Social democracy transformed?
Ideological change, electoral change, and party–union ties[1]

Mario Taschwer[a]
Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik[a]
Verena Reidinger[b]

[a]University of Vienna, Department of Government

[b]University of Zurich, Department of Political Science

Abstract. Social democratic (SD) parties have undergone transformative ideological and electoral change. Yet, how has this affected their alliance with trade unions in terms of personal linkages? We hypothesize that SD parties appoint fewer union-linked ministers as they become more economically centrist and less reliant on working-class voters. However, institutions that stabilize party–union relationships should weaken these effects (statutory linkages, high union density, or union involvement in policy-making). Using novel data on 2,600 ministerial appointments in Western Europe, we show that there is no direct relationship between trade unionist appointments and changes in party electorates or party ideology. However, electoral change *is* correlated with appointment patterns if institutional stabilizers are weak. Social democrats thus attenuate their elite-level linkages with unions in response to the middle-class shift in their electorates, but only if the institutional context is unfavorable to the party–union relationship.

Keywords: social democracy, trade unions, party–union linkages, ministers.

Introduction

Social democratic (SD) parties have been important political actors in many Western democracies since the late nineteenth century (Keman, 2017). In alliance with trade unions they have shaped the political economies of Europe (Allern & Bale, 2017). In many countries, the two 'siamese twins' (Ebbinghaus, 1995) of the labor movement worked in lockstep to promote worker interests and establish new social rights (Howell, 2001; Korpi, 1980; Padgett & Paterson, 1991; Poguntke, 2002). This party–union relationship has been underpinned by a political exchange: Unions offer parties organizational, financial, and electoral support in return for a labor-friendly regulatory environment, pro-employment and pro-welfare policies (Howell, 2001).

However, over the past decades, social democracy has undergone significant electoral and ideological transformations (Kitschelt et al., 1994): As de-industrialization has progressed throughout Europe, social democratic electorates have become more middle-class (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015). At the same time, some social democratic parties have changed ideologically to become more friendly toward globalization, business, and the market economy (Giddens, 1998; Hall, 2002). Both these developments may challenge established party–union linkages. Yet, we theorize that the extent to which they will do so depends on the presence of institutional anchors (statutory ties, union density, union involvement in policy-making) that have the potential to isolate party–union relationships from electoral and ideological change.

This paper thus examines how ideological and electoral change have affected the linkages that bind unions and social democratic parties together, and how institutions moderate these effects. As multiple case studies suggest (Allern et al., 2007; Anthonsen et al., 2011; Aylott, 2003; O'Grady, 2019; Thomas, 2001), the mutually beneficial bargain that once ensured party–union cooperation has weakened (see also Allern & Bale, 2017). Yet it remains unclear to what extent the case-specific explanations that have been put forward in small-N studies apply more generally. Our understanding of how the electoral and ideological transformation of social democracy has affected party–union ties thus remains limited.

To address this problem, we combine survey and manifesto data with a novel data set on social democratic ministerial appointments to provide the most comprehensive analysis of personal linkages[1] between parties and unions to date. Our analysis examines the biographical backgrounds for around 2,600 ministerial appointments made by social democratic parties in 16 West European countries between 1960 and 2014 and identifies whether ministers had links to trade unions prior to their appointment. By establishing such personal linkages, parties provide unions with access to the policy-making process in exchange for electoral and political support.

Using personal linkages as an indicator of party–union ties has upsides and downsides. On the one hand, such linkages can be seen as informal, yet powerful, organizational ties at the individual level (Allern et al., 2020, p. 1258) that enable unions to exert significant policy influence over policy-making (Adolph, 2013; Alexiadou, 2015, 2016). On the other hand, ministerial appointments are not just expressions of organizational linkage, but originate in multidimensional political calculations involving demands for regional and factional representation (Ceron, 2014; Ennser-Jedenastik, 2013), gender balance (Goddard, 2019), or the availability of subject-matter expertise (Alexiadou & Gunaydin, 2019). Given their importance in providing access to the policy-making process, we nevertheless consider them highly relevant objects of analysis.

Our analysis documents a steep decline in personal linkages between social democratic parties and unions: Between the 1960s and the 2010s, the proportion of social democratic ministers with trade union ties almost halved from 30 to 16 percent. Yet, despite a temporal coincidence of this trend with substantial electoral and ideological change, we find no direct association between trade unionist appointments and party ideology or party electorates.

However, we find support for one of our conditional expectations: As social democrats become less reliant on working-class voters, their propensity to appoint union-linked ministers declines – but only in the absence of institutional stabilizers (union density, concertation). Yet no such interaction effect exists for the association of party ideology and the

---

[1]The terms linkages and ties are used interchangeably in this paper.

selection of trade unionists as government ministers. While ideological shifts have certainly affected party–union ties in some instances (Allern et al., 2007; Christiansen, 2012; O'Grady, 2019), they do not account for the general disintegration of social democratic parties and trade unions in terms of ministerial appointments.

These results significantly deepen our understanding of party–union relationships and highlight the importance of institutional context factors for their stability. The political transformations that social democrats have undergone in the post-industrial era clearly have the potential to affect these parties' ties with trade unions. However, such changes do not play out uniformly, but are shaped by the institutional framework in which party–union relationships are embedded.

Our findings also have implications for understanding political elite recruitment and its (potential) effect on policy outputs. As social democratic parties rely less on unions as recruitment pools, they must find ministerial appointees elsewhere. As work by Alexiadou (2015, 2016) shows, this may push socio-economic policy outputs to the center.

The following sections introduce our theoretical arguments and derive four hypotheses from this discussion. We then go on to outline our empirical strategy, before delving into the analysis. The conclusion discusses our study's implications for understanding ties between unions and social democratic parties, highlights limitations of our approach, and points out potential avenues for future research.

Social democracy and trade unions: an exchange relationship

The relationship between trade unions and social democratic parties has typically been conceptualized as a cost–benefit model of political exchange in which both sides engage to further their goals (Allern & Bale, 2017; Allern et al., 2007; Howell & Daley, 1992; Pizzorno, 1978; Poguntke, 2006; Quinn, 2002). Like any other exchange, this relationship presupposes that both actors do not value each exchange good equally and can thus obtain 'gains from trade': Unions seek to influence public policy in the interest of their members and wage earners in general. After all, the bargaining power of union members is inextricably linked to that of the wage-earning population as a whole (Ebbinghaus &

Visser, 2000; Hyman, 2001). Social democratic parties, by contrast, have vote-seeking and office-seeking ambitions in addition to their policy goals (Müller & Strøm, 1999; Strøm, 1990). Given these varying motivations, the 'obvious' (though certainly not the only) mutually beneficial exchange is for parties to provide unions with access to and influence over the policy-making process, whereas unions support parties in achieving their electoral (and thus office) goals.

To maintain such a relationship in practice, parties may grant unions policy influence in multiple ways, ranging from informal consultations to joint policy committees, from union representation in party organs to the appointment of union representatives to public office – the empirical focus of this paper. In return, unions may further social democrats' ambitions in terms of financial resources, human capital (e.g. campaign staff), ideational, or organizational support (Allern et al., 2017, 2021).

To be sure, the relationship between social democratic parties and unions goes beyond a purely instrumental logic. They share deep historical roots that continue to shape their relationship today. For example, party–union ties today are still influenced by the sequence of party and union formation and the strength of Christian, Communist, and syndicalist tendencies in the labor movement (Ebbinghaus, 1995). As this variation produced significant cross-country differences in party–union relations, the weakening of ties between social democrats and unions in the late 20th century was especially notable where the two had previously been very close (Christiansen, 2012; Padgett & Paterson, 1991). As a consequence, the relationship between unions and social democratic parties became more instrumental in times of increased electoral competition (Howell, 2001, p. 13).

Appointments as linkage

The personal linkages[2] between social democratic parties and trade unions constitute only one of many potential linkage types between parties and interest groups (Poguntke, 2002; Thomas, 2001). At a most basic level, three forms of ties between parties and trade unions

---

[2]The terms linkages and ties are used interchangeably in this paper.

can be distinguished (Allern et al., 2020): organizational (collective membership, mutual executive representation, liaison committees, leadership overlap), material (money, staff, information), and ideological ties (policy positions and programs).

More specifically, organizational ties can be understood as 'structured interaction' between parties and unions. Thus, the union-linked appointments we examine should be viewed as informal organizational ties at the individual level (Allern et al., 2020, p. 1258), since there are typically no political or formal mandates for such appointments within unions or parties. Even so, unions' policy influence certainly depends on the strength of their informal elite-level linkages (Adolph, 2013; Alexiadou, 2015, 2016).

There are at least three important caveats when examining ministerial appointments as party–union linkages: First, our premise is that these appointments are made by party actors. While it is true that the presence of nonpartisan *appointees* in European cabinets has increased (Vittori et al., 2023), the *appointers* generally remain firmly partisan. This is visible, inter alia, in the sustained recruitment of parliamentarians and party officers to ministerial positions (de Almeida et al., 2003; Dowding & Dumont, 2008; Kaltenegger, 2023).

Second, the party actors who appoint ministers typically need to balance multiple demands and concerns, including regional and factional representation (Ceron, 2014; Ensser-Jedenastik, 2013), gender balance (Goddard, 2019), and the availability of expertise (Alexiadou & Gunaydin, 2019). In coalition governments, these demands are further complicated by the constraints of quantitative and qualitative portfolio allocation, i.e. the number and types of portfolios available to a party (Browne & Frendreis, 1980; Ecker et al., 2015). Trade union representation in the executive is thus only one dimension in a multidimensional appointment game.

Third, one important pipeline leading to ministerial office is the parliamentary party group (De Winter, 1991). A strong trade union presence among SD legislators could thus be an important predictor of union-linked ministerial appointments. However, cross-national data on legislators' union presence simply does not exist. Furthermore, we assume that our theoretical argument applies to legislators no less than it does to ministers.

5

If so, the analytical gain from including such data would actually be limited.

The scant evidence that exists from single-country studies suggests that ministerial appointments of trade unionists have become less common over the past decades (Davidsson & Bäck, 2019; Ennser-Jedenastik, 2017). In the following section, we theorize that this trend (which we also find in our data) is due to the electoral and ideological changes in the post-industrial era.

The transformation of social democratic electorates

From their founding days, social democratic parties relied on working-class voters as their most important electoral constituency: More workers meant more social democratic votes. Yet the working class never achieved majority status in any Western democracy – not even during the industrial period (Przeworski, 1986, pp. 23–24). Social democrats have thus always faced an 'electoral dilemma' in that they depended on some modicum of middle-class support to be successful (Przeworski & Sprague, 1986).

While this dilemma has long been recognized (Kirchheimer, 1966), it has been reinforced by the advent of post-industrial capitalism. As de-industrialization progressed, the proportion of working-class voters shrank. This has been one of the most important drivers of the electoral decline of social democratic parties (Best, 2011). Across Europe, the contraction of the industrial working class has been associated with substantially lower vote shares for social democratic parties (Benedetto et al., 2020).

In addition to the decline of industrial employment and the rise of the service economy, a reconfiguration of political conflict around a second, non-economic, dimension has contributed to the change in social democrats' voter coalition (Kriesi et al., 2006). As Kitschelt et al. (1994, p. 32) theorize, social democratic electorates in post-industrial societies will, as a result, include more white-collar voters, especially those working in public-sector, 'symbol-producing', and interpersonal jobs (see also Oesch, 2006).

There is ample evidence for this transformation of social democratic electorates: As Gingrich and Häusermann (2015) document, middle-class voters have outnumbered working-class voters among (employed) center-left voters in Europe since the 1990s. As

working-class voters decline in numbers and also retreat from center-left parties, contemporary social democratic parties rely more heavily on a cross-class coalition of voters (Rennwald, 2020). Among the middle class, socio-cultural professionals, especially those employed in the public sector, have become an important stronghold of social democratic support (Abou-Chadi & Hix, 2021; Oesch & Rennwald, 2018).

What are the implications of these changes for party–union ties? Our argument rests on the premise that union-linked politicians are often viewed by parties and voters as representatives of the working class, broadly defined, or at least representing working-class interests. To be sure, many union members today are highly educated and work in white-collar professional occupations. However, as Arndt and Rennwald (2016) show, the electoral link between unions and social democratic parties remains strongest where historically allied blue-collar unions are still dominant.[3] While the class–union link has thus weakened overall, unions remain a potent ally for SD parties to attract working-class voters (Mosimann et al., 2019). Union affiliation among social democratic politicians can therefore be understood as a 'class residual' (Kitschelt et al., 1994, p. 46) that provides voters with cues about a party's class loyalties.

In general, voters are not biased against working-class politicians (Albaugh, 2021). Electorates even prefer them over wealthy ones (Campbell & Cowley, 2014; Carnes & Lupu, 2016; Hoyt & DeShields, 2021; Vivyan et al., 2020) (but see Wüest & Pontusson, 2018). What is more, the class background of party candidates can affect the prevalence of class voting (Bellucci & Heath, 2012; Evans & Tilley, 2017; Heath, 2015). For parties with a strong working-class base, it thus makes sense to appeal to this group by appointing trade unionists, since unions provide credible 'class markers' for parties.

Yet, the middle-class voters that social democrats increasingly rely on may view traditional party–union ties less favorably (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013, pp. 138–9). As Abou-Chadi and Wagner (2019b, p. 1408) argue, the trade-off between appealing to working-class and middle-class voters becomes sharper when unions are stronger, since

---

[3]To examine whether this is true of our data, we extracted a random sample of 20% of all union-linked ministers ($n = 54$). 66% of these individuals either have working-class occupational experience or affiliations with working-class-focused unions (e.g. metal, textile, or transport workers).

unions may be skeptical of shifting programmatic emphasis away from worker-oriented social consumption policies towards middle-class-friendly social investment programs. Still, Rennwald and Pontusson (2021) document that union members are less likely to abandon social democratic parties when they attract new non-worker voters.

Even so, the sharpened electoral trade-offs in the post-industrial age have led some social democratic parties who seek to appeal to new electorates to loosen their ties with trade unions (Allern et al., 2007; Christiansen, 2012; Koelble, 1992). As unions become less attractive electoral allies for social democrats, the transformation of social democratic electorates is likely to affect parties' elite recruitment strategies, too. With working-class voters becoming fewer in numbers and less reliable in terms of vote choice, unions' potential for electoral mobilization diminishes. As a result, the necessity to reward them with ministerial appointments is declining.

Hypothesis 1 *The less a social democratic party relies on working-class voters, the less likely it is to appoint trade unionists as ministers.*

The transformation of social democratic ideology

Throughout their existence, social democratic parties have faced pressures to moderate and adapt ideologically. Debates over the merits of radical versus reformist approaches or about revolutionary versus parliamentary strategies characterized the party family's early history (Keman, 2017; Lipset, 1983). After their accommodation to representative democracy, social democratic (and other) parties in the post-war era moderated further to become catch-all parties in response to softening class lines and increasing electoral competition (Kirchheimer, 1966). They thus abandoned working-class symbols and class-based rhetoric and turned towards promoting Keynesian demand management and welfare state expansion instead of state ownership of the means of production (Padgett & Paterson, 1991, pp. 21–26).

In more recent decades, social democratic parties have not only witnessed radical changes to their electoral coalition (see above), but also adapted their programmatic

profile – often in ways that antagonized their union allies. As the ideological distance between trade unions and social democrats has thus increased, party–union ties have weakened (Howell, 2001).[4]

Beginning in the 1990s, some center-left parties endorsed Third Way programs and policies (Giddens, 1998). Under this label, social democrats became more accepting of globalization, the market economy, and budgetary restraint. In addition, they endorsed social investment (as a partial alternative to social consumption) and supply-side reforms to labor market policy (Keman, 2017). Peter Hall has identified four common themes among Third Way social democrats: a more pro-business stance, an embrace of the market, a preference for regulatory over spending policies, and a shift from viewing unemployment as a demand-side to a supply-side problem (Hall, 2002). Importantly, party leaders saw union influence as antithetical to these policy goals (Larkin & Lees, 2017, p. 66).

The most prominent examples of parties endorsing Third Way programs are the UK Labour Party and the German SPD (along with the U.S. Democratic Party). Yet it is important to note that similar tendencies were on display in smaller European democracies (Green-Pedersen & van Kersbergen, 2002; Green-Pedersen et al., 2001). This produced a number of national and regional variations on the general theme of Third Way principles (Bonoli & Powell, 2002). While Third Way rhetoric fell out of fashion in the aftermath of the 2008–9 financial crisis (and, importantly, after the electoral defeats of social democrats in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom), its policy prescriptions have survived to some extent (Arndt & van Kersbergen, 2015; Bremer, 2018).

From the perspective of trade unions, social democrats' right-ward turn in economic ideology was not welcome (Ceron & Negri, 2017), especially the supply-side oriented labor market policies and the greater tolerance for low-wage work. These developments 'call[ed] into question policies designed to strengthen the trade unions' (Hall, 2002, p. 37). Yet, the Third Way diminished not only the ideological commonalities between social democratic

---

[4]This argument builds on the premise that, during our period of observation, trade unions in Western Europe prefer social democrats to adopt socio-economically left-wing positions, and that SD parties are more likely to deviate from unions' ideal points by moving to the right than further to the left.

parties and trade unions, it also went hand in hand with a decrease in working-class and unionist representation among social democratic elites (O'Grady, 2019). This suggests that Third-Way social democrats view union-linked appointees as less faithful agents to carry out their socio-economic agenda. Conversely, trade union officials may be less eager to serve as ministers for centrist SD parties. Therefore we expect that ideological shifts towards the center will be associated with fewer trade unionist appointments among social democratic ministers.

Hypothesis 2 *As social democratic parties become more economically centrist, they appoint fewer trade unionists to ministerial office.*

Institutions as moderators of electoral and ideological change

The two hypotheses outlined above theorize direct associations between electoral and ideological transformations and SD parties' appointment decisions: Union-linked appointments are expected to correlate with the shape of party electorates and party ideology. Yet, it is unlikely that the impact of these two factors is independent of the institutional framework in which party–union relationships are embedded. The more stability an institutional framework provides to party–union relationships, the less likely it is that electoral and ideological change have large effects on appointment patterns.

As argued above, parties and interest groups have a long history of building linkages in multiple dimensions (organizational, material, ideological) (Allern & Bale, 2017; Allern et al., 2020; Christiansen, 2012), and this is especially true of social democrats and trade unions. While our empirical focus is on informal organizational linkages (elite-level appointments), formal, or statutory, organizational linkages such as collective membership or mutual representation/delegation in executive bodies tend to be much more stable in the short and medium term (Poguntke, 2002, 2006). Whereas some social democratic parties have severed statutory ties with trade unions, others maintain such linkages. Even where ties have weakened, this was the result of long-term shifts, rather than short-term fluctuations, in cost–benefit calculations (Allern et al., 2007; Aylott, 2003). Statutory

linkages thus have the tendency to stabilize the relationship between parties and unions over time and can thus isolate short-term appointment patterns from changes in the composition of the electorate or party ideology:

Hypothesis 3 *The association between union-linked appointments and electoral or ideological change will be weaker if statutory linkages between unions and social democratic parties are strong.*

In addition, party–union ties are embedded in a set of socio-political institutions that characterize industrial relations and interest-group politics more broadly – most prominently captured as the degree of corporatism in a country (Jahn, 2016; Kenworthy, 2003; Siaroff, 1999). Corporatist arrangements are characterized by centralized and highly concentrated peak organizations – often with a representation monopoly – for employers and employees that are embedded into a system of institutionalized policy formulation that also includes state actors (tripartism) (Jahn, 2016; Molina & Rhodes, 2002).

While corporatism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, two central features for the purpose of this paper are high levels of unionization and the routine involvement of unions in policy-making: Concertation – the regular involvement of corporatist peak organizations in policy-making processes – institutionalizes relationships between trade unions and governments in a different manner. It provides an entry point for unions into the governing arena, familiarizes union officials with the policy-making process, and thus stabilizes elite-level ties between unions and the political sphere. These conditions strengthen relationships between social democratic parties and unions, and thus provide stability to party–union ties. We therefore assume that ministerial appointments will be less responsive to electoral and ideological shifts when unions are routinely involved in policy-making (concertation).

Hypothesis 4 *The association between union-linked appointments and electoral or ideological change will be weaker if levels of concertation are high.*

High levels of union density lend bottom-up legitimacy to union demands, irrespective of labor market transformations and changes in the occupational structure of electorates.

Out of electoral self-interest, SD parties are well-advised to maintain functioning relationships with large unions. In addition, union membership at the individual levels binds workers to SD parties even if their electorates become more middle-class (Rennwald & Pontusson, 2021). High unionization thus lessens the electoral trade-off for social democrats between their traditional and their new electoral constituencies. In sum, union density thus has the potential to isolate party–union ties from the effects of electoral and ideological change.

Hypothesis 5 *The association between union-linked appointments and electoral or ideological change will be weaker if levels of union density are high.*

Empirical strategy

Our key empirical contribution is a novel data set comprising information on the trade union background of around 1,200 social democratic ministers. The data set covers ministers from 19 parties in 16 Western European countries (EU-15 minus Greece, plus Switzerland and Norway) between 1960 and 2014 (see Table 5 in the appendix). Note that the majority of individuals in our data is appointed to a ministerial position in more than one cabinet. Therefore, the 1,200 ministers correspond to over 2,600 appointments in total. We exclude reshuffle appointments within the same cabinet, though. Our results are robust to the exclusion of re-appointments in multiple cabinets (see Tables 8 and 9 in the appendix).

Dependent variable: trade union background

Our dependent variable is binary and records whether a social-democrat-appointed minister has a career background in a trade union or similar labor movement organization (1) or not (0). We define 'career background' as holding political positions (elected or appointed) in or being employed (e.g. as advisor, aide, lawyer, economist, ...) by a trade union, trade union confederation, trade-union related organization (e.g. educational organizations) or functionally equivalent associations (e.g. the Austrian Chambers of Labor).

Union membership alone is not sufficient.[5]

To obtain these data we collected and coded the biographies of around 1,200 social democratic ministers between 1960 and 2014. In a first stage we assembled biographies from national biographical dictionaries and Wikipedia. Biographies were then searched for union-related keywords (e.g. the national-language translation of 'trade union', 'labor movement' as well as names and abbreviations plus their derivatives of the most important unions and union confederations in a country). Inevitably, this search strategy returned many false positives (e.g. ministers who experienced conflict or negotiations with unions) which we eliminated by manually examining all matches to the keyword search.

In a next step, we cross-checked the trade union background of ministers against existing data (Blondel, 1985) and Wikipedia's 'trade unionist' categories (which exist separately for each language or nationality).[6] To minimize the possibility of remaining false negatives we manually checked the union background for the rest of the ministers by country.

Fig. 1: Share of social democratic ministers with trade union background per decade

---
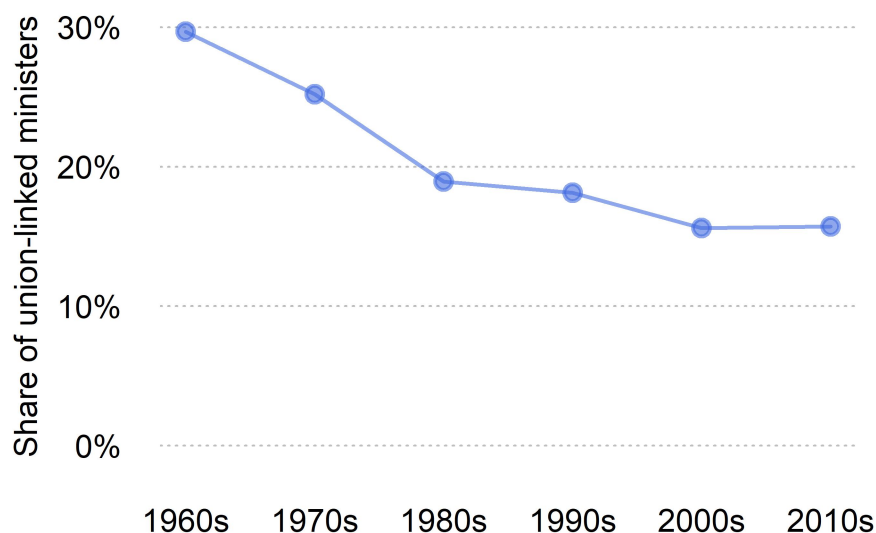
[5]The most important reason for this choice is that mere union membership would not facilitate interaction between union and party leaders and can therefore not provide strong linkage between unions and parties. In addition, union membership among social democratic elites may at times approach 100 percent, leaving little room for meaningful variation.

[6]For further information on the meta-category and the lists for all countries see 'Wikipedia Category: Trade unionists by country'.

Fig. 2: Share of social democratic ministers with trade union background per country and over time
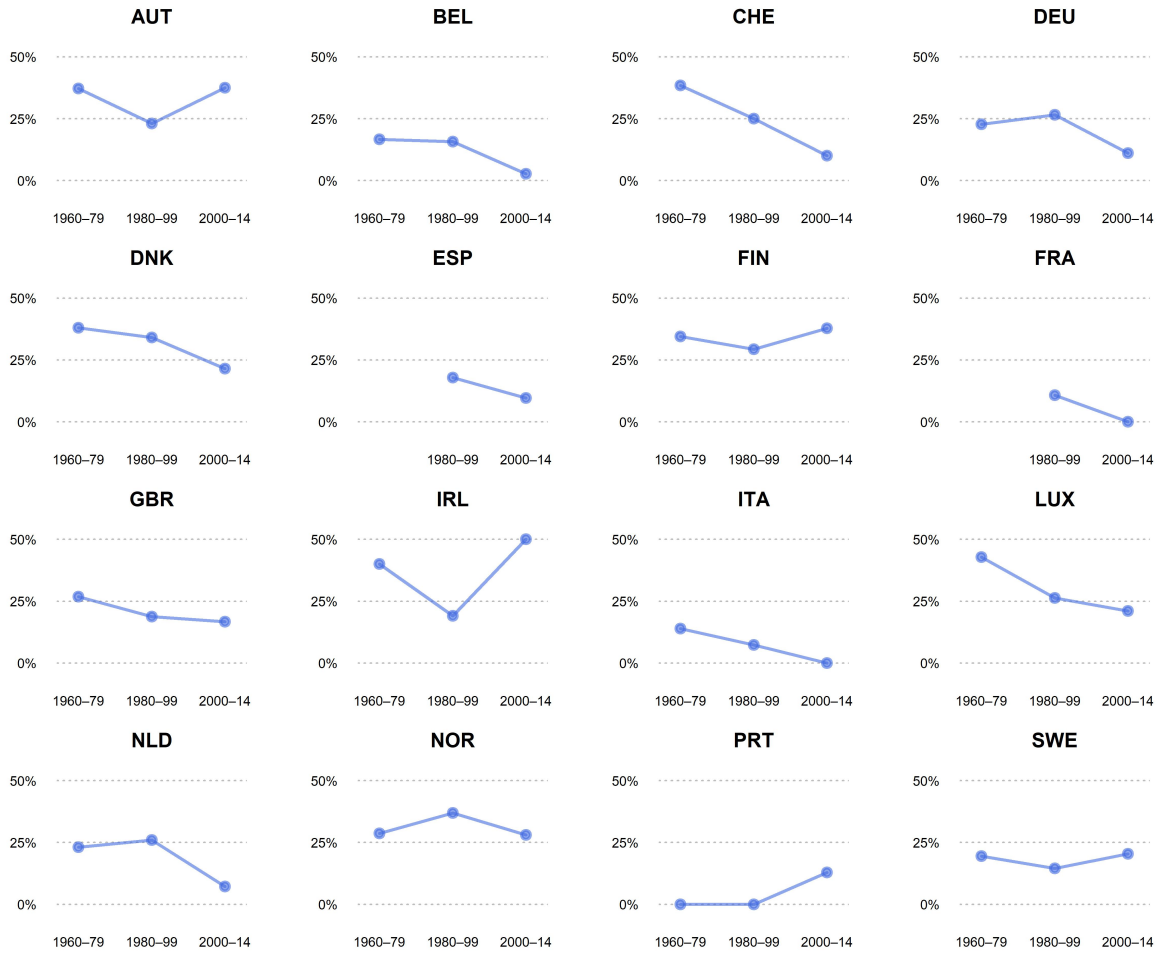
Note: Small number of cases for Ireland (34), Switzerland (35), Luxembourg (52), and the Netherlands (54). For all other countries, $N > 130$.

Figures 1 and 2 display the proportion of social democratic ministers with a trade union background across countries and over time. The time trend shows a continuous decline in the dependent variable between the 1960s and the 2010s. Across our period of observation, the proportion of social democratic ministers with a trade union background halves, from 30 to 16 percent. Most of this decline happens during the 1960s and 1970s.

The between-country variation by and large follows well-known patterns of union strength and corporatism across Western Europe. SD parties in the Nordic countries (Norway, Finland, Denmark) as well as those in Switzerland and Austria have the highest shares of union-linked ministerial appointments (around one in three), whereas some of the Southern countries (France, Italy, Portugal) display very low proportions of trade

unionists among social democratic ministers (less than 10% each, see also Table 5 in the appendix). The aggregate decline that is visible in Figure 1 is manifest in many individual countries, too. Notable exceptions are Austria, Finland, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden.

Independent variables

Working-class share among SD voters. To operationalize our first hypothesis (electoral change), we record for each observation (ministerial appointment) the share of working-class voters in the electorate of the appointing social democratic party. To obtain these data, we use cross-national and national surveys. Our main sources are Eurobarometer (1970–2001) and the European Social Survey (2002–14). To complement these data, we gather national election studies where available (see appendix for a comprehensive list of sources). To identify party voters we combine prospective and retrospective questions – depending on which were asked in the survey (or where there are more observations available). Our working-class measure is based on respondents' occupations and includes all employed individuals in working-class jobs.[7] While the occupational categories vary somewhat across surveys, they are quite consistent in identifying working-class jobs: Typical categories are 'skilled workers', 'manual workers', 'semi-skilled workers' or 'unskilled workers'. We aggregate them and then calculate the share of working-class voters for each relevant SD party and year and include only those observations where the total number of respondents voting for a certain party is higher than 20.

Parties' economic left–right position. To operationalize our second hypothesis (ideological change), we calculate social democratic parties' economic left–right positions based on data provided by the Manifesto Project (Lehmann et al., 2022). Following Lowe et al. (2011), we compute party positions as the logged proportion of right-wing minus the logged proportion of left-wing quasi-sentences (both values increased by 0.5 to avoid logging zeros and thus producing missing data points). We limit our position measure to economic categories, see Table 1.

Figure 3 shows how both of our key independent variables evolve over time. While

---

[7]In excluding retirees, students or the main care-takers of the household we follow Gingrich and Häusermann (2015).

Table 1: Manifesto categories used for ideology measure

Left-wing categories	Right-wing categories
per403: Market Regulation	per401: Free Market Economy
per404: Economic Planning	per402: Incentives: Positive
per405: Corporatism/Mixed Economy	per407: Protectionism: Negative
per406: Protectionism: Positive	per414: Economic Orthodoxy
per409: Keynesian Demand Management	per505: Welfare State Limitation
per412: Controlled Economy	per702: Labor Groups: Negative
per413: Nationalization	
per415: Marxist Analysis	
per416: Anti-Growth Economy	
per504: Welfare State Expansion	
per701: Labor Groups: Positive	

there is quite substantial variation across parties, the average share of workers among social democratic electorates more than halves between the 1970s and the 2010s. As for ideological change, the local regression estimate shown in the right-hand panel of the figure indicates that there is a steady right-ward move up until the 1990s (the heyday of the Third Way), followed by a left-wing shift after 2000.

Fig. 3: Key independent variables over time: share of workers among social democratic voters (left-hand panel) and economic left–right positions (right-hand panel)
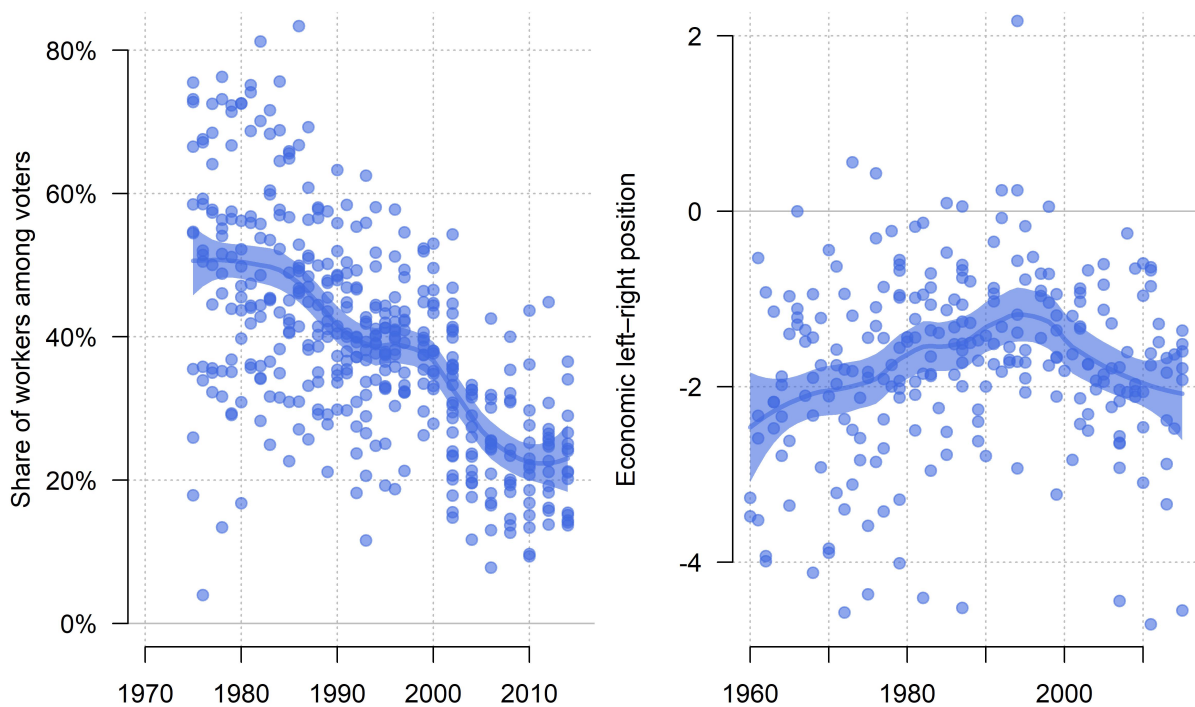
Note: In contrast to the analysis below, this figure includes data points for SD parties in opposition. The left-hand panel only uses data from Eurobarometer and the European Social Survey.

In addition to these two key independent variables, we require moderator variables to operationalize H3, H4 and H5. First, we include a binary measure of statutory linkage between social democratic parties and trade unions. This measure takes on the value 1 for country-years in which one or several unions had collective membership in the appointing party or were formally (i.e. as regulated by party statutes) represented in the party executive and 0 otherwise. We code collective membership and statutory representation based on information provided in case studies (Allern et al., 2007; Christiansen, 2012; Quinn, 2002), the information collected by Katz and Mair (1992), party statutes available from the Political Party Database (Scarrow et al., 2017), and digitized versions of historical party statutes obtained from a number of libraries (see appendix for details).

Next, we include a measure of union density, that is, the proportion of wage and salary earners that are union members. We use the union density measure provided by the CPDS (Armingeon et al., 2019), as these data include some imputed data points and thus achieve greater temporal and spatial coverage than the original data collected by Visser (2019).

Finally, we use a three-level measure of concertation provided by Visser (2019) who categorizes country-years into 'no', 'partial' and 'full concertation'. We use 'no concertation' as the reference category and include binary indicators for 'partial' and 'full concertation' in our analyses.

Furthermore, we include the (logged) number of social democratic appointments per cabinet. This is because parties will have an easier time finding a ministerial portfolio for a trade union representative if they have more positions to fill.

We also add parties' vote shares and vote share changes at the (lower-chamber, if applicable) legislative election preceding the appointment (taken from Lehmann et al., 2022), to control for the electoral size and performance of social democratic parties.

Next, we include unemployment rates for the country and year of the respective appointment. High unemployment weakens the bargaining power of unions, threatens collective bargaining coverage and lowers the reservation wage (Hein & Schulten, 2004). Furthermore, it may produce right-ward shifts in parties' programmatic profile (e.g. more fo-

cus on supply-side measures). Data are taken from the European Commission's AMECO database.[8]

We also control for economic globalization which exposes many workers in advanced economies to higher levels of competition through trade, outsourcing, or immigration (Sano & Williamson, 2008, p. 484). Globalization thus has the potential to weaken unions' bargaining position vis-à-vis employers and political actors (Piazza, 2001, 2005; Scruggs & Lange, 2002, pp. 129–30). To operationalize globalization we use trade openness, the sum of a country's imports and exports, expressed as a percentage of GDP. Data are taken from the Comparative Political Dataset (CPDS) (Armingeon et al., 2019). We log-transform this variable to eliminate skew.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Trade unionist appointment	2,627	0.21	0.41	0.00	1.00
% Workers among party voters	2,627	42.13	16.13	0.00	81.21
Economic left–right position	2,627	-1.72	1.13	-4.71	2.17
Union density	2,627	0.45	0.22	0.09	0.87
Statutory linkage	2,627	0.45	0.50	0.00	1.00
Concertation: partial	2,627	0.27	0.44	0.00	1.00
Concertation: full	2,627	0.48	0.50	0.00	1.00
Unemployment rate	2,627	6.02	3.97	0.00	20.80
Trade openness (ln)	2,627	4.09	0.35	3.28	5.64
SD appointments per cabinet	2,627	23.92	7.13	6.00	41.00
Vote share	2,627	34.24	10.76	2.96	51.03
Change in vote share	2,627	1.36	5.15	-11.24	17.89

Analysis

We first present binary relationships between our dependent variable and our two key independent variables. To that end, we calculate the percentage of union-linked ministers per quintile of the proportion of workers among SD voters and SD parties' economic left–right positions.

---

[8]https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/ameco

Fig. 4: Share of union-linked ministers by quintiles of key independent variables
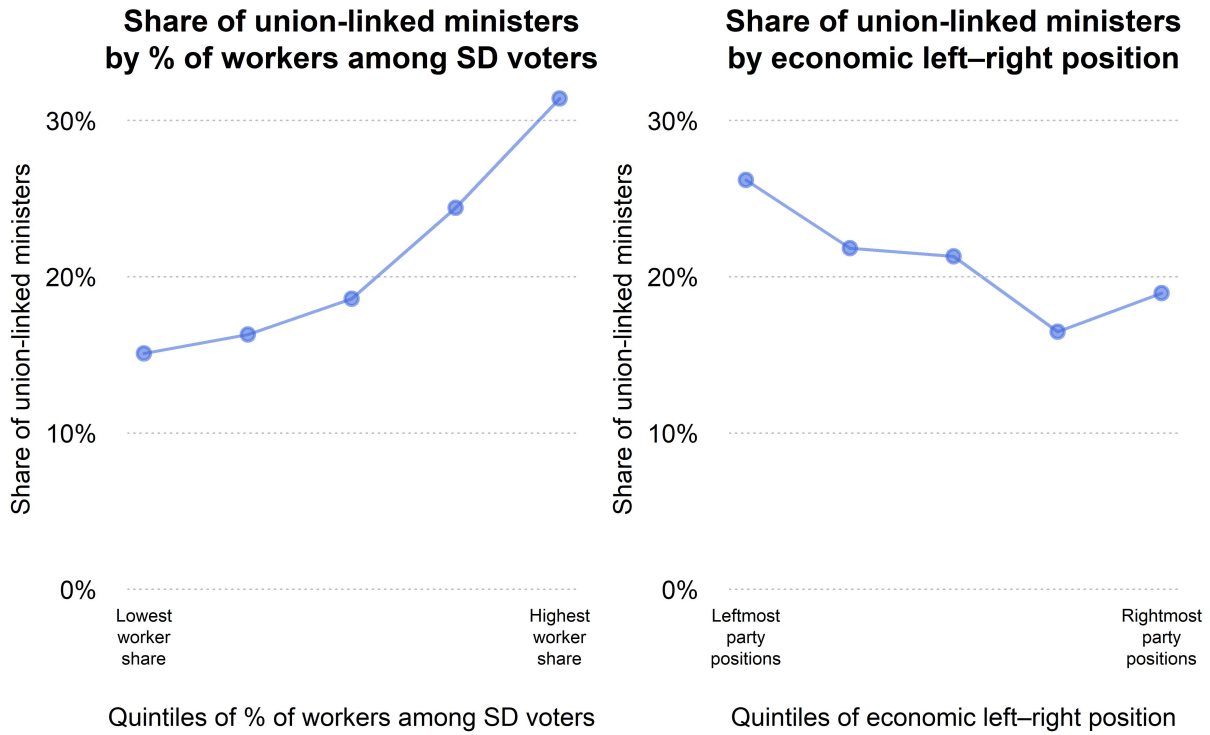
As Figure 4 shows, the relationships are broadly in line with our hypotheses: The proportion of ministers rises steadily as we move from the quintile of observations with the lowest share of workers among SD voters to the top quintile. The slope is somewhat less steep for parties' economic ideology, but there is still a notable drop in the proportion of union-linked ministers between the observations with the leftmost positions and those with the rightmost positions.

Since our data are hierarchically structured (individuals nested in countries), we estimate two-level mixed-effects logistic regressions with trade unionist background as the dependent variable.[9] To be sure, there is also a time dimension to our data, yet the data are not well-suited for time-series analysis, since data points within countries are clustered at certain points in time (e.g. multiple appointments happening at the start of one cabinet) and have long gaps (long absences from government, e.g. UK Labour during the Thatcher years or the German SPD during the Kohl Chancellorship). We therefore attempt to account for time trends by including fixed effects for decades.

---

[9]Our results hold when using country-level fixed effects, see Tables 6 and 7 in the appendix.

For the multivariate analysis, we first present three regression models to test the direct hypotheses (H1 and H2) in Table 3. The first model includes only the two key independent variables: the share of workers among SD voters and the economic left–right position of the appointing party. The second model adds all the control variables, and the third model adds decade-fixed effects to capture time dependencies.

Table 3: Mixed-effects models: explaining trade unionist appointments

	I	II	III
% Workers among party voters	0.0106**	0.00447	-0.00202
	(0.00371)	(0.00477)	(0.00630)
Economic left–right position	0.0374	0.0807	0.0805
	(0.0531)	(0.0589)	(0.0600)
Statutory linkage		0.0680	0.0599
		(0.176)	(0.183)
Union density		0.441	0.400
		(0.633)	(0.691)
Concertation: partial		0.121	0.0895
		(0.214)	(0.219)
Concertation: full		0.0305	0.0170
		(0.306)	(0.317)
Appointments per cabinet		-0.0152	-0.0113
		(0.0117)	(0.0120)
Vote share		-0.00340	-0.00567
		(0.0116)	(0.0122)
Change in vote share		-0.00630	-0.00666
		(0.0118)	(0.0120)
Unemployment rate		-0.0523*	-0.0398
		(0.0238)	(0.0278)
Trade openness (ln)		-0.116	0.0485
		(0.312)	(0.350)
Constant	-1.843***	-0.516	-0.627
	(0.227)	(1.619)	(1.675)
Variance: countries	0.397*	0.292	0.342
	(0.170)	(0.163)	(0.187)
Decade FEs	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,584	2,584	2,584
Log likelihood	-1,258	-1,253	-1,250
AIC	2,523	2,532	2,537

$^{*}\ p < 0.05,\ ^{**}\ p < 0.01,\ ^{***}\ p < 0.001$

In model I, the proportion of working-class voters in social democratic electorates yields a significant coefficient, thus supporting H1. However, the coefficient shrinks and turns insignificant in models II and III.

The economic ideology of social democratic parties is uncorrelated with trade unionist recruitment to ministerial office (H2). While the variable displays the expected movement

over time (social democrats move towards the center in the 1980s and especially 1990s, see Figure 3), it is not associated with changes in appointment patterns. Surprisingly, thus, SDs' economic left–right position – at least as measured by manifesto data – appears to play no role in explaining the decline of unionist appointments. While the rise of Third Way politics coincides temporally with a decline in union-linked ministers, there is no statistical relationship between the two in our sample. The analyses reported in Table 3 thus suggest that there is no robust linear relationship between the electorates and ideological positions of SD parties and their likelihood of appointing trade unionists as ministers.

To test our conditional hypotheses (H3, H4, and H5), we estimate regression models that interact the share of workers among SD voters and parties' economic left–right position with the binary statutory linkage indicator, union density, and the level of concertation. We include all control variables from model III (see Table 3), but we do not report them here (their coefficients are substantively identical to those reported in model III). Models IV to VI interact the share-of-workers variable with the three measures of institutional stabilizers. Two of these models yield the expected conditional effects, with negative and significant interaction terms: Thus, according to models V and VI, union-linked appointments *are* less likely when SD parties rely less on working-class voters, but this relationship is only present when union density is low or concertation is absent. The interaction with statutory linkage points in a substantively similar direction, yet the effect does not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.21$).[10]

While there is thus good evidence for a conditional effect of electoral change, the interaction terms with ideology vary in their direction and do not reach statistical significance. Thus, the relationship between parties' economic left–right positions and their ministerial appointments does not change substantially under different institutional conditions.

To see this more clearly, take a look at the predicted probabilities for high and low levels of the moderating variables in Figure 5. The top panels show that union-linked appointments are positively correlated with the share of workers in party electorates if

---

[10]We present models in Tables 18 and 19 in the appendix using the presence of statutory ties in 1960 as an indicator. These models return an interaction term with $p = 0.107$.

union density is low or concertation is absent – thus if institutional stabilizers are *not* present (blue-shaded graphs). Under such circumstances, social democratic appointments respond much more strongly to the transformation of party electorates. More specifically, the probability of trade unionist appointments increases across the empirical range of the share-of-workers variable when union density is low (from 11 to 39 percent) and when concertation is not established (from 12 to 35 percent). Yet when institutional stabilizers are strong (high union density, full concertation), the association between SD electorates and union-linked appointments is even negative, as indicated by the downward-sloping dashed red lines in the top three panels of Figure 5.

By contrast, no strong differentiation according to institutional factors becomes visible for the association of economic ideology with union-linked appointments. Whether institutional stabilizers are present or not, economic ideology remains essentially uncorrelated with the appointment of trade unionists as ministers.

Table 4: Mixed-effects interaction models: electorate and ideology effects conditional on institutional stabilizers

	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
% Workers among party voters	0.00413	0.0384**	0.0196	-0.00111	-0.00156	-0.00124
	(0.00830)	(0.0141)	(0.0104)	(0.00638)	(0.00630)	(0.00649)
× Statutory linkage	-0.00939					
	(0.00836)					
× Union density		-0.0805**				
		(0.0251)				
× Concertation: partial			-0.0292*			
			(0.0118)			
× Concertation: full			-0.0275*			
			(0.0112)			
Economic left–right position	0.0861	0.0661	0.0674	0.143	0.264	-0.119
	(0.0600)	(0.0607)	(0.0623)	(0.0778)	(0.198)	(0.174)
× Statutory linkage				-0.142		
				(0.112)		
× Union density					-0.294	
					(0.303)	
× Concertation: partial						0.312
						(0.193)
× Concertation: full						0.163
						(0.193)
Statutory linkage	0.467	0.240	0.123	-0.182	0.0112	0.0424
	(0.405)	(0.191)	(0.194)	(0.265)	(0.189)	(0.191)
Union density	0.469	3.353**	0.575	0.295	0.0437	0.253
	(0.667)	(1.143)	(0.662)	(0.698)	(0.775)	(0.719)
Concertation: partial	0.148	0.142	1.269*	0.0939	0.0751	0.549
	(0.224)	(0.222)	(0.540)	(0.219)	(0.218)	(0.355)
Concertation: full	0.0756	-0.0661	1.071	0.0484	-0.0205	0.243
	(0.319)	(0.321)	(0.556)	(0.319)	(0.319)	(0.419)
Constant	-1.122	-2.021	-1.535	-0.364	-0.693	-0.879
	(1.680)	(1.719)	(1.654)	(1.699)	(1.657)	(1.677)
Variance: countries	0.308	0.341	0.281	0.351	0.327	0.361
	(0.167)	(0.190)	(0.160)	(0.191)	(0.179)	(0.195)
Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,584	2,584	2,584	2,584	2,584	2,584
Log likelihood	-1,250	-1,245	-1,247	-1,250	-1,250	-1,249
AIC	2,537	2,528	2,533	2,537	2,538	2,537

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Fig. 5: Predicted probability of trade unionist appointment (interaction effects)
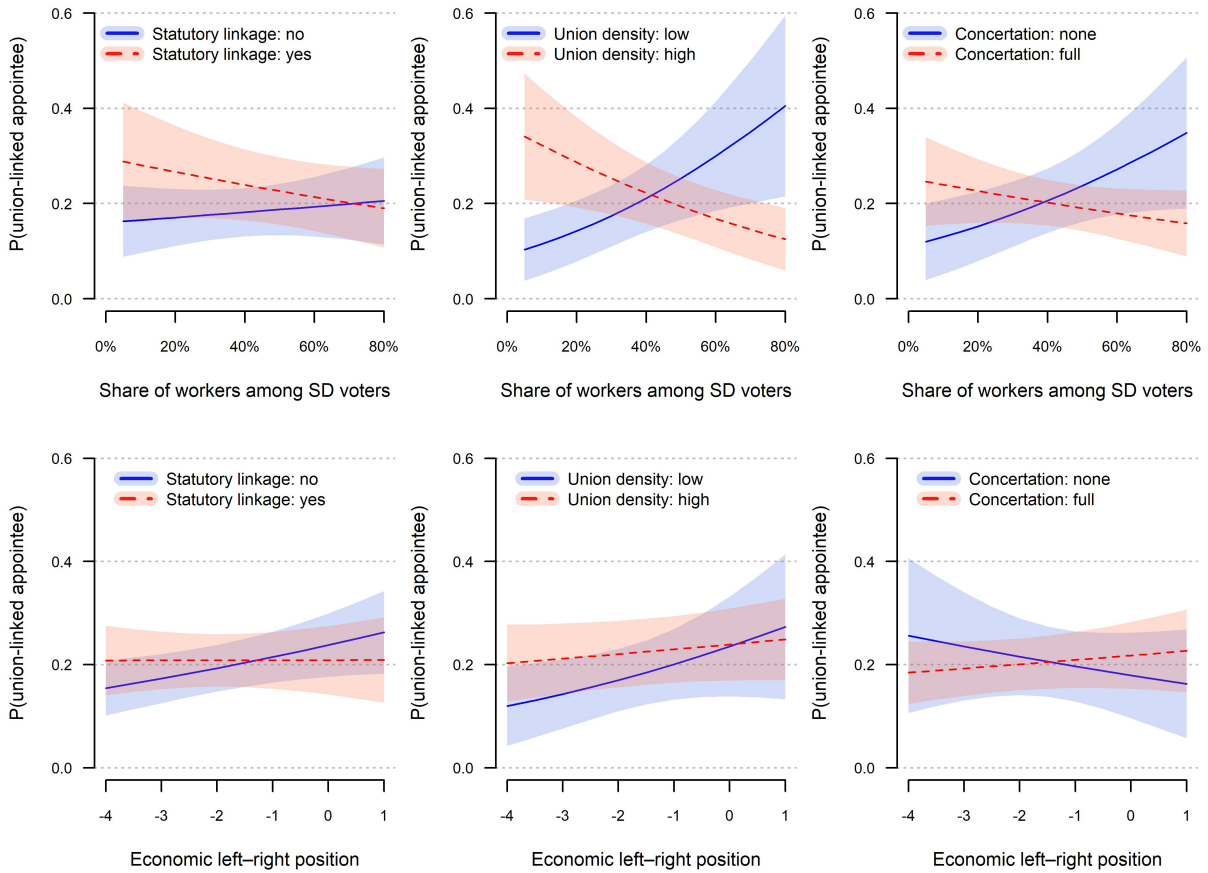
Note: Predicted probabilities and 95-percent confidence intervals; results based on Models IV–IX in Table 4; for 'low' and 'high' values, statutory linkage was held at 0 ('no') and 1 ('yes'), concertation held at 0 ('none') and 2 ('full'), union density held at the 10th and 90th percentile; other variables held at observed values.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper presents the most comprehensive analysis to date of how social democratic parties' electoral and ideological transformations over the past decades affected their elite-level linkages with trade unions. Examining over 2,600 ministerial appointments between 1960 and 2014, we document a steep decline in the share of social democratic appointees with a trade union background. Whereas 30 percent of social democratic ministers had a union background in the 1960s, this proportion has declined to 16 percent in the recent past (Figure 1).

Yet how do the electoral middle-class shift and the ideological moderation that (some)

SD parties underwent relate to this trend? We theorized that union-linked ministerial appointments become less likely as party electorates become less reliant on working-class voters and parties shift rightward on the economic left–right dimension. However, we also argue that the institutional framework in which party–union ties are embedded (statutory linkages, union density, concertation) affects how ministerial appointments respond to these changes. If the institutional environment is favorable to party–union linkages, we should see weaker effects of electoral and ideological change.

Our analysis yields very little support for our direct-effect hypotheses (H1 and H2). Electoral change and ideological shifts have no linear relationship with union-linked ministerial appointments. At least in the short term, these appointments are not dictated by electoral or party-ideological considerations. This may be due to the fact that ministerial positions are public rather than party offices, hence other considerations may come into play (e.g., expertise, experience, or communication skills).

By contrast, we find good support for some of our interaction hypotheses. In particular, union density and concertation moderate the effect of electoral change on ministerial appointments: In the absence of these institutional stabilizers, the association between working-class voter shares and union-linked ministerial appointments is substantial. Institutional environments that are less conducive to strong party–union linkages thus display a strong correlation between the shape of party electorates and ministerial appointments. The same moderators, however, have no bearing on the relationship between party ideology and appointments.

The central conclusion from our findings is thus that the electoral and ideological transformation of social democracy in itself does not dictate the shape of party–union linkages. Economic centrism and low working-class support can co-exist with substantial personal linkages among SD and union elites. Likewise, ideological leftism and sizeable proportions of working-class voters do not guarantee union-linked ministerial appointments. As important as these factors may be, their impact, if any, is moderated by the institutional context in which party–union linkages are embedded.

To be sure, one important limitation of our paper is the fact that the causal rela-

tionships between key variables in our analysis are likely to be complex. For example, ministerial appointments may be a consequence of electoral and ideological change, but they may also drive these trends to some extent (Heath, 2015; O'Grady, 2019). In addition, the institutional moderators theorized in H3–5 can hardly be viewed as fully exogenous: Statutory linkages and levels of concertation – while much more stable in the long-term – may at times be affected by informal personal linkages (i.e. ministerial appointments).

While our observational research design thus does not allow for causal identification, we still consider it an important contribution – not least because the absence of direct associations between union-linked appointments and ideological and electoral change suggest that earlier case study findings (Allern et al., 2007; Anthonsen et al., 2011; Aylott, 2003; Thomas, 2001) do not generalize as broadly as one could have assumed.

Overall, our findings thus contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between the political and the economic arm of the labor movement. Yet the explanations tested here are certainly not exhaustive. For example, the current paper takes a party-centered perspective, yet there have been significant transformations of the trade union landscape that have, in some cases, triggered a re-evaluation by unions of their ties with political parties (Allern et al., 2007). A comprehensive explanation of the personal linkages between parties and union would certainly need to take both actors' calculations into account. What is more, it remains an open question to what extent the explanations offered in this paper apply to party–interest group ties more broadly.

This point opens up important avenues for future research. Our paper provides a first step in demonstrating the theoretical and empirical value of examining party–interest group ties through the prism of transforming party politics. Future research could apply this logic more broadly, for example by examining how changed patterns of party competition alter the recruitment strategies of political parties (Abou-Chadi & Wagner, 2019a; O'Grady, 2019). How shifts in party–interest group relations affect political elite selection and feed into policy outputs and outcomes will thus be one of the most pertinent questions to answer for students of parties, interest groups, and policy-making in

post-industrial democracies.

References

Abou-Chadi, T., & Hix, S. (2021). Brahmin left versus merchant right? Education, class, multiparty competition, and redistribution in Western Europe. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *72*(1), 79–92.

Abou-Chadi, T., & Wagner, M. (2019a). The electoral appeal of party strategies in postindustrial societies: When can the mainstream left succeed? *The Journal of Politics*, *81*(4), 1405–1419.

Abou-Chadi, T., & Wagner, M. (2019b). The electoral appeal of party strategies in postindustrial societies: When can the mainstream left succeed? *The Journal of Politics*, *81*(4), 1405–1419.

Adolph, C. (2013). *Bankers, bureaucrats, and central bank politics: The myth of neutrality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Albaugh, Q. M. (2021). *Do voters discriminate against working-class candidates? Evidence from fifty years of self-reported candidate occupations* [Unpublished manuscript].

Alexiadou, D. (2015). Ideologues, partisans, and loyalists: Cabinet ministers and social welfare reform in parliamentary democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, *48*(8), 1051–1086.

Alexiadou, D. (2016). *Ideologues, partisans, and loyalists: Ministers and policymaking in parliamentary cabinets.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alexiadou, D., & Gunaydin, H. (2019). Commitment or expertise? Technocratic appointments as political responses to economic crises. *European Journal of Political Research*, *58*(3), 845–865.

Allern, E. H., Aylott, N., & Christiansen, F. J. (2007). Social democrats and trade unions in Scandinavia: The decline and persistence of institutional relationships. *European Journal of Political Research*, *46*(5), 607–635.

Allern, E. H., & Bale, T. (2017). *Left-of-centre parties and trade unions in the twenty-first century.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Allern, E. H., Bale, T., & Otjes, S. (2017). Variations in party-union relationships: Explanations and implications. In E. H. Allern & T. Bale (Eds.), *Left-of-centre parties*

and trade unions in the twenty-first century (pp. 310–341). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Allern, E. H., Hansen, V. W., Otjes, S., Rasmussen, A., Røed, M., & Bale, T. (2021). All about the money? A cross-national study of parties' relations with trade unions in 12 Western democracies. *Party Politics, 27*(3), 407–417.

Allern, E. H., Otjes, S., Poguntke, T., Hansen, V. W., Saurugger, S., & Marshall, D. (2020). Conceptualizing and measuring party-interest group relationships. *Party Politics, 27*(6), 1254–1267.

Anthonsen, M., Lindvall, J., & Schmidt-Hansen, U. (2011). Social democrats, unions and corporatism: Denmark and Sweden compared. *Party Politics, 17*(1), 118–134.

Armingeon, K., Wenger, V., Wiedemeier, F., Isler, C., Knöpfel, L., Weisstanner, D., & Engler, S. (2019). *Comparative political data set 1960-2017.* Institute of Political Science, University of Berne.

Arndt, C., & Rennwald, L. (2016). Union members at the polls in diverse trade union landscapes. *European Journal of Political Research, 55*(4), 702–722.

Arndt, C., & van Kersbergen, K. (2015). Social democracy after the third way: Restoration or renewal? *Policy & Politics, 43*(2), 203–220.

Aylott, N. (2003). After the divorce: Social democrats and trade unions in Sweden. *Party Politics, 9*(3), 369–390.

Bellucci, P., & Heath, O. (2012). The structure of party-organization linkages and the electoral strength of cleavages in Italy, 1963-2008. *British Journal of Political Science, 42*(1), 107–135.

Benedetto, G., Hix, S., & Mastrorocco, N. (2020). The rise and fall of social democracy, 1918–2017. *American Political Science Review, 114*(3), 928–939.

Best, R. E. (2011). The declining electoral relevance of traditional cleavage groups. *European Political Science Review, 3*(2), 279–300.

Blondel, J. (1985). *Government ministers in the contemporary world.* London: Sage.

Bonoli, G., & Powell, M. (2002). Third ways in Europe? *Social Policy and Society, 1*(1), 59–66.

Bremer, B. (2018). The missing left? Economic crisis and the programmatic response of social democratic parties in Europe. *Party Politics*, *24*(1), 23–38.

Browne, E. C., & Frendreis, J. P. (1980). Allocating coalition payoffs by conventional norm: An assessment of the evidence from cabinet coalition situations. *American Journal of Political Science*, *24*(4), 753–768.

Campbell, R., & Cowley, P. (2014). Rich man, poor man, politician man: Wealth effects in a candidate biography survey experiment. *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, *16*(1), 56–74.

Carnes, N., & Lupu, N. (2016). Do voters dislike working-class candidates? Voter biases and the descriptive underrepresentation of the working class. *American Political Science Review*, *110*(4), 832–844.

Ceron, A. (2014). Gamson rule not for all: Patterns of portfolio allocation among Italian party factions. *European Journal of Political Research*, *53*(1), 180–199.

Ceron, A., & Negri, F. (2017). Trade unions and political parties in Italy (1946–2014): Ideological positions and critical junctures. *South European Society and Politics*, *22*(4), 491–508.

Christiansen, F. J. (2012). Organizational de-integration of political parties and interest groups in Denmark. *Party Politics*, *18*(1), 27–43.

Davidsson, J. B., & Bäck, H. (2019). Selecting ministers in times of crisis: A historical analysis of the role of intra-party politics and union background in Swedish cabinet appointments 1917–2014. *Political Studies*, *67*(4), 932–954.

De Winter, L. (1991). Parliamentary and party pathways to the cabinet. In J. Blondel & J.-L. Thiébault (Eds.), *The profession of government minister in Western Europe.* (pp. 44–69). Palgrave.

de Almeida, P. T., Pinto, A. C., & Bermeo, N. G. (2003). *Who governs southern europe?: Regime change and ministerial recruitment, 1850–2000.* Routledge.

Dowding, K., & Dumont, P. (2008). *The selection of ministers in europe: Hiring and firing.* Routledge.

Ebbinghaus, B. (1995). The siamese twins: Citizenship rights, cleavage formation, and party-union relations in Western Europe. *International Review of Social History*, *40*(S3), 51–89.

Ebbinghaus, B., & Visser, J. (2000). *Trade unions in Western Europe since 1945*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ecker, A., Meyer, T. M., & Müller, W. C. (2015). The distribution of individual cabinet positions in coalition governments: A sequential approach. *European Journal of Political Research*, *54*(4), 802–818.

Ennser-Jedenastik, L. (2013). Portfolio allocation within parties: The role of regional party branches. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *19*(3), 309–327.

Ennser-Jedenastik, L. (2017). Die personelle Verflechtung zwischen Sozialpartnern und Bundesregierung in Österreich, 1945–2015. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, *45*(3), 29–44.

Evans, G., & Tilley, J. (2017). *The new politics of class: The political exclusion of the British working class*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Giddens, A. (1998). *The third way: The renewal of social democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gingrich, J., & Häusermann, S. (2015). The decline of the working-class vote, the reconfiguration of the welfare support coalition and consequences for the welfare state. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *25*(1), 50–75.

Goddard, D. (2019). Entering the men's domain? Gender and portfolio allocation in European governments. *European Journal of Political Research*, *58*(2), 631–655.

Green-Pedersen, C., & van Kersbergen, K. (2002). The politics of the 'third way': The transformation of social democracy in Denmark and the Netherlands. *Party Politics*, *8*(5), 507–524.

Green-Pedersen, C., van Kersbergen, K., & Hemerijck, A. (2001). Neo-liberalism, the 'third way' or what? Recent social democratic welfare policies in Denmark and the Netherlands. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *8*(2), 307–325.

Gumbrell-McCormick, R., & Hyman, R. (2013). *Trade unions in Western Europe: Hard times, hard choices.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, P. A. (2002). The comparative political economy of the 'third way'. In O. Schmidtke (Ed.), *The third way transformation of social democracy. Normative claims and policy initiatives in the 21st century* (pp. 31–58). London: Routledge.

Heath, O. (2015). Policy representation, social representation and class voting in Britain. *British Journal of Political Science, 45*(1), 173–193.

Hein, E., & Schulten, T. (2004). Unemployment, wages and collective bargaining in the European Union. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, 10*(4), 532–551.

Howell, C. (2001). The end of the relationship between social democratic parties and trade unions? *Studies in Political Economy, 65*(1), 7–37.

Howell, C., & Daley, A. (1992). Introduction: The transformation of political exchange. *International Journal of Political Economy, 22*(4), 3–16.

Hoyt, C. L., & DeShields, B. H. (2021). How social-class background influences perceptions of political leaders. *Political Psychology, 42*(2), 239–263.

Hyman, R. (2001). *Understanding European trade unionism: Between market, class and society.* London: Sage.

Jahn, D. (2016). Changing of the guard: Trends in corporatist arrangements in 42 highly industrialized societies from 1960 to 2010. *Socio-Economic Review, 14*(1), 47–71.

Kaltenegger, M. (2023). The intra-party bargain over ministerial appointments: How party leader performance affects the 'partyness' of government. *West European Politics, 46*(6), 1156–1177.

Katz, R. S., & Mair, P. (1992). *Party organizations: A data handbook on party organizations in Western democracies, 1960–90.* London: Sage.

Keman, H. (2017). *Social democracy: A comparative account of the left-wing party family.* London: Routledge.

Kenworthy, L. (2003). Quantitative indicators of corporatism. *International Journal of Sociology, 33*(3), 10–44.

Kirchheimer, O. (1966). The transformation of the Western European party systems. In J. LaPalombara & M. Weiner (Eds.), *Political parties and political development* (pp. 177–200). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kitschelt, H., et al. (1994). *The transformation of European social democracy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Koelble, T. A. (1992). Recasting social democracy in europe: A nested games explanation of strategic adjustment in political parties. *Politics & Society, 20*(1), 51–70.

Korpi, W. (1980). Social policy and distributional conflict in the capitalist democracies. A preliminary comparative framework. *West European Politics, 3*(3), 296–316.

Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S., & Frey, T. (2006). Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared. *European Journal of Political Research, 45*(6), 921–956.

Larkin, P., & Lees, C. (2017). The Austrialian labor party and the trade unions: Till death do us part? In E. H. Allern & T. Bale (Eds.), *Left-of-centre parties and trade unions in the twenty-first century* (pp. 54–69). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lehmann, P., Burst, T., Matthieß, T., Regel, S., Volkens, A., Weßels, B., & Zehnter, L. (2022). Manifesto corpus. version: 2022a. https://doi.org/10.25522/manifesto.mpds.2022a

Lipset, S. M. (1983). Radicalism or reformism: The sources of working-class politics. *American Political Science Review, 77*(1), 1–18.

Lowe, W., Benoit, K., Mikhaylov, S., & Laver, M. (2011). Scaling policy preferences from coded political texts. *Legislative Studies Quarterly, 36*(1), 123–155.

Molina, O., & Rhodes, M. (2002). Corporatism: The past, present, and future of. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci, 5*, 305–31.

Mosimann, N., Rennwald, L., & Zimmermann, A. (2019). The radical right, the labour movement and the competition for the workers' vote. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 40*(1), 65–90.

Müller, W., & Strøm, K. (1999). *Policy, office, or votes? How political parties in Western Europe make hard decisions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oesch, D. (2006). Coming to grips with a changing class structure: An analysis of employment stratification in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. *International Sociology, 21*(2), 263–288.

Oesch, D., & Rennwald, L. (2018). Electoral competition in Europe's new tripolar political space: Class voting for the left, centre-right and radical right. *European Journal of Political Research, 57*(4), 783–807.

O'Grady, T. (2019). Careerists versus coal-miners: Welfare reforms and the substantive representation of social groups in the British labour party. *Comparative Political Studies, 52*(4), 544–578.

Padgett, S., & Paterson, W. E. (1991). *A history of social democracy in postwar Europe*. London: Longman.

Piazza, J. (2001). De-linking labor: Labor unions and social democratic parties under globalization. *Party Politics, 7*(4), 413–435.

Piazza, J. (2005). Globalizing quiescence: Globalization, union density and strikes in 15 industrialized countries. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 26*(2), 289–314.

Pizzorno, A. (1978). Political exchange and collective identity in industrial conflict. In C. Colin & P. Alessandro (Eds.), *The resurgence of class conflict in Western Europe since 1968* (pp. 277–298). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Poguntke, T. (2002). Parties without firm social roots? Party organisational linkage. *Keele European Parties Research Unit (KEPRU). Working Paper 13*.

Poguntke, T. (2006). Political parties and other organizations. In R. S. Katz & W. J. Crotty (Eds.), *Handbook of party politics* (pp. 396–405). London: Sage.

Przeworski, A. (1986). *Capitalism and social democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Przeworski, A., & Sprague, J. (1986). *Paper stones: A history of electoral socialism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Quinn, T. (2002). Block voting in the labour party: A political exchange model. *Party Politics*, *8*(2), 207–226.

Rennwald, L. (2020). *Social democratic parties and the working class: New voting patterns.* Cham: Springer Nature.

Rennwald, L., & Pontusson, J. (2021). Paper stones revisited: Class voting, unionization and the electoral decline of the mainstream left. *Perspectives on Politics*, *19*(1), 36–54.

Sano, J., & Williamson, J. B. (2008). Factors affecting union decline in 18 OECD countries and their implications for labor movement reform. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, *49*(6), 479–500.

Scarrow, S. E., Webb, P. D., & Poguntke, T. (2017). *Organizing political parties: Representation, participation, and power.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Scruggs, L., & Lange, P. (2002). Where have all the members gone? Globalization, institutions, and union density. *The Journal of Politics*, *64*(1), 126–153.

Siaroff, A. (1999). Corporatism in 24 industrial democracies: Meaning and measurement. *European Journal of Political Research*, *36*(2), 175–205.

Strøm, K. (1990). A behavioral theory of competitive political parties. *American Journal of Political Science*, *34*(2), 565–598.

Thomas, C. S. (2001). *Political parties and interest groups: Shaping democratic governance.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Visser, J. (2019). Data base on institutional characteristics of trade unions, wage setting, state intervention and social pacts, 1960-2014 (ICTWSS). *Institute for Advanced Labour Studies AIAS*.

Vittori, D., Pilet, J.-B., Rojon, S., & Paulis, E. (2023). Technocratic ministers in office in european countries (2000–2020): What's new? *Political Studies Review*, 14789299221140036.

Vivyan, N., Wagner, M., Glinitzer, K., & Eberl, J.-M. (2020). Do humble beginnings help? How politician class roots shape voter evaluations. *Electoral Studies*, *63*, 1–13.

Wüest, R., & Pontusson, J. (2018). *Descriptive misrepresentation by social class: Do voter preferences matter?* [Unpublished Paper].

Appendix

Parties in the analysis

Table 5: Countries, parties, appointments, and ministers

Country	Parties	Appointments	Ministers	% unionist app.
AUT	SPÖ	183	74	0.31
BEL	BSP/PSB, SP, PS, sp.a	178	78	0.14
CHE	SPS	16	16	0.31
DEU	SPD	131	69	0.21
DNK	SD	281	98	0.35
ESP	PSOE	147	87	0.15
FIN	SSDP	135	74	0.31
FRA	PS	303	121	0.09
GBR	Labour	256	124	0.22
IRL	Labour	34	21	0.29
ITA	PSI, PSDI, PD, RI	201	69	0.07
LUX	LSAP/POSL	30	16	0.33
NLD	PvdA	54	41	0.20
NOR	Ap	217	131	0.33
PRT	PS	139	89	0.04
SWE	SAP	226	115	0.15
Total	–	2,531	1,223	0.20

Coding of statutory linkage variable

The organizational linkage variable was coded as a binary indicator. It takes on the value 1 for all party–years when at least one of two conditions is met (and 0 otherwise):

- A system of collective party membership for union members is in place
- The party statutes mandate union representation in the party executive

Information on these characteristics was obtained from a range of sources including Katz and Mair (1992), the party statutes available from the Political Party Database, and digital reproductions of party statutes obtained directly from online archives (e.g., archives-socialistes.fr, dnpp.nl) and libraries. In addition, some cases could be coded based on information found in the literature (Allern et al., 2007; Christiansen, 2012). For a few cases where information was scarce or difficult to access, country experts were contacted to provide clarifications. Combining the two criteria, the following cases were coded as instances of high (1) statutory linkage (other party-years were coded 0):

- Austria (SPÖ): all party-years from 1967
- Belgium (SP.a): all party-years from 1997
- Belgium (PS): all party-years from 1996
- Denmark (SD): all party-years before 1997
- Ireland (Labour): all party-years from 1978
- Italy (PSDI): all party-years from 1980 to 1990
- Norway (Ap): all party-years before 1997
- Portgual (PS): all party-years
- Sweden (SAP): all party-years before 1991
- Switzerland (SPS): all party-years from 1970 to 1980
- United Kingdom (Labour): all party-years

Coding and sources for the variable 'working-class share among party voters'

We start by combining data from the Mannheim Eurobarometer Trendfile (EB) with the European Social Survey (ESS) to get data from 1975 up to 2015 and largely follow Gingrich and Häusermann (2015) in making the two comparable. This gives us about half the observations needed. We then supplement national election studies and national surveys as well as other international surveys to maximize spatial and temporal coverage.

As we want to assess what proportion of social democratic voters are workers, we create the category 'working class'. In the different surveys used, the typical categories are 'skilled workers', 'semi-skilled workers' and 'unskilled workers'. For example in the ESS the category 'working class' includes 'technicians', 'skilled craft workers' and 'technical routine workers' and is based on Oesch's 16 class categories. In the Eurobarometer data, this category includes 'manual workers', 'skilled manual workers', 'supervisors' and 'other (unskilled) manual workers, servants'.

We compute the share of working-class voters in social democratic electorates only for cases where at least 20 social democratic voters are present in the survey. We use the following survey data:

Cross-national surveys:

- Eurobarometer: Attitudes towards Europe 1962
- Eurobarometer: Mannheim Eurobarometer Trendfile
- European Election Study
- European Community Study
- European Social Survey
- European Values Survey
- European Voter Database
- Political Participation and Equality in Seven Nations, 1966–1971

Country-specific surveys:

- Austria:
  - Social Survey Austria 1986 (SUF edition)
  - Exit Poll Nationalratswahl 1990
- Denmark: Gallup Omnibus Data 1959, 1964, 1971, 1973
- Finland:
  - Finnish Voter Barometers 1973–1990: Combined data

- Pesonen, P. (ed.). (1972). Protestivaalit, nuorisovaalit: Tutkielmia kansane-

  dustajien vaaleista 1966, 1970 ja 1972. Ylioppilastuki.

- United Kingdom:

  - Political Change in Britain, 1963-1970
  - British Election Study: February 1974

- Italy:

  - Gallup DOXA Poll No.1963: Social Class and Social Change, 1963
  - Italian Mass Election Survey, 1968, 1972;
  - ITANES (Italian National Election Study) 1996; ITANES 2001; ITANES 2006

- Portugal: Bacalhau, M. and Bruneau, T. (1978). Evolução das atitudes, opiniões

  e comportamentos políticos dos portugueses, quatro anos depois do 25 de Abril.

  Lisbon: NORMA.

- Sweden: Swedish National Election Study 1956-1994

- Switzerland: Swiss Election Study (Selects), cumulative dataset 1971-2019

Change in share of union-linked ministers as a function of pre-1986 levels of union-linked ministerial appointments

Below, we present the post-1985 decline in the share of union-linked appointments as a function of the share of union-linked appointments pre-1986. The countries that start from a higher trade union presence among its ministers are, of course, vulnerable to steeper declines. By and large, this notion is supported by the data. The steepest declines are recorded in countries with high pre-1986 levels of union-linked appointments. However, some countries buck this trend, especially Finland and Norway, where union-minister shares increase in the aggregate despite relatively high starting levels.

Fig. 6: Scatterplot: Change in union-minister share (1986–2014 vs. 1960–85) as a function of average proportion of union-linked appointments in 1960–95
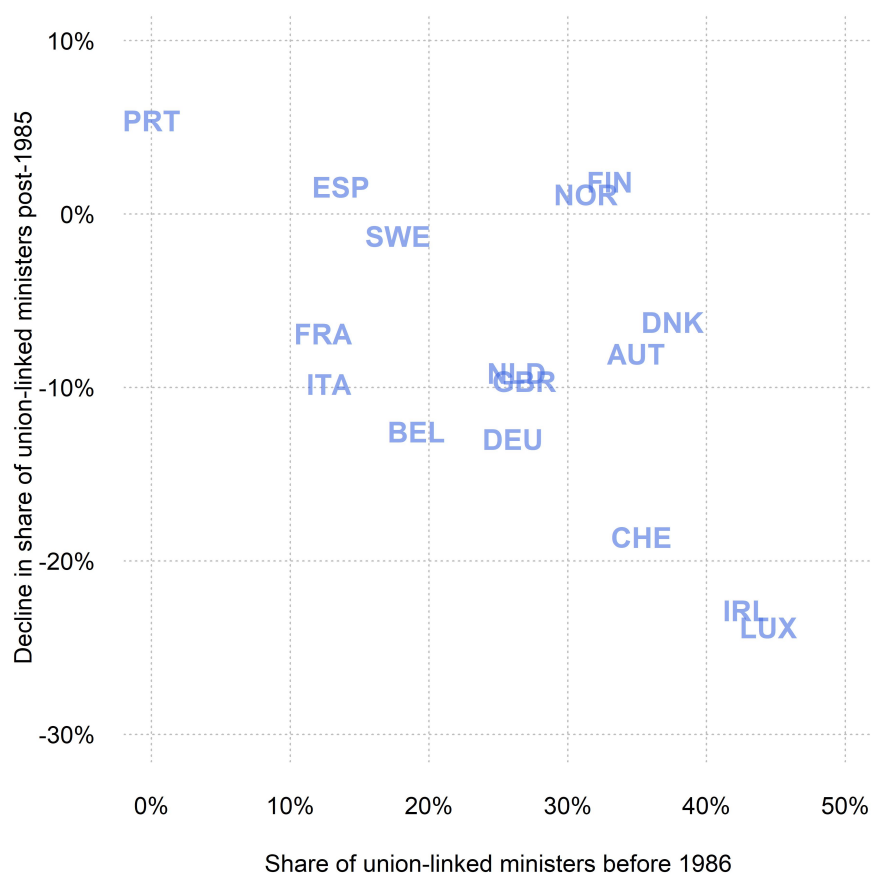
Regression models using country-level fixed effects

Table 6: Regression models explaining union-linked appointments (country-level FEs)

	I	II	III
% Workers among party voters	0.00912*	0.00250	-0.00534
	(0.00372)	(0.00502)	(0.00643)
Economic left–right position	0.0435	0.107	0.111
	(0.0537)	(0.0597)	(0.0612)
Statutory linkage		0.116	0.0309
		(0.197)	(0.212)
Union density		-0.861	-1.252
		(0.819)	(0.910)
Concertation: partial		0.267	0.241
		(0.219)	(0.227)
Concertation: full		-0.0272	-0.0332
		(0.342)	(0.350)
Appointments per cabinet		-0.00568	-0.00310
		(0.0127)	(0.0129)
Vote share		-0.0157	-0.0203
		(0.0146)	(0.0152)
Change in vote share		-0.00389	-0.00332
		(0.0123)	(0.0125)
Unemployment rate		-0.0402	-0.0266
		(0.0278)	(0.0326)
Trade openness (ln)		-0.765	-0.561
		(0.397)	(0.516)
Constant	-1.068***	3.693	3.788
	(0.209)	(2.062)	(2.282)
Decade FEs	No	No	Yes
Country FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,602	2,602	2,602
Log likelihood	-1,234	-1,229	-1,225
AIC	2,505	2,512	2,514

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7: Regression models with interaction effects (country-level FEs)

	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
% Workers among party voters	-0.00431	0.0394**	0.0122	-0.00468	-0.00508	-0.00515
	(0.00892)	(0.0149)	(0.0105)	(0.00646)	(0.00645)	(0.00658)
× Statutory linkage	-0.00148					
	(0.00895)					
× Union density		-0.0890***				
		(0.0267)				
× Concertation: partial			-0.0301*			
			(0.0123)			
× Concertation: full			-0.0196			
			(0.0118)			
Economic left–right position	0.112	0.103	0.0777	0.180*	0.219	-0.135
	(0.0613)	(0.0613)	(0.0664)	(0.0800)	(0.211)	(0.180)
× Statutory linkage				-0.153		
				(0.115)		
× Union density					-0.171	
					(0.321)	
× Concertation: partial						0.368
						(0.202)
× Concertation: full						0.213
						(0.202)
Statutory linkage	0.0952	0.291	0.0259	-0.232	-0.000341	-0.00257
	(0.443)	(0.224)	(0.241)	(0.290)	(0.220)	(0.224)
Union density	-1.222	1.923	-1.135	-1.332	-1.436	-1.554
	(0.928)	(1.308)	(0.907)	(0.913)	(0.972)	(0.931)
Concertation: partial	0.249	0.315	1.489**	0.243	0.226	0.776*
	(0.233)	(0.231)	(0.561)	(0.227)	(0.228)	(0.371)
Concertation: full	-0.0245	-0.179	0.646	0.0207	-0.0622	0.316
	(0.354)	(0.356)	(0.597)	(0.352)	(0.355)	(0.454)
Constant	3.663	2.183	3.435	3.999	3.675	2.970
	(2.403)	(2.345)	(2.395)	(2.289)	(2.292)	(2.327)
Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,602	2,602	2,602	2,602	2,602	2,602
Log likelihood	-1,225	-1,220	-1,222	-1,224	-1,225	-1,223
AIC	2,516	2,505	2,512	2,515	2,516	2,514

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Regression models excluding re-appointments

Table 8: Mixed-effects models explaining union-linked appointments, excluding re-appointments

	I	II	III
% Workers among party voters	0.0128*	0.0119	0.00862
	(0.00533)	(0.00664)	(0.00834)
Economic left–right position	-0.00455	0.0209	0.0210
	(0.0780)	(0.0826)	(0.0858)
Statutory linkage		0.0962	0.124
		(0.219)	(0.228)
Union density		0.491	0.538
		(0.612)	(0.644)
Concertation: partial		0.259	0.247
		(0.284)	(0.292)
Concertation: full		0.253	0.246
		(0.380)	(0.393)
Appointments per cabinet		-0.0144	-0.0113
		(0.0162)	(0.0175)
Vote share		0.00759	0.00710
		(0.0129)	(0.0133)
Change in vote share		-0.0186	-0.0183
		(0.0162)	(0.0164)
Unemployment rate		-0.0243	-0.00947
		(0.0280)	(0.0342)
Trade openness (ln)		0.457	0.572
		(0.330)	(0.378)
Constant	-1.952***	-3.962*	-4.168*
	(0.276)	(1.737)	(1.824)
Variance: countries	0.324*	0.0766	0.0956
	(0.165)	(0.0745)	(0.0861)
Decade FEs	No	No	Yes
Observations	1,162	1,162	1,162
Log likelihood	-570	-564	-564
AIC	1,148	1,155	1,163

$^{*}\ p < 0.05,\ ^{**}\ p < 0.01,\ ^{***}\ p < 0.001$

Table 9: Mixed-effects interaction models, excluding re-appointments

	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
% Workers among party voters	0.0163	0.0440*	0.0339*	0.00921	0.00856	0.0102
	(0.0102)	(0.0190)	(0.0142)	(0.00839)	(0.00827)	(0.00862)
× Statutory linkage	-0.0142					
	(0.0105)					
× Union density		-0.0725*				
		(0.0352)				
× Concertation: partial			-0.0300			
			(0.0162)			
× Concertation: full			-0.0337*			
			(0.0155)			
Economic left–right position	0.0255	-0.00557	0.0107	0.107	0.404	-0.147
	(0.0854)	(0.0876)	(0.0866)	(0.102)	(0.262)	(0.241)
× Statutory linkage				-0.248		
				(0.158)		
× Union density					-0.641	
					(0.413)	
× Concertation: partial						0.313
						(0.263)
× Concertation: full						0.0781
						(0.271)
Statutory linkage	0.756	0.222	0.166	-0.327	0.0246	0.0862
	(0.518)	(0.236)	(0.228)	(0.366)	(0.234)	(0.235)
Union density	0.498	3.332*	0.597	0.435	-0.260	0.479
	(0.647)	(1.495)	(0.613)	(0.627)	(0.816)	(0.675)
Concertation: partial	0.311	0.320	1.570*	0.243	0.226	0.742
	(0.296)	(0.297)	(0.786)	(0.292)	(0.288)	(0.480)
Concertation: full	0.344	0.217	1.691*	0.224	0.185	0.319
	(0.400)	(0.397)	(0.796)	(0.390)	(0.391)	(0.555)
Constant	-4.577*	-5.547**	-5.108**	-3.861*	-4.083*	-4.380*
	(1.860)	(1.956)	(1.846)	(1.802)	(1.806)	(1.856)
Variance: countries	0.101	0.0982	0.0643	0.0764	0.0841	0.108
	(0.0851)	(0.0909)	(0.0694)	(0.0809)	(0.0796)	(0.0948)
Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,162	1,162	1,162	1,162	1,162	1,162
Log likelihood	-563	-562	-561	-563	-562	-562
AIC	1,164	1,161	1,163	1,163	1,163	1,164

$^{*}\ p < 0.05,\ ^{**}\ p < 0.01,\ ^{***}\ p < 0.001$

Jackknife analysis of interaction effects

Below we present interaction coefficients from models V and VI. We exclude one country at a time to gauge the robustness of the overall effects.

Fig. 7: Coefficients of interaction terms when omitting one country at a time
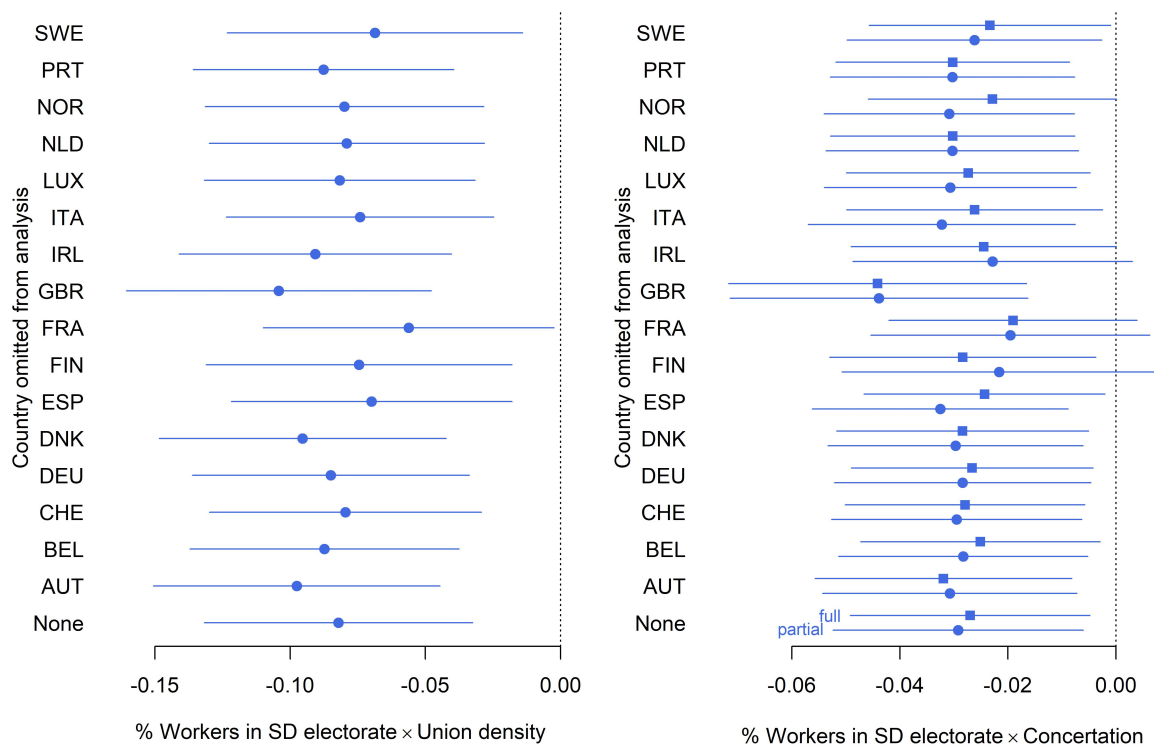
Regression models using narrower measure of economic left–right position

As a robustness check, we provide a version of our regression models that includes a narrower measure of parties' economic left–right positions. Specifically, we exclude the following Manifesto Project categories from the calculation: per415 – Marxist Analysis, per504 – Welfare State Expansion, per505 – Welfare State Limitation. Yet compared with the original models, the substantive conclusions from Tables 10 and 11 remain unchanged.

Table 10: Mixed-effects models using narrower measure of parties' economic left–right position

	I	II	III
% Workers among party voters	0.00913**	0.00379	-0.00214
	(0.00354)	(0.00477)	(0.00627)
Economic left–right position	-0.00239	0.00881	0.0191
	(0.0462)	(0.0476)	(0.0501)
Statutory linkage		0.0162	-0.00132
		(0.174)	(0.182)
Union density		0.389	0.299
		(0.621)	(0.690)
Concertation: partial		0.144	0.122
		(0.213)	(0.218)
Concertation: full		0.0453	0.0474
		(0.305)	(0.317)
Appointments per cabinet		-0.0130	-0.00963
		(0.0116)	(0.0120)
Vote share		-0.00241	-0.00565
		(0.0117)	(0.0124)
Change in vote share		-0.00535	-0.00510
		(0.0118)	(0.0120)
Unemployment rate		-0.0433	-0.0345
		(0.0232)	(0.0277)
Trade openness (ln)		-0.0438	0.124
		(0.310)	(0.350)
Constant	-1.860***	-1.043	-1.114
	(0.229)	(1.582)	(1.633)
Variance: countries	0.423*	0.313	0.376
	(0.181)	(0.172)	(0.202)
Decade FEs	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,593	2,593	2,593
Log likelihood	-1,255	-1,252	-1,249
AIC	2,518	2,529	2,534

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 11: Mixed-effects interaction models using narrower measure of parties' economic left–right position

	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
% Workers among party voters	0.00323	0.0423**	0.0200	-0.00169	-0.00210	-0.00224
	(0.00828)	(0.0143)	(0.0104)	(0.00634)	(0.00631)	(0.00653)
× Statutory linkage	-0.00825					
	(0.00845)					
× Union density		-0.0886***				
		(0.0257)				
× Concertation: partial			-0.0312**			
			(0.0116)			
× Concertation: full			-0.0274*			
			(0.0115)			
Economic left–right position	0.0247	0.0459	0.0240	0.0500	0.0264	-0.267
	(0.0503)	(0.0509)	(0.0534)	(0.0752)	(0.159)	(0.153)
× Statutory linkage				-0.0523		
				(0.0946)		
× Union density					-0.0119	
					(0.247)	
× Concertation: partial						0.467**
						(0.180)
× Concertation: full						0.276
						(0.169)
Statutory linkage	0.352	0.208	0.0606	-0.0181	-0.00290	0.00794
	(0.404)	(0.191)	(0.192)	(0.185)	(0.185)	(0.188)
Union density	0.369	3.430**	0.421	0.244	0.298	-0.0268
	(0.672)	(1.134)	(0.672)	(0.701)	(0.691)	(0.753)
Concertation: partial	0.173	0.199	1.404**	0.122	0.122	0.309
	(0.223)	(0.221)	(0.538)	(0.217)	(0.217)	(0.230)
Concertation: full	0.0938	-0.0464	1.098	0.0563	0.0466	0.107
	(0.318)	(0.323)	(0.566)	(0.317)	(0.317)	(0.321)
Constant	-1.571	-2.499	-1.869	-0.914	-1.130	-0.966
	(1.660)	(1.687)	(1.663)	(1.682)	(1.665)	(1.680)
Variance: countries	0.345	0.403	0.334	0.377	0.375	0.459
	(0.185)	(0.215)	(0.186)	(0.205)	(0.202)	(0.245)
Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,593	2,593	2,593	2,593	2,593	2,593
Log likelihood	-1,248	-1,243	-1,245	-1,249	-1,249	-1,245
AIC	2,535	2,523	2,530	2,535	2,536	2,530

$^{*}\ p < 0.05$, $^{**}\ p < 0.01$, $^{***}\ p < 0.001$

Regression models including party competition and government type controls

As a further robustness check, we provide a version of our regression models that includes the electoral strength of far left and far right parties (SD's strongest competitors for the working-class vote) as well as indicators for single-party and minority cabinets, to capture the influence of party competition and government formation. None of these predictors yield statistically significant coefficients in any of the models (coefficients in interaction model not shown due to space limitations). Also, the key variables of theoretical interest produce substantively identical effects as in the original models.

Table 12: Mixed-effects models including party competition and government type controls

	I	II	III
% Workers among party voters	0.0103**	0.00503	-0.00172
	(0.00371)	(0.00482)	(0.00631)
Economic left–right position	0.0375	0.0849	0.0898
	(0.0531)	(0.0600)	(0.0616)
Statutory linkage		0.0676	0.0595
		(0.184)	(0.195)
Union density		0.514	0.414
		(0.658)	(0.715)
Concertation: partial		0.163	0.139
		(0.226)	(0.232)
Concertation: full		0.101	0.0908
		(0.328)	(0.341)
Appointments per cabinet		-0.0140	-0.0101
		(0.0117)	(0.0120)
Vote share		-0.00630	-0.0106
		(0.0138)	(0.0145)
Change in vote share		-0.00490	-0.00549
		(0.0120)	(0.0122)
Unemployment rate		-0.0516*	-0.0396
		(0.0242)	(0.0283)
Trade openness (ln)		-0.143	-0.0173
		(0.317)	(0.362)
Far left strength		-0.00662	-0.00784
		(0.0170)	(0.0175)
Far right strength		-0.00283	-0.00684
		(0.0127)	(0.0139)
Single-party cabinet		-0.0498	-0.0151
		(0.162)	(0.171)
Minority cabinet		-0.145	-0.123
		(0.163)	(0.167)
Constant	-1.832***	-0.315	-0.190
	(0.227)	(1.715)	(1.804)
Variance: countries	0.400*	0.295	0.351
	(0.171)	(0.163)	(0.193)
Decade FEs	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,585	2,585	2,585
Log likelihood	-1,259	-1,253	-1,251
AIC	2,526	2,541	2,546

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 13: Mixed-effects interaction models including party competition and government type controls

	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
% Workers among party voters	0.00440	0.0380**	0.0205*	-0.000858	-0.00131	-0.000938
	(0.00824)	(0.0141)	(0.0104)	(0.00638)	(0.00630)	(0.00648)
× Statutory linkage	-0.00956					
	(0.00843)					
× Union density		-0.0795**				
		(0.0253)				
× Concertation: partial			-0.0302*			
			(0.0119)			
× Concertation: full			-0.0282*			
			(0.0112)			
Economic left–right position	0.0942	0.0715	0.0779	0.153	0.286	-0.0930
	(0.0615)	(0.0623)	(0.0639)	(0.0806)	(0.201)	(0.177)
× Statutory linkage				-0.142		
				(0.115)		
× Union density					-0.314	
					(0.305)	
× Concertation: partial						0.295
						(0.196)
× Concertation: full						0.143
						(0.198)
Statutory linkage	0.469	0.234	0.124	-0.177	0.00886	0.0376
	(0.409)	(0.203)	(0.210)	(0.275)	(0.201)	(0.207)
Union density	0.497	3.330**	0.584	0.288	0.0229	0.244
	(0.692)	(1.162)	(0.690)	(0.725)	(0.805)	(0.744)
Concertation: partial	0.188	0.163	1.374*	0.157	0.127	0.585
	(0.235)	(0.234)	(0.561)	(0.233)	(0.230)	(0.366)
Concertation: full	0.132	-0.0308	1.188*	0.145	0.0570	0.305
	(0.340)	(0.344)	(0.576)	(0.345)	(0.342)	(0.441)
Constant	-0.605	-1.621	-1.088	-0.00290	-0.197	-0.509
	(1.799)	(1.853)	(1.801)	(1.818)	(1.791)	(1.812)
Variance: countries	0.317	0.344	0.297	0.364	0.340	0.375
	(0.173)	(0.193)	(0.169)	(0.201)	(0.188)	(0.205)
Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,585	2,585	2,585	2,585	2,585	2,585
Log likelihood	-1,250	-1,246	-1,247	-1,250	-1,250	-1,249
AIC	2,547	2,538	2,542	2,546	2,547	2,547

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Regression models excluding France and pre-1996 Italy

As a further robustness check, we provide models that exclude France and pre-1996 Italy, where the strongest party–union linkages were not those maintained by social democrats, but by communist parties. The models in Tables 14 and 15 show that the interaction effects with the worker-share variable weaken or disappear, while the interactions with the economic ideology predictor are now statistically significant – albeit in a different way than hypothesized: In the absence of statutory linkages or strong unionization, economically more right-wing SD parties appoint *more* union-linked ministers.

Table 14: Mixed-effects models excluding France and pre-1996 Italy

	I	II	III
% Workers among party voters	0.00928*	0.00457	-0.000892
	(0.00372)	(0.00482)	(0.00652)
Statutory linkage		0.0330	0.0694
		(0.182)	(0.188)
Union density		0.0622	0.221
		(0.705)	(0.725)
Concertation: partial		0.0621	-0.0249
		(0.252)	(0.260)
Concertation: full		-0.0348	-0.0928
		(0.336)	(0.345)
Appointments per cabinet		-0.0131	-0.00790
		(0.0130)	(0.0134)
Vote share		-0.00648	-0.00763
		(0.0138)	(0.0145)
Change in vote share		-0.00792	-0.00805
		(0.0123)	(0.0126)
Unemployment rate		-0.0464$^+$	-0.0332
		(0.0246)	(0.0282)
Trade openness (ln)		-0.184	-0.105
		(0.347)	(0.366)
Economic left–right position	0.0392	0.0873	0.0906
	(0.0542)	(0.0613)	(0.0623)
Constant	-1.693***	0.118	0.212
	(0.230)	(1.847)	(1.865)
Variance: countries	0.337$^+$	0.296	0.304
	(0.172)	(0.184)	(0.185)
−			
econLR2			
Decade FEs	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,110	2,110	2,110
Log likelihood	-1,126	-1,122	-1,117
AIC	2,259	2,271	2,271

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 15: Mixed-effects interaction models excluding France and pre-1996 Italy

	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
% Workers among party voters	0.00217	0.0226	0.0119	0.0000395	-0.000231	-0.000406
	(0.00883)	(0.0151)	(0.0113)	(0.00656)	(0.00651)	(0.00666)
× Statutory linkage	-0.00450					
	(0.00875)					
× Union density		-0.0473^{+}				
		(0.0274)				
× Concertation: partial			-0.0179			
			(0.0141)			
× Concertation: full			-0.0165			
			(0.0124)			
Economic left–right position	0.0926	0.0760	0.0823	0.186^{*}	0.559^{*}	-0.103
	(0.0623)	(0.0632)	(0.0649)	(0.0823)	(0.242)	(0.251)
× Statutory linkage				-0.206^{+}		
				(0.116)		
× Union density					-0.724^{*}	
					(0.361)	
× Concertation: partial						0.280
						(0.269)
× Concertation: full						0.159
						(0.269)
Statutory linkage	0.266	0.171	0.0970	-0.284	-0.0312	0.0425
	(0.425)	(0.197)	(0.203)	(0.274)	(0.193)	(0.194)
Union density	0.257	2.023	0.247	0.0488	-0.787	0.114
	(0.717)	(1.268)	(0.737)	(0.725)	(0.870)	(0.744)
Concertation: partial	0.00551	0.00511	0.766	0.00571	0.00700	0.400
	(0.266)	(0.261)	(0.705)	(0.263)	(0.258)	(0.458)
Concertation: full	-0.0595	-0.143	0.610	-0.0336	-0.120	0.133
	(0.350)	(0.347)	(0.637)	(0.348)	(0.343)	(0.500)
Constant	-0.0891	-0.699	-0.323	0.771	0.384	0.0634
	(1.946)	(1.936)	(1.964)	(1.882)	(1.842)	(1.871)
Variance: countries	0.297^{+}	0.308	0.305	0.286	0.270^{+}	0.301^{+}
	(0.179)	(0.188)	(0.193)	(0.175)	(0.162)	(0.182)
Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,110	2,110	2,110	2,110	2,110	2,110
Log likelihood	-1,117	-1,116	-1,116	-1,116	-1,115	-1,116
AIC	2,272	2,270	2,273	2,269	2,268	2,273

$^{+}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Regression models including indicators for labor and social affairs portfolios

While our main models focus on indicators at the level of countries or parties, it is likely that portfolio characteristics play a role in the appointment of union-linked ministers. To test this expectation we include further regression models with predictors for labor/employment and social affairs portfolios. The results clearly show that individuals with a union background are more likely to be nominated to these types of portfolio than to others.

Table 16: Mixed-effects models including indicators for labor and social affairs portfolios

	I	II	III
% Workers among party voters	0.0106**	0.00306	-0.00295
	(0.00371)	(0.00482)	(0.00640)
Economic left–right position	0.0374	0.0747	0.0760
	(0.0531)	(0.0600)	(0.0611)
Statutory linkage		0.0838	0.0762
		(0.176)	(0.183)
Union density		0.450	0.411
		(0.629)	(0.686)
Concertation: partial		0.152	0.131
		(0.216)	(0.221)
Concertation: full		0.0740	0.0739
		(0.309)	(0.321)
Appointments per cabinet		-0.0135	-0.00974
		(0.0117)	(0.0121)
Vote share		-0.00184	-0.00399
		(0.0116)	(0.0123)
Change in vote share		-0.00631	-0.00627
		(0.0120)	(0.0121)
Unemployment rate		-0.0600*	-0.0467
		(0.0242)	(0.0281)
Trade openness (ln)		-0.169	-0.0296
		(0.313)	(0.352)
Portfolio: labor/employment		1.016***	1.013***
		(0.174)	(0.174)
Portfolio: social affairs		0.639***	0.635***
		(0.178)	(0.179)
Constant	-1.843***	-0.486	-0.553
	(0.227)	(1.623)	(1.687)
Variance: countries	0.397*	0.276	0.324
	(0.170)	(0.154)	(0.180)
Decade FEs	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,584	2,559	2,559
Log likelihood	-1,258	-1,219	-1,216
AIC	2,523	2,467	2,473

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 17: Mixed-effects interaction models including indicators for labor and social affairs portfolios

	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
% Workers among party voters	0.00387	0.0387**	0.0182	-0.00209	-0.00238	-0.00135
	(0.00839)	(0.0142)	(0.0104)	(0.00648)	(0.00640)	(0.00660)
× Statutory linkage	-0.0104					
	(0.00843)					
× Union density		-0.0833**				
		(0.0255)				
× Concertation: partial			-0.0288*			
			(0.0118)			
× Concertation: full			-0.0270*			
			(0.0113)			
Economic left–right position	0.0824	0.0601	0.0625	0.135	0.297	-0.0527
	(0.0611)	(0.0618)	(0.0633)	(0.0794)	(0.202)	(0.175)
× Statutory linkage				-0.133		
				(0.114)		
Economic left–right position × Union density					-0.356	
					(0.309)	
× Concertation: partial						0.261
						(0.196)
× Concertation: full						0.0614
						(0.195)
Statutory linkage	0.526	0.257	0.139	-0.150	0.0194	0.0289
	(0.407)	(0.191)	(0.194)	(0.268)	(0.189)	(0.192)
Union density	0.474	3.459**	0.578	0.318	-0.0274	0.283
	(0.661)	(1.149)	(0.657)	(0.693)	(0.777)	(0.711)
Concertation: partial	0.199	0.184	1.292*	0.133	0.113	0.526
	(0.227)	(0.224)	(0.542)	(0.221)	(0.219)	(0.357)
Concertation: full	0.140	-0.00923	1.104*	0.0995	0.0293	0.146
	(0.323)	(0.325)	(0.559)	(0.322)	(0.323)	(0.424)
Portfolio: labor/employment	1.018***	1.011***	1.012***	1.013***	1.018***	1.005***
	(0.174)	(0.175)	(0.175)	(0.175)	(0.175)	(0.175)
Portfolio: social affairs	0.635***	0.659***	0.631***	0.639***	0.635***	0.642***
	(0.179)	(0.179)	(0.178)	(0.179)	(0.179)	(0.179)
Constant	-1.088	-1.971	-1.432	-0.300	-0.626	-0.773
	(1.688)	(1.733)	(1.665)	(1.711)	(1.667)	(1.690)
Variance: countries	0.292	0.327	0.269	0.332	0.309	0.346
	(0.160)	(0.185)	(0.154)	(0.183)	(0.172)	(0.189)
Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,559	2,559	2,559	2,559	2,559	2,559
Log likelihood	-1,216	-1,211	-1,213	-1,216	-1,216	-1,214
AIC	2,473	2,464	2,470	2,473	2,473	2,473

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Regression models including historical statutory linkages variable

We present models including historical statutory linkages below. The key argument here is that statutory linkages are expressions of long-standing organizational ties between parties and unions. We therefore use the existence of statutory links at the beginning of our observational period (1960) as the criterion to code the statutory linkages variable. Changes over time are not captured. The criteria for coding the presence of statutory linkages (collective membership or statutory union representation in the party executive) remain the same. Compared to our main models in the text, there are only slight changes in the coefficients. For example, the statutory linkage effect in model IV in Table 19 now has $p < 0.1$, and the interaction term in the same model has $p = 0.107$. Overall though, the results are very similar to the main models.

Table 18: Mixed-effects models including historical statutory linkages variable

	I	II	III
% Workers among party voters	0.0106**	0.00473	-0.00257
	(0.00371)	(0.00469)	(0.00632)
Economic left–right position	0.0374	0.0783	0.0803
	(0.0531)	(0.0578)	(0.0590)
Statutory linkage (historical)		0.213	0.336
		(0.341)	(0.376)
Union density		0.330	0.175
		(0.662)	(0.733)
Concertation: partial		0.129	0.111
		(0.213)	(0.219)
Concertation: full		0.0539	0.0510
		(0.309)	(0.320)
Appointments per cabinet		-0.0165	-0.0127
		(0.0117)	(0.0120)
Vote share		-0.00401	-0.00740
		(0.0115)	(0.0122)
Change in vote share		-0.00646	-0.00661
		(0.0117)	(0.0119)
Unemployment rate		-0.0517*	-0.0392
		(0.0238)	(0.0278)
Trade openness (ln)		-0.131	0.0352
		(0.311)	(0.348)
Constant	-1.843***	-0.441	-0.490
	(0.227)	(1.603)	(1.655)
Variance: countries	0.397*	0.289	0.346
	(0.170)	(0.159)	(0.185)
Decade FEs	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,584	2,584	2,584
Log likelihood	-1,258	-1,253	-1,250
AIC	2,523	2,532	2,536

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 19: Mixed-effects interaction models including historical statutory linkages variable

	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
% Workers among party voters	0.00406	0.0341*	0.0178	-0.00120	-0.00218	-0.00184
	(0.00751)	(0.0137)	(0.0104)	(0.00640)	(0.00632)	(0.00649)
× Statutory linkage	-0.0119					
	(0.00737)					
× Union density		-0.0724**				
		(0.0240)				
× Concertation: partial			-0.0289*			
			(0.0118)			
× Concertation: full			-0.0251*			
			(0.0109)			
Economic left–right position	0.0842	0.0575	0.0600	0.166*	0.260	-0.116
	(0.0588)	(0.0597)	(0.0602)	(0.0807)	(0.195)	(0.173)
× Statutory linkage				-0.163		
				(0.104)		
× Union density					-0.283	
					(0.293)	
× Concertation: partial						0.311
						(0.193)
× Concertation: full						0.160
						(0.189)
Statutory linkage	0.848	0.378	0.264	0.0132	0.308	0.336
	(0.482)	(0.373)	(0.357)	(0.423)	(0.371)	(0.387)
Union density	0.133	2.821*	0.386	0.303	-0.152	0.0287
	(0.713)	(1.142)	(0.722)	(0.732)	(0.800)	(0.760)
Concertation: partial	0.171	0.141	1.279*	0.0985	0.100	0.570
	(0.221)	(0.222)	(0.540)	(0.219)	(0.218)	(0.354)
Concertation: full	0.0850	-0.0268	0.991	0.0138	0.0144	0.273
	(0.318)	(0.322)	(0.540)	(0.321)	(0.321)	(0.418)
Constant	-1.232	-1.910	-1.371	-0.520	-0.514	-0.728
	(1.659)	(1.696)	(1.676)	(1.654)	(1.642)	(1.664)
Variance: countries	0.313	0.333	0.296	0.330	0.332	0.369
	(0.164)	(0.181)	(0.167)	(0.180)	(0.178)	(0.195)
Decade FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,584	2,584	2,584	2,584	2,584	2,584
Log likelihood	-1,249	-1,245	-1,247	-1,249	-1,250	-1,248
AIC	2,535	2,529	2,533	2,536	2,537	2,537

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$