How to Please Voters Without Alienating Friends? Parties, Organised Interests and Advocacy Coalitions in Swiss Immigration Policy

Alexandre Afonso, King's College London

Abstract This article seeks to explain why and how political parties adopt more restrictive migration policy positions by using Paul Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). While a number of studies have focused almost exclusively on electoral factors to explain this anti-immigration turn, this article argues that policies and cooperation constraints with organised interests for purposes of coalition maintenance are also fundamental factors to understand change in party positions. Using the Swiss case as an empirical application, the article first shows how an increasingly anti-immigration policy discourse by parties has been triggered by a series of exogenous shocks (economic crisis, European integration and changes in partisan power relationships). Within advocacy coalitions, parties have sought to accommodate changing voter preferences with longstanding connections with organised interests. Centre-right parties have turned to an ever more restrictive stance on selective aspects of immigration policy (third country migration, asylum, access to citizenship) without challenging high levels of EU labour migration so central for employers. Social Democrats, for their part, have had to negotiate between the preferences of their middle–class voters keen on multiculturalism and those of trade unions whose base has become increasingly opposed to migration.

Keywords: Migration Policy, Advocacy Coalition Framework, Parties, Social-Democrats, Liberals, Switzerland.

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Introduction

There is now substantial empirical evidence showing that mainstream political parties in Western Europe have advocated ever more restrictive migration policies over the last three decades (Alonso & Da Fonseca 2012: 875). This "anti-immigration turn" has affected parties on the right (Bale 2003), but also on the left (Bale et al. 2010). If the outcome of this change in policy positions has been extensively documented, however, its *causes* and the *processes* leading to it remain unclear. As to *causes*, while this phenomenon has often been explained by party competition and the "contagion" effect of radical right parties (Van Spanje 2010), recent research has tended to downplay this element as the sole explanatory factor (Akkerman 2012; Alonso & Da Fonseca 2012). Bale and Partos (this volume) show for instance that the British Conservatives have advocated more restrictive immigration policies *before* the emergence of a credible electoral threat on their right, such as the UK Independence Party. As to *processes*, a major question is *how* political parties reconcile a more restrictive stance on immigration with the interests of their policy allies (Bale 2008: 324; Bale et al. 2010: 413-414; Karol 2009). For instance, how do political parties accommodate voters who are critical of immigration without alienating business interests on whom they depend for funding and expertise?

In contrast to analyses focusing exclusively on electoral factors to explain the anti-immigration turn, this article argues that policies and the relationships between parties and interest groups are important to understand how parties adapt their migration policy positions. Drawing on the case of Switzerland as an empirical example, it argues that an increasingly anti-immigration rhetoric in the *discourse* of mainstream political parties has – paradoxically – been triggered by an ever more liberal *practice* of migration policy, especially for EU workers. In this respect, the article connects this anti-immigration turn with the "policy gap" emphasised by a now large literature on immigration policy (Cornelius 2004). As it became ever more difficult to actually control labour migration flows, political parties have been prompted to show voters that they still had immigration under control by turning to a more restrictive stance on selective aspects of migration policy (asylum, citizenship, extra-EU migration), a tendency that has been bolstered by the strengthening a national-populist party, the SVP (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*). However, in spite of this more restrictive discourse, mainstream parties have not challenged the general thrust of labour market opening because of a set of cooperation constraints with their policy allies. Centre-right parties have sought to recover segments of their electorate tempted by the anti-immigration rhetoric of the SVP without alienating business interests that are strongly supportive of free movement. Social-democrats have had to reconcile the constituency of trade unions feeling threatened by foreign labour with their middle-class electorate keen on multiculturalism.

At the theoretical level, this article uses the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) developed by Paul Sabatier and his collaborators (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1999; Sabatier & Weible 2007) to understand how and why political parties adjust their belief system over time in the field of migration policy. The main added value of this approach is threefold. First, it brings in policy-oriented factors to explain change in belief systems, while existing analyses of the "anti-immigration turn" have focused almost exclusively on electoral factors and vote-seeking strategies. Second, while this strand of the literature has been largely party-centric, the concept of advocacy coalition makes it possible to consider the plurality of actors that intervene in party policy change, and notably organised interests (Karol 2009). Third, it seeks to analyse how changes in the policy positions of political actors (policy core beliefs) relate to their broader ideological agenda (deep core beliefs), or how immigration policy is connected to other policy areas. The article is structured as follows. The first section presents the ACF and how it can help explain change in belief systems in the field of immigration policy. After outlining some methodological issues, the empirical part of the article analyses the transformation of belief systems within the Swiss migration policy subsystem. The conclusion draws some implications for future research.

Understanding Immigration Policy Change with the Advocacy Coalition Framework: Parties, Groups and Belief Systems

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) developed and refined by Paul Sabatier and his collaborators is an analytical tool to understand policy change within policy subsystems over a period of a decade or more (Sabatier & Jenkins-

Smith 1999; Sabatier & Weible 2007). In a nutshell, the ACF assumes that policymaking in a specific policy subsystem can be understood as a struggle for power between different coalitions of actors (*advocacy coalitions*) championing different visions (belief systems) about policy problems and their solutions (Sabatier & Weible 2007: 192). Advocacy coalitions are groups of actors from different spheres (e.g. parties, public officials, interest groups, academic experts, journalists) who share a common "belief system" and who maintain steady patterns of cooperation over time. The borders of coalitions can be relatively fuzzy and cooperation across members can be more or less formalised, but one defining factor is their pursuit of similar goals across time. The idea of coalition can be a useful analytical tool to understand across institutional channels and levels of government.

Belief systems are constituted of three layers. First, *deep core beliefs* involve "very general normative and ontological assumptions about human nature" (Sabatier & Weible 2007: 194). Deep core beliefs can be understood as the deeply entrenched ideology that structures the preferences of actors in many policy domains, such as the left/right divide. Second, *policy core beliefs* include the definition of the basic problem in a policy subsystem, the ordering of policy objectives, the respective role of state and market in this domain, and the proper role of different actors in this subsystem. Finally, *secondary beliefs* essentially address instruments and modes of implementation of the policy core beliefs, such as budgetary rules or the timespan provided for policy outputs.

An important characteristic of these different layers is their different degrees of resistance to change. While deep core beliefs are almost impossible to change (cases of radical ideological conversion are rather rare), policy core beliefs can only change as a result of a major exogenous shock, such as a major shift in public opinion, a change in the ruling coalition, or crisis. Secondary aspects, by contrast, are those on which (incremental) change and agreements across coalitions are the most likely.

According to the initial version of the ACF, there are two major mechanisms whereby changes in belief systems can take place in a policy subsystem. The first is *policy-oriented learning*, or the adaptation of belief systems in the light of experience and new information on policy problems. Coalitions may incrementally change their belief system as a response to the effects of past policies on the actual problem to be solved (e.g. immigration flows) or their electoral effects (e.g the perception of a policy by voters). This type of mechanism is believed to affect the outer layers of belief systems only, because deep core beliefs act as important cognitive filters for new information: actors tend to dismiss evidence that does not fit with their deeper beliefs (Sabatier & Weible 2007: 198). The other major mechanism of change is *external perturbations and shocks*, such as changes in socio-economic conditions, regime change, outputs from other policy subsystems, or disasters (Sabatier & Weible 2007: 198-199). External shocks are understood as the only channel whereby major changes in policy core beliefs can take place, notably because they redistribute resources among coalitions within a policy subsystem.

I argue that the ACF can provide useful insights–as a heuristic tool to analyse migration policymaking, a field where this framework has, to my knowledge, only been applied once (Balch 2010). More precisely, I use it to emphasise the idea that parties seek to reconcile both electoral support and cooperation within coalitions in a policy subsystem. Here, I assume that maintaining cooperation in the face of a changing environment requires adjustments in belief systems for purposes of "coalition maintenance" (Karol 2009: 18). As argued above, most of the party politics literature assumes that political parties adjust their migration policy agendas as a response to electoral challenges only. They do not pay much attention to actual policy developments in this field, or to actors with whom parties cooperate or depend on. They largely ignore the fact that interest groups can be important actors influencing party policy, and that "much of politicians' energies are devoted to keeping the groups that support them happy" (Karol 2009: 35). For the purpose of this article, I stick to the main policy- and coalition-centred assumptions of the ACF while paying attention to the specificities of electoral incentives.

First, I assume that electoral factors alone are not sufficient to account for changes in belief systems. In the field of immigration policy, a major finding pointed out by scholars has been the significant difference between electoral discourse and actual policies. Hence, in spite of the anti-immigration preferences expressed by parties and public opinion, most industrial countries have failed to effectively reduce immigration flows (Cornelius 2004). In many respects, this makes interpretations focusing exclusively on vote-seeking strategies fairly unrealistic: if only votes count, most countries should have dramatically reduced immigration levels.

Second, I argue that parties will seek to adjust their belief system in a way that reconciles electoral concerns with the need to maintain cooperation with other actors within coalitions, and particularly interest groups (Karol 2009). These cooperation constraints can act as triggers of immigration restriction, but more often as limits. Interest groups can push for more restrictions if immigration generates costs, but also temper attempts to restrict because of the economic benefits of migration.

Third, I assume that these adjustments in belief systems will be subordinated to deep core beliefs in a relatively coherent manner. In other words, political actors will seek to maintain a certain degree of ideological coherence between their changing position in immigration policy (policy core beliefs) and the traditional values they advocate in other fields (deep core beliefs). If changes in parties' policy positions (policy core beliefs) contradict their broader ideological values (core beliefs), voters and supporters may perceive these changes as opportunistic, and they may create internal dissent between "true believers" and "opportunists" within parties (Bale et al. 2010: 413-414). As to immigration policy, I will show how adaptation in immigration policy discourse has targeted specific aspects of immigration policy which do not challenge the core beliefs of coalitions.

Research Strategy, Methods and Data

The empirical part of this paper is a case study analysis of advocacy coalitions and belief system change in the Swiss immigration policy subsystem across time. The case study format makes it possible to analyse the causes and processes of changes in belief systems over a longer period of time, something that is difficult to manage with a statistical analysis of many countries. Switzerland is an interesting case to analyse change in immigration policies because it has faced – early on and in an amplified manner – a set of constraints that most Western countries have had to deal with: high demand for foreign labour from the economy on the one hand, and widespread popular opposition to it on the other, the latter finding decisive institutional channels of expression through direct democracy. These constraints have made the need to maintain cooperation within coalitions of parties and interest groups particularly prominent, especially for right wing parties closely connected to employers.

First, the Swiss economy has relied to a very important extent on foreign labour since the mid-19th century, and the proportion of immigrants in the workforce has been consistently among the highest in Europe since the second World War. With 24.7% in 2011, the proportion of foreign-born in Switzerland was higher than in any EU member state but Luxembourg, and was more than twice as high as the EU average (9.7%) (Vasileva 2012: 2). On the other hand, the institutions of direct democracy have provided institutional channels of expression for popular xenophobia not available elsewhere. Since the late 1960s, a number of popular initiatives have been started by fringe groups to limit immigration, thereby empowering early on anti-immigration groups which could be largely ignored elsewhere. At present, Switzerland notably features the biggest populist radical right party in Western Europe with respect to its electoral strength. The SVP (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*) gathered 28% in the 2011 national parliamentary elections, and has by far the biggest parliamentary representation in the lower chamber before the Social Democrats, the Free Democrats and the Christian Democrats.

Methodologically, I proceed in a similar manner as Kübler (2007: 222). First, I defined a period of observation ranging from the immediate post-war period to 2012. Second, I circumscribed the Swiss migration policy subsystem consisting of the actors (parties, interest groups, experts, bureaucrats) actively concerned with migration policy. Third, I constructed a matrix of belief systems following the three-tiered model of the ACF. Fourth, I identified clusters of actors acting together in line with these different belief systems, and fifth, identified changes in the power resources of these coalitions over time, and worked out alterations in their belief systems. I divided the period of observation into phases when major changes in power relationships occurred. The analysis relies primarily on newspaper reports, government reports, and responses to government consultations, party manifestos and secondary literature.

Advocacy Coalitions in the Swiss Migration Policy Subsystem (1948-early 1990s)

It is possible to identify three main advocacy coalitions in the Swiss immigration policy subsystem: a *market-liberal*, a *nativist* and a *social-democratic coalition* (Table 1). The first of these coalitions, the *market-liberal coalition,* is composed of the Free Democrats (a liberal party that has been the only dominant political force in the Swiss party system) and Christian-Democratic party, employer associations (the Swiss Employer's Union, *Economiesuisse* and the Swiss Union of Crafts) and the labour market bureaucracy at federal level (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs). It advocates individual economic freedom and limited state intervention (*deep core beliefs*), an immigration policy primarily geared to satisfy the needs of the economy, and a limited role for the state in supplying welfare and integration for immigrants (*policy core beliefs*). This coalition is the one whose belief system has the most decisively shaped immigration policy in Switzerland for most of the post-war period. It remained essentially unchallenged between 1948, when the first bilateral recruitment agreement was signed with Italy, and 1963, when it had to concede a number of measures of immigration control to the two other coalitions (Piguet 2004: 14).

The Swiss immigration policy regime between 1948 and 1963 clearly embodied the guiding principles of this belief system: an open admission policy catering for the economic needs of various sectors of the economy, particularly those requiring low-skilled and seasonal workers (construction, hotels, agriculture) combined with a restrictive *immigrant* policy, or limited social rights granted to migrant workers (Afonso 2007). Different temporary stay permits tied to employment and the absence of a compulsory unemployment insurance scheme ensured that foreign workers left the country if they lost their jobs, thereby making it possible to "export" unemployment (Fluckiger 1998: 371-372). The foundations of this model remained in place until the late 1980s, even if they underwent a number of major adjustments in the early 1960s.

Table 1: Belief system of Advocacy Coalitions in Swiss Immigration policy

	Market-Liberal	Nativist	Social-Democratic
Deep Core Beliefs	Individual responsibility should be promoted and state intervention in the economy should be kept to a minimum.	National identity should be preserved against foreign influences above all other considerations.	The state should ensure social opportunities and equality for everybody.
Policy Core Beliefs	Migration policy should primarily be guided by the needs of the economy; immigrants are responsible for their own integration; the state has a minimal role.	Immigration should be reduced to a minimum; immigrants allowed in the country should conform to local norms and rules; the state has no role in integration.	Migration policy should be guided by humanitarian values, but not undermine equality and social protection within the country; the state assumes an active role in facilitating

			integration.
Secondary aspects	Up to 1990s: migration policy should allow for the admission of both low-skilled and high-skilled migrants 1990s onwards: admission policy towards third countries should allow exclusively for the admission of high-skilled migrants	Immigration quotas should allow for tight government control over who enters the country; access to citizenship should be subject to popular votes; foreigners committing criminal offences should be expelled	International humanitarian commitments should prevail over national rules
Coalition Members	Liberal Party (FDP), Christian Democratic Party (CVP), employer associations, federal bureaucracy	Small extreme-right parties (until 1990s), Swiss People's Party (1990s onwards), Swiss Democrats	Social-democratic Party, Green party, Trade Unions, civil society groups

The second is a *nativist* coalition advocating the defence of national identity and restrictive rules in terms of immigration, integration and access to citizenship. This coalition emerged in the 1960s as a reaction against the massive increase in the number of foreign workers throughout the 1950s, and was essentially composed of fringe extreme-right groups, such as the *National Action*. From the early 1960s onwards, it used the channels of direct democracy, most notably popular initiatives, to fight what it perceived as the "over-foreignisation" (*Überfremdung*) of the country (Skenderovic 2009: 57). As the imposition of migration limitations *from below* would have had massive consequences for a booming economy and the interests of the market-liberal coalition (Piguet 2004: 25), the government adopted a system of immigration quotas in the early 1960s, essentially as a way to show public opinion that it was keeping migration flows under control. Moreover, a number of other measures were adopted to accommodate the claims of the nativist coalition, such as the requirement for companies to prove that there was no Swiss worker available in applications for work permits. The quota system, however, would ultimately fail to stop the increase in immigration until the sudden economic recession of the 1970s. During this decade, the flexible immigration system outlined above allowed Switzerland to keep extremely low unemployment levels despite a drop in GDP. About 300'00 jobs disappeared and 175'000 migrant workers were constrained to leave the country (Piguet 2004: 38). This mechanism allowed for a substantial level of policy stability within the subsystem until the late 1980s, mainly because the costs of economic change could be externalized on foreign workers. It must be noted that even if the nativist coalition had a substantial impact on immigration policy change in this period, it did not really challenge the cohesion of the liberal market coalition because it did not constitute a major electoral threat per se.

The third is a *social-democratic coalition* composed of the Social Democrats, the Green party, trade unions, and migrant rights associations advocating a generally humanitarian stance regarding immigrants, but also the defence of existing social conditions and wages. Hence, while trade unions traditionally tended to support the extension of migrant rights within the country, it was principally as a way to prevent foreign workers from being used to undercut Swiss wages and working conditions. Trade unions were generally supportive of immigrant quotas that could limit labour supply and enhance their position in collective bargaining (Flückiger 1992). This coalition has generally assumed a subordinate position in immigration policy-making, however. Trade unions, for instance, were typically side-lined in an immigration policymaking process which was dominated by employers (Cattacin 1987: 61). However, a number of its requests were introduced to prevent pressure on the labour market, such as the requirement that any work permit was conditioned on compliance with existing labour law and collective labour agreements (Afonso 2013: 140). The initiatives of the social-democratic coalition to improve immigrant rights proved essentially unsuccessful, as testified notably by the failure of a popular initiative launched in the late 1970s to facilitate access to stable stay permits and abolish seasonal short-term guest-worker permits (Piguet 2004: 40-41)

As a whole, the Swiss migration policy subsystem from the early 1960s up to the 1990s can be characterized by the enduring dominance of the market-liberal coalition combined with a number of elements designed to appease the two other coalitions: immigration quotas to limit the growth of the migrant population, and built-in measures to protect the interests of the core native workforce. Moreover, within the market-liberal and social-democratic coalitions, interest groups, rather than political parties, assumed a leadership position. Hence, the implementation of immigration policy essentially relied on a complex system of lobbying between employers and the bureaucracy with a weak involvement of Parliament (Cattacin 1987; Dhima 1991).

Economic Crisis, European Integration and Party System Change: The Migration Policy Subsystem under Stress (1989-1999)

The decade starting in the late 1980s can be considered as a period of change for the Swiss migration policy subsystem (Afonso 2007: 18; Piguet 2004: 47). Three interrelated exogenous shocks can be considered decisive to explain these changes: the increase in unemployment since the early 1990s, the increasing constraints of European integration, and important change in power relationships between political parties. While the "contagion" effect of the radical right can be considered important, the nature of strategic adjustments in belief systems can only be properly grasped in conjunction with the two other exogenous shocks.

The first important exogenous shocks was the sudden deterioration of socio-economic conditions that took place in the early 1990s (Afonso 2007). Starting in 1991, Switzerland faced a long period of economic stagnation. Economic growth stayed below one percent for six consecutive years, and the number of unemployed increased from nearly zero in 1991 to 125'000 in 1993 (Fluckiger 1998: 371). Even if unemployment stayed at moderate levels in comparative

terms, this shift was perceived as a landslide, and in many ways, revealed the hidden externalities of the existing migration policy regime (Afonso 2007). As they were on average low-skilled, migrant workers became greatly over-represented among the unemployed (Afonso 2005: 654). In 2010, for instance, 43% of the unemployed were foreigners, while they represented less than 25% of the workforce (Swiss Federal Statistics Office 2012). Unemployment could no longer be "exported" because a large proportion of migrant workers now had gained access to permanent stay permits. In many ways, this triggered a process of policy learning particularly within the market-liberal coalition. Hence, a number of economic analyses highlighted the hidden cost of the existing migration system which favoured structurally weak economic sectors in need of low-skilled workers, the latter being more likely to face periods of unemployment in times of recession (Dhima 1991). As the costs of this system now had become highly visible within the welfare system, a growing number of actors within the liberal-economic coalition, particularly employers in export-oriented sectors, started advocating an admission policy targeting high-skilled migration only, and closing immigration channels for low-skilled migration from non-EU countries. This change of belief system was reflected by a series of policy changes providing for the progressive closure of entry for third-country nationals all over the 1990s (Afonso 2007). Interestingly, this movement of selective closure started when the national-populist SVP was still a relatively marginal political force, and was particularly pushed by employers rather than parties.

The second exogenous shock was the European integration process, which prompted an opening of the Swiss labour market to EU workers, and the suppression of the measures introduced in the 1960s to appease the nativist coalition. Even if Switzerland has remained outside the European Union, the completion of the Single Market by 1992 prompted the Swiss government to negotiate a number of bilateral agreements with the European Union in order to secure access to EU markets. While the Swiss authorities hoped to maintain measures of immigration control, the EU imposed the opening of the Swiss labour market and the removal of immigration quotas as a condition for the conclusion of all bilateral agreements (Fischer et al. 2002). For the market-liberal coalition, the bilateral agreements were of vital importance to preserve the interests of the Swiss economy, and would ensure access to a large pool of skilled workers within EU countries.

The social-democratic coalition, and particularly trade unions, asked for guarantees as to the protection of Swiss wages should the free movement of workers be established. In the face of the firm opposition of the nativist coalition to any sort of opening of the Swiss labour market, an agreement was struck between the market-liberal coalition and the social-democratic coalition about an opening of the Swiss labour market coupled with a reinforcement of measures to protect Swiss wages and working conditions. This agreement about "accompanying measures" to the free movement of workers was a way to reconcile the economic needs defended by the market-liberal coalition and some degree of protection for local wages and working conditions championed by the social-democratic coalition. This agreement was fought by the SVP in a number of referendums, first on its establishment with the EU15, then on its extension to

the EU10 after enlargement, on its extension to Romania and Bulgaria, and on its continuation after a period of evaluation. If in each of these occasions a majority of Swiss voters voted in favour of these agreements. However, these majorities were always relatively short, and showed the growing resonance of the belief system of the nativist coalition well beyond the electoral base of the Swiss People's party, especially in a context were immigration was de facto being facilitated.

The third exogenous shock has been the reconfiguration of the party system throughout the 1990s, with the steady weakening of centre-right parties and the emergence of the nativist Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei* – SVP) as the biggest electoral force in the country. This development was closely connected to the previous one, as the electoral success of the SVP managed to mobilise the "losers" of internationalisation through its opposition to European integration and immigration (Kriesi & Trechsel 2008). In many ways, the strengthening of the SVP has made the nativist coalition penetrate the mainstream. While the fringe political groups which composed it in previous decades had never managed to constitute an electoral threat for established parties, the rise of the SVP exerted substantial pressure on centre-right parties. Throughout the 1990s, the Swiss People's Party progressively emerged as the major political force in the Swiss political system (Skenderovic 2009; Vatter 2008: 8-10). From 11.9% of the vote in 1991, the SVP increased its electoral strength to 28.9% in 2007, the best score ever achieved by a Swiss political party since the introduction of proportional representation (Vatter 2008: 9). During the same period, the Liberal and Christian Democratic parties went from 21% and 18% to 15.8% and 14.5% respectively (Kriesi & Trechsel 2008: 191). While it only represented about 20% of the electorate at the time, it was able to rally at least 45% of voters on referendums on the free movement of workers (Engeli & Tresch 2005).

Adjustments in Belief Systems Within Market-Liberal and Social-Democratic Coalitions (1999-2012)

In many ways, the combination of these exogenous shocks that emerged over the 1990s triggered a number of strategic adjustments in belief systems within the market-liberal and the social-democratic coalitions, not the least because these shocks loosened the links between parties and their allies within coalitions. For centre-right parties, and particularly the FDP, it became increasingly difficult to reconcile their commitment to the free movement of workers, considered vital for the Swiss economy and employers, and the preferences of their voters tempted to defect to the Swiss People's party. In the popular vote on the extension of free movement to A8 countries in 2005, for instance, analyses showed that one quarter of the traditional FDP electorate voted against the position of the party leadership, and instead rejected free movement as advocated by the SVP (Engeli & Tresch 2005). For Social-Democrats, the problem lay in the difficulty to reconcile an electorate of middle-class "socio-cultural professionals" keen on international integration and multi-culturalism on the one hand (Oesch & Rennwald 2010: 364), and the working class base of trade unions increasingly tempted to join the SVP as well. In 2007, the SVP gathered 39% and 40% of votes

among production and service workers respectively, while it represented 29% of the electorate as a whole (Oesch & Rennwald 2010: 354). As can be observed in other countries, the SVP has now become the party of choice for the working class

The first substantial change in belief systems was the more restrictive stance adopted by centre-right parties regarding third-country migration, particularly on the side of the FDP. After the elections of 1999, when the SVP eventually outpolled the FDP for the first time, a change in belief systems has taken place within the FDP, who endorsed increasingly right-wing policy positions as a way to recover the ground lost to the SVP (Afonso 2013: 178-182; Akkerman 2012: 10-11). This move was closely connected to changing power relationships within the party. Traditionally, the FDP had gathered a rather "moderate" wing with strongholds in French-speaking Switzerland and a more conservative wing particularly strong in German-speaking Switzerland. From the late 1990s, the more conservative strand of the FDP took the ascendency over centrist strands, and the party sought to recover the ground lost to the SVP while still maintaining its commitment to business circles and the free market (its deep core beliefs). In the field of migration policy, this was essentially done by adopting a differentiated approach EU labour migration on the one hand, and third-country migration, asylum and access to citizenship on the other. The opening of the labour market for EU workers was interpreted as a further justification to close down immigration channels for third countries. This tougher stance on third-country migration and asylum was not considered particularly problematic for business circles, as high-skilled migration was still possible, and cuts in the asylum system also allowed for cuts in public spending. Hence, while a U-turn on the free movement would have been problematic in terms of core beliefs, restrictions in third country migration policy that allowed for cuts in state intervention could be accommodated without alienating business and employers. This move however, has not been fully followed by the Christian-Democrats.

In the 2000s the FDP has often followed the more restrictive position advocated by the SVP on a number of secondary aspects, for instance by supporting a revision of the aliens law in 2005 which strengthened the ability of public authorities to detain foreigners, or an extension of the period during which foreigners can be locked up (Conseil Fédéral 2002). In a position paper issued just before the elections of October 2011, the party explicitly made a difference between the "useful" migrants from EU countries and migrants from third countries, whose numbers should be reduced to a minimum (Radicaux-Libéraux 2011: 1). The measures proposed in this policy paper notably consisted in limitations on family reunification in order to restore control over migration flows, or enhanced sanctions against marriage fraud (Radicaux-Libéraux 2011: 4). Along a similar development, the new president of the FDP nominated in 2012 was a prominent advocate of immigration control, and was notably the main proponent of a popular initiative voted on in 2000 aiming at limiting the migrant population to 18% (Forster 2012). In 2013, the FDP, CVP and SVP supported a revision of citizenship regulations which would make it more difficult to gain access to Swiss citizenship.

In spite of this more restrictive stance, the party has sought to preserve its policy core beliefs and its connections to business interests by keeping a commitment the free movement of workers with the EU. More recently, however, even some aspects of the free movement of workers with the EU have come under criticism within the FDP. The number of EU workers migrating to Switzerland had increased very substantially since the introduction of free movement: between 2002 and 2010, the number of citizens of the EU27 increased by 260'000, reaching 1'151'000 (Swiss Federal Statistics Office 2012). The party has notably been advocating shorter stay permits, limits on the ability of EU workers to claim unemployment benefits, and the continuous use of safeguard clauses to limit migration from Romania and Bulgaria (Radicaux-Libéraux 2011: 2-3). However, this increasingly anti-immigration stance and its persisting connections to business keen on foreign labour have put the party in a rather fragile equilibrium which does not seem to have stopped its electoral decline.

The social-democratic coalition has been confronted with a different kind of trade-off: the difficulty to reconcile the pro-multiculturalism preferences of middle-class voters and those of blue-collar workers feeling threatened by migration. Historically, Swiss Social Democrats have been closely linked to trade unions. However, the electoral base of the Social Democrats has become less composed of blue collar and manual workers and increasingly of so-called socio-cultural professionals (teachers, social workers, public sector employees, journalists, healthcare workers, etc.) (Oesch & Rennwald 2010: 347). On the one hand, socio-cultural professionals and public sector workers have adhered to an internationalist and culturally progressive agenda, while the trade union base has become ever more concerned with the cultural impacts of immigration. In other words, if trade unions have stayed the traditional allies of social democrats at the political level, the clientele they are supposed to represent have increasingly sided with the populist right.

Until the late 2000s, the social-democratic coalition sought to maintain an agenda guided by humanitarian values. The social-democrats notably staunchly opposed a number of legislative reforms supported by the Liberal Democrats and the SVP geared to strengthen sanctions in the migration and asylum system. Over the decade, however, this position faced exhaustion. First, measures of restriction supported by right-wing parties have been systematically supported by a large majority of Swiss voters. New asylum and immigration laws which essentially provided for tougher sanctions and more restrictive admission criteria were all supported by more than 70% of voters in 1999 and 2006. Two popular initiatives launched by the SVP, on a ban on the construction of minarets and one on the deportation of criminal offenders were even accepted by a majority of voters despite the opposition of the centre-right and the left. In this context, engaging in referendum battles about immigration and asylum increasingly appeared as a dead end for the social democrats. In 2012, they eventually gave up on supporting a referendum against a new asylum law, arguing that another defeat was unavoidable and would ultimately weaken the party in this domain (Zeller 2012). Second, the opening of the Swiss labour market to EU workers started in 2002 had caused a significant influx of immigrants from EU countries which was causing pressure on the labour and housing markets, and the "flanking

measures" negotiated with the right and employers proved to be relatively ineffective in preventing abuse in wage standards. A report issued in 2011 notably showed that 38% of foreign companies posting workers in Switzerland did not respect the minimum standards laid out in collective labour agreements (SECO 2011: 32).

By the end of the decade, the pro-European and humanitarian position of the Social Democrats had been substantially toned down in the field of immigration policy. The party leadership issued a position paper in early 2012 which essentially emphasised the social, labour market and housing problems caused by immigration (Parti Socialiste Suisse 2012). The new president of the party argued that this theme could "not be left to the SVP" anymore, and that the party now advocated "regulated migration" instead of open borders (Graffenried & Pétignat 2012; Petignat 2012). It now admitted that deportations of asylum seekers committing criminal offences could be envisaged, and that the free movement of workers had only benefitted a minority. These problems were essentially framed as a consequence of the "failed fiscal and economic development policies of right-wing parties". Employers attracted migrant workers without developing integration measures to accompany economic development, and opened the labour market without enough guarantees for the protection of local wages (Parti Socialiste Suisse 2012: 4). The party sought to frame this new policy position as subordinate to its "deep core beliefs": the protection of wages and social protection. In many ways, this reorientation of the party agenda on the issue of immigration can be understood as an attempt to re-conquer the working class vote that has increasingly moved towards the SVP. However, this change of policy generated a significant amount of controversy with the party, and was notably strongly criticised by French-speaking and youth sections, who denounced its alleged right-wing undertones (Matin 2012).

Conclusion

In this article, I have analysed change in belief systems within the Swiss immigration policy subsystem between the early 1990s and 2012. I have adopted an approach paying particular attention to contextual strategic factors, and particularly the need for parties to reconcile both electoral concerns and their links with other actors within a policy subsystem as determinants of belief system change. While electoral competition has been presented as the major factor influencing change in belief systems among mainstream parties, I have shown that electoral competition is only one component of the strategic context in which political parties change their belief systems in immigration policy. In many respects, this strategic context differs on the left and on the right, and the dilemmas analysed here are surely also present in other countries. For right-wing parties, the main dilemma has been to cope with the electoral threat of the radical right while sticking to a core belief system emphasising the free market as guiding policy principle. For social-democrats, it has consisted in the difficulty to reconcile core humanitarian beliefs with the preferences of blue-collar workers increasingly tempted by the radical right. While there has been a degree of convergence in belief systems both on the right and on the left, the justifications for these changes have been different, because they relied on different "core

beliefs″. Centre-right parties have sought to reconcile their commitment to market principles with enhanced control for third country nationals. Social-Democrats have framed their more defensive migration policy agenda as a means to preserve the Swiss welfare model.

The present article has pointed to three elements that should certainly be borne in mind in future research on political parties and immigration policy. First, vote-seeking concerns are not the only driver of party policy change. Parties seek to balance vote-seeking strategies with other considerations influenced by existing policies and socio-economic conditions. Second, the analysis of party positions on immigration has almost completely ignored interest groups, while they do play an important role in the elaboration of party policies. Parties often depend on groups for funding, resources and expertise, and they seek to balance these relationships with vote-seeking strategies. Third, there may a substantial difference between what parties say (e.g in manifestos) and what parties do (the actual outputs of policy). This calls for a better integration of electoral politics and policymaking processes in the analysis of migration policies.

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