Spring 2019

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SIT International Affairs and Multilateral Diplomacy
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Major: Political Science/Philosophy

Abstract:

This paper shall analyze Swiss attitudes as they relate to migration in order to explain why recent controversial popular initiatives aimed against foreigners have been successful. Swiss attitudes will be analyzed as they relate to perceptions of economic and cultural threat. More specifically, Swiss attitudes will be related to specific fears of labor market competition, social spending, over-foreignization, and integration with the EU. Afterwards, these attitudes will be used to explain the success of controversial popular initiatives as a means to implement policy aimed against foreigners.

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Introduction:

The Problem & Research Question:

For a country that hosts many of the world's largest and most influential international organizations such as the UN and WTO, it comes as a surprise that Switzerland has had a rather tumultuous history of migration. For over 50 years, migration has been an ever-present topic Switzerland's public discourse. More recently, however, the passing of popular initiatives such as the 2009 ban on minarets and the 2014 initiative 'Against Mass Immigration' have highlighted a considerable shift in public opinion towards conservative, anti-immigration attitudes. The aim of this paper is to identify the underlying factors at the root of this shift in opinion and attempt to illustrate how Swiss attitudes have impacted policy in recent years.

This is a particularly important issue to discuss as the Swiss migration context is rather unique. According to Schindall, in 2008 the population of foreigners in Switzerland was over 1.6 million (21.4% of the total population) with 62.6% of foreigners from EU/EFTA states and the remaining 38.4% coming from non-EU 'third countries' (2009). In proportion to other developed nations, these statistics are particularly high. Switzerland's unique relationship with the EU also adds importance to this issue; the country remains outside of the Union and instead chooses to engage in a series of comprehensive bilateral agreements (FDFA 2019). The agreements that are of the most relevance to this topic include the provision of the first set of Bilateral Agreements in 1999 called the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons, or AFMP, which according to the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (2019) grants citizens of the contracting parties the right to settle and seek employment throughout both Switzerland and the EU. In 2004, Switzerland also became a member of the Schengen Area, which further facilitated the free movement of persons with the EU by reducing border checks. Switzerland's high wages and

relatively low unemployment make it particularly alluring to EU citizens due to the nature of these arrangements with the EU. Furthermore, Switzerland's system of direct democracy and popular initiatives allows public opinion to create legally-binding political change. This allows the impact of public opinion to be directly analyzed against subsequent policy changes. Understanding Switzerland's shift from multilateralism and free movement towards a more skeptical view of migration will be the central topic of this paper. The research question is as follows: What are Swiss attitudes towards migration, and how has this impacted Switzerland's migration policy in the past 10 years?

Focus of the Study, Theoretical Framework, and Literature Review:

The focus of this study will be on public opinion and migration policy from the past 10 years. Within this timeframe some of the most controversial popular initiatives regarding migration have taken place and it is thus important to assess how changes in attitude are shaping current and future policy. A section of the analysis will be dedicated to the broader history of Swiss immigration policy to examine this issue's historical context as well as to draw parallels to modern movements and attitudes.

A brief overview of the geography and demography of public opinion will also be provided to establish further context. The majority of this information is gathered using data surrounding the 2014 Initiative Against Mass Immigration due to the sheer volume of information available because of the controversy of the initiative and subsequent academic interest on the issue.

The bulk of this study's analysis will break down public opinions based on the perception of economic threats and cultural threats that are typically associated with migration. Piguet (2004) argues that Swiss migration policy has historically been caught between a nexus of

economic demands, popular xenophobia, and more recently, international constraints. Furthermore, Diehl, Hinz, and Ausupurg (2018) point to research that explains xenophobia directed towards immigrants as products of economic and cultural threats. The choice of grouping public opinion topics based on economic threat and cultural threat are reflective of these theoretical arguments, with Piguet's conceptions of popular xenophobia and international constraints being synonymous with cultural threats in this context. Economic threats include the topics of labor market competition (LMC) and social spending. Cultural threats include Swiss attitudes on over-foreignization as well as international integration. Lastly, the impact of Swiss perceptions on these topics will be related to recent popular initiatives and their outcomes to determine how public opinion has influenced policy. The initiatives that will be analyzed are the 2009 Ban on Minarets, the 2010 Expulsion of Criminal Foreigners, and the 2014 Initiative Against Mass Immigration.

Relevant publications on this issue include Piguet (2006) and Perkowska (2015) and their historical overviews of Swiss migration policy. Piguet frames the history of Swiss migration policy in terms of different periods of influence with economic needs, popular xenophobia, or international constraints being the dominating factor in driving migration policy throughout Switzerland's recent history (2006). Helbling and Kriesi (2014) and Stribjis and Polavieja (2018) provide information related to perceptions of economic threat in the Swiss migration context. As well as providing background on previous research on economic threat perception as it relates to migration, they test the accuracy of subsequent theoretical models in the Swiss context. Spies and Schmidt-Catran (2016) and Diehl, Hinz, and Auspurg (2018) further contribute to this idea and focus rather on the theoretical models of cultural threat perception as it relates to migration.

Research Methodology:

The type of data gathered for this research includes surveys, statistics, interviews, news articles, government publications, and academic journals. The surveys and statistical data are mainly comprised of public opinion polls and voting information. This type of information is particularly helpful because of the unbiased nature and the straightforward outlining of citizens' political beliefs and voting habits. Four interviews were conducted as part of the research process to provide first-hand insight to the issue. One interview was with an associate professor at the University of Geneva, one with a senior researcher at the University of Neuchâtel, one with the Swiss Mission to the EU, and the last with the State Secretariat for Migration. Several academic journals will be referenced to supplement analysis on how different economic and socio-political factors are related to Swiss attitudes on migration.

The main tool used to gather data was the usage of web tools like Google Scholar and university-sponsored search engines. The data collected early in the research process remained broad and apolitical so as to establish a clear framework of the issue as a whole. As important elements became more prominent in the context of the greater issue, the research became much more acute and focused on the factors outlined in the analysis section.

Interviewees were selected on the basis of their academic or professional knowledge regarding the subject of Swiss migration. Like most of the collected research, potential interviewees were discovered using online resources. The primary method of contact was email. Many organizations and experts that were contacted failed to respond, but despite this, four extremely relevant and insightful interviews were secured.

An ethical issue arose with two of the interviewees relating to the occupation of the subjects. Two of the interviewees are active civil servants of the Swiss government and mentioned that they cannot be directly cited within academic work. Both interviewees, however,

have direct involvement in the legal framework of Swiss migration policy and were able to

provide a tremendous amount of insight and background information as well as help to identify

certain factors to examine through future research. To work around this limitation, the insight of

these interviewees was used to synthesize the context outlined in the introduction of this paper

and to identify the most pertinent factors in the analysis section without the usage of direct

citations or references to their names.

Analysis:

History of Swiss Migration Policy

Migration in Switzerland has been a hotly debated topic for over 50 years. Piguet states

that despite not dealing with the same problems of other European countries such as high rates of

migrant unemployment and social unrest, the large coalition structure of the Swiss government

has allowed for a relative continuity in policy without majorities taking power and creating

drastic changes (Piguet 2006). This is extremely beneficial for analytical purposes as this allows

us to examine the social and economic factors behind migrant policy in the relative absence of

any dominating political parties or ideologies. Piguet dissects the history of Swiss migration

policy into 5 periods that, at different conjunctures, represent a recurring battle between

economic interests, popular xenophobia, and international agreements.

The first relevant section of Swiss migrant policy lies within the post WWII period, when

Switzerland's industry was untouched by the war and the economic demand of Europe was high

(Piguet 2006). This positioned Switzerland at an incredibly advantageous position where it could

expand its economy by accepting unemployed immigrants to meet the demands of the rest of

Europe. Switzerland subsequently developed a policy of seasonal rotation for foreign workers

where migrants were only allowed to work for a certain portion of the year before having to

leave. Most immigration from this period was from Italy, and the Swiss government reached an agreement in 1948 stating that Italians cannot qualify for a full-time residence permit until they have worked for 10 years in Switzerland (Piguet 2006). Piguet argues that this first period was entirely dominated by the needs of the economy. This is evidenced by the fact that before WWII, Swiss immigration had been relatively low and therefore there would have been no cause for high levels of xenophobia.

Perkowska (2015) argues that the high influx of Italian workers in the post-war period led to the beginning of fears of over-foreignization that categorizes the next period of Swiss immigration and continues in varying degrees to the modern-day. In response to Swiss natives' concern of migration in the 1960s, the government attempted to implement policies that aimed through various economic measures at limiting the total number of foreigners in the population (Piguet 2006). These measures proved ineffective and served only to place restrictions on business. This greatly increased the perception of government ineptitude which led to a further rise in anti-immigration sentiment.

Beginning in the late 60s and continuing throughout the 70s, popular initiatives became a tool for anti-immigration groups to influence policy and discourse (Perkowska 2015). An example worth mentioning is the *Schwarzenbach* initiative. This initiative attempted to limit foreign population at no more than 10% per canton and established that no Swiss citizen can be fired in favor of a foreign worker. The initiative narrowly failed but creates a remarkably similar parallel to the 2014 initiative Against Mass Immigration in its ambitious goal of placing a total cap on immigration. To appease anti-immigrant sentiment following the initiative, the federal government attempted to impose migration quotas but with limited success due to cantonal sovereignty and agreements with Italy.

The third period of migration represents a unique harmony between economic and xenophobic influences. The oil crisis of the 1970s hit Switzerland particularly hard, but due to the temporary permits issued to its foreign workers, Switzerland was able to avoid native job loss by refusing to renew work permits of migrants (Piguet 2006). Piguet states that "Through the non-renewal of the permits of unemployed foreigners, the administration gave the economy the opportunity to reduce its workforce without increasing domestic unemployment. Considering a total job loss of 340,000 during the period, 228,000 (67 percent) concerned foreign workers" (2006). As previously mentioned, the 1970s were filled with several more popular initiatives which attempted to place restrictions on foreigners to little success success (Perkowska 2015). This illustrates that even with the overall reduction of the foreign population due to economic crisis, fear of over-foreignization was still high.

The fourth period of migration policy represents a decrease in xenophobia and a return to economic influences. With a pro-immigrant referendum aimed at increasing migrant integration and solidarity having been utterly defeated and the 1970s having seen an overall reduction in foreign population, both sides of the migration debate had been temporarily subdued, leaving room for the economy to determine policy (Piguet 2006). The economic recovery of the 1980s marked a return to Switzerland's old migration policies of the first period - cheap salaries and weak permits. Perkowska (2015) argues that the diversification of immigration countries and the development of international asylum and anti-racism law foreshadow the complications that arise in the next period of Swiss migration.

In the fifth and final period Piguet argues that the introduction of new international constraints emerges as a third policy-influencing factor that greatly complicated Switzerland's ability to fully control its immigration policy. Piguet points out several specific constraints that

had arisen during this period. The European Convention on Human Rights developed a fourth protocol that allowed legal immigrants to choose their place of residence within their host country (Piguet 2006). This placed pressure on Switzerland, as its seasonal worker policy made it unable to sign. The UN International Convention on the Elimination of Racism and All Forms of Discrimination was ratified by Switzerland and placed further pressure on the selective nature of Switzerland's migration system. Finally, international norms on asylum pressured Switzerland to accept asylum-seeking migrants despite their poor economic standing (Piguet 2006). The proliferation of asylum-seekers and international law gave anti-immigrant movements a new form of ammunition.

In 1999, Switzerland adopted the first set of bilateral agreements with the EU, drastically changing the dynamic of Swiss migration (FDFA 2019). Switzerland now has access to the highly-skilled EU labor market and opened its doors to a new breed of foreign workers. 'Third country nationals', as they are referred to, are still subject to intense screening and are typically only granted work permits if highly qualified (SwissInfo). Furthermore, they must wait 5-10 years before qualifying for permanent residency.

This concludes the extent of Piguets 5-fold history of Switzerland's migration policy. Since the publishing of his 2006 paper, drastic changes have taken place in the form of popular initiatives. After exploring the motivating factors behind Switzerland's shifting attitudes in migration and how they have influenced recent policy, it will be argued that a sixth period of migration policy is taking place that is characterized by a xenophobic backlash to Switzerland's increased acceptance of foreigners due to its integration with the EU. To formulate the characteristics of this new period and to determine the main features of Switzerland's recent shift

in public opinion, factors of public opinion will be examined through the scope of economic and cultural threat.

Geography/Demography of Public Opinion:

Examining the geography and demography of Swiss public opinion is essential to establish further context and to understand the types of voters that have lent their support to recent anti-migration initiatives. The data under examination surrounds the 2014 referendum Against Mass Immigration due to its recency, availability of research, and relevance to the overarching topic of migration attitudes.

Sciarni, Lanz, and Nai (2015) look at public attitudes after the referendum alongside the controversy surrounding its incompatibility with Switzerland's bilateral agreements with the EU. Utilizing a VOX survey, they found that right-wing voters and people who identify as untrusting of the government were more likely to prioritize importance to the popular initiative rather than maintaining bilateral relations with the EU. This illustrates that a growing consensus amongst right-wing voters in Switzerland are willing to risk the entirety of Swiss-EU agreements (due to a so-called 'guillotine clause') in order to solve the issue of migration. Conversely, voters who favored the bilateral agreements were typically educated, left-wing, and French speaking. A caveat in their findings appears in that older people were more likely to prioritize the bilateral agreements over the popular initiative (and presumably vote 'no' on the referendum). Conservative, right-wing views are often identified with an older age group, but in the context of this issue Sciarni, Lanz, and Nai (2015) argue that this disparity might be due to older voters having more knowledge of the importance of the bilateral agreements due to them having seen them come to fruition over the past twenty years.

Information from the Federal Statistics Office (2014) shows that Swiss-Germans and Swiss-Italians were more inclined to vote 'yes' on the 2014 referendum. German urban centers are the only municipal level where 'yes' votes were under 50%, and in Swiss-Italy, all municipal levels voted 'yes' at a rate of 66% or higher (Federal Statistics Office 2014), indicating that amongst these groups anti-immigration sentiment is the highest. Rural communities also exhibited higher levels of 'yes' votes. The following image provided by the Federal Statistics Office shows percentage of 'yes' votes by canton.
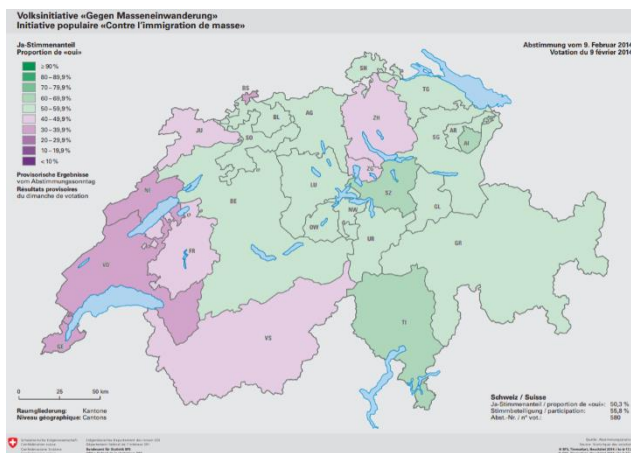
The canton of Ticino also plays an important role in analyzing the demography and geography of this issue. Mazzoleni and Pilotti (2015) state that Ticino, as the only canton where the primary language is Italian, is politically and geographically distinct from the rest of Switzerland. They are cut off from the rest of the country by mountains, have historical and economic ties to the Lombardy region, and in the past have experienced lower wages than the rest of Switzerland. The Lega dei Ticinesi is a right-wing populist party that has played a powerful role in the region, and their popularity goes to show the extent of anti-immigrant and isolationist attitudes in the region. This is further reflected in that the canton of Ticino, as seen above, has one of the highest percentages of 'yes' votes in the entire country. Almost one third of post-vote surveys in Ticino emphasize a need to regulate immigration that is "out of control"

while an additional 21.3% consider too many frontier workers being a threat to unemployment

(Mazzoleni & Pilotti 2015).

The takeaway from this information is that the 2014 referendum was a classic battle

between the left and right, and ultimately, the right came out on top. This is concurrent with

right-wing populist movements that are present around Europe and abroad, such as in nearby

Italy, or even in the United States where Donald Trump portrays immigration as a threat to

national security. Furthermore, this data shows that Swiss-Germans and Swiss-Italians had an

extremely influential role in determining the outcome of the referendum. This information is

critical to the analysis of this paper as it illustrates where and from whom anti-immigrant

sentiment is concentrated the highest in Switzerland.

Determinants of Anti-Immigration Attitudes:

Economic Threat: Labor Market Competition

Many studies suggest that one of the main vehicles of economic threat perception is

through labor market competition (Helbling and Kriesi 2014). Helbling and Kriesi's labor market

competition model suggests that highly-skilled natives prefer low-skilled migrants and that low-

skilled natives prefer high-skilled migrants due to fears of economic competition. This is based

on the assumption that similarly skilled migrants are perceived by natives as a threat to

employment, wage levels, and housing prices. Pecoraro and Ruedin (2019) corroborate this idea

by testing the notion that "immigrants threaten the economic position of natives by potentially

undercutting wages or 'taking away' the jobs of natives." In their study on the effect of

workplace contact with migrants, they found that a high presence of migrants in one's profession

does increase negative attitudes. This effect is amplified even further in times of high

unemployment and economic uncertainty. Tausch and Hewstone (2010) have found that

intergroup contact can actually decrease negative attitudes towards migrants, but Pecoraro and Ruedin (2019) prove that this notion is context-dependent and in the workplace, increased contact actually leads to an increase in prejudiced attitudes.

Helbling and Kriesi (2014) preface their exploration of whether the labor market competition model holds true in Switzerland by pointing out that "various studies have shown that not only governments but also ordinary people prefer high- over low-skilled immigrants, and they do this irrespective of their skill levels, education, income, ethnocentrism, or their cultural and economic environment". This predicts that there may be a unanimous dislike for low-skilled migrants over high-skilled migrants regardless of native skill-level. An interview with Didier Ruedin of the University of Neuchatel further supplements this idea, with Mr. Ruedin having pointed out that much of the SVP's anti-immigrant rhetoric has been aimed at low-skilled TCN migrants, though not exclusively (Ruedin, personal contact, 2019). This group is culturally the most distant and due to their distant countries of origin and due to their lower economic status, they are assumed to place the heaviest burden on the economy whilst contributing the least. Helbling and Kriesi (2014) also counteract the idea that education leads to openness towards immigrants by pointing out that studies have shown that this effect is greater attributed to economic threat, implying that education is simply a means to achieve a higher economic skill-level and therefore a greater sense of job security.

Helbling and Kriesi's findings disprove the labor market competition model in the context of Switzerland by showing that while low-skill natives do have a greater preference for high-skilled migrants, high-skilled native preferences are indistinguishable from their low-skilled counterparts (2014). This illustrates a unanimous dislike for low-skilled natives that defies the labor market competition model. Potential explanations for this phenomenon include the

possibility that high-skilled natives feel more protected by their jobs. Another explanation is that the demonization of low-skilled migrants, specifically those from Balkan and Muslim countries, by right-wing parties such as the SVP has left a considerable impression on Swiss attitudes.

One of the most astonishing results of this paper's research is that many migrants living in Switzerland voted very similarly to Swiss natives on the 2014 initiative. This is a direct contrast to the standard expectations of migrant voter behavior and clearly points to a unique phenomenon in the Swiss context that influenced the outcome of the initiative. Strijbis and Polavieja (2018) have conducted research on this matter and theorized that this phenomenon is likely created by the influence of ethnic hierarchies and again due to labor market competition amongst migrants.

Stribjis and Polavieja (2018) used a 2015 MOSAiCH survey as well as a paper drop-off survey to gather data on attitudes held by Swiss natives and Swiss migrants. Their questions included information on migration background (up to three generations) and actual/hypothetical vote choice for the 2014 referendum. Their findings show that 'yes' votes did not drastically change the more recently that immigration had taken place, indicating that generational bias did not play a role in the minds of many migrants when casting their vote in 2014. They also found that "respondents with higher levels of specific human capital have a lower propensity to vote yes while those living in areas with a high share of cross–border commuters and those reporting a Secondo/a identity have a higher propensity to vote yes" (Stribjis & Polavieja 2018). This implies that migrants who are low-skilled laborers and/or live in areas where cross-border workers are subjected to a higher degree of labor competition were more inclined to vote yes in 2014.

The most significant information to be taken away from this is that the migrant choice to vote 'yes' on the 2014 referendum can be viewed as an act of boundary-making between themselves and other migrants. Stribjis and Polavieja (2018) speak on the Swiss notion of 'secondo' status, which constitutes a migrant who is viewed as higher on the Swiss ethnic hierarchy than others. They also cite sources stating that in Switzerland, Eastern Europeans, Muslims, and black migrants experience higher levels of hostility than any other ethnic group. From this information it can be concluded that migrant 'yes' votes in 2014 were a symbolic action aimed at separating themselves from migrants of a perceived lower status. Furthermore, many migrants (particularly third-state migrants) are typically employed in low-skilled jobs and live in cross-border regions to a higher degree than Swiss natives. Voting to impose quotas on future immigrants would thereby serve as a tool to limit labor market competition and decrease the likelihood of future competition for current migrants.

Economic Threat: Social Spending

Alongside perceptions of labor market competition, Helbling and Kriesi (2014) also test the accuracy of economic threat stemming from the welfare state in the context of Swiss migration. Their model posits that high-skilled, high-earning natives are opposed to low-skilled migrants due to the risk of an increase in taxes due to welfare expenditure. Conversely, low-skilled natives are posited to be more supportive to high-skilled migrants due to a potential increase in welfare funding.

Helbling and Kriesi (2014) preface their findings by stating that "for Europe, in general (from all countries and social categories), migrants are considered least deserving when compared with other vulnerable groups. The sentiment of migrant deservingness does not seem to depend on the welfare state model of a given country: in generous welfare states, such

sentiments are not stronger than in other states". The basis of Helbling and Kriesi's definition of the welfare state model is based on the idea that low-skilled migrants utilize welfare services the most while contributing to them the least. The 'deservingness' model also predicts that negative attitudes and opposition to migrant welfare can be correlated to the perception of laziness. Quadango (1994) supports this by positively correlating racial stereotypes with opposition to welfare.

Helbling and Kriesi (2014) find that "while in high-tax regions income does not play a role, it has an effect in low tax cantons: the higher the level of income, the stronger the respondents' opposition to low-skilled immigrants (and the higher the preference of high-skilled immigrants as the main income effect shows)". The implication is that those who are actively concerned about high taxation are more likely to feel threatened by the perceived effect of immigrants on the welfare system. To further confirm this notion, the study finds that in low-tax cantons, attitudes towards immigrants increase positively with immigrant skill level. Therefore, the welfare and deservingness models are proven, but only among wealthy and high-skilled natives who live in low-tax cantons.

Spies and Schmidt-Catran provide further insight to this topic by pointing to the US welfare model (2016). The US model suggests that heterogeneity of the population is correlated to a decrease in support for welfare and wealth redistribution due to members of a society being generally unwilling to financially contribute to an out-group. Despite this, Spies and Schmidt-Catran point out that migration has the potential to have both a positive and negative effect on the welfare system. Young migrants can lead to a net positive in welfare contribution, especially with an aging population. Alexandre Vautravers (Vautravers, personal contact 2019) points out, however, that this can go in the opposite direction as well. Positive effects of young migration on

the welfare system can be easily offset by migrant unemployment, which is statistically proven to be higher (Schindall 2009). Furthermore, migrant unemployment, disproportionate use of welfare, and family size can create a negative impact on the welfare system.

The OECD has come to mixed conclusions regarding the overall fiscal impact of migration (Spies and Schmidt-Catran 2016). Spies and Schmidt-Catran point out that despite this, both Americans and Western-Europeans view ethnically dissimilar migrants with the least amount of concern. Furthermore, Western-European welfare states were formed during times of ethnic homogeneity, so recent increases in migration threatens the welfare system by making the presence of out-groups more salient. Overall, Spies and Schmidt-Catran's study found little correlation between size of immigrant groups and support for welfare but did prove a positive correlation between perceived cultural and economic threat. A surprising outcome is that the Swiss perceive cultural threats not only from TCNs but also from culturally-similar Western-Europeans such as French and Germans, and idea that will be further explored as it relates to fears of over-foreignization and Swiss national identity.

Cultural Threat: *Uberfremdung* and Swiss Identity

Riano and Wastl-Walter speak on the Swiss notion of *uberfremdung*, the idea that an "excess number of foreigners can threaten Swiss identity" (2006). *Uberfremdung* translates to 'over-foreignization' and has persisted throughout Switzerland's migration discourse for well over 50 years (Piguet 2006). This notion, combined with the fact that Switzerland has a relatively low naturalization rate compared to the rest of Europe (Riano and Wastl-Walter 2006), has created a distinct cultural identity within the country which enables its citizens to sharply distinguish the difference between in- and out-groups. Riano and Wastl-Walter describe this as a

segregated relationship between nationals and foreigners that stems from the 'two-circle' policy from the period of EU-integration. The 'two-circle' policy (originally the 'three-circle' policy but simplified due to international criticisms as being discriminatory) creates a hierarchy of migrant desirability between EU-citizens and TCNs. This essentially formed the foundation of the free movement of persons policy that was established the first round of Bilateral Agreements. Riano and Wastl-Walter (2006) argue that despite Switzerland's greater need for low-skilled labor, these agreements created a norm where European migrants are viewed with greater favorability than low-skilled TCNs, an idea reinforced both by right-wing rhetoric and the notion that cultural distance contributes to a greater higher degree of perceived cultural threat (Diehl, Hinz, and Auspurg 2018).

Although discourse stemming from the 'two-circle' policy has certainly contributed to negative perceptions of TCNs, the phenomenon of cultural distance has recently spread to Switzerland's EU migrants as well. As Carrera, Guild, and Eisele (2015) point out, by including EU nationals as migrants in the 2014 referendum, Switzerland has effectively labeled them as foreigners. Furthermore, Didier Ruedin states that the SVP has not spared European immigrants from their rhetoric, pointing out that cultural threat can stem from cultural closeness as well (Ruedin, personal communication, 2019). He explains that similarities in language invoke something of an 'identity crisis' where the presence of French and German-speaking foreigners call into question the cohesiveness of Swiss identity.

The SVP has played a considerable role in utilizing cultural threat as a tool to invoke negative attitudes towards immigrants by emphasizing fears related to *uberfremdung*. This has proven quite controversial at times with the use of various campaign posters surrounding popular initiatives such as the 2009 ban on minarets and the 2010 expulsion of criminal foreigners

(CNN). In 2009, the SVP published a poster depicting a veiled woman standing in front of

minarets depicted in the shape of missiles, clearly invoking fears of islamophobia.

Again in 2010, the SVP used an image of a white sheep standing on a Swiss flag kicking out a

black sheep next to the phrase "yes to the removal of criminal foreigners" (Quito 2016).

Cultural Threat: International Integration vs. Swiss Sovereignty

To understand how the topic of migration attitudes relates to Switzerland's integration

with the EU it is imperative to examine how the 2014 initiative Against Mass Immigration

reflects a greater struggle between the sovereignty and self-determination of Switzerland and the

continuation of its bilateral agreements. The quotas outlined in the initiative do not exclude EU

nationals, creating a direct conflict with the 1999 Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons

(Carrera, Guild, & Eisele 2015). Carrera, Guild, and Eisele clarify that "Current rights include quota-free circulation for EU nationals (right of entry and short stay in Switzerland) with no conditions beyond proper identification (passport or ID). They also cover the right to work or be self-employed and reside in Switzerland for that purpose, as well as residence on the basis of self-sufficiency". The gravity of Switzerland's choice to abandon these provisions is extremely important when considering the 'guillotine mechanism' which threatens to terminate all other bilateral agreements with the EU if even one is in violation.

The legally-binding nature of Switzerland's popular initiatives means that 'yes' voters were prepared to take this enormous risk, showing an increasing lack of trust, confidence, and commitment to Switzerland's relationship with the EU. This is an extremely significant development in the context of migration as this represents a mass rejection of Switzerland's international commitments and a labelling of non-Swiss Europeans living within the country as members of an 'out-group'. Carrera, Guild and Eisele (2015) further this notion by pointing out that by trying to impose quotas on all migrants, "Swiss authorities are not only challenging the most symbolic foundations of the EU, they are also categorizing EU nationals as foreigners in Switzerland by subjecting them to new immigration rules". The choice of Switzerland to risk its relations with the EU reveals that that the extent of migrant distrust is so large, or at least was so at the time of the 2014 referendum, that the economic and cultural threats such as labor market competition and fears of *uberfremdung* associated with low-skilled TCNs had extended to Switzerland's culturally-similar and high-skilled EU neighbors.

There are various explanations as to why Swiss attitudes are shifting towards Swiss sovereignty over EU integration. Dr. Vautravers of UNIGE Global Studies points out that the AFMP and Schengen agreements were made during a time when the EU was considerably

younger and much smaller (Vautravers, personal communication 2019). Switzerland's

motivations for engaging in bilateral agreements with the EU at that time can presumably be

explained by its desire to increase trade and cooperation between its large and powerful

neighbors such as France, Germany, and Italy. The 2004-2013 expansion of the EU into Eastern

Europe created many more of these opportunities but also greatly increased the burden of

migration and foreign job-seekers. Dr. Vautravers argued that this created much movement

within the EU and inevitably has stirred controversy, especially considering that Eastern

Europeans are among the group of immigrants that experience the highest degree of hostility in

Switzerland (Stribjis and Polavieja 2018).

The anti-EU sentiment reflected by the 2014 referendum against immigration is not

necessarily unique to Switzerland and is reflective of a growth of right-wing populism

throughout Europe. In Hayyeh, Murray, and Fekete's analysis of the 2014 referendum, they

quote British member of European Parliament Nigel Farage who praises the "Swiss people [that]

have taken advantage of their position outside the European Union to set their own immigration

rules in their own national interest" (2014). Further support for the 2014 referendum has been

vocalized by conservative politicians such as Marine Le Pen (France), Heinz-Christian Strache

(Austria), and Mazyar Keshvari (Norway). Hayyeh, Murray, and Fekete (2014) argue that the

targeting of EU-nationals represents a translation of fears of social dumping, preservation of

jobs, and affordable housing that are typically associated with low-skilled TCNs. They cite

further rhetoric of the SVP as associating a decline in living standards and wages to the presence

of immigrants of all types.

The most significant information to be taken away from this topic is that the success of

the 2014 initiative is a clear sign that the Swiss are questioning their relationship with the EU

due to cultural threat and a fear of becoming overly-entangled in the EU political framework, especially as it relates to Switzerland's ability to influence its migration policy. This is reflective of a larger fragmentation within the EU that can be seen in the examples of Brexit and similar hypothetical movements such as 'Frexit' in France. Migration and the role of the AFMP are subjects that are viewed with increasing negativity as evidenced by Switzerland's risk of terminating all other bilateral agreements in passing the 2014 referendum. The factors that influence this shift from EU integration to Swiss sovereignty include the perception of EU citizens as foreigners due to cultural and economic threat and the recent expansion of the EU.

Policy Implications:

2009 Ban on Minarets and 2010 Expulsion of Foreign Criminals:

Following several failed cantonal initiatives, the SVP successfully launched a popular initiative in 2009 to ban the construction of minarets, a type of tower typically built near or as a part of mosques (Stephens 2009). The referendum received the necessary double-majority 'yes' vote to pass. Oskar Freysinger of the SVP claims that the vote was successful because "society wants to put a safeguard on the political-legal wing of Islam, for which there is no separation between state and religion" (Stephens 2009). Justice Minister Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf also claimed that the outcome reflected fears of Islamic fundamentalism. It is possible that the SVP had stirred fears by claiming that, since they have no mention in the Koran, minarets are not religious symbols and instead are "signs or watchtowers of the political and religious claim to power of Islam" (Muller 2009). As mentioned previously, the SVP made use of controversial posters depicting a veiled woman standing in front of missile-shaped minarets. This was an extremely significant development in Switzerland and in the international community due to its

controversy. Despite this, Switzerland has upheld the outcome of the referendum since popular initiatives that are passed are required to become law.

In 2010, there surfaced yet another popular referendum aimed against foreigners. A 2010 referendum which proposed the expulsion of foreign criminals passed with a 52.9% acceptance rate (Cummings-Bruce 2010). Echoing the 2009 initiative, this referendum stirred controversy due to the SVP's depiction of foreigners as 'black sheep' on campaign posters. Furthermore, there were questions as to whether the initiative threatened Switzerland's bilateral agreements with the EU considering that deported foreigners might include EU citizens protected by the AFMP. Implementation of the initiative required 11 changes to federal law including that which concerns foreigner and asylum-seeker rights (The Local 2016).

So how exactly have Swiss attitudes shaped these decisions? The ban on minarets can be explained first and foremost by perceptions of cultural threat. By targeting Muslim symbols, the SVP preys upon the fact that the degree of cultural distance greatly increases perceptions of cultural threat (Diehl, Hinz, Auspurg 2018). Considering that Stribjis and Polavieja (2018) have cited Muslims, Africans, and Eastern Europeans as the groups that experience the highest levels of hostility in Switzerland, the SVP's targeting of minarets becomes even more potent. This applies to the 2010 referendum as well, with the 'black sheep' imagery and characterization of foreigners as criminals emphasizing cultural distance. The notion of *uberfremdung* and Swiss national identity comes into play here as well, with SVP rhetoric having clearly portrayed the presence of minarets as a threat to Swiss society and an unwelcome intrusion by Islamic culture (Muller 2009). By characterizing the minaret as a tool for so-called 'political Islam' to enter Switzerland, the SVP creates a narrative where Swiss culture, historically based on the Roman

Catholicism and Swiss Reformed faiths, comes under threat by a highly-politicized religion practiced by one of the country's out-groups.

Negative attitudes towards migrant groups have been heightened through rhetorical fear-mongering that over-emphasize issues such as cultural distance and threats to Swiss national identity. The most effective tool for these sentiments to enter policy is shown to be the popular initiative since it allows any issue to become law so long as it is approved directly by the Swiss people. The effective implementation of both the 2009 and 2010 popular initiatives despite their controversy show how effectively this tool allows the Swiss to turn attitudes into policy. It is important to note that the fears which these negative attitudes stem from exist naturally, with perceptions of cultural threat stemming from cultural distance being a well-documented phenomenon (Diehl, Hinz, Auspurg 2018). Rhetoric alone is not enough to inspire these anti-foreigner initiatives, but in this context the SVP has specialized in responding to cultural threat based on fears of over-foreignization and threats to Swiss identity.

2014 Against Mass Immigration:

In 2014, the SVP launched yet another campaign aimed at eliminating the presence of foreigners in Switzerland. This time, the entirety of Switzerland's immigrants were made targets of a proposed quota system. This system was specifically aimed at European migrants, as a system of quotas was already in place for TCNs (The Local 2016). After narrowly passing by 50.3%, international controversy had erupted and a massive strain was immediately placed on Swiss-EU relations. Not only was the future of Switzerland's bilateral agreements placed under question, but Switzerland's refusal to extend free movement of persons to Croatia (having newly joined the EU) led to its temporary suspension of participation in the EU's Erasmus and Horizon 2020 projects.

The legal implementation of the initiative was a departure from Switzerland's norms. Instead of imposing a strict quota on EU migrants as the initiative had outlined, a system was put in place where Swiss natives are given preference on the job market before a company can hire from the EU (The Local 2016). The SVP attacked this as a betrayal of the popular initiative but the "majority of MPs felt it was more important to maintain the country's relationship with the EU than apply the 2014 initiative to the letter" (The Local 2016).

So how do Swiss attitudes relate to yet another controversial popular initiative? Due to the all-encompassing nature of the 2014 initiative, all the factors outlined in the above analysis come into play. Although Helbling and Kriesi (2014) have shown that Switzerland's highly-skilled natives prefer highly-skilled migrants over low-skilled migrants, it is clear that the fear of labor market competition still prevails thanks to the workings of SVP rhetorical campaigns (Ruedin, personal contact 2019), proving that even the perception of a threat can lead to negative attitudes even if the legitimacy of the threat is non-existent. The idea of *uberfremdung* once again surfaces as the presence of non-Swiss Europeans contributes to cultural threat perception due to mistrust arising from cultural and lingual similarity. Fears of international integration are also motivating attitudes behind this referendum. The initiative can be viewed as a direct act of defiance to Switzerland's previous agreements and commitments with the EU, reflecting a growing unwillingness and dissatisfaction with the degree that the bilateral agreements have facilitated migration.

This initiative as well as the two mentioned above represent a considerable shift in Swiss attitudes, being the first successful initiatives to introduce anti-migration and anti-foreigner laws since they were initially used as a tool by anti-immigration groups in the 70s (Piguet 2006). Swiss attitudes on migration have always been closely divided, but the passing of such

controversial referendums is a clear indication that opinions have recently shifted against migration. The government's 'watering down' of the 2014 initiative should also be taken note of, as this established a precedence where the legal integrity of a passed initiative is no longer guaranteed when the Swiss parliament deems it as too harmful to the country's national interest.

Conclusion:

The success of recent initiatives aimed against foreigners represents a new phase in the history of Swiss migration policy. To build off the framework provided by Piguet (2006), this new period can be characterized as a xenophobic backlash to the influences of both economic influences and international constraints that had dominated Swiss migration policy from the late 90s and early 2000s.

This shift in attitudes can be explained by the perception of economic threats, specifically labor market competition (Helbling and Kriesi 2014). Low deservingness and opposition to welfare for low-skilled migrants was also proven to be a factor amongst high-skilled, high-earning natives living in low-tax cantons (Helbling and Kriesi 2014). Spies and Schmidt-Catran (2016) and Quadango (1994) supplement this notion by pointing out that higher proportions of out-groups in society lead to less support for social spending and contribute to a higher degree of economic and cultural threat perception. Negative attitudes stemming from cultural threat include fears of *uberfremdung*, or over-foreignization (Riano and Wastl-Walter 2006). This idea applies primarily to low-skilled TCNs, as Diehl, Hinz, and Auspurg (2018) show that cultural distance increases the perception of cultural threat. SVP rhetoric surrounding the 2014 referendum proves, however, that EU-migrants were labelled as foreigners as well (Carrera, Guild, and Eisele 2015). Furthermore, fears of becoming overly-entangled with the EU

framework and how this relates to Switzerland's political self-determination is a major factor that relates yet again to fears of over-foreignization and cultural threats to the Swiss national identity.

In this analysis, the popular initiative is revealed to be the main vehicle for translating Swiss attitudes into policy. The controversial passing of three popular initiatives from 2009-2014 therefore shows the great extent to which these attitudes were able to influence political change. Political rhetoric becomes a powerful tool in this context for emphasizing economic and cultural threat perceptions in order to mobilize voters into supporting such referendums.

A final consideration must be made regarding the influence of Swiss attitudes on future policy. As Piguet's (2006) history has proven, Swiss attitudes are by no means static. The nexus of economic influences, popular xenophobia, and international constraints is still relevant and is constantly undergoing drastic and unpredictable change. Although the previous decade can certainly be characterized by a relative rise in popular xenophobia, future policy will continue to be influenced by a multitude of factors, some of which may have yet to be identified. Since the 2014 referendum, Switzerland has in fact adopted several pro-foreigner laws through vote by popular initiative. In 2016, the process of acquiring citizenship for 3rd generation migrants was made much easier (Geiser 2016), and in the same year, amendments were made expanding rights to asylum-seekers (Federal Council). Furthermore, there are strong arguments that Switzerland needs foreign workers. Anonymous representatives from both the State Secretariat for Migration and the Swiss Mission to the EU point out that stress on the pension system due to the aging population can benefit from an influx of young foreigners (State Secretariat for Migration, personal contact 2019, Swiss Mission to the EU, personal contact 2019). They also point out that

certain sectors of the labor market are reliant on foreign workers such as hospitals, banks, and construction.

An important takeaway from this information is that mere perceptions of a threat can be more influential than facts and statistics. It has been clearly demonstrated that economic and cultural threat can be easily manipulated by rhetoric and fear-mongering, and although these threats can represent genuine concerns, it should be taken into consideration that the perception of a problem can oftentimes be far-off from the reality.

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Abbreviation List:

AFMP - Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons

LMC - Labor Market Competition

TCN - Third Country National