gain from redistributive policies. Consequently, one might expect them to be more inclined to support such policies.

However, the effect of perceived corruption on this relationship could go in two distinct directions: On one hand, perceived corruption might erode trust in the efficiency and transparency of public institutions, (3) potentially leading to decreased support for redistribution. Conversely, perceived corruption could increase their concerns about relative wealth decline, (4) thereby increasing support for redistribution.