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Research Essay Comments: Comparative Political Economy of Advanced Democracies

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Essay Title: Is corporatism clean or dirty? Examining the effects of corporatism on climate policy

Marker 1 Comments:

This is an excellent paper on an important topic. The author provides both an initial theoretical contribution and an interesting preliminary empirical analysis. He/she argues that corporatism promotes climate policy when green parties are electorally influential and mitigates it when the carbon-intensive industry is powerful. The author also argues that corporatism will impose greater costs on consumers than producers, unless counteracted by the electoral competitiveness of green parties. Empirically, the author aims to extend existing analyses with newly available data.

This paper exceeds expectations in terms of theoretical contribution, familiarity with the literature and empirical analysis. It represents superb preliminary work showing fine command of the subject area, including facts, sources, and intellectual debates, and making an articulate and creative contribution to them. As I would like the author to continue to work on this paper until it is ready to be sent out to a journal, I have the following recommendations of how to move the project forward:

Theory:

- Why should we care about corporatism? Isn't it on the decline everywhere?
 - And is there a level below which the arguments in the thesis do not apply? In other words, are marginal changes in low levels of corporatism theorized to have the same effects as marginal changes in corporatism at high levels of corporatism?
- In the theory side, the benign version of the effects of corporatism could have connected more with the Olsonian arguments about corporatism that focus on its solidarity-related implications. These arguments (particularly related to wage/inflation outcomes) propose that actors who may otherwise act particularistically would have incentives to internalize the costs of solidaristic policy if encompassing/centralized/coordinated enough. All of which seems relevant to the author's thesis.
- I'm not fully convinced that corporatism has two countervailing effects (Finnegan versus Mildenberger). Alternatively, one could argue that Mildenberger just gets it wrong (to the extent

that corporatism and concertation are just promoting the interests of anti-environment actors, it is not corporatism).

- The theory seems to focus on the effects of factors that interact with corporatism and vary (the power of carbon-intensive industries, or the influence of green parties). But isn't the variation that matters the most (if not temporally, cross sectionally) the one affecting corporatism itself?
- I guess I'm not sure what the theoretical counterfactual is here.
 - Take Hypothesis 1, "the greater the economic heft of 'dirty' manufacturing," the less likely environmental policy will be. Presumably, this will be the case whether there is a high level of corporatism or not... If this is a powerful sector, why would they need corporatism to promote their interests?
 - Or Hypothesis 3, the greater the electoral influence of green parties, the lower the costs of environmental policy for consumers. Again, would this not be the case also in non-corporatist countries?
 - In other words, should we be interested in how these variables matter more or less in corporatist/non-corporatist countries? Or on the influence of corporatism being affected by these variables?
- The theoretical section focuses on the potential effects of concertation. But the main intuitions are all about relationships that are in fact not fully theorized. It is not clear to me, most importantly, how we should think electoral politics should be integrated into the institutionalist analysis of corporatism...

Empirics:

- Pet peeve: why no descriptives to give the reader an impression of what the main variables are capturing? Is corporatism high in some countries and low in others? Which? Is it generally going up or down? How about the stringency of climate policy or the distribution of the costs of climate policy between consumers and producers?

Marker 2 Comments:

This is an excellent paper. There are many reasons to commend it. It is focused on the important question around when and why countries embrace more stringent – and, indeed, more costly - climate policy, with an emphasis on contemporary years in which climate policy has become more high salience in advanced economies. The puzzle at hand is presented very clearly: the most recent climate politics literature has focused on lobbies and public opinion to answer the above question; yet, as ambitious and disruptive climate policy become increasingly central to government action, we need to better understand the relation between government, organized business and labour, i.e. the nature of corporatism and its impact on climate policy adoption and distributional costs. The paper is incredibly competent and shows outstanding diligence and carefulness in addressing the most recent literature on the topic. The juxtaposition of Mildenberger and Finnegan's takes on the role of corporatism is spot on.

On theory: the theoretical framework presented in section 3 is astute in that it takes the two apparently contradictory claims of Mildemberger and Finnegan and qualifies them so in order to solve their inconsistencies. Specifically, the three main claims of the paper – efficiently captured in Figure 1 – are that (a) the relevance (e.g. size) of dirty industries will condition the veto player dynamics with government, effectively making corporatism more of a trap; (b) economic openness (i.e. trade) matters, and greater economic openness results in a distribution of costs more favourable to producers; and (c) corporatism can yield more ambitious climate policy (and fairer distributions of costs) if green parties drive electoral competitiveness on the issue. My only comment about this rich and comprehensive theoretical argument is that it may be a bit overloaded for a single paper. Because of the far-reaching nature of the argument, some bits of the theory rely on a number of assumptions (e.g. non-removable/non-convertible dirty sectors? multi-party electoral system?). Evidently, the more the moving parts (in a paper of 7k words), the more the compromises and short-cuts one has to make on some assumptions. That said, the theory does come together quite nicely, does a great job connecting insights from IPE, institutional politics and party politics that are too often disconnected, and is nicely tied to the empirics.

On empirics: the data effort is really worthwhile and interesting, and again there is so much to comment the paper for here. The operationalization of the variables is very clear and convincing. The approach is correlational but still based on a replication of the literature so far. I appreciate the data is on an accessible repository but descriptively, in the paper, I would have liked to hear more about the CAPMF (since it is not exactly a very popular database). Similarly, the Kayser et al coalition inclusion probability measurement is reasonable but I would have wanted to see on a rawer level (bivariate descriptives) how these scores pan out in countries with various types of concertation. Ultimately, the analysis is very well crafted considering the data and power limitations, but perhaps it would have been helpful to fix ideas further with qualitative anecdotes and validation.