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Adaptation of Redistribution Preferences or Cultural Resistance.

A Study of Migrants in Germany

Abstract

The question about adaptation of preferences for redistribution is of particular interest nowadays because of their political and electoral importance. “Is it possible that living under a specific system leads to adaptation of preferences?”, Alberto Alesina and Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln asked this question in their paper “Good-Bye Lenin (or Not?): The Effect of Communism on People’s Preferences” (Alesina and Fuchs-Schündeln 2007, 1507). They discussed the long-lasting effect of Communism, however we could reinforce the accent and ask the same question about migrants from different cultures and welfare regimes: “Do migrants adapt their redistribution preferences to a new institutional context or do they hold on to attitudes shaped in their country of origin?”. This question seems to be even more important if we take into account increasing migration flows in Europe and inclusion of migrants into electoral process.

To answer this question I utilize data of the German Socioeconomic Panel (GSOEP). Hence I test dynamic of redistribution preferences of migrants from Turkey, Poland, Russia and Kazakhstan compared to West and East Germans from 1997 to 2002. Effect of income mobility in each subsample is of particular interest. I assess the effect of tenure in Germany on redistribution preferences. At first I include into my model baseline controls: age, gender, marital status, labor force status, education, occupation of the respondent, the number of children, the number of adults in the household and the annual household income. On the second stage some macro indicators like income per capita, unemployment rates in German states, gross and net transfers per capita that each state receives from other states and the federal government in 1997 and 2002 as well as different modifications of income proxies on individual level are added for robustness check.

The general conclusion of the paper says that migrants adapt in a long run their redistribution preferences to the average preferences of the country where they live. However the dynamics varies across different migrant groups.