

**A Discourse-Historical Analysis of  
the 2014 Vote ‘Against Mass Immigration’ in Switzerland**

By

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the 2014 vote ‘against mass immigration’ (Masseneinwanderungsinitiative) in Switzerland by employing a discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis. The Foucauldian theoretical framework of governmentality is used to reveal how power and knowledge production on immigration in Switzerland has been dominated by elite actors in politics and the media. In the context of direct democracy and immigration governmentality in Switzerland, it highlights how the national-conservative Swiss People’s Party (SVP) has used the popular initiative as an instrument to exert their power, and push forward their anti-Europeanization and anti-immigration agenda. Data is drawn from the SVP campaign and fourteen articles from four major Swiss newspapers. By identifying the discursive strategies and arguments of legitimation surrounding the vote, the analysis reveals how the existent fears of ‘over-foreignization’ are (re)produced in the polarizing discourses of the SVP and popular media.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

On 9 February 2014, the Swiss electorate voted in majority to accept the popular initiative ‘against mass immigration’ as launched by the national-conservative Swiss People’s Party (SVP).<sup>1</sup> It was a vote which triggered wide-ranging and divisive debates across the country about national identity, about immigration and integration, and about the future of Switzerland in the European context. Ultimately, 56.5 percent of the eligible voters in Switzerland participated in the vote, with 50.3 percent of those voting to support the limitation of immigration through the use of quotas. The results of this popular vote have generated scholarly interest across disciplines, and questions have been raised to investigate potential explanatory factors for the outcome. Specific interest has been given to the media coverage of the vote and the results, with particular attention given to the discourses constructing a ‘divided Switzerland’. Indeed, a clear division in opinion emerged between French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland. Building upon the studies which have examined Swiss media discourses on the ‘against mass immigration’ initiative, this thesis aims to investigate the sub-national dimension of anti-immigrant discourse and its relation to policy preferences and outcomes across Switzerland. This study will be situated in a Foucauldian framework of governmentality to place emphasis on the elements of power, truth, and knowledge production in the generation of discourse. This theoretical framework will help to answer the two-part research question: What discourses have emerged surrounding the 2014 vote ‘against mass immigration’ and why have these discourses on immigration emerged and not others at the specific point in time under investigation? In

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<sup>1</sup> In German, ‘Masseneinwanderungsinitiative’; In French, ‘Initiative populaire fédérale ‘Contre l’immigration de masse’.

employing a discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis, this study seeks to address existent gaps in the migration research on public attitudes towards immigration, sub-national immigration policy, and populist anti-immigration discourse.

## 1.2 Case study selection

Switzerland as a country is not new to inflows of immigration. Until World War One, Switzerland had struggled to retain its population given its scarce agricultural and mineral resources (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006, p.1696). Following World War Two, inward movements of people were perceived as essential for the country's industrialization and economic development (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006). Between 1961 and 1970, bilateral guest worker agreements with Switzerland's neighbouring countries led to a total of more than 1.6 million new residents (Table 1).<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1**

Migration of the foreign permanent resident population, from 1950 to 2020

<b>Year</b>	<b>Immigration in numbers</b>
<b>1960</b>	162 428
<b>1961</b>	204 862
<b>1962</b>	210 184
<b>1963</b>	199 469
<b>1964</b>	196 100
<b>1965</b>	141 375
<b>1966</b>	140 730
<b>1967</b>	127 981

<sup>2</sup> In 1970, foreigners were approximately a sixth of the 6.3 million population (FSO 2020b).

<b>1968</b>	137 901
<b>1969</b>	140 245

*Note.* <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/catalogues-banques-donnees/tableaux.assetdetail.18344412.html>. Copyright 2020 Federal Statistical Office. (FSO 2020b)

Since 2006, over 100 000 people yearly have chosen to move to Switzerland (Federal Statistics Office [FSO], 2020b). In 2016, 25 percent of the Swiss permanent resident population was foreign born [Figure 1](FSO, 2020a). Although the character of inward migration and settlement has fluctuated over the last seventy-five years, the processes of immigration have become increasingly politicized and intensified in Swiss popular discourse (Ruedin and D’Amato, 2015b). The imagined boundaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’ have shifted over the course of the country’s history, between those who belong and those who do not. Other popular debates throughout the country’s history have centered around issues of economic protectionism, culture, identity, and on what rights should be afforded to non-citizens. Switzerland now stands as a country with one of the most restrictive processes of immigration and naturalization in Europe (MIPEx, 2020).<sup>4</sup>

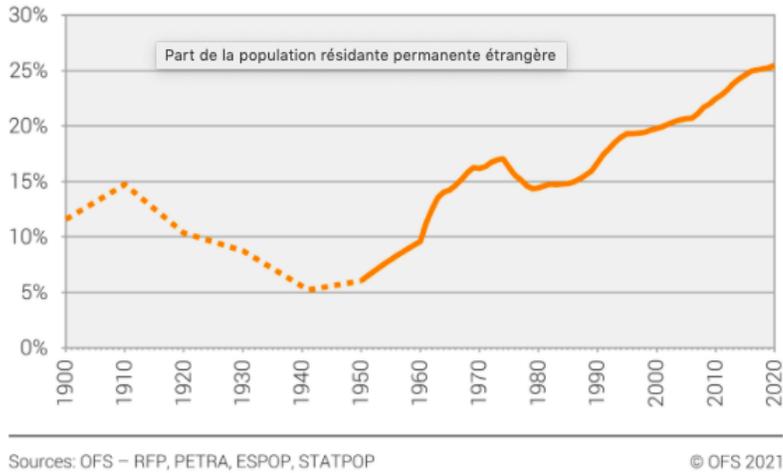
### **Figure 1**

Percentage of foreign permanent residents

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<sup>4</sup> This is according to the policy indicators developed by the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEx, 2020)

### Part de la population résidante permanente étrangère



*Note.* Accessed from: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/catalogues-banques-donnees/graphiques.assetdetail.18264552.html>. Copyright 2021 Federal Statistical Office.

As immigration shifted from being an issue of economics to one of social and political importance, the discourse on immigration in Switzerland widened. The topic of migration was being newly linked to other social fields including the economy, education, security, health and welfare (Bennett, 2018, p. 2). Discriminatory discourses have shifted their focus from the Italian guest worker population to immigrants from the former Yugoslavia to a more recent anti-Muslim sentiment among supporters of Swiss People’s Party (Skenderovic, 2009; Manatschal, 2015). What were once understood as essential processes of immigration for economic growth and infrastructure, were instead framed in 2014 as movements which threatened national unity, access to jobs, and government resources. The topic of migration thus has a long-standing history in public discourse and in direct legislation and referenda in Switzerland. Sciarini and Tresch (2009) identified 25 popular votes on foreign, European and immigration/asylum policies between 1992 and 2006. The case of Switzerland, as Kreisi (2005) notes, thus lends itself well to an analysis of how individual and contextual characteristics interact and jointly influence voters’

decisions. Switzerland also stands as an interesting case as it is one of the most integrated in the globalized economy and is strongly interlinked to its international immediate political context of the European Union (Steiner and Wanner, 2019, p. vi). Despite the pressure of globalization to adopt more liberalized migration regimes like those that prevail in the EU, some scholars have argued that the country's direct democratic system has allowed for anti-immigration discourse to be more vocal, and to have significant influence both on admission and integration policies (Steiner and Wanner, 2019, p. vi). Given these dynamics, its unique history of immigration, and the plurality of actors involved in migration policy, Switzerland stands as a compelling case to study the emergent discourses on immigration in culturally diverse democracies.

### **1.3 Why Critical Discourse Analysis?**

Critical discourse analysis allows for the study of a social phenomenon through its micro and macro-level contexts. This lens is useful to understand anti-immigration sentiment as it is not advantageous to isolate one single factor which could potentially lead to this outcome under investigation. The method also assumes that the given discourse is in a dialectical relationship with the context in which it is embedded. In this regard, the discourse surrounding the vote is not only influenced by context, but CDA views that the discourse itself also can influence the context. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), this discourse-context dialectic relies on the Foucauldian idea that discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972, p. 50, quoted in Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). This leads to another interrelated reason as to why CDA is the appropriate method to investigate this social phenomenon: the method itself flows from the Foucauldian understanding of discourse and power, the theoretical framework which will inform this study.

Critical discourse analysis is also rooted in critical theory which will allow for this study to analyse the social biases, inequalities, and imbalances of power that are embedded in Swiss popular discourse. By shedding light on these injustices as they materialize in discourse, a CDA can even hold a certain ‘emancipatory’ power (Bennett, 2018). Critical discourse analysis argues that these social inequalities are established and maintained using language and control over the means of discourse production and distribution. When examining popular discourse through media texts, this perspective is essential.

Finally, critical discourse analysis is interdisciplinary. In the field of migration studies, an interdisciplinary research method will allow this study to draw upon several theoretical approaches and thereby create a new holistic approach to discuss this political issue. While many CDA scholars have investigated discourses of exclusion, racism, and nationalism from a linguistics perspective, this study will be using CDA to contribute principally to the field of political science and migration.

I have chosen to employ this methodology, rather than content analysis or frame analysis which are also used to investigate discourses, because of these very reasons. In the case of content analysis, which is usually quantitative, a major drawback to the approach is that it investigates discourses abstracted from their contexts and from the intentions of the producers of those texts. Thus CDA’s particular focus on deconstructing social phenomenon through critical theory frameworks and with attention to context is essential in the study of the 2014 vote ‘against mass immigration’.

#### **1.4 Problems, hypotheses, and questions**

The objective of this study is to be problem-oriented in its analysis and critique. One of the central tenets of research in critical discourse analysis is that it aims to address societal

problems in a greater social context. In the Swiss case, the societal problems that this study is concerned with are as follows:

- i) The liberal shifts in immigration policy throughout Switzerland's history have not been met with total support of the public, despite the continued demands from the labour market economy (Afonso, 2004).
- ii) The discourse of immigration and integration in Switzerland manifests in divisive forms across cantons, with the French-speaking regions being generally more in favour of liberal immigration policies.
- iii) Due to entrenched societal inequalities and power relations in Switzerland, incoming non-nationals are largely excluded from the political popular discourse of immigration.

Given these problems, this study proposes the following hypotheses. The objective of this study is to test these hypotheses by applying the method of critical discourse analysis:

- H1: Discourses are divisive: Discourses on immigration and integration are greatly divided across Switzerland along linguistic lines.
- H2: Discourses affect policy: Cantons that converse negatively about immigration and integration are likely to have insufficient immigration strategies.
- H3: Discourses are guided by power: In line with Foucauldian conceptions of power and knowledge production, the discourse of immigration and integration in the Swiss public sphere is dominated by elite actors in politics and the media.

In order to operationalize these hypotheses and provide a framework for analysis, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

**Research Question: How were the popular political discourses on the 2014 vote 'against mass immigration' covered by Swiss media articles?**

- Sub-question 1: How has immigration and integration been discursively constructed in Swiss popular discourse in the lead up to the 2014 vote 'against mass immigration'?
- Sub-question 2: What discourses emerged in the public sphere and how were these recontextualized in media texts?

### 1.5 Media discourse: data collection

The material for the analysis of the popular political discourses on the 2014 initiative will be taken from a sample of Swiss newspaper articles published between January 1, 2013 and January 1, 2015. This data sample will allow us to investigate the discourse which emerges in the lead up to the popular initiative, and the coverage of the vote after it is accepted. The newspapers were selected for their levels of readership, their similar political alignment, and their language of publication.<sup>5</sup> Two popular French-language newspapers and two popular German-language newspapers were selected: *Le Matin* (French), *Le Temps* (French), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (German), *Basler Zeitung* (German). Fourteen articles were retrieved from the corpus using the following relevant search terms: *Eidgenössische Volksinitiative "Gegen Masseneinwanderung"* French: *Initiative populaire "Contre l'immigration de masse"*.

### 1.6 Survey of existing literature

Studies on immigration policy and discourse in Switzerland have drawn interest across various disciplines and from scholars around the world. Prior to the vote ‘against mass immigration’, the case of Switzerland had drawn interest from many historians in English, French and German, such as Mahnig (2005), Piguet (2004), Niederberger (2004) or Skenderovic and D’Amato (2008) who have sought to map the history of immigration and integration policy in Switzerland. A large body of literature has also emerged on the sources of anti-immigrant attitudes in the last two decades. Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014), for example, provide a useful review of anti-immigration attitudes in North America and Western Europe in their article titled “Public Attitudes Toward Immigration”. Most notably, their chapter on ‘Ethnocentrism, Group-

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<sup>5</sup> According to an analysis done by Roger Blum at the Center for Media Studies at the University of Bern, *the Basler Zeitung*, *Le Matin* and *Le Temps* can be described as Neutral newspaper sources in Switzerland, while *the Neue Zürcher Zeitung* is categorized as Liberal-right (n.d.).

Specific Stereotypes, and the Media' reviews studies which emphasize the influence of media in the prediction of anti-immigrant attitudes (p. 233).

Since 2014, the 'against mass immigration' initiative has also been studied by researchers who seek to understand more about the motives for the vote on restricting immigration and has served as an interesting site to test theories which aim to predict attitudes towards immigration. Ackermann and Freitag (2015), for example, draw upon 2013 data from the MOSAICH-ISSP survey in Switzerland to study the attitudes toward immigration before the 2014 initiative. This study, which includes data from 1237 respondents, finds that even before the debate on the 2014 initiative, 50 percent of Swiss citizens could be mobilized to call for reduced immigration and to vote for anti-immigration issues (Ackermann and Freitag, 2015). In other perspectives, Milic (2015) in "For They Knew What They Did – What Swiss Voters Did (Not) Know About The Mass Immigration Initiative" argues that the vote was passed in 2014 due to the fact that the Swiss electorate was not sufficiently informed about the vote nor the possible economic ramifications that acceptance could have for the relationship between Switzerland and the European Union.

Other scholars have approached the study of the 'against mass immigration' initiative through visual praxis by analyzing the political messages that were conveyed through images during the debate. Wintzer (2019) interestingly analyses the posters released by the right-wing Swiss People's Party which generally portray Switzerland as a country which is overcrowded and one that must stop immigration. The author finds a discourse that emerges amongst these posters which portrays Switzerland as a homogenic space as visualized through the references to the colors red and white and the Swiss cross (p. 7). This work is in contrast to the many other

works which have emerged in literature on practices of countries and sub-national linguistic groups to promote their images (Castells 2008; Dolea 2015a,b; Kaneva 2011; Pamment 2014).

In the realm of popular media and discourses on immigration, Abadi and D’Haenens (2016) have investigated the mainstream media coverage on Germany’s integration debate between 2009 and 2014 by studying newspaper articles. They find that discourses and key events are mainly discussed depending on the political alignments of the German newspapers at hand (2016). Similarly, Bennett (2018) looks into the *Constructions of Migrant Integration in British Public Discourse* by focusing on media texts in popular newspapers. He finds that discursive constructions at the elite level maintain power imbalances through use of popular channels, and that the political discourses on topics of integration in the UK are largely constructed along ethno-cultural lines. Others have noted the power that traditional media still holds in popular political discourse. Another major contribution to this field of study is a work which was published during the time of this research by Dolea, Ingenhoff and Beju (2021). These authors investigate the idea of country image promotion and populist political communication in the 2014 vote ‘against mass immigration’. Finally, Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006) have contributed to this field of work through theory development in their work titled “The contingency of the mass media’s political agenda setting power: Toward a preliminary theory” and also in “Right-wing Bias in Journalists' Perceptions of Public Opinion” (2021).

This study is therefore situated at a relevant crossroad of migration scholarship, media communication research, and CDA contributions on discourse and society. It seeks to combine theoretical approaches on national identity with perspectives from political science on populism and the media. It will address questions of inclusion and exclusion in the field of migration, and will be enriched by the multidisciplinary methodological approach of critical discourse analysis.

Its objective is to gain a greater understanding of why anti-immigrant attitudes emerge in heterogeneous democracies. Ultimately, it will seek to contribute to the scholarship which aims to understand the discursive constructs of immigration in the unique and evolving case of Switzerland.

### **1.7 Plan of study**

Moving forward, this study will consist of six chapters. In Chapter 2, it will detail the theoretical framework which will guide the empirical analysis. Theories on governmentality and anti-immigrant sentiment will be presented with an overview of the theory's popular tenets, scholars, and assumptions. These theories, namely group-threat theory, intergroup contact theory, and social identity theory, will be tested against the backdrop of Swiss media texts in the empirical section, Chapter 5. Then, the study will review the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis in Chapter 3, and will introduce the discourse-historical approach. This chapter will also review what contributions scholars have made to CDA and national identity, CDA and newspaper media, as well as to news as recontextualization.

As is important to any CDA study, Chapter 4 will provide a historical and socio-political context for the empirical analysis. It will give important background on the history of immigration as a politicized issue in Switzerland, and will identify certain discourses which have emerged on the topic throughout history. This will provide essential context on the immigration policy and public opinion in the country leading up to the 2014 vote 'against mass immigration'. This will also show how identity, narratives, and concepts evolved during the period under study in line with socio-political and historical developments.

In Chapter 5, an empirical analysis will be conducted of fourteen selected newspaper articles as found in Swiss popular media sources, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Basler Zeitung*, *Le Matin*, *Le*

*Temps.* The hypotheses as introduced in Chapter 1 will be tested. The objective of this section is to uncover the popular discourses which have been recontextualized in publications surrounding the ‘against mass immigration’ debate. Discourses will be tested against the theories as presented in Chapter 2, and recurrent narratives will be identified and categorized. Finally, Chapter 6 will provide opportunity for discussion on the consequences of exclusionary discourses and conclusion on the identified discourses and their implications for areas of further research.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to set forward the relevant theoretical framework for the analysis of the discourses on immigration and integration in Switzerland. For this examination, discourse analysis is based on the methodological approach of French philosopher Michel Foucault and his contributions on governmentality, and on truth, power, and the subject. The first section will begin with a general discussion of his works and his concept of discourse and will move forward to present a framework of governmentality to apply to the Swiss context. Foucault's work on governmentality will provide the analytical tools necessary to examine how the concepts of truth, power, and the subject interconnect in the context of the vote 'against mass immigration', and how these have shaped flows of contemporary discourses on migration and integration in Switzerland. In the second section, theories on attitudes towards immigration will be presented to supplement the 'grand theory' of governmentality (Wodak, 2001).

### 2.2 Foucault and Governmentality

French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984) is one of the most influential thinkers in discourse analysis research in the social sciences. Through his writings, he established a range of famous analytic concepts including *discourse*, *dispositive*, *power/knowledge*, *archaeology*, *genealogy*, *discipline*, *biopower*, and *governmentality* (Keller, 2018, p. 68). In his work titled *The archeology of knowledge* (1969) and his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1971, translated as "The Order of Discourse" (1981), he introduces his understanding of the 'statement' and of 'discourse' and develops this over the course of his academic career (Keller, 2018). These works are therefore commonly understood as his greatest contributions to the inquiry into language and knowledge making (McIlvenny et al, 2016 p. 5; Keller, 2018, p. 72).

In *The archeology of knowledge*, Foucault presents a ‘toolbox’ for the methodological approach to discourse analysis and sets forward an established rationale for the empirical analysis of historical and current knowledge making (Keller, 2018, p.72). Although he does not provide a singular definition of the concept, the term *discourse* is described as an object of inquiry in the ‘ordered practices’ of knowledge making. This is developed throughout his discussion of how discursive formation is generated (McIlvenny et al, 2016, p.6). Foucault himself comments on his own understanding of discourse in the following way:

Lastly, instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe that I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements; and have I not allowed this same word ‘discourse’, which should have served as a boundary around the term ‘statement’, to vary as I shifted my analysis or its point of application, as the statement itself faded from view? (Foucault, 2010 [1969], p.80).

Discourse analysts have built upon this to understand discourses as those that ‘naturalize’ and often ‘implicitly universalize’ a particular view of the world and position subjects within it (Foucault, 1980; Gregory, 2002, p. 78) Foucault also added to the methodological approach of discourse analysis, and defines the task of analysis as follows:

A task that consists of not - of no longer - treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (langue) and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe. (Foucault, 2010 [1969], p. 49)

In the perspective of Foucault, single discursive events and statements obtain their meaning from the network of statements and formation patterns to which they ‘belong’ (Keller, 2018). In this regard, discourse is formed by a series of discursive events and practices that are ordered by ‘regularity’ or ‘rules of formation’ (Foucault, 2010). There are four dimensions of ‘rules of

formation' to discourse: the formation of objects; the formation of enunciative modalities; the formation of concepts; the formation of strategies (Keller, 2018, p. 73; Foucault, 2010).

Foucault's perspectives on discourse also developed alongside his philosophies on *power* and *knowledge* during his career. Foucault's concept of power is developed in the majority of his works, and is understood as a basic dimension of human actions and human relations. In line with the thinking of Nietzsche, Foucault takes the position that power and knowledge are closely intertwined: "there is no power relation without a particular field of knowledge, and no knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute power relations." (quoted in Keller, 2018, p. 74). He notes that even the researcher, or 'knowing subject' cannot assume an external position free of influence from power. In his view, power is a productive, enabling, and constraining force all at the same time (Foucault, 1998). Power relations can be found at every level of social action and society, and "...are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter." (Foucault, 1998, p. 94). In future chapters, this study will show how knowledge distortion takes place in immigration discourse in the mass media and the political elite. Visualisation will also be discussed for the crucial role it plays in the formation and dissemination of knowledge.

On the relationships between his concepts of discourse, power, and knowledge, he writes: "Indeed it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. [We must imagine the world] as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must reconstruct [...]"(Foucault, 1998, p. 100). Foucault also discusses the internal and external elements that structure the unfolding of discourses. He argues that situational contexts allow for some ideas to be voiced, but not others, and that discourses are

structured by mechanisms of exclusion and empowerment (Keller, 2018, p.74). Foucault's understanding of conflicting, clashing or collaborating discourses in given historical contexts are a focal interest point for him in the investigation of discourse, and will be of importance for the analysis of the emergent discourses in the vote 'against mass immigration'.

Foucault's concept of *governmentality* (Foucault, 2009, 2011, 2012) refers to the elements and properties of individual or collective state-based 'governing' of conduct, to the 'conduct of (one's own or others') conduct' (Keller, 2018, p.77): "To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 1982, p.221). 'Governmentality', according to Foucault, indicates a new 'economy' of power. It implies: "the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument." (Foucault, 2009, p. 144) He goes on to specify the difference between the technologies of discipline, which refer to the individual as object, through close technologies of dominance (ways of leading and subjugating others) and through technologies of the self, which refer to the individual as a moral, confessing, reflecting subject of self-conduct. (Keller, 2018).

Although Foucault's writings on governmentality do not specifically address migration, studies in immigration and governmentality have grown in the last twenty years, and a selection of scholars have applied Foucault's work on governmentality to the study of immigration. Sociologist Didier Bigo, for example, has discussed the securitization of migration discourse within the framework of governmentality. He asks the question, "why the discourses of securitization continue to be so powerful even when alternatives discourses are well known, and why the production of academic and alternative discourses has so little effect in either the

political arena or in daily life.” (Bigo, 2002, para. 5). His work concludes by arguing that the securitization of migration is “a transversal political technology, used as a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease.” (Bigo, 2002, para. 6). Similarly, Didier Fassin in “Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries. The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times” talks of a ‘biopolitics of otherness’ in the field of immigration governmentality and explores the ideologies and technologies at work in the policing of borders and the production of boundaries. (Fassin, 2011, p. 214).

Foucault throughout his work discusses the relations between truth, power, and the subject without reducing them to one another. He explains their interconnection in the following way:

Connecting together modes of veridiction, techniques of governmentality, and practices of the self is basically what I have always been trying to do. [...] What is involved, rather, is the analysis of complex relations between three distinct elements none of which can be reduced to or absorbed by the others, but whose relations are constitutive of each other. These three elements are: forms of knowledge (*savoirs*), studied in terms of their specific modes of veridiction; relations of power, not studied as an emanation of a substantial and invasive power, but in the procedures by which people’s conduct is governed; and finally the modes of formation of the subject through practices of self. (Foucault, 2011, p. 8–9)

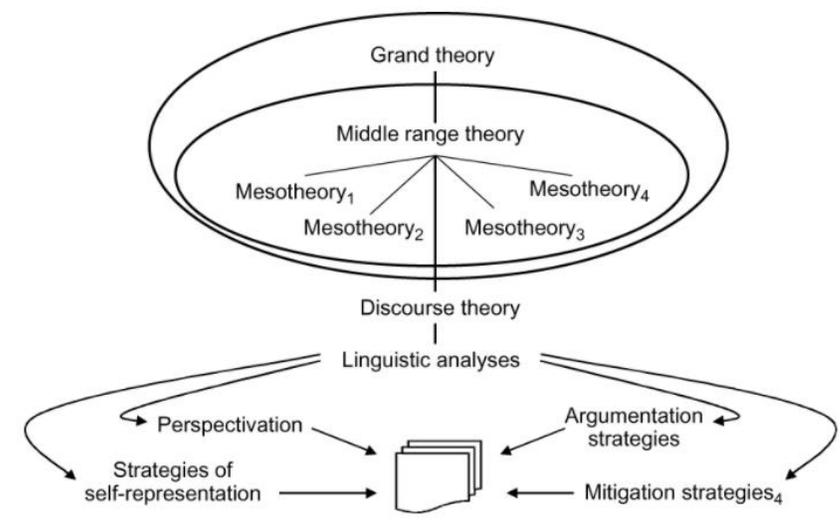
Foucault’s understanding of ‘truth’ or *veridiction* in speech is especially important for the study of populist movements and the SVP in Switzerland. Foucault (2011) writes: “the courage of the truth in the person who speaks and who, regardless of everything, takes the risk of telling the whole truth that he thinks, but it is also the interlocutor’s courage in agreeing to accept the hurtful truth that he hears.”(p. 13). This *parrhesiastic* role is played according to Foucault (2011) “when scientific discourse is deployed as criticism of prejudices, of existing forms of knowledge, of dominant institutions, of current ways of doing things” (p. 30).

It is clear, therefore, that the contributions of Foucault to the field of discourse analysis are a substantial and relevant theoretical departure for the case of the vote ‘against mass immigration’. In the following sections, his interwoven yet concrete concepts of *discourse*, *power*, *knowledge*, *veridiction*, and *governmentality* will be used to analyse the historical and socio-political context of discourses on migration in Switzerland. Foucault’s discussion of these concepts provides a useful toolkit to inquire into the ways in which migration has become an object of government in Switzerland. It is through these four interrelated elements that this study can also answer the question as to why these specific discourses on migration emerged, and not others, at our specific point in time under investigation.

Moving forward, this chapter will review theories on individual preferences regarding immigration and will situate them in the Foucauldian framework of governmentality. This will allow the study to describe and position the discourses within the predominant theoretical framework of Foucault, and will allow us to see if the discourses which emerged surrounding the vote ‘against mass immigration’ ‘fit’ the existent theories on preferences. Discourse analysis is inherently interdisciplinary, and thus this study draws from several approaches and types of theories at the respective operational levels. This plurality, however, has been cited as one of the “major difficulties of operationalization in the research process” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). This figure by Wodak best explains the interaction between the levels of theories and linguistic analysis (Figure 2). In this case, the ‘Grand theory’ of this analysis is governmentality, and the ‘Middle range theories’ are the theories on anti-immigrant sentiment to be discussed in the following section.

**Figure 2**

Levels of theories and linguistic analysis



*Note.* Levels of theories and linguistic analysis. “The discourse-historical approach.” By R. Wodak, *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 63-94). 2001. SAGE Publications, Ltd.

In order to delineate the theory of most relevance, this study will be asking the following question put forward by Wodak (2005): “What conceptual tools are relevant for this or that problem and for this and that context?” (p.125).

### 2.3 Theories on anti-immigrant sentiment

Generally, many researchers have approached the study of individual preferences regarding immigration from a utilitarian, interest-based perspective. In other words, it is agreed that individuals will favour globalization and European integration, depending on the material losses or benefits they expect from it (e.g. Gabel, 1998a,b; Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Kriesi et al., 2006). This logic, likewise, has been applied to the study of preference formation in increases to inward migration. However, theories have emerged which see preferences regarding immigration as more complex than simply utilitarian. Most relevant for the case of Switzerland, the

approaches which theorize on attitudes towards immigration that will be presented in the following chapter are group-threat theory, intergroup contact theory, and social identity theory.

### 2.3.1 *Group-threat Theory*

Introduced by sociologist Harold Blumer (1958) in his work on *Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position*, group-threat theory posits that racial prejudice toward an outside group is the result of a perceived threat among the dominant group. Prejudices develop, according to Blumer, when this outside group challenges the dominant group's 'exclusive' claim to certain resources. Furthermore, hostility can increase with regards to the level of threat, depending on the size and growth of the outside group. In the context of increasing immigration, this can not only be framed as a threat to national identities and lifestyles, but also to material resources like money, work, or land (Ackermann and Freitag, 2015, p. 37).

It is within this theoretical field that it is argued that education can be a predictor of attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Scholars have claimed that highly educated people feel less threatened by low-skilled immigrants and therefore demonstrate less prejudice than people with lower education (Coenders and Scheepers, 2003, p. 313). Many other studies have also cited education levels as a relevant predictor of attitudes towards immigration (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2008; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2009).

Group-threat theory assumes that those who are less socially and economically secure will feel even more threatened by increases to immigration. Negative prejudices towards migrants can be furthered in economically less prosperous times. Group-threat theory presumes that in worsening economic conditions, whether objectively or subjectively, those that are less economically secure can feel more threatened by increases in immigration. Increases to immigration can be interpreted as enhancing competition over scarce resources, therefore fueling

anti-foreigner sentiments. It is for this reason that some studies find that economic conditions or the assessment of the national and personal economic situation of the demographic under observation as relevant predictors of attitudes towards immigrants (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2008).

Therefore, as many scholars have noted, people who feel threatened by ethnic heterogeneity for socioeconomic or cultural reasons are more likely to oppose increases to immigration (Sides and Citrin, 2007). Perceived group threat is a recurrent and prevalent discourse which has been provenly cited as a factor which can predict attitudes towards immigration across many Western democracies. This theory will be tested to see if it too emerges in popular discourse surrounding the 2014 vote against mass immigration.

### *2.3.2 Intergroup contact theory*

Intergroup contact theorists argue that increased contact with an 'outside group' can reduce prejudices and increase positive attitudes. Allport's (1954) Intergroup Contact Hypothesis also aims to specify the critical situational conditions for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice, and holds that the positive effects of intergroup contact only can occur in situations marked by four key conditions: equal group status within the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and the support of authorities, law, or custom (Allport, 1954 quoted in Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008). Pettigrew (1998) builds upon this theory with his concept of 'ingroup reappraisal' which argues that optimal intergroup contacts can not only affect both the ingroups view of the outgroup, but also can shape the view of your ingroup and lead to a less provincial view of outgroups in general ("deprovincialization") (Pettigrew 1998). In this regard, the acceptance of the popular initiative on mass immigration in Swiss regions with high shares of foreigners could be seen as a proof of the positive effect of intercultural contact.

### 2.3.3 *Social identity theory*

The final theory which is of relevance for the purpose of this study is *Social identity theory*, introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1979), which claims that social identification with an ethnic group is a relevant predictor for attitudes towards immigrations. The concept of identity here is built upon Cornell and Hartmann's observation that while "identity construction may occur in any part of a society and as an aspect of virtually any set of social relations", labour markets, residential space, social institutions, culture, daily experience and, most importantly from the point of view of this study, the field of politics often serves as "critical construction sites" in which identity formation occurs (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998, p.153).

Several scholars have put forward the argument that people with strong national feelings are more likely to develop negative attitudes toward immigrants and immigration (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2008; Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; Sides and Citrin, 2007). In the context of the 'against mass migration' vote, it can be assumed, therefore, that those that have strong feelings of national identity in Switzerland are more likely to express negative attitudes towards immigrants. Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) extend this to argue that those who "harbour protectionist sentiments" will be less likely to support international flows of people (p.543). It can thus be assumed that those who are against succession to the EU also would be less likely to support liberalized immigration policy.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Moving forward, Chapter 3 will introduce the methodological approach of the study, critical discourse analysis (CDA), and will explore how it interacts with the Foucauldian framework of governmentality. As the next chapter will show, CDA shares with the Foucauldian tradition a particular concern with the ways in which language works within power relations in

society. Intersecting CDA with governmentality allows this study to empirically investigate the ways in which the discourse surrounding the vote ‘against mass immigration’ was situated in the historical and socio-political context, while also evaluating how it intersects with the technologies and knowledge in the exercise of power.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis – An Introduction

Since its introduction by Norman Fairclough, (1992, 1993, 1995) critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been employed to decode ideology, structures, and power in texts and spoken language. ‘Discourses’ are the broader ideas communicated by these texts, and have impact on readers’ mental representations of events, their knowledge, beliefs, attitude, norms, values and ideologies, which can consequently influence their future actions (Van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2001; Wodak, 2001). According to Simpson and Mayr (2010), in CDA ‘discourse’ itself operates above the level of grammar and semantics to “capture what happens when these language forms are played out in different social, political, and cultural arenas” (p. 5). To discourse analysts, discourse is not isolate, but is a transactional relationship between society and language. As explained by Fairclough and Wodak (1997), “the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them” (p.258). In the words of Colombo and Quassoli (2016): “discourse is regarded as being less about everyday linguistic interaction and more about historically developed systems of ideas that form institutionalised and authoritative ways of addressing a topic: the ‘regimes of truth’ (p. 324).

One of the challenges of critical discourse analysis is the distinction drawn between micro, meso and macro conceptualisations of discourse. Macro-level investigations can treat data as culturally standardized, while micro-level analyses can lack an understanding of the broader cultural context in which they are situated (Colombo and Quassoli, 2016, p. 325). In order to integrate these two approaches, this study employs the discourse-historical approach (DHA) of critical discourse analysis to ‘triangulate’ knowledge about the historical context, and the socio-political context within which this discursive event is embedded. Another solution to this

problem is to, according to Fairclough (1993) conceptualize the local construction of discourses and the totality of discursive practices of an institution as mutually reinforcing” (p.138). This of course is in line with the Foucauldian understanding of a discourse which in its context is mutually reinforcing (See Chapter 2).

Therefore, in order to investigate the discourses of migration in Switzerland through the media coverage of the 2014 vote ‘against mass-immigration’, this study will seek to integrate the types of discourse identified in popular newspaper media coverage with the broader historical context of immigration, the socio-historical setting, and the debates in society. While the detailed empirical section of the study will refer to a sample drawn from popular newspaper articles, the broader analyses will refer to the greater contextual setting. This DHA approach will allow for a thorough and exhaustive examination of the against mass immigration initiative. Indeed, as van Dijk has asserted, “few disciplines ... offer such a broad, multidisciplinary, multicultural and socially relevant approach to human language, cognition, communication and interaction as discourse analysis.” (van Dijk 1997, p.32).

This study also distinguishes between a ‘state discourse’ of immigration (formal core) and ‘popular discourses’ (informal periphery). State discourses refer to the way of portraying migrants and those unsuitable for citizenship, via official documents, white papers, legislation, political rhetoric, and other documents, texts, and forms of representation (McDowell, 2003). In the Foucauldian framework, these are particularly powerful discourses. While popular discourses are also shaped by systems of power, these are not so institutionalized.

### **3.2 The discourse-historical approach**

The discourse-historical approach to CDA was first developed by Wodak (2001) to go beyond the textual approach of CDA. The method adheres to CDA’s use of critical theory, but

also makes use of the wider socio-political, economic and historical contexts within which the discourses emerge. One of the greatest benefits of DHA for the purpose of this study is its ability to work interdisciplinary, multi-methodically and on the basis of a variety of different empirical data as well as background information (Wodak and Meyer, 2001) According to van Leeuwen, three dimensions are central to the discourse-historical method: the content of the data, the discursive strategies employed, and the linguistic realization of these contents and strategies (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999, p. 91). These three dimensions will be covered by the following analysis to ultimately achieve a ‘multi-dimensional deconstruction’ of the way certain discourses and arguments are recontextualized.

In alignment with the work of van Leeuwen, the historical dimension within the discourse-historical approach will be presented in two ways. First, an integrated presentation of all information on the historical background and of the original source in which discursive events are embedded. And secondly, the “exploration of the ways in which particular genres of discourse are subject to diachronic change.” (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999, p. 91).

Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) also distinguish four types of macro-strategies of discourse which will be of use for the purpose of this study: constructive strategies, strategies of perpetuation and justification, strategies of transformation, and destructive strategies (1999). When conducting a discourse analysis through this discourse-historical approach, specific attention should be paid towards these elements and macro-strategies as defined by van Leeuwen and Wodak. Moving forward, this study will test these contributions in the context of the Swiss debate on the ‘against mass immigration’ initiative.

Migration scholars have been increasingly interested in employing critical discourse analysis in their works on the construction of in-groups and out-groups in modern societies.

Studies have examined discourses of national identity and belonging and also have revealed dimensions of anti-‘foreigner’ debate in most ‘liberal’ modern societies. Seminal works from van Dijk (1987, 1991), Hartmann & Husband (1974), Lynn & Lea (2003), and Jones (2000) have focused specifically on the discriminatory discourse of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. The study of inclusion and exclusion in the field of migration thus has been widely enriched by the contributions of the multidisciplinary approaches to critical discourse analysis.

The principal aim of employing a DHA approach is to discuss how events, people and the vote are recontextualized in two very different perspectives in Switzerland, and how these discourses are reconstructed in the press through text. It also aims to unveil dynamics of power in Swiss popular discourse. It should be specified that the term ‘discourse’ will herein be used to refer to both the written and oral texts. Although the objective of this study is to examine the discourse in text format in the corpus of newspaper articles, the analysis of this discourse does not begin nor end in the form of written documents.

Reisigl and Wodak (1999) stressed that CDA assumes a dialectical relationship between particular discursive events and situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded: on the one hand, the situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discourses; on the other hand, discourses influence social and political reality. In other words, discourse constitutes social practice and is at the same time constituted by it. (p. 157) This includes the event, situation, institution and social structure. When examining a given discourse, there are four levels to analysis within context: the immediate, language or text internal co-text; the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses; the extralinguistic social/sociological variables and institutional frames of a specific ‘context of

situation' (middle-range theories); the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, to which the discursive practices are embedded and to which they are related (Wodak, 2000).

### **3.3 National Identity and CDA**

The construction of national, and in this case, sub-national identities have been explored using CDA because the method is “often interested in the study of ideologically biased discourses, and the ways that these polarize the representation of us (ingroups) and them (outgroups). [...], we thus often witness an overall strategy of ‘positive self-presentation and negative other presentation’, in which our good things and their bad things are emphasized, and our bad things and their good things are de-emphasized” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 103). As Wodak et al. (2009) have highlighted, “often nationalist attitudes and ethnic stereotypes articulated in discourse accompany or even determine political decision-making, and we note with concern the increase in discriminatory acts and exclusionary practices conducted in the name of nationalism in many parts of Europe” (p. 1). This is a helpful contribution for the overall objective of this study to investigate subnational identities and to analyse the role of traditional media in reproducing ‘discourses of identity’ through strategies of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

### **3.4 Newspaper, Media and CDA**

This study is primarily concerned with how discourses materialize in textual form through popular newspaper media in Switzerland. Media is a valuable source to examine popular discourse as it can reflect the ideology of a group and can also play a very vital role in shaping the cognitive and social structure of the population. Here this analysis is concerned with how the Swiss media discourses on the ‘stop mass immigration’ initiative increase or highlight the division between the French-speaking part of Switzerland and the German speaking part of Switzerland.

The role of discourse in mass media in the study of the 2014 initiative ‘against mass immigration’ is an invaluable key to understanding how differentiated ideologies emerge and are disseminated across the federation. It is also useful in understanding how preferences towards migration are re-constructed and re-created in popular discourse (van Dijk, 2005b, van Dijk, 2003.) In line with Foucauldian thinking, ‘mass’ communication assigns a centrality to discourse, as those that have control over mass communication exercise control over the ideologies at work in society. And as Jäger (2001) maintains, “discourses exercise power as they transport knowledge on which the collective and individual consciousness feeds. This emerging knowledge is the basis of individual and collective action and the formative action that shapes reality” (p. 38).

Globally, news has a social, political, and educational role. It is not always a direct representation of real life, however, but is shaped by structures of power, social settings, and cultural determinants. This is an important lens for this analysis of newspaper media, as the newspapers under analysis will not be interpreted as a direct representation of popular discourse. Instead, this analysis will investigate how the discourses of the SVP are recontextualized in mass media, and how these have influenced other reports of public discourse in the country. Additionally, it will be assumed that journalists are also social agents who can include their own opinions and stances on issues being reported.

#### *3.4.1 News as recontextualization*

The process of including one social practice into another is a recontextualization (van Leeuwen, 1993) or a sequence of communicative activities which make the social practices explicit to a greater or lesser degree. Social practices are things that people do, with greater or lesser degree of freedom, fixed by custom or prescription, or some mixture of these two (van

Leeuwen, 1993, p. 30). Important to note is that recontextualizations involve substitution, deletion or addition of elements of a given social practice (van Leeuwen, 1993). Elements of a news story such as events, people and actors can be represented (or not) depending on the goals of the publication, thus raising questions of truth, bias, and manipulation in media discourses. It is important to distinguish this when examining a complex phenomenon such as the vote ‘against mass immigration’ in Switzerland, as it can not be nor will be claimed that there is a direct and transparent representation of the social practice in the newspapers examined.

### *3.4.2 Discourses as legitimation*

How do discourses help to legitimize social practices in public communication? Van Leeuwen (2007) presents a useful framework for analysing the way discourses construct legitimation for social practices in public communication:

- 1) Authorization legitimation
- 2) Rationalization legitimation
- 3) Moral evaluation legitimation
- 4) Mythopoesis (telling stories)

The empirical section of this study will seek to evaluate this framework of legitimation in the discourse of the demographic who voted ‘for’ the initiative ‘against mass immigration’. This will be a helpful tool to evaluate different media discourses and their counter-discourses to illustrate how the Swiss media presents the issue of immigration and of the vote.

### *3.4.4 Intertextuality*

The discourse-historical approach sets the groundwork for an intertextual analysis, but the main objective is to offer a systematic and full analysis of media discourses of the against mass-immigration vote. It is important to note, however, that these discourses that emerge in the form of newspaper articles, are not independent from the policy and legal discourses. Indeed, it is understood widely in the field of discourse analysis that policy, legal and media discourses

interact in complex ways (Ter Waal, 1997). Quotes from parliamentary debates and interviews with politicians are absorbed by newspapers and reported in the media, therefore becoming a part of the reader's everyday discourse. The discourse-historical approach will allow this study's analysis to be intertextually connected to other genres of discourse and strategies of argumentation in Swiss popular media, and connected to the history of anti-immigration sentiment in Switzerland more generally.

## Chapter 4: Historical and Socio-political contexts

*“All language is historically conditioned, and all history is linguistically conditioned.”*

*(Koselleck, 1989, p. 649).*

### 4.1 Introduction

Although Switzerland is globally recognized as a country with a high share of foreign population, it has not always been regarded nor has it depicted itself as a true immigration state (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006). According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, at the end of 2020, there were 2.2 million foreign nationals residing in Switzerland with the majority of these foreigners coming from the EU members states of Germany, Italy, Portugal, and France (FSO, 2020c). With foreigners consisting of approximately twenty-five percent of the total population of 8.6 million, immigration and European integration are prominent and contested topics in contemporary politics (FSO, 2020a; Manatschal, 2015, p. 1). Since the 1960s, Switzerland has also been host to right-wing populist parties, like the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), which have successfully mobilized nationalist-conservative sentiments and anti-immigration attitudes to influence immigration policy (Skenderovic, 2007). The instruments of direct democracy have also created effective opportunity for these actors to push through their demands on issues related to immigration. In addition, there exists a lingering discursive legacy of *Überfremdung* (‘over-foreignization’) which has manifested in the campaigns of right-wing parties and the anti-immigrant sentiment which exists today in public opinion (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006; Manatschal, 2015).

By reviewing the history of immigration patterns to Switzerland and the policy which regulated these flows, this chapter seeks to lay the groundwork for an analysis of the vote ‘against mass immigration’ and the public discourse on immigration in the country. Historic,

demographic, and economic aspects of migration to Switzerland are an essential contextual element for this discourse-historical analysis of the vote ‘against mass immigration’. This chapter also seeks to situate the Swiss historical transformations of power and relationships of communication in the Foucauldian framework of governmentality. What is revealed through this overview of the history of Swiss immigration is that, despite the growing labour shortages and demands from many sectors of the economy, the vote ‘against mass immigration’ was situated in a favourable institutional and discursive environment to succeed which was propelled forward by the exclusionist agenda of the SVP.

#### **4.2: The history of immigration and integration as politicized issues in Switzerland**

Over the course of Switzerland’s history and especially evident in the discourse which followed the First World War, policies related to immigration and integration have regularly been at the top of the national agenda (Skenderovic, 2007). During the first wave of immigration in the nineteenth century, both skilled and unskilled foreigners were viewed as indispensable for economic development. Recruitment agreements were signed with Switzerland’s neighboring countries, France, Germany, and Italy, and foreigners began to arrive on the premise of the free movement of labour. These changes in migration flows, however, were met with an increased presence of radical-right parties who campaigned against labour immigrants (Skenderovic, 2007). As this chapter will demonstrate, while foreign nationals were perceived positively during a period of industrialization by civil society and the government, this conceptualization shifted greatly over the course of the country’s history and into the twenty-first century. The analysis is supported by a review of published material in English and French literature on the history of immigration policies in Switzerland (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006; Arlettaz & Arlettaz, 1996; Ruedin et al., 2015). According to Riaño and Waslt-Walter (2006), four historical periods,

namely the country's transformation from a rural to an industrial economy, the outbreak of the two world wars, the postwar economic growth, and the most recent Europeanisation of immigration politics have all greatly impacted the popular discourse surrounding immigration in Switzerland (p.1696). Moving forward, this chapter will provide a brief overview of the major trends in immigration and integration discourse during these four historical periods.

#### *4.2.1 Pre-World War One Switzerland*

At the foundation of the federation of Switzerland in 1848, immigration and integration were regulated solely by the federal constitution and the 1876 and 1903 laws on naturalizations (Reudin et al., 2015). During this time, Swiss cantons were able to curate their own immigration and integration policies (Skenderovic and D'Amato, 2008). Prior to the First World War, Switzerland is described by Riaño and Wastl-Walter (2006) as a poor nation with high levels of emigration due to scarce agricultural and mineral resources (p.1696). It was during this time that industrialisation introduced a need for foreign labour to support the development of Switzerland's textile and steel industries, as well as to build roads and railways (Afonso 2004, p.151). Subsequently, bilateral worker agreements were signed with France, Germany, and Italy. These agreements were based on the principle of the free movement of labour, which gave foreign nationals the same rights as national citizens, apart from voting rights (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 1696). Immigrants were able to apply for Swiss citizenship after two years of residence (Caroni, 2004; D'Amato, 2001).

These foreign worker programs contributed to a rapid growth in the foreign population. By the start of the 20th century, 15% of Switzerland's resident population consisted of foreign nationals (Reudin et al., 2015) According to Riaño and Wastl-Walter (2006), the number of foreign nationals increased from 150,000 in 1870 to 552,000 in 1910. This number represented

the highest rate of foreigners in Europe at the time and was met with negative reaction among the conservative cultural and political elite.

Although there are few English-language translations of historians who write about this period of Swiss history, some scholarly work in English and French can be found. Riaño (2006) has cited that some politicians, writers, and scientists began to speak about the threat of foreigners: “ ‘We are also being invaded by barbarians...Those Slavs, Greeks, South Americans and Orientals are all like big uncivilized children...Only, if we were strong enough to impose our culture on them’ ” (de Reynold, 1909, p. 261. Quoted in Riaño & Wastl-Walter 2006, p. 1697). Other authors have noted similar findings, such as Arlettaz and Arlettaz, in “La ‘question des étrangers’ en Suisse 1880-1914” [English: The ‘question of foreigners’ in Switzerland 1880-1914]. They note that between 1885 and 1914, migrants to Switzerland were met with ‘violent language’, and many newcomers were coined as ‘undesirable’ (para. 10). Terms such as “abnormal increase”, “unhealthy situation”, “infiltration”, “invasion”, and “colonization” were used during this time by some to refer to this rapid increase in foreign nationals living in the country (Arlettaz & Arlettaz 1996, para. 10).<sup>10</sup> Other historians in the field such as Picot (1914) called the period of migration a time of “foreign overpopulation” leading to “an abnormal, almost pathological social state” (p. 15).<sup>11</sup> He continues by arguing that this overpopulation “...creates a kind of malaise where all suffer more or less, but it is difficult to say precisely the exact causes which make one complain” (Picot 1914, p. 11).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Translation is my own. Original: « augmentation anormale », « situation malsaine », « infiltration », « invasion », « colonisation ».

<sup>11</sup> Translation is my own. Original: “Cette ‘surpopulation étrangère’ révèle un ‘état social anormal, presque pathologique’ (Picot 1914, p.15).

<sup>12</sup> Translation is my own. Original: “créer une sorte de malaise dont tous souffrent plus ou moins, mais dont il est difficile de faire préciser les causes exactes à ceux qui s’en plaignent”(Picot 1914, p. 11).

Much of the xenophobic reaction of the time was towards the rising Italian population. Between 1888 and 1910, the Italian population in Switzerland quadrupled, from 41,881 to 202,908 people (Arlettaz & Arlettaz, 1996). The integration of Italian workers was largely seen as a challenge to the Swiss labour movement (Vuillemier, 1977). Seasonal workers who moved from one construction site to another were reluctant to unionize and, as Arlettaz and Arlettaz (1996) argue, were more driven by immediate interests than those within the strategy of the Swiss trade unions. (para. 19). Other authors have noted that Italians were criticized for being “illiterate, uneducated, and lazy, with a much lower level of training than nationals” (Burckhardt 1913, pp. 20-21). Alternatively, the migrants from Germany during this period had a strong economic and cultural impact in Switzerland. Their number augmented from 112,342 in 1888 to 219,530 in 1910 (Alettaz & Arlettaz, 1996). By 1915, 14% of the university professors in Switzerland were from Germany, a number which represented 52.5% of the foreign professors (Busino, 1991). This was not met without criticism from locals, however, some deemed the movement a ‘scientific invasion’ (Rappard, 1915, p. 541).

These changes in population were met with increased political debate on assimilation and naturalization. The President of the Confederation, Robert Comtesse, then affirmed “the vital importance from a national point of view of greater facilities for the assimilation of foreigners” (Bulletin stenographique, 1910, p. 292).<sup>13</sup> Some argued that this might put national cohesion at risk. Foreigners were considered vehicles of new ideas and morals designated as ‘non-Swiss’. As Sauser-Hall is quoted, “what must be feared most are not men, but the ideas they embody” (Sauser-Hall, 1911, p. 429). As a measure to control the increasing movement of people across Swiss borders, an Alien’s Police was established in 1917 by the Swiss confederation (Reudin et

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Arlettaz & Arlettaz (1996).

al, 2015). In a quantitative study by Ruedin and D'Amato titled *Immigration and Integration Policy in Switzerland, 1848-2014*, the authors cite the establishment of the Alien's Police as "ebbing the way for more restrictive policies after World War I" (Ruedin et al., 2015, p. 10).

#### 4.2.2 Post World-War One Switzerland

The notion of *Überfremdung*, the idea that an excessive number of foreigners could threaten Swiss identity, became a predominant stance for the defense against immigration, settlement, and naturalization of foreigners in the period which followed the First World War (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 1698). Although the number of foreign nationals had actually decreased from 547,447 in 1910 to 398,459 in 1920, Riaño and Wastl-Walter (2006) argue that politicians were able to successfully use statistical extrapolations, instead of actual census statistics, to make their case for *Überfremdung*. The authors cite this fear as to what ultimately led to the paradigm shift away from the liberal stance of pre-war immigration policy towards a more restricted Switzerland (p.1699).

In 1932, this growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the country was solidified through popular vote in the Federal Law on the Settlement and Residence of Foreigners (ANAG). This law restricted the civil rights of foreigners and allowed for immigrants to be selected along the basis of ethnic criteria (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006). This law was also the first time that the concept of *Überfremdung* entered into formal legislation: in Article 16 of the ANAG it is stated that "officials granting foreigner permits need to take into account the intellectual and economic interests of the country as well as the degree of *Überfremdung*." (ANAG, 1931; Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 1703). According to Riaño and Wastl-Walter (2006), "...the aims stated in the law (still in force in 2006) were to avoid the entry and settlement of 'undesirable' people into the country, to stabilize the job market, to protect Swiss nationals from unemployment, and to

control the ratio of foreigners to Swiss within the population (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 1931)” (p. 1698). It is during this time that the discourse of ‘the boat is full’ first emerged to refer to the rising population in Switzerland.<sup>14</sup> This shift meant that the exclusionist ideas, and discriminatory attitudes found in Swiss society were no longer in the margins but also at the centre of Swiss formal discourse.

Switzerland has a long standing history of receiving refugees from religious and political persecution, yet during the Second World War, there existed a culture of selectivity in place of its commitments to humanitarianism and internationalism. Indeed, in 1938 a ‘J’-stamp was introduced to mark the passports of German and formerly Austrian Jews. As Ludi (2014) argues, this made it easier for Swiss immigration officials to identify Jewish refugees which were considered ‘undesirable’. The author also notes that the analogy of an overcrowded lifeboat became popularized during this era, where it was used to justify the government’s controversial decision to close the border to civilian refugees (Ludi, 2014). This moment in Swiss refugee history precluded warm reception Switzerland prepared for Hungarian refugees in 1956 (Ludi, 2014). A discourse of ‘the boat is full’ and a culture of selectivity would develop considerably during the Second World War and continue into the 21st century.

#### *4.2.3 Post World-War Two Switzerland*

Following the Second World War, Switzerland once again saw a period of great economic expansion. In order to meet the renewed demand for domestic labour, the government introduced a seasonal-worker system to promote the recruitment of labour into the country (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006). Thousands of Italians once again came to the German and French

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<sup>14</sup> See Alfred Adolf Häsler, *Das Boot ist voll: Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge 1933–1945* (Zurich: Ex Libris, 1968)

speaking parts of Switzerland because of Swiss labour recruitment schemes, and many came to help build the Gotthard tunnel (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006).

The notion of *Überfremdung* was still a real fear among citizens during this period, however, and the access to permanent residency and formal citizenship was highly regulated. Foreign workers were permitted to enter the country as a ‘temporary phenomenon’, and only allowed to work for a period of up to nine months (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 1699). The Swiss authorities also created a one-year status for foreign workers, where the renewal of the yearly workers permit was conditional on the country’s economic situation. Many Swiss perceived Italian migrants as threatening the integrity of ‘Swiss culture’, and metaphors such as ‘the boat is full’ were used to emphasize that Italians potentially undermine Swiss values and culture, and that Switzerland could therefore not accept more migrants (Braun, 1970; Stolz, 2001). Ultimately, and in accordance with the findings of Reudin et al., (2015) between 1921 and 1974 almost all policy changes in Swiss immigration and integration were ‘restrictive’ in nature (p. 10).

#### 4.2.4 Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Switzerland

This period also saw a tightening of naturalization legislation. In 1952, a new citizenship law (Bürgerrechtsgesetz [BüG]) was passed that elevated the minimum number of residence years from two to twelve (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 1952). Article 14 of the law reinforced the discourse of *Überfremdung*, by stating that citizenship could only be granted to citizens that were “integrated into Swiss society”, “familiar with the Swiss lifestyle, morals and customs”, “obedient to the Swiss legal system” and for those who “did not represent a danger to Switzerland's security” (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 1952).

From the 1950s until the 1970s, Italians were heavily discriminated against in the housing market, the job market, and in public institutions such as Swiss sport associations and schools (Seiler 1965; Braun 1970). The movement against over-foreignization reached a new height in the early 1960s and the mid-1970s with the emergence of several new populist right-wing parties which were bound together by strong anti-immigrant sentiment. The groups National Action (Nationale Aktion gegen die Überfremdung von Volk und Heimat – NA, 1961), Vigilance (1964), the Swiss Republican Movement (1971) and the Swiss Democratic Union (1975) all shared a common goal which was to restrict the country's policies towards immigrants and foreign residents (Skenderovic, 2009). Anti-immigration discourse peaked in 1970 with the Schwarzenbach Initiative 'Against Floods of Foreigners and Overpopulation' (Maiolino, 2011; Manatschal, 2015). The vote aimed to reduce the immigrant share from what was then 17 percent to 10 percent (Manatschal, 2015, p. 25). The close result of the Schwarzenbach vote (46 percent yes-votes) is a demonstration of the long-standing history that anti-immigration discourse has in Swiss society (Manatschal, 2015).

In recent years, Switzerland has abandoned the seasonal-worker approach, in exchange for a more liberal immigration stance towards citizens from the EU. In 2001, an agreement between Switzerland and the EU on the free movement of individuals was accepted by popular vote, giving EU nationals the same living and working rights as the Swiss, with the exception of voting rights (European Community, 2002). In 2004, the new 'Foreign Nationals Act' replaced the outdated 1931 Federal Law on the Residence and Settlement of Foreign Nationals (now 'Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, FNIA 2005). This act restricted entry for non-EU immigrants to only those who are skilled personnel, who are seen as essential for the economy and who are more able to integrate into Swiss society (FNIA, 2005, ch.2 art. 4). In the following

section, this chapter will build upon this historical context to provide a review of the immediate socio-political context in the lead up to the vote ‘against mass immigration’ in 2014.

### **4.3 Switzerland’s Labour Market Concerns**

#### *4.3.1 Cross-border workers*

The complete removal of all immigration restrictions for workers from the EU in Switzerland, also referred to as the free movement phase, first began in mid-2004 to fill the growing labour market shortages in the country (Beerli et al., 2019, p. 977). This controversial policy change allowed many companies, educational institutions, and NGOs in the border region of Switzerland to gain free access to cross-border workers (CBW). Before this change in policy, there were several administrative hurdles for firms hoping to hire CBW. Most notably, the Swiss businesses had to prove that they were unable to find an equally qualified Swiss worker before hiring those from across the border.<sup>15</sup> This priority requirement was abolished in 2004, allowing firms to have a greater availability of CBW to fill their employment shortages (Beerli et al., 2019, p. 977).

Contrary to much of the discourse which subsequently emerged, this change had little effect on jobs or wages for native Swiss residents. In a study which sought to evaluate the effects of this policy change on the Swiss labour market, on Swiss workers, and on Swiss firms, the authors found that the greater availability of CBW did not have a statistically significant negative impact on average employment or wages of Swiss native workers. Most interestingly, the findings demonstrate that the reform increased wages of highly educated native workers by around five percent (Beerli et al., 2018, p. 978). The authors also demonstrate that the free movement policy increased research and development (R&D) employment, patent applications,

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<sup>15</sup> Also known as a ‘priority requirement’ (Beerli et al. 2018, p. 977).

and product innovations in firms which reported scarcity of R&D workers before the reform. These findings are highly relevant against the backdrop of the opposition to free labour mobility which was present in the discourse surrounding the vote ‘against mass immigration’ in Switzerland. When immigrants from the EU gained free and full access to the labour market and when priority requirements were abolished, a trend towards progressive labour market opportunities was observed; the liberalization of immigration policy in Switzerland during this time was proven to facilitate success for companies without harming the labour market opportunities of Swiss workers (Beerli et al., 2018).

#### *4.3.2 Retaining International Graduates*

International students constitute a major percentage of the foreign population in Switzerland and are typically viewed by governments as ideal immigrants to fill existent labour shortages. It is for this reason that international student mobility and migration (ISM) has become of increasing economic and academic significance in the field of migration research in Switzerland.<sup>16</sup> Many countries have identified international graduates as highly valuable skilled workers and have thus implemented more liberal policies to allow them to stay after graduation (Lombard & Zufferey, 2019, p. 5). According to Ruhs (2008), there are three principal rationales for retaining international graduates as formulated through an economic lens: to encourage labour expansion by complementing the skill of the domestic workforce; to support and facilitate economic growth by employing highly qualified workers; and to provide fiscal benefits by maximizing overall gains and minimizing adverse distributional effects for existing residents (Ruhs, 2008, p. 406).

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<sup>16</sup> For example, see: Riaño et al. (2018) New directions in studying policies of international student mobility and migration, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*; Makarova, E., & Kassis, W. (2022). *Understanding School Success of Migrant Students: An International Perspective*; Lombard. (2019). *International students in Switzerland: trajectories, stay rates, and intentions for post-graduate mobility*.

Policies that have been put in place to facilitate the retention of international students following graduation have been termed as ‘study-to-work’ policies, ‘student switching’ or ‘two-step migration’ (Mosneaga, 2015; Robertson, 2011; Hawthorne, 2012). In 2011, a bill was passed in Switzerland to modify Article 27 of the 2005 Foreign Nationals Act, to facilitate the admission and integration of foreign nationals who graduated from a Swiss university (Riaño et al., 2018, p. 296). These changes represented a significant liberalization in Swiss migration policy, marking a shift from the former restrictive policies which aimed at avoiding competition from non-EU nationals (Riaño et al., 2018, p. 296). According to Riaño et. al, Switzerland has the second-highest share of international students of all OECD countries (31%) after Luxembourg (44%) (OECD, 2016, quoted in Riaño et al., 2017, p. 7). According to the amendments, international students were no longer required to submit a declaration confirming their intent to leave Switzerland following their education. The graduates were also permitted to stay provisionally in Switzerland for up to six months after graduation to seek employment matching their qualifications and were no longer subjected to the priority rule giving Swiss citizens priority over jobs if the prospective employment was of ‘high scientific or economic interest’ for Switzerland (Riaño et al., 2018, p. 296). Finally, international graduates were able to use the years spent studying at a Swiss university to be counted towards obtaining long-term residence status (Federal Office for Migration, 2010).

The National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) for migration and mobility studies has since contributed to this field of research with a multivariate analysis of Swiss labour market integration based on graduate surveys from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. Their findings show that the employment share of international graduates in Switzerland one year after graduation is 83%, a very high finding (Lombard & Zufferey, 2019, p.12). The differences in

employment rates varies somewhat across nationalities, where Germans led with a high employment rate of 93%, ahead of Swiss graduates (90%) (Lombard & Zufferey, 2019, p.12). Non-EU nationals followed further behind with Latin Americans (79%), then European non-EU nationals (77%), Asians and Oceanians (73%), and Africans (66%) (Lombard & Zufferey, 2019, p.12). When asked to report the reason for difficulties in finding employment, non-EU graduates reported relatively more problems in job-seeking due to their nationalities (Lombard & Zufferey, 2019, pp.15-16). Migration policy liberalization for international students in Switzerland is thus an important socio-political context within which to analyse the discourse surrounding the vote ‘against mass immigration’. Although foreign nationals have provenly enriched Swiss society and filled labour market shortages, this was not a universally accepted ‘truth’ in the context of the vote. Instead, it was overshadowed by the anti-immigrant discourse perpetuated by the Swiss People’s Party.

#### **4.4 Immigration policy and the Swiss People’s Party**

The Swiss People’s Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei* - SVP) is a national-conservative, right-wing populist political party in Switzerland and has been a central actor in the Swiss immigration debate over the last thirty years. The party was originally founded in 1971 but adopted a more populist strategy and exclusionist agenda in the 1990s under the leadership of Christophe Blocher (Skenderovic, 2009, p. 3). This substantial radical shift led the Council of Europe to list the SVP in a report concerning the rise of political parties that directly or indirectly foster xenophobia, intolerance and racism alongside the Flemish Block in Belgium and the

Freedom Party in Austria (p. 3).<sup>17</sup> Not all were as concerned about this shift, however, as this transformation was met with substantial electoral gains in Switzerland.

Since its foundation, the Swiss People's Party has become a strong actor in Switzerland's legislative institutions. In order to best understand the discourse surrounding the vote 'against mass immigration', it is essential to situate this vote in the distinct history and internal culture of the populist party which spearheaded the initiative. The party's success began in 1991 following a period of political and ideological radicalization, according to Skenderovic (2009). After this shift, the SVP almost doubled its number of cantonal MPs, from 297 in 1991 to 570 in 2003 (Skenderovic, 2009, p. 151). In the 2011 election, the Swiss People's Party won 26.6 percent of the popular vote under the leadership of Toni Brunner (FSO, 2020d). At the time of the vote 'against mass immigration', the party held 54 seats of the 200 seats in the National Council, and 5 of 46 in the Council of States (FSO, 2020d).

#### *4.4.1 Switzerland, Euroscepticism and the SVP*

A brief overview of Switzerland's relationship with the European Union is also important for situating the vote against mass immigration in its respective socio-political and historical contexts. Limiting migration and Euroscepticism have been core issues on the SVP's agenda since the political shift in the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> In 1992, Switzerland voted against the proposal to join the European Economic Area with eighteen of twenty-six cantons (50.3 percent of the population) rejecting the agreement (The Federal Chancellery, 2019). This vote created a divisive debate across the country. Like the vote 'against mass immigration', French-speaking Switzerland

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<sup>17</sup> Report titled: "Threat Posed to Democracy by Extremist Parties and Movements in Europe" Report of the Political Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe, Doc. 8607, 3 January 2000. Quoted in: Skenderovic 2009, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Bernhard (2017) calls this a 'process of radicalization' under the decisive influence of Cristophe Blocher's Zurich wing. (p.511)

largely stood for EU integration, while the German-speaking regions voted against it. (See Figure 9).

Between 1993 and 2004, the EU and Switzerland created a series of bilateral agreements to foster mutual cooperation, but not without reservations from the SVP. Most notably, on 21 June 1999, Switzerland and the European Union signed seven bilateral agreements including the Swiss-EU Bilateral Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (Duport & Sciarini, 2007). As previously mentioned in this chapter, Bilateral Agreement I (1999) introduced the free movement of people with the EU and gave Switzerland access to the EU single market (Schwok and Najy, 2016, p.127). This agreement was met with general support from the Swiss public, and received sixty-eight percent of the popular vote (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 5). This series of bilateral agreements opened the Swiss labour market originally to the members of the EU-15, and subsequently was extended to the new EU member states when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007 (McKeever, 2020, p.70).

Although these bilateral agreements were meant to be a step to enhance economic cooperation between Switzerland and the EU, the free movement of people from the EU to Switzerland became a politicized issue spearheaded by the SVP. In 2004, the SVP with the support of the Swiss Democrats attempted to deny the extension of free movement of people to the newly joined citizens of Eastern European countries, but ultimately was unsuccessful (McKeever 2020, p.74). The party viewed the acceptance of these agreements as a threat of further integration with the EU, according to Milic (2006), and prepared counterproposals (p.1277). Ultimately, these efforts were unsuccessful, and 56 percent of the popular vote supported the extension of the Agreements to the newly joined EU states (The Federal Council, 2017).

The SVP found success once again in 2006 when their proposed amendments to the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals were supported by 68 percent of the population (McKeever 2019, p.76). Christoph Blocher, member of the Swiss People's Party, headed the Federal Department of Justice and Police proposals which sought to introduce more restrictive rules for family reunification and to tighten integration practices by requiring newcomers to possess sufficient knowledge of the local language as a confirmation of successful integration (McKeever 2019, p.76). Also part of the amendments was a new requirement for non-EU workers to prove they had sufficient financial means for staying in Switzerland (Pauchard, 2006). This newfound Eurosceptic and anti-immigration support among the Swiss electorate would continue in the lead-up to the vote 'against mass immigration'.

#### *4.4.2 Direct democracy and populist anti-migration sentiment*

After its electoral success in 2003, the SVP gained significant influence in parliamentary and governmental arenas. However, as McKeever (2019) explains, the SVP was often unable to persuade other parties in parliament to support their radical stances towards immigration policy (p. 75). For this reason, the party turned to the extra-parliamentary channels of direct democracy to push forward their Eurosceptic and anti-immigration agenda (p. 75).

The resistance against immigration by means of direct democracy has a longstanding tradition in Switzerland. At the national level, there are three institutions of Swiss direct democracy. Firstly, the popular initiative can revise any part of the constitution if the movement succeeds in collecting 100,000 signatures in eighteen months (Skenderovic, 2009, p.45). Alternatively, a referendum can be initiated with the signature of 50,000 citizens (Skenderovic, 2009, p.45) Finally, any new law or amendment to the constitution which passes through both chambers of the federal body is subject to mandatory referendum. This includes membership in

organizations for collective security or supranational communities. (Skenderovic, 2009, p.45) Despite their prevalence in Swiss politics, the actual adaptation of popular initiatives is not so common: of the 160 submitted initiatives between 1891 and 2015, only 15 have been adopted (Lathion, 2011, p. 17). In many cases, these democratic instruments have been used throughout Swiss history to indicate current concerns among the population, with the objective of putting pressure on the government to act. According to Manatschal (2015), there have been three popular initiatives which were targeted towards immigration to Switzerland: The Schwarzenbach Initiative in 1970 ‘Against Floods of Foreigners and Overpopulation’, the 2009 Minaret Ban Initiative, and the 2014 vote ‘against mass immigration’.

In 2007, anti-immigrant sentiment reemerged in Swiss political discourse when a group of right-wing politicians from the Swiss People's Party and the Federal Democratic Union (Egerkingen Committee) launched a federal popular initiative that sought to establish a constitutional ban on minarets.<sup>19</sup> The debate originated in Wangen bei Olten, where the Turkish cultural association had requested to erect a six-metre-high minaret on the roof of its Islamic community centre (Mayer, 2011, p.13). After unsuccessfully attempting to pass legislation through the Swiss parliament, the committee launched an initiative which proposed to change Article 72 of the Swiss Federal Constitution to read: “The building of minarets is prohibited.” (Mayer, 2011, p.13). The initiative committee argued that minarets could symbolize a religious and political claim for power that threatens Switzerland and its Christian values (Wyler, 2017, p.414) The ban of minarets, therefore, was understood to be a ‘symbolic gesture’ against the ‘Islamization’ happening in Switzerland and Europe as a whole.

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<sup>19</sup> A minaret is an element in Islamic religious architecture, such as a tower, which is always connected with a mosque.

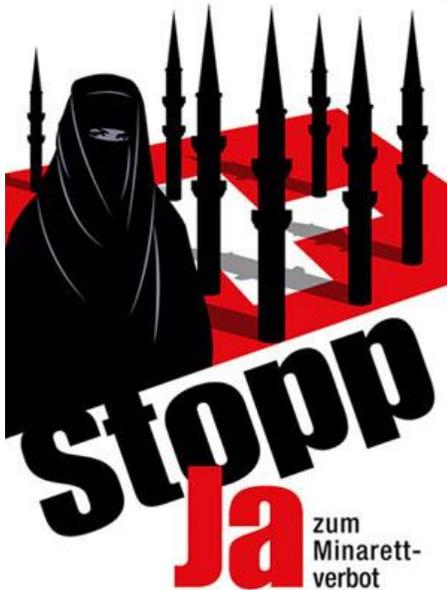
In their work titled “Locating the threat, rebordering the nation: Gender and Islamophobia in the Swiss Parliament, 2001–2015”, Direnberger, Banfi and Eskandari (2022) discuss how the idea of an ‘Islamic threat’ became a prominent debate among the ruling elite in Switzerland and is used to justify the socio-spatial exclusion of Muslims. The authors highlight the campaigns in the November 2009 minaret-ban referendum to demonstrate the relationship between Islamophobia and political actors in Switzerland (Direnberger, Banfi, & Eskandari, 2022). It was also during this time that the SVP developed a discourse around the incompatibility of Islam with Swiss values (Direnberger, Banfi, & Eskandari, 2022). This discourse continued during the debate around the vote ‘against mass immigration’ where the SVP succeeded in making the ‘Islamic threat’ a federal issue. In the campaign posters to be discussed in Chapter 5, immigrants being a ‘threat to identity’ prevails. Indeed, in one poster (Figure 6) a woman wearing a burqa is clearly illustrated in the front row of a crowded Switzerland, along with the statement “Yes to the initiative against mass immigration”.

The minaret referendum debate evoked an intense discussion within Switzerland and around the world. Questions emerged on whether or not the initiative was a violation of human rights, and if it was a move to directly restrict the religious freedom of Muslims living in Switzerland. At the time of the vote, there were roughly 350,000 Muslims living in Switzerland. In comparison to the European average, the country at the time had the second lowest number of mosques per Muslim resident with one mosque per 4000 Muslim residents (Allievi, 2010, p. 20). At the date of the initiative in 2009, there were only four minarets across Switzerland in Zürich, Geneva, Winterthur and Wangen bei Olten (Allievi, 2010, p. 20). On 29 November 2009, 57.5 percent of the Swiss electorate voted to approve the ban (Dodd, 2015, p.10). Only the French-speaking cantons of Geneva, Vaud and Neuchatel voted against the ban (9.7%, 53.1% and 50.9%

respectively) (Dodd, 2015, p.10). Several international human rights organizations moved to challenge the ban, claiming that it violated their international human rights obligations. The Human Rights Watch, for example, argued that the referendum “violates the rights of observant Muslims to manifest their religion in public” (Human Rights Watch, 2009). The United Nations’ human rights chief, similarly, called the referendum a “discriminatory and deeply divisive step which risks putting the county on a collision course with its international rights obligations” (UN Rights Center, 2009) The Swiss minaret referendum gained public awareness from Muslims and non-Muslims around the world as they expressed their disappointment in the Swiss public’s decision. According to Wyler (2017), more than 4000 articles all around the world reported on the vote (p. 416). Two of the most popular Arab satellite television stations, Al-Arabia.net and Al-Jazeera.net published over 50 articles between September and October 2010 (Wyler, 2017, p. 416). Reports were especially concerned with the SVP and the controversial posters that they published to promote their cause: in Figure 3, a campaign poster can be seen with the Swiss flag covered by minarets which were transformed to resemble missiles, along with an image of a woman in a burka.

### **Figure 3**

“Stopp Ja – zum Minarett-verbot” [in English: Stop, Yes – to the ban on minarets]



*Note.* Geeta Dayal, “6 Posters on the Swiss Minaret Vote”, *Print Magazine*, November 2012, Web, <http://www.printmag.com/Article/6-Posters-on-the-SwissMinaret-Vote>.

The SVP campaign on the ban of minarets is argued to have caused serious damage to the country’s international reputation and was ruled as racist by some city authorities such as Basel (Dodd, 2015; Manatschal, 2015). This tactic of using xenophobic and racist images during a political campaign is not unique to the case of the SVP’s ban on minarets. In the Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners, the anti-immigration discourse of the SVP was especially evident in the imagery. In this case, the UN’s special rapporteur on racism, Doudou Diène, was driven to ask the SVP to withdraw a controversial election poster which depicted a white sheep kicking a black sheep out of Switzerland (Amnesty International, 2008). The proposal itself called for the automatic expulsion and return of non-Swiss residents who committed crimes in the country (Federal Council 2019). Although this initiative was accepted by fifty-three percent of the votes, the Federal Council and the Parliament rejected the initiative (McKeever, 2019, p. 77). This led

the SVP to claim that the government was not representing the true will of the people, and they criticized the government's proposed counter-project. In an interview with a former national councillor, Hans Fehr, he is cited,

If the government does not respect the decisions of the people, this is bad. For instance, the removal of foreign criminals, the government took some time, the parliament did not respect erectly the decisions of the people and that is why we made a second initiative on foreign criminals (the implementation). (Fehr, 2016. Quoted in McKeever, 2019, p.90)

Due to the nature of the Swiss political system, the strategy of using the instruments of direct democracy had been a successful tool for the SVP to advance their anti-immigration and Eurosceptic agenda even before the vote 'against mass immigration'. They had routinely used this process to legitimize their xenophobic and anti-immigration discourses. Like in the quote from Hans Fehr, the democratic processes which did not ultimately pass illiberal initiatives to restrict immigration policy were criticized by the SVP, and the government was accused for not representing the will of the people. The Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners is a demonstration of the power that the SVP has in pushing forward their illiberal and at times xenophobic agenda using the instruments of direct democracy in the country.

#### *4.4.3 The SVP and Federal Election Manifestos*

The federal election manifestos of the SVP are another useful source to demonstrate the continuity in the party's discourses on national identity, on immigration, on security, and on Europeanization. In 2007, the party released an electoral platform titled "My home, our Switzerland" which focused on separation from the EU, and less abuse of the right to asylum, and less immigration into the social system (SVP, 2007, p.5) In the document, the party argues that family migration is on the rise, and that it does not benefit Switzerland economically. Anti-Islamic sentiment is seen on page 44, where a picture with two women in headscarves is titled

“Are we the foreigners in our own country?” (SVP, 2007, p. 44). The discourses surrounding the EU describe it as a super state, one that forces political uniformity upon its members, and one that imposes foreign policy, security, and common currency (McKeever, 2020; SVP, 2007, p. 17). The party claims that its objective is to free Switzerland from its ‘corset’ of international conventions and agreements (SVP, 2007, p. 16).<sup>20</sup> Again in 2011, the SVP released a comprehensive election manifesto which outlined the objectives of the party. During this time, yet another controversial poster was released by the party titled “Kosovans slice up Swiss” (Figure 4).

#### Figure 4

“Kosovaren Schlitzern – Masseneinwanderung Stoppen!” [in English: “Kosovans slice up Swiss”]



*Note.* Accessed from: “Schlitzer-Inserat ist rassendiskriminierend” [in English: Slicing ad is racially discriminatory”] <https://www.derbund.ch/schweiz/standard/schlitzerinserat-ist-rassendiskriminierend/story/18467596>. Copyright Der Bund 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Translation is my own. Original: “Libérer la Suisse du corset des conventions et prescriptions internationaux” (SVP, 2007, p. 16)

The poster was argued to be a discriminatory attack towards Kosovans living in Switzerland and was deemed by the Federal Supreme Court for being an offence of racial discrimination (Der Bund, 2017).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This Chapter on the historical and socio-political and context in Switzerland shows that the discourses which emerged during 2014 were not unique to the vote ‘against mass immigration’. Instead, this vote is an indication of the continuity of power and knowledge production in anti-migration discourses. The result of the vote ‘against mass immigration’ in February 2014 was not unforeseen, and in fact, there were evident signs of the SVP initiative succeeding to a great extent (Skenderovic, 2008). By reviewing Switzerland’s relationship with the EU, this section has situated the Swiss People’s Party’s objectives and discourse in their greater political and historical contexts. It has shown that anti-immigration and Eurosceptic sentiment was already prevalent and even a central issue in the Swiss political arena before the vote ‘against mass migration’. Discourses existed historically which aimed to protect Swiss identity and the Swiss economy. The popular initiative was not new to the SVP, as direct democracy had previously been used as the party’s channel to restrict immigration, oppose ‘Islamification’ and object EU integration, including the Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets and The Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners.

In the section on labour market shortages and international student retention, this chapter has shown how critical international migration is to the growth and success of Swiss research and development capacities. Some scholars have argued that one of the greatest challenges faced by the Swiss government today is the task of balancing the demands for high-skilled labour from

the growing economy, while managing the xenophobic sentiment which exists in the public sphere.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the present anti-immigration sentiment in the country may be the greatest barrier to recruitment and retention of migrants in the twenty-first century.

As has been shown, the discourse of *Überfremdung* in Switzerland has been characterised by continuity that extends from the late 1800s and throughout the postwar era (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006). This persistent discourse has been captured by the populist SVP and has been used to increase their popularity in Swiss political institutions. Indeed, these have led to considerable xenophobic reactions among the Swiss population, and direct democracy in the country has provided an especially unique means of expressing this sentiment at the political level (Afonso, 2004). The 2014 popular initiative as launched by the national-conservative Swiss People's Party aimed to limit immigration through quotas which asked the question, "Do you accept the federal popular initiative 'against mass immigration'?" (Federal Statistical Office, 2014). The passing of this initiative with 50.3 percent of the popular vote, and a difference of 19,526 votes, is a successful but not unique example of how this party gained popular support by pushing through their demands on issues related to immigration using the instruments of direct democracy.

Though there has been a liberalization in Swiss immigration policy in the freedom of movement between Switzerland and the European Union, the success of this popular initiative exemplifies the legacy of the notion of *Überfremdung*. This chapter has situated this analysis in historical and socio-political context which shows how issues of immigration have been

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<sup>21</sup> For example, see Hans Mahnig, "Between Economic Demands and Popular Xenophobia: The Swiss System of Immigration Regulation," in *Regulation of Migration: International Experiences*, ed. Anita Böcker (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1998), 174–90.

historically perceived and how immigrants are discursively constructed in public debates and political processes in Switzerland (Skenderovic, 2008). It also has shown the lengths that the country must go in order to become accommodating and accepting of foreign nationals, specifically of non-European origin, whether they are entering the country through asylum or through high-skilled recruitment channels.

## Chapter 5 – Analysis of Media Texts

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as the center of empirical analysis and is an investigation into Swiss popular discourse on migration, integration, and the vote ‘against mass immigration’ during 2013-2014. In line with the thinking of Foucault, it is in this section that the ‘more’ behind the discourse will be revealed and described. This period is marked by a continuation of cultural discursive constructions of migrants, many of which have been identified in Chapter 4. As seen in the review of the historical-political context of Switzerland, Switzerland has had a longstanding discourse about who is inside and outside the larger national community. This began with the Italians and Yugoslavians in the post-World War II era and continued in the minaret ban initiative which sought to limit the ‘Islamification’ of Switzerland. Despite historically not being a country under one unified religion or one unified language, there are evident discursive constructs of who belongs and who does not belong in the Swiss community.

In the following analysis, there is also evidence that the discursive strategies and arguments of legitimation used by past right-wing populist movements reappear in the popular discourse surrounding the vote ‘against mass migration’ between 2013 and 2014. In excerpts from public statements by the SVP, in newspaper opinion pieces, and in articles covering the results of the vote, the conceptualization of immigrants as dangerous, as a threat to Swiss culture, and a limit upon physical space are repeatedly used as arguments of legitimation (van Leeuwen 2007). In applying the critical approach to discourse analysis, this section seeks to first identify the discursive strategies and constructions as employed by the SVP and the media in the coverage of the vote ‘against mass migration’, and second, to reveal how these discourses interact with structural power and existent divides in the country. Upon investigation, what is

revealed is a clear divide of discourse in the country. As some journalists have identified, this cleavage can be explained by the city-country divide, or by an ideological gap between the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of globalization in the country. But most notably, the distinction is clearest between the German and French-speaking regions of the country when examining the discourse of newspapers covering the vote ‘against mass immigration’, demonstrating that the perceived border called ‘*Röstigraben*’ goes beyond mere cultural differences.<sup>22</sup>

This chapter will move forward to investigate the discourses on immigration that emerged across the informal periphery with reference to the vote ‘against mass immigration’. Although some data will be pulled directly from the SVP campaign to provide context for the discourse used in promotional strategies and advertisements, the focus of this section will be on the newspaper articles which covered the vote, the interviews with SVP elites during the campaign, and opinion pieces. This will allow the analysis to situate the discourses within the wider textual context in which they occur (Wodak, 2001). To recapitulate, the data comes from four major Swiss newspapers: *Le Matin* (French), *Le Temps* (French), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (German), *Basler Zeitung* (German).

## 5.2 List of Discourse Topics

The concentration of this empirical analysis is of the discourses on immigration which emerged during the course of the vote ‘against mass immigration’ between 1 January 2013 and 1 January 2015. Particular attention is paid towards how the established discourses as revealed in Chapter 4 are ‘recontextualized’ in the discourse of the SVP and in the media. In order to

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<sup>22</sup> *Rösti* is a Swiss-German word which refers to the kind of Swiss dish found mostly in German-speaking Switzerland made of grated potatoes. The term “*Röstigraben*” or as translated into English, “Rösti-trench” most frequently is cited to refer the divide between French-speaking and German-speaking part of Switzerland. See section 6.3.1 for a more detailed discussion of the term.

centralize the theoretical framework of governmentality in the interpretation of these texts, the following sub-questions will be asked:

- i) How has the socio-political context and history of Switzerland shaped the discourses on immigration of today?
- ii) How has the discourse on immigration of the SVP been recontextualized in the media?
- iii) Which issues surrounding the vote and its outcome were most salient in popular discourse?

To answer these questions, a code will be assigned in the empirical analysis to delineate discourses which appear in the SVP campaign posters and the newspaper articles under investigation (Table 2). As will be shown, some discourses appear concurrent to others, while in other data points, one overarching discourse can be identified. A discussion of this empirical analysis will follow in Chapter 6.

**Table 2**  
List of Discourse Topics

<i>Code</i>	Discourse Topic
<i>DI 1</i>	Density stress
<i>DI 2</i>	Job/housing shortages
<i>DI 3</i>	‘Overforeignization’
<i>DI 4</i>	Immigrants as dangerous
<i>DI 5</i>	Threat to identity
<i>DI 6</i>	Economic concerns (general)
<i>DI 7</i>	Röstigraben
<i>DI 8</i>	City-country divide
<i>DI 9</i>	(anti-)Globalization / Europeanization

### 5.3 ‘Against Mass Immigration’ in SVP Discourse

This section focuses in brief on the election posters for the vote ‘against mass immigration’ as launched by the national conservative Swiss People’s Party in February of 2014.

The analysis is situated in the theoretical Foucauldian concepts of power, knowledge, and discourse. The analysis of these images is critical to understanding how the SVP employed historically symbolic elements to construct specific and strategic social narratives about migration and foreigners in Switzerland.<sup>23</sup> In enabling viewers to link previously existing knowledge to their emerging fears, needs, or expectations, the campaign posters of the SVP produce new forms of knowledge in the existent discourses which appear real or ‘true’ (Wintzer, 2019). In critical discourse analysis, this strategy has also been called *Mythopeosis*, or the act of telling stories to legitimize discourse (van Leeuwen, 2007).

Four campaign posters are highlighted in this section which were used by the SVP as a form of visual argumentation to produce meaning, and to legitimize their discourse in public communication. The posters were designed by Alexander Segert, an artist who had been designing advertisements for the SVP for fourteen years (Wintzer, 2019, p. 4). According to Wintzer, these posters were the main vehicles of political propaganda during the campaign for the ‘against mass immigration’ initiative. They could be seen in public places across the country, and were disseminated over the Internet, in newspapers, and in magazines (Wintzer, 2019, p. 4).

In the first image, “Masseneinwanderung stoppen!” (Figure 5), black feet can be seen trampling across a border marked by a red surface with a white cross. In bold, the text of “mass immigration” is written along with the action verb, “stop”. The figures are without faces and therefore unidentifiable, and in all black. To the onlooker, it appears that they are viewing an endless stream of strangers entering Switzerland from a lower perspective, accentuating the idea of them coming closer, and in the words of Wintzer, giving the suggestion that these outsiders are “threatening/unstoppable/ crushing/infinity, trampled/crossing the Swiss border.”(2019). In

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<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed, in-depth analysis, see contributions of J. Wintzer in “The Visualization of Migration” (2019)

the second image, “Ja zur Initiative gegen Masseneinwanderung” (Figure 6), an image of a ‘flat’ Switzerland is depicted against a red background. Inside the image of Switzerland, the artist has drawn a ‘crowded’ view of a community, with cars releasing exhaust into the air. Surrounding this image, there are illustrations of needles, pistols, and garbage pointed towards the shape of Switzerland.

**Figure 5**

“Masseneinwanderung stoppen!” [in English: Stop Mass Immigration!]



*Note.* Swissvotes (2022). Swissvotes – the Database on the Swiss Popular Votes. Année Politique Suisse, University of Bern. Online: <https://swissvotes.ch/vote/580.00>.

**Figure 6**

“Ja zur Initiative gegen Masseneinwanderung” [in English: Yes to the initiative against mass immigration”]



*Note.* Swissvotes (2022). Swissvotes – the Database on the Swiss Popular Votes. Année Politique Suisse, University of Bern. Online: <https://swissvotes.ch/vote/580.00>.

Reference is made to over-Europeanization in a poster titled “Masslosigkeit schadet!” [Excess is Harmful!] (Figure 7). In this image, a tree bearing red apples can be seen with its roots surrounding a crumbling Switzerland, marked by its white cross on a red background. To someone who is unaware of the context of previous uses of the metaphor of the fruit bearing tree in Switzerland, an analysis could also be drawn from the biblical story of the root of evil. According to Wintzer, however, the symbol of the tree was first used by pro-European parties in Switzerland. They write, “the tree would grow in the middle of Switzerland, standing for positive aspects of the bilateral relations between Switzerland and the EU, which so to speak make Switzerland a fruitful place.” (Wintzer, 2019, p. 10). In this example, the SVP is using this imagery of the EU (or the bilateral agreements) as the tree to show how it has surrounded, pressurized, and crushed Switzerland.

**Figure 7**

“Masslosigkeit schadet!” [in English: “Excess is Harmful!”]



*Note.* Accessed from Swissvotes (2022). Swissvotes – the Database on the Swiss Popular Votes. Année Politique Suisse, University of Bern. Online: <https://swissvotes.ch/vote/580.00>.

For the final example of how anti-immigrant discourse has manifested in the political campaign of the SVP, in Figure 8, a ‘factual’ graphic used as the main page on the SVP’s campaign shows how ‘truth’ can be manipulated by those holding power. On the official campaign website of the ‘against mass immigration’ initiative, this graphic is used to show the figures representing the resources that immigrants could possibly use if coming to Switzerland. These are presented as ‘facts’ yet are lacking context and without real or accessible reference to the source upon which these claims are based. Again, this imagery presents the country as red, giving the impression that it is one homogenous structure. The figures are in the colour black, a colour which is associated with negativity or with ‘outsiders’ in the other images.

Figure 8

“The argumentarium” (Wintzer, 2019)



Note. “The argumentarium” sourced in Wintzer (2019) in *The Visualization of Migration*. From the website: <http://www.masseneinwanderung.ch>.

In these SVP election posters for the vote ‘against mass immigration’, already several pre-existing discourses can be identified. In Figure 5, the image of foreigners ‘trampling’ over a small Switzerland contributes to the narrative of density stress (DI 1), and the large, anonymous figures illustrated with the colour black also give the idea that these outsiders are potentially a danger to the homogenous Swiss society (DI 4). In Figure 6, there is symbolism which relates to the discourse topics of density stress (DI 1) and ‘Overforeignization’[*Überfremdung*] (DI 3), but most clearly the viewer is aware of the discourse of ‘immigrants as dangerous’ with the images of a gun, needles, and a piece of trash pointed towards the image of the overcrowded Switzerland (DI 4). The discourse of (anti-)Europeanization is evident in Figure 7, with the metaphor of the EU as the overbearing apple tree which crushes small Switzerland (DI 9). In Figure 8, mass immigration is presented along with a range of problems such as the land loss of 1.1 m<sup>2</sup>/s,

problems for the transportation and energy supply sector, as well as an overburdening of the education and health systems (Wintzer, 2019) (D1; D2; D3; DI 6).

#### **5.4 ‘Against Mass Immigration’ in Media Discourse**

Moving forward, the following section will provide empirical analysis of a selection of newspaper articles which covered the vote ‘against mass immigration’. The articles are organized by discourse, and then by source of publication. The newspapers were selected for their levels of readership, their similar political alignment, and their language of publication. According to an analysis done by Roger Blum at the Center for Media Studies at the University of Bern, *the Basler Zeitung*, *Le Matin* and *Le Temps* can be described as Neutral newspaper sources in Switzerland, while the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* is categorized as Liberal-right (n.d.).

Two popular French-language newspapers and two popular German-language newspapers were selected: *Le Matin* (French), *Le Temps* (French), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (German), *Basler Zeitung* (German). For the analysis of German-language media sources, data was pulled from the search engines *Factiva* and *Nexus Uni* using the search term ‘against mass immigration’ [*gegen Masseneinwanderung*]. The search was narrowed by selecting the sources of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) and the *Basler Zeitung*, and by choosing the date range between 1 January 2013 and 1 January 2015. This search resulted in a corpus of 403 newspaper articles. Articles were selected for this analysis due to the presence of one or more of the discourse topics of legitimation identified in Chapter 4. Translations were generated for the extracts by using the in search-engine translation. The articles are introduced by discourse, and a brief, one line description of the article is presented to give context for the extracts selected.

##### *5.4.1 The Neue Zürcher Zeitung*

In the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, six articles in particular were selected for having evident examples of the discourse topics. The first article is titled, “Blocker’s renewed triumph; Yes to the popular initiative ‘against mass immigration’ has gradually announced itself. The new reality is full of question marks”<sup>24</sup>. The author, René Zeller, writes about the slow rise in anti-immigration sentiment in their article and argues that the vote was not one of economics, but one which was very ideologically and emotionally driven:

Large sections of the population are affected by ‘**density stress**’. Immigration stirs up fears that go far beyond worries about one’s own job...Polls are reliable seismographs. A look at federal votes in recent years shows that **dissatisfaction** has been creeping in.<sup>25</sup> [DI 1]

Alternatively, in a separate article by Christophe Wehrli, the polarizing result of vote is highlighted, but the author claims that it is not as simple as ‘density stress’. While reflecting on the outcome of the vote, the author also notes that the implementation of the initiative will likely be fraught with conflict. Titled, “Business arguments do not prevail; First referendum against the core of migration policy – mass immigration initiative polarizes in several respects.”, the author writes: “The difference between town and country is obvious at first glance. The pro-migration vote of the major centers (67 percent in Zurich) contradicts the talk of “**density stress**” [DI 1].

The historical precedence of the anti-immigration discourse in Switzerland is also noted,

On the other hand, although it had already given “signs” of displeasure with the acceptance of the minaret and deportation initiatives, it has always shown itself to be aware of economic interests since the “Schwarzenbach” vote of 1970 when it came to the core of migration policy [DI 6].

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<sup>24</sup> Translation is offered by Nexis Uni. In German: “Blochers erneuter Triumph; Das Ja zur Volksinitiative «gegen Masseneinwanderung» hat sich schleichend angekündigt. Die neue Realität ist voller Fragezeichen” (Zeller, 10 February 2014)

<sup>25</sup> Translation is by Nexis Uni. In German: “Breite Bevölkerungskreise sind vom «Dichtestress» befallen. Die Zuwanderung schürt Ängste, die weit über die Sorge um den eigenen Arbeitsplatz hinausgehen.” (Zeller, 2014)

In “Letters to NZZ” (23 February 2014), several Swiss citizens contribute their opinion to the *NZZ*. They explain their view on the density stress and ‘boat is full’ discourse as used by the SVP in Switzerland. There is also an example of a ‘liquid metaphor’ used to refer to a wave of immigrants:

There is a fundamental question about the free movement of people: “**The Swiss boat is full: yes or no?**” The sovereign has decided: ‘Yes’. An example of ‘yes’: Our village, Bazenheid (SG), is being **overwhelmed** by a **wave** of immigrants. Immigrants from EU countries are not the most pressing problem, but immigrants from **third countries**, especially from the Balkans and Turkey. They are attracted by local companies. There are hardly any controls. Large ghettos arose in the village. All Swiss have moved out of our quarters. [DI 1; DI 3]

In an article titled “Imagine it's Röstigraben, and nobody's looking; French-speaking Switzerland still votes differently when it comes to Europe and immigration, but it's talked about less”, author Christophe Büchi (26 February 2014) highlights the evident ‘Röstigraben’ that emerged in the vote ‘against mass immigration’:

Although in this vote the contrast between **urban** Switzerland and the **suburban and rural** communities was obviously in the foreground, the language-regional differences also caught the eye... The fact that regional language influences played a role was also evident in the bilingual cantons of Valais and Fribourg, where the French-speaking majority said “No” and the Swiss-German minority said “Yes”. [DI 7; DI 8].

Other authors chose to focus on the impact that the outcome of the vote would have on Switzerland and EU relations. Simon Gemperli (9 February 2014), for example, titles his article: “Switzerland as a Petitioner - The SVP initiative gives Switzerland back a piece of **sovereignty** in terms of migration policy. In terms of European policy, it has the opposite effect: Berne is more **dependent on Brussels** than ever before”. He continues to argue that the vote has placed Bern in an unfavourable position to negotiate with the EU. “Sunday's election fundamentally **changed the relationship** between Switzerland and the 28 EU countries: Bern is in the position of petitioner if it wants to keep the bilateral agreement.” [DI 9].

The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* also published articles which gave a voice to those advocating for a ‘no’ vote. One article highlights a newly released study about the positive economic impacts of the free movement of people with the EU. The article, written by Walter Bieri, is titled, “Study praises free movement of people: The employers' association is opposed to the mass immigration initiative of the SVP. To this end, they commissioned a study on the free movement of persons. According to the researchers, immigration has other causes” (6 December 2013). Key extracts include:

The labor market situation of resident workers has so far **hardly been negatively affected** by immigration. ‘Neither wages nor employment have suffered significantly as a result.’...’The Swiss economy benefited from the agreement. But the state is also currently benefiting from immigration’, said FAI director Sheldon. ‘Against this background, termination of the agreement appears **economically unattractive.**’ [DI 2; DI 6; DI 9]

#### 5.4.2 *The Basler Zeitung*

Three articles were selected for this analysis from the newspaper, the *Basler Zeitung*, from both sides of the debate. In “Objection; Values and Wealth”, Ranjit B. Mazumder (23 January 2014) focuses on the negative impacts of mass immigration from the EU on the economy and on the job market in Switzerland. Several discourses identified in the SVP campaign can be observed:

With this uncontrolled mass immigration, Switzerland also runs the risk of losing fundamental **Swiss values**, which have been built up by generations of the local population with a lot of commitment and sacrifice. It is precisely these values that make up the strength of **the resource-poor country** of Switzerland! Characteristics such as commitment, quality awareness, innovation, personal responsibility (not wanting everything from the state), a sense of duty, good education and further training are just a few characteristics that are rarely found in sufficient numbers among immigrants.” [DI 1; DI 2; DI 3; DI 5]

Interestingly, the author describes Switzerland as ‘resource-poor’ just as those who were anti-immigration in Switzerland’s early history did. The author continues to speak about the ‘job shortages’ in the country:

In Switzerland there is a huge untapped potential of **qualified and experienced employees**. Thinking of the many over 50s who have lost their jobs, let's also think of those willing to work past retirement age but not getting hired! Let's not forget the many women who would like to work full-time or part-time” [DI 2; DI 6]

In another series of letters to the *Basler Zeitung*, some highlight job shortages, unemployment, and anti-Europeanization as reasons to vote ‘yes’ for the popular initiative ‘against mass immigration’. In “Letters; SP should take citizens' fears seriously” (13 January 2014) One person writes:

Traffic jams, for example, **cost our economy** around CHF 2,000 million a year. Rising rents and the often-forgotten increase in government spending are putting a **strain on people's wallets**. This economic dark side of the free movement of people leads to the conclusion that Switzerland must steer immigration back to a healthy level. [DI 1; DI 2; DI 6]

In an article titled “WWZ Corner; Put to the test: The theses of the mass immigration initiative”, a Professor of Labour and Industrial Economics at the Faculty of Economics (WWZ) at the University of Basel refutes many of these principal arguments of the SVP, ultimately arguing to vote ‘no’ for the initiative as the state benefits from immigration. The author George Sheldon (4 February 2014) writes about the observed fears and discourses surrounding the vote:

Many fears and worries are currently associated with the agreement on the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU. Some believe that the agreement led to mass immigration, as the title of the initiative against the free movement of people suggests. Others point to the high level of **unemployment** among foreigners – they believe that the agreement on the free movement of people has put undue strain on the state treasury. Others fear **losing their jobs** as a result of immigration or having to accept cuts in income due to increased competition.[DI 1; DI 2; DI 6]

The Professor refutes these, however, and continues by highlighting the economic benefit that the free movement of people has brought to Switzerland:

As a result of the higher level of education among new immigrants, the **unemployment** rate among foreigners has been falling steadily since the mid-1990s. The Swiss economy has benefited greatly from recent immigration from the EU area. About a third of the **economic growth** in this country is due to this immigration. The pace of economic growth, labor productivity and per capita gross domestic product have also increased due to immigration from the EU area. [DI 2; DI 6]

#### 5.4.3 *Le Matin*

For the analysis of French-language media sources, data was pulled from the search engines *Factiva* as well as *Nexus Uni* using the search term ‘against mass immigration’ [*contre l’immigration en masse*]. The search was once again narrowed by specifying the sources of *Le Temps* and *Le Matin*, and by selecting the date range between 1 January 2013 and 1 January 2015. This search resulted in a corpus of 693 newspaper articles. Translations were provided for these articles once again by using the in-search engine translator, and articles were selected for this analysis due to the presence of one or more of the discourse topics as previously identified. Two articles from *Le Matin* will be highlighted.

In “The Six Reasons for Anger”, authors Cléa Favre and Éric Felley (15 February 2014) report on the opinions of those who voted ‘yes’ to the initiative. Abuse of social services, ‘wage dumping’, and being anti-EU were some of the reasons highlighted by the quotes taken from those who wrote in to the newspaper. One writer cites the ‘boat is full’, and the job shortage discourse as one of the reasons they have voted yes to the initiative:

Which Swiss can accept this salary? The 10,000 cross-border workers who enter a small canton like Neuchâtel cause a drop in wages when they work! At La Chaux de Fonds, you are offered 3,300 francs for work in watchmaking manufacturing. So what Swiss can accept this salary? **The cup is full!** That's why we had to put a brake on the expansion of more than 10% per year of cross-border workers." (Cédric Weber, 46, store manager, Bevaix, NE ) [DI 1; DI 2; DI 6]

Another person writes in to *Le Matin* expressing their frustration with the social services that are offered to foreign nationals in the country. They also write about the perceived threat that newcomers pose to their cultural identity. They write:

Fed up with those who live on the backs of society! Tired of **paying for people** who arrive in Switzerland believing that it is El Dorado. Who are embedded and live on the backs of society! On the other hand, I do not reproach anything to the foreigner who is at **home to work** honestly and, above all, who does not want to impose his culture on us, but, on the contrary, who tries to integrate.” [DI 6]

Finally, in this extract the discourse on anti-Europeanization can be identified, as the person states that this was a factor which led them to vote ‘yes’ in the end:

Personally, I was very divided on whether to vote. But I agree on one thing anyway: I am for direct democracy and against **the European dictatorship** on internal Swiss affairs. No to dictatorship in all its forms! It won't work that way. [DI 9]

In the final article from *Le Matin*, Arthur Rutishauser and Pascal Tischhauser (28 December 2014) speak with the president of the Social Democratic Party, Simonetta Sommaruga. She reflects on the future of Switzerland after the vote ‘against mass immigration’, and speaks to the division which emerged on opinion across the country. The article is titled, “Reforms are not achieved through the effects of announcements”. Sommaruga is quoted, “For me, our country is doing very well. I see tensions between **traditional rural** Switzerland and **urban** Switzerland. But the country is not rural or urban, it is both at the same time, and that is what makes us strong.” [DI 8]. Here, the discourse of the city-country divide is evident in an example of the political elite in Switzerland. Regarding the result of the vote, she also acknowledges the economic concerns which were prevalent during the debate: “No matter how big the reduction, what we are refusing is **unemployment** and **recession**. We do not want a return to the 1990s, because the fact that immigration was very low then is due to the economic

problems which led to unemployment of 5%.” [DI 6]. Finally, she reflects on how Switzerland can move on from its ‘traditional’ past to accept a more globalized future:

In 2015, there will still be controversies over how to envisage the future of our country. Some are nostalgic for a traditional, rural Switzerland. Others want an open, connected future. But we don't have to choose between one or the other. Switzerland is both at the same time. I wish that we have the strength to find the necessary compromises. [DI 8]

#### 5.4.4 *Le Temps*

*Le Temps* is a popular Swiss daily newspaper published in the French-speaking city of Geneva. The articles under investigation indeed highlight the division between French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland. Author Yves Petignant (10 February 2014), for example, titles his article about the outcome of the vote, “A win which slaps the other Switzerland”<sup>26</sup> [DI 7]. This opinion piece focuses on the fact that Switzerland’s divided opinion towards mass immigration mirrored the opinion of French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland toward the vote to join the EEA, “Same opposition between **towns** and **countryside**, same gap in sensitivity, although lessened, between French-speaking Switzerland and German-speaking Switzerland” [DI 7; DI 8]. He also notes the flaw in the argument that immigration leads to economic issues in the country, and writes “Clearly, the Federal Council has discovered during this campaign that Swiss economic growth is not the ultimate **value** of the Swiss, but can be experienced as a difficult challenge for some.” [DI 6]. Finally, Petignant notes the recurrent discourse of density stress in the debates, “In recent weeks, anxiety about a so-called “**density stress**”, in the face of foreign competition on the labor market or the saturation of infrastructure, has dominated the debates.” [DI 1]

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<sup>26</sup> In French: “Une Victoire qui gifle l’autre Suisse.”

In a separate article titled “Blocher: ‘The Romands have always had a weaker national consciousness’”, Céline Zund (12 February 2014) reflects on a separate interview with SVP’s Christophe Blocher.

The **French Swiss** always had a **weaker national conscience**. He continues, “It was always this way in the history of Switzerland. There are some who want to adapt and others who will fight for independence.”<sup>27</sup> [DI 7]...According to him, if the results vary from one canton to another, or between the **city and the countryside**, it is because the population is not united. “It has always been so in the history of Switzerland.”<sup>28</sup> [DI 7; DI 8]

This extract shows how the discourse of a divided Switzerland manifests in the discourse of the political elite. It could even be seen as a top-down process wherein the SVP pushes this idea of a ‘divided Switzerland’ to benefit from the polarization and politicization in the debate.<sup>29</sup>

In the final article of this analysis, Romaric Godin (10 February 2014) reflects on the divided outcome of the vote in the work titled “The vote on immigration shows that there are two Switzerland’s” [DI 7; DI 8; DI 9] This French author seems to try to distance himself from his Swiss counterparts who voted ‘for’ the initiative:

Europe has not finished wondering about the Swiss sphynx. It is true that it is difficult to grasp what this small Alpine country wants, which for fifteen years has been both one of **the most open** and prosperous economies in Europe while giving pride of **place to xenophobic parties**. [DI 9]

The article concludes with the exact puzzle which has also been the driving force behind this analysis, the so called Swiss ‘paradox’ where the apparatus of direct democracy has been used by some actors to subvert democratic principles.<sup>30</sup> Moving forward, Chapter 6 will discuss these

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<sup>27</sup> “Il en a toujours été ainsi dans l’histoire de la Suisse. Il y a ceux qui veulent s’adapter et les autres, qui se battent pour l’indépendance.”

<sup>28</sup> “Les Romands ont toujours eu une conscience nationale plus faible” (Zund, 2014)

<sup>29</sup> This will be developed further in the Chapter 6.

<sup>30</sup> This idea of the ‘Swiss paradox’ is developed by Gold (2019) in their work titled “The Swiss Paradox”. They argue that the federal structure of direct democracy protects the egalitarian representation of local political interests, but at the same time, can become an apparatus with the potential to subvert democratic practices (p.22).

empirical findings within the theoretical framework of governmentality and will draw conclusions for future studies in migration scholarship in Switzerland.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Having established the discourse on immigration and integration in the informal periphery in Switzerland, this section seeks to show how these discourses entered the formal core through the vote ‘against mass immigration’. It will show how populist parties like the SVP have the power to shape formal, state discourses, and even the policy which governs the lives of immigrants. In this regard, and in alignment with Foucault, these discourses have influenced the ‘construction of knowledge’ in formal discourse on immigration and integration in Switzerland. This concluding chapter will begin by situating the discourse on immigration in the theoretical foundation of immigration governmentality in Switzerland. It will move forward to discuss the results of the vote ‘against mass immigration’, the discourse surrounding the results, and how the success of the initiative impacted government documents and legislation. It concludes by presenting policy recommendations and showing how this analysis of the SVP can serve as a caution for other liberal democracies that experience anti-immigration discourses in the formal core.

### **6.2 Discourses of anti-immigrant sentiment: From theory to practice**

This study has sought to situate the discourses in the vote ‘against mass immigration’ within the Foucauldian notions of governmentality, power, and the production of knowledge. This section will now discuss the findings of the empirical analysis within this theoretical foundation, drawing conclusions for future studies on immigration governmentality. It examines how the ideas of ‘mass immigration’ and ‘over-foreignization’ are (re)produced in the discourses of the SVP and popular media. It also seeks to understand the ways in which mobility has been managed and conducted in Switzerland. Finally, it relates the power of the SVP and its discourse

to the subjugation of foreign nationals in Switzerland and highlights its role in contributing to the polarization of anti-immigration sentiment in the country.

As explained in the theoretical foundation as outlined in Chapter 2, Foucauldian ‘governmentality’ pays attention to the techniques and knowledge that underpin attempts to shape the conduct of selves and others in diverse settings (Walters, 2012, 30). Applied to the field of migration, governmentality helps to understand the role that ‘truth’ and the production of knowledge play in the shaping of SVP discourses, and how these are recontextualized in mass media. It also provides a lens through which this study can analyse the ‘biopolitics of otherness’ as Didier Fassin has explained, which includes the politics of borders and boundaries, temporality and spatiality, states and bureaucracies, detention and deportation, and asylum and humanitarianism (Fassin, 2011, p. 214). Moving forward, major conclusions can be drawn from the lens of immigration governmentality in Switzerland.

### *6.2.1 Immigration Governmentality in Switzerland*

The first major conclusion of this analysis regards the *construction of knowledge* on migration which underlies the discourses under analysis in Switzerland. What the empirical section has shown is that these are informed by a ‘formal’ core and ‘informal’ periphery. The ‘formal’ core includes governmental documents and legislation, state statistic departments. The ‘informal’ periphery constitutes power relations in the journalistic field, opinion pieces in popular media, the SVP, academics, independent studies by research centers and employer associations.<sup>31</sup> These are intrinsically linked to forms of expertise in the country. The dominant

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<sup>31</sup> The concept of a ‘formal core’ and ‘informal periphery’ in Foucauldian discourse analysis was developed by Messerschmidt (2014) in his work on “Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of German Demographic Change at the Beginning of the 21st Century”. These conclusions have been built upon his analysis and his presentation of his major hypotheses in the case of population growth in Germany.

forms of veridiction in Switzerland on migration include the ‘experts’ who take reference from state data and those in political power, such as the SVP.

In Chapter 4, this study presented a section on the labour market concerns in Switzerland and argued that the country benefits greatly from international migration and international student retention. This argument was based on findings which form the ‘*formal core*’ in the construction of knowledge on migration in Switzerland: i.e The National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) for migration and mobility studies, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, and peer reviewed scholars such as Beerli et al (2018), and Lombard, A., & Zufferey, J. (2019). This ‘formal core’ in the construction of knowledge is also recontextualized in mass media. In the empirical chapter, one article is an example of how a study on the benefits on the free movement of people is discussed in the lead up to the vote ‘against mass immigration’. The author in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* interviews the director of the employer’s association to highlight the findings, which show that the termination of the free movement of people agreement is economically unattractive for Switzerland.

Knowledge is also constructed by the ‘informal periphery’ in the context of the vote ‘against mass immigration’. The greatest vehicles for this are the campaign posters of the SVP, the ‘letters’ of readers published in mass media, and the opinion pieces published by journalists. Each source wields power over their own unique jurisdiction. The campaign posters of the SVP construct knowledge and contribute to a discourse of a ‘crowded Switzerland’ therefore subjugating foreign nationals. In the ‘letters’ from the readers, such as “The six reasons for anger” in *Le Matin*, knowledge is constructed when the newspaper gives space for the following extract: “The 10,000 cross-border workers who enter a small canton like Neuchâtel cause a drop in wages when they work”. Opinion pieces by journalists also propagate another kind of

construction of knowledge and veridiction. As Mazumder (2014) writes in *Objection; Values and Wealth*: “With this uncontrolled mass immigration, Switzerland also runs the risk of losing fundamental Swiss values, which have been built up by generations of the local population with a lot of commitment and sacrifice. It is precisely these values that make up the strength of the resource-poor country of Switzerland”. It is due to the power that is held by the ‘informal periphery’ that they are able to access technologies to construct knowledge on migration, and create ‘truth’ about migration to Switzerland. These technologies enable some agents to be involved in the construction of knowledge on migration, while subjugating and marginalizing others. Hence why the Swiss People’s party has been capable of reproducing discourses of identity through strategies of ‘us’ and them’. Alternatively, immigrants’ have not been central agents in producing a ‘truth’ about ‘mass immigration’ in the country. They do not have the same access to the technologies in the construction of knowledge on migration as others, such as the SVP.

The campaign posters are a prime example of this: the politicization of their anti-immigration discourse (i.e. ‘boat is full’) created a ‘truth’ that was recontextualized in mass media about the link between mass immigration and unemployment, crime, and even housing shortages. When compared to the discourses of the ‘formal core’, this analysis demonstrates how dominant and powerful these discourses truly were in the debate. Although the formal core presents the findings which contradict the arguments of the SVP, these discourses were given a space to be widely disseminated in the media. To members of the formal core, for example, density stress is not a prevailing theme. Instead, they recognize the prosperity that Switzerland experiences through movements of inward migration. The power relations found within governmentality is a constant ‘contextual element’ of analysis in Switzerland’s historical

transformations of power. This also has implications for the relationships of communication that shape the discourses on immigration in public realm and in the media. Even when seemingly ‘powerful’ actors of the ‘formal core’ made claims to the contrary, SVP was successful in generating an anti-immigration discourse which traversed all sectors of the general population.

### 6.2.2 *The popular initiative as an apparatus of immigration governmentality*

To some, the results of the vote ‘against mass immigration’ raised questions about the state of direct democracy in Switzerland. As expressed by Laufer following the vote ‘against mass immigration’, “Direct democracy has been instituted to ensure greater cohesion and security of rights in a country rather recently unified and with deep divisions. Today, the use we make of it has transformed it into an agent of institutional instability [...]. But institutional stability is our first comparative advantage from an economic point of view. Let us give our society the stability it needs to face the future: reform our direct democracy.” (Laufer, 2014). In Chapter 4, this study argued that the apparatus of the popular initiative was used on many occasions by the SVP to push forward their anti-Europeanization and anti-immigration agenda, and has therefore been a key instrument in their success since the 1990s. They have routinely generated popular support beyond their voting demographic for many items on their populist agenda. From the Minaret Ban to the Deportation Initiative, to the vote ‘against mass immigration’, the party has generated fear and created images of an ‘outside threat’ to refer to migration into the country. Some authors, (Mahnig & Piguet, 2003) have postulated that the success of the xenophobic SVP is tied largely to Switzerland's system of direct democracy. In alignment with the thinking of Foucault, the apparatus of direct-democracy could therefore be seen as a form of immigration governmentality, wherein the SVP has been able to justify their

xenophobic policy objectives at the federal level. In this regard, it can also be seen as a technology of dominance, for the ways in which it leads and subjugates others.

### 6.3 Results and discourse of the vote ‘against mass immigration’

The polarization in preferences towards immigration is not a new field of study in the field of migration studies. In the discourses which followed the vote ‘against mass immigration’, many sought to understand the puzzle of the divided vote [DI 7; DI 8; DI 9]. In the discourses which have been identified in the media coverage of the vote ‘against mass immigration’, the most frequently cited reasonings for this outcome were ‘Röstigraben’, the city-village divide, and the ‘winners and losers’ of globalization [See Table 3]. An additional section is included to discuss the unique case of Ticino.

**Table 3**

“Résultats par région linguistique et par type d’habitat” [in English: Results by linguistic region and by type of housing]

*Initiative «Contre l’immigration de masse»*

	Suisse alémanique [German-speaking Switzerland]	Suisse romande [French-speaking Switzerland]	Suisse italienne [Italian-speaking Switzerland]	<b>Suisse [Switzerland]</b>
<b>Communes urbaines [Kind of region]</b>				
Centres [Centers]	41.0	37.7	66.3	<b>41.5</b>
Communes d’agglomération [Towns/ villages]	52.9	40.6	68.5	<b>51.2</b>
Villes isolées [Isolated towns]	53.9	42.2		<b>51.3</b>
Communes rurales [Rural communes]	60.7	47.0	69.6	<b>57.6</b>
<b>Suisse [Switzerland as a whole]</b>	<b>52.0</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>50.3</b>

*Note.* Adapted from: <https://www.bk.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/va/20140209/det580.html>. Copyright 2020 Federal Statistical Office.

### 6.3.1 *Röstigraben*

The most frequently cited word for the divide between French-speaking and German-speaking part of Switzerland is the ‘Röstigraben’ or as translated into English, “Rösti-trench”.<sup>32</sup> Prior to the vote against mass immigration, this term was most famously used to refer to the 1992 vote on EEA membership where the results drew a line between the German-speaking and French-speaking cantons (Figure 9). Similar to the vote ‘against mass immigration’, the initiative was rejected with 50.3 percent of the population voting against membership to the EEA. When examining the maps of the vote, one can observe a clear line between French-speaking and German-speaking cantons (Figure 10). As best explained by Zeller,

“The story repeats itself. When the Swiss people rejected the EEA treaty on December 6, 1992, the defeated side fell into a state of shock. The Minister of Economic Affairs Delamuraz spoke of a ‘dimanche noir’. Now the sovereign has raised a comparable exclamation point. Irrespective of the photo finish, the Yes to the popular initiative ‘against mass immigration’ shakes the divided Switzerland. Not everything will be different. But much will. (Zeller, 2014)”

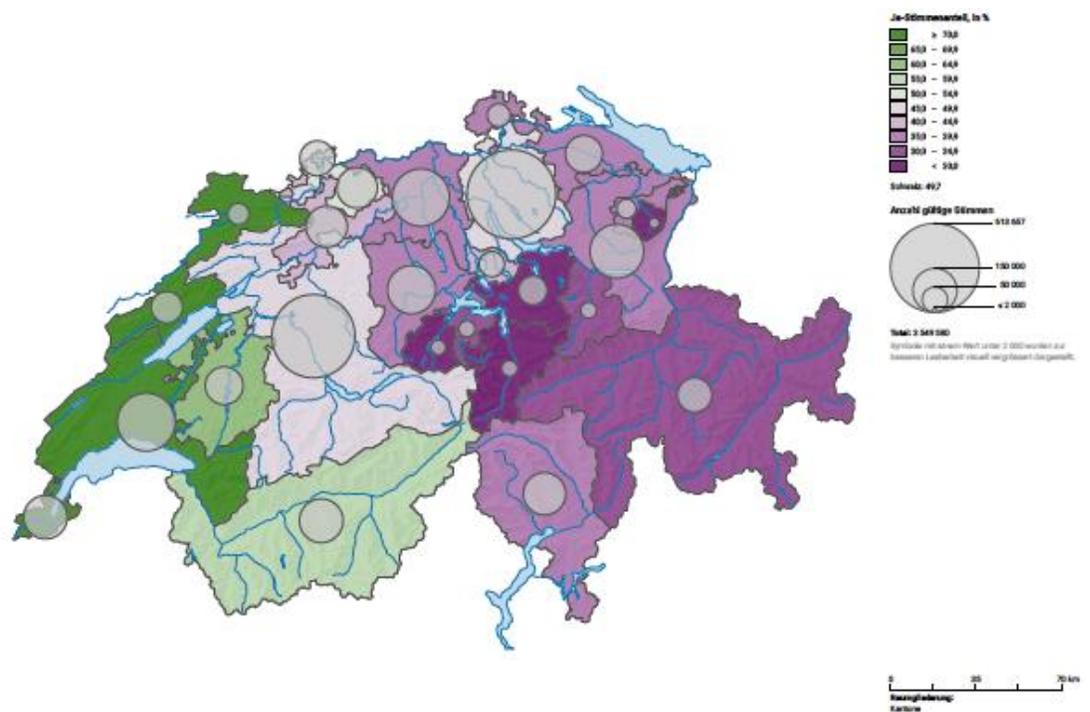
The canton of Vaud, for example, voted to reject the initiative with a vast majority (61.1%) (Figure 10). In contrast, French-speaking cantons with a German-speaking majority (Fribourg and Valais) were not as in agreement. Only three German-speaking cantons voted to reject the vote against mass immigration, Basel-Stadt, Zurich and Zug (FSO 2020).

### **Figure 9**

Voting Results on the Federal decree on the European Economic Area (EEA), vote of December 6th, 1992 – Interactive Map

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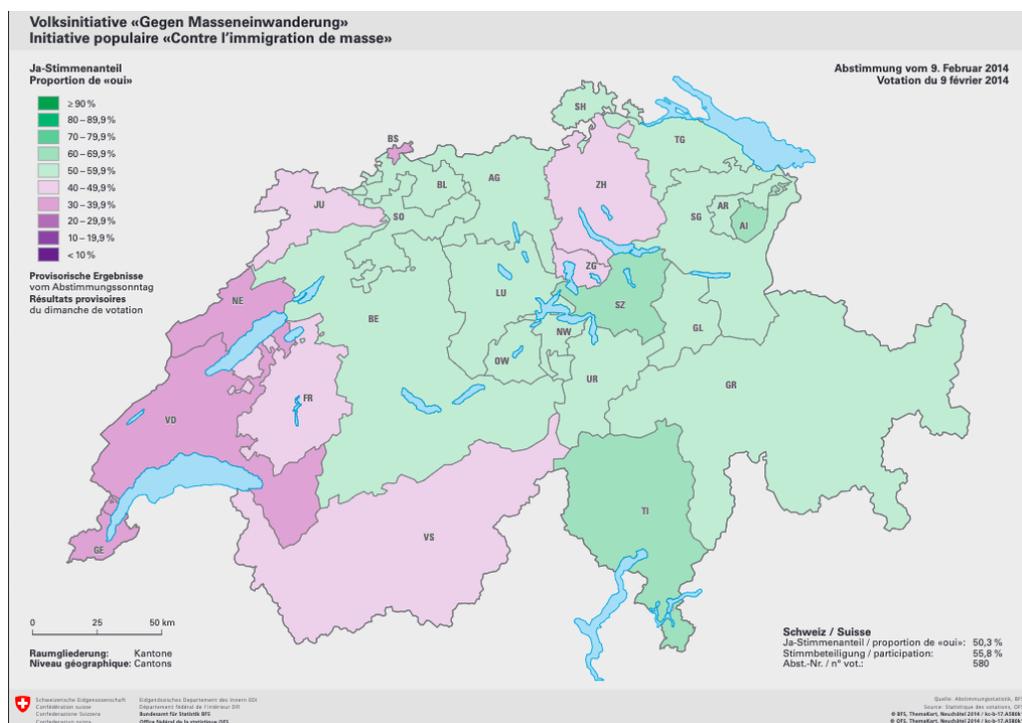
<sup>32</sup> Rösti refers to the kind of Swiss dish found mostly in German-speaking Switzerland made of grated potatoes.



*Note.* Image of interactive map produce by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office – Voting and election statistics, 2020. [Green: ‘Yes’ vote; Purple: ‘No’ vote] Accessed from: <https://swissvotes.ch/vote/388.0>. Copyright Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2020.

### Figure 10

Map of Results in the 2014 Vote ‘Against Mass Immigration’



*Note.* Federal Statistical Office (2014) [in English “Popular initiative ‘Against Mass Immigration’”] Results by canton. Accessed from: <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/17/03/blank/key/2014/013.html>. Copyright Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2020.

This divisive result was covered by the media in the discussion of the aftermath of the vote ‘against mass immigration’. In one article, Christophe Büchi (2014) notes: “The fact that regional language influences played a role was also evident in the bilingual cantons of Valais and Fribourg, where the French-speaking majority said “No” and the Swiss-German minority said “Yes”. And Romaric Godin highlights this divide in his article titled “The vote on immigration shows that there are two Switzerland’s”. This idea of the Röstigraben also entered the discourse of the SVP. In an interview with Cristopher Blocher, he is quoted: “The French Swiss always had a weaker national conscience.” He continues, “It was always this way in the history of Switzerland.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> In DHA, this constitutes a kind of ‘authorization legitimation’ by reference to the authority of tradition.

### 6.3.2 *The city-village divide*

There was also an evident divide between urban and rural Switzerland with regards to the vote. As explained by Pascal Sciarini, a political scientist at the University of Geneva, “when we look at the results in detail, we see above all a break between traditional and modern Switzerland.” (Sciarini, 2014). This divide that Sciarini observed can be seen in the fact that all major cities in Switzerland (French and German) voted against the initiative: Zurich, Bern, Basel, Geneva, Lausanne and St. Gallen. When these results are compared with the vote of the canton, a clear divide between the city and the countryside can be observed: for example, the city of Bern rejected the initiative by 72.3% while the canton accepted it by 51.1%. The divide between urbanized and rural areas is also observable in the canton of St. Gallen. This striking result supports the theory which predicts that those that have proximity to newcomers are more likely to support the freedom of movement. As explained in this newspaper: “For many supporters of the initiative, it was primarily a vote of identity. The decision was much less linked to what people live directly. Otherwise, how to explain that the cities with the highest concentrations of foreigners voted against the initiative? But no country emphasises the myth of its independence in relation to the rest of the continent, as Switzerland does. (Buttner and Tages-Anzeiger, 2014)”

### 6.3.3 *‘Winners and Losers of Globalization’*

Another divide which can be observed is the divide between the wealthiest and least prosperous regions of the country. As noted by Geneva’s *Le Temps*, it was Switzerland’s “less prosperous that won the yes” (Le Temps, 2014). Some have argued that it was in the cantons where companies were most present in international markets, and where they had benefitted from the opening to European Markets that the Initiative was rejected. For example, on the lake

Geneva, Zurich and Basel or in regions of the country where the watch industry is present. On the other hand, in cantons more dependent on equalization payments (or transfer payments), and the local economy, we can see the population vote in favour of the initiative. Similarly, in the landlocked municipalities of French-speaking Bernese Jura, they also voted in favour of the initiative.

#### *6.3.4 The case of Ticino*

The Italian-speaking canton of Ticino accepted the initiative with 68.2 percent of the population voting 'yes'. "Thirty years ago, Ticino had an alignment very close to French-speaking Switzerland, today there is a right-wing drift and a strong anti-Italian sentiment," says Pascal Sciarini (2014). The author of the article in *La Tribune* attributes this to three reasons. Firstly, the number of cross-border commuters from Italy "increased significantly" after the free movement agreement with the EU (*Le Tribune*, 2014). Secondly, the canton has suffered economically from competition with the German-speaking cantons and has developed a strong feeling of 'abandonment' with Bern (*Le Tribune*, 2014). Finally, the emergence of a new political party in the 1990s, the 'Lega dei Ticinesi' (League of Ticinos), spread feelings of defense against Italy and against the Confederation. And according to *La Tribune* (2014), these themes, "occupied the entire Ticino public space...Italy has benefited a lot from the opening of the borders by sending workers and companies to Switzerland, Ticino much less," he says, adding: "The problem is the scale of these problems." (Pascal Sciarini, quoted in *Le Tribune*, 2014). A kind of 'Italophobic' discourse has become a dominant position in the canton, supporting the 'group-threat' theory, and as the article notes, that "even the greens in the canton called for a 'yes vote' to the initiative" (*Le Tribune*, 2014).

#### **6.4 Policy implications and recommendations**

This section seeks to answer the question: How did the discourses of the SVP and of the popular vote translate to policy in Switzerland? On December 22, 2016, Switzerland and the European Union (EU) agreed on the option of “priority for Swiss nationals”, which does not limit the free movement of EU workers to Switzerland but may require Swiss employers to give priority to candidates based in Switzerland (Wintzer, 2019). Immigration to Switzerland is controlled by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNIA). The act, in force as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007, states that it “... regulates the entry and exit, residence and family reunification of foreign nationals in Switzerland. In addition, it regulates the encouragement of their integration.”(FNIA, 2005, Art 1).

Integration policies are regulated at the cantonal level, and programs to facilitate newcomers’ integration vary greatly across the country. Switzerland’s approach to immigration and integration in the act can be best described as ‘Temporary Integration’ (MIPEX 2022). On the issue of family reunification, as explained by MIPEX, non-EU families face some of the least favourable family reunification procedures in Switzerland, ranking below the average EU/OECD countries, which subsequently encourage the Swiss public to see immigrants as foreigners and not as the equals of native Swiss citizens. Very little is said about the responsibilities of Swiss citizens and the host society on the preservation or maintenance of newcomers’ cultural heritage. The act has been criticized for limiting access for non-EU migrants to the full labour market, as well as its restrictive approaches to family reunification, challenging pathways to permanent residency, below-average naturalization rates, and a lack of protection for migrants against discrimination (MIPEX, 2020). Like immigration policy, integration policies are an important symbolic resource for newcomers “... and send signals that immigrants have a legitimate membership ... with the national community” (Bloemraad, 2013, p. 205).

One of the key pieces of legislation which is a direct result of the vote ‘against mass immigration’ is Article 21 of the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals. In Article 21 of the FNIA, the principle of ‘Precedence’ is outlined: Art. 21 Precedence 1: Foreign nationals may be permitted to work only if it is proven that no suitable domestic employees or citizens of states with which an agreement on the free movement of workers has been concluded can be found for the job. (FNIA, Art 21.1). Switzerland remains today one of the most restrictive countries with regards to naturalization and citizenship: nowhere else in the world must a request for citizenship be approved at three levels: municipal, cantonal, and federal (Steiner & Wicker, 2004).

## **6.5 Final Remarks**

Returning to the main hypotheses of this study, the findings of this empirical analysis support the idea that discourses can be divisive, discourses do affect policy, and that discourses are guided by power. Discourses on immigration and integration are greatly divided across Switzerland, not only along linguistic lines, but also between urban and rural centers. This study has demonstrated that this polarization in anti-immigration sentiment can even be a top-down process. Indeed, in the case of the 2014 vote ‘against mass immigration’, the SVP could be seen to be a driving force of attitudinal change in Switzerland by emphasizing the enduring *Röstigraben* in popular discourse. This study has also shown how discourses can affect policy: the anti-immigration discourse as instrumentalized by the SVP, generated fear and distrust of mobility with the European Union. This translated into the principle of ‘Precedence’ in the ‘Foreign Nationals and Integration Act’ (FNIA 2005). Finally, discourses are guided by power. In line with the Foucauldian understanding of power, those that have control of certain technologies in the governance of immigration also construct knowledge and veridiction about

migration to Switzerland. These discourses then subjugate foreign nationals and marginalize them from the channels of discourse.

### *6.5.1 Switzerland in the global perspective*

Although Switzerland provides a unique opportunity to study populist movements against mass immigration due to its direct democratic system, the findings of this study are particularly useful for the future study of anti-immigration discourse in multilingual democracies for several reasons. Today, Switzerland's selective governance of migration continues to influence existent patterns of inclusion and exclusion, while the institution of direct democracy allows certain kinds of discourse on migration to enter national debate. For other countries which experience populist anti-immigration movements, Switzerland can serve as an example of how powerful actors can shape harmful discourses on migration and even construct knowledge. Right-wing populism has become increasingly influential in liberal democracies across Western and Central Europe.<sup>34</sup> This populism has also been marked by a strong anti-immigration rhetoric which uses pre-existing fear of over-foreignization to spread xenophobic discourse. The presence and popularity of these parties is dangerous for liberal democracy as they extend social legitimacy to anti-immigrant sentiments including racism. As best explained by Amantini (2021):

There is a mutually reinforcing link between the anti-immigrant sentiments expressed by populist right-wing parties and the anti-immigrant sentiments that spread among citizens. To gain electoral success, populist right-wing parties exploit hostile opinions and emotive reactions about immigrants, which nonetheless do not emerge in isolation: they are shaped, amplified and rationalized by politicians and echoed and strengthened by the media. (p. 107).

The diffusion of populist anti-immigrant sentiments like those identified in the discourse surrounding the vote 'against mass immigration' are therefore not unique to Switzerland. These

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<sup>34</sup> To cite a few examples, The National Front (France), Dutch Party for Freedom (The Netherlands), Freedom Party (Austria), The League Party (Italy), Fidesz (Hungary).

sentiments are indeed a rising concern to liberal democracies around the world, and offer an essential area of future research in the field of migration scholarship.<sup>35</sup>

### *6.5.2 Areas of future research*

As demonstrated by this analysis, migration studies can benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach and from uncoupling migration from the nation-state framework. The theoretical foundation of ‘governmentality’ allowed this study to present the vote ‘against mass immigration’ within the foregrounded power relations and technologies of government in Switzerland. Future studies in migration research could be enriched by this theoretical approach and the newly emerging subfield of ‘immigration governmentality’. Patterns of mobility no longer benefit solely from classical migration research which operates from the perspective of the host societies and their capabilities to assimilate migrants. Research must move beyond the study of legal boundaries and borders, to examine the networks of power relations and actors which play an influential role in shaping migration policy in present-day democracies.

In the field of discourse analysis, future areas of research could focus on problematizing populist anti-immigration sentiment by demonstrating how it works to restrict the rights and integration possibilities for foreign nationals to Switzerland. Furthermore, it could examine how pro-migrant voices can help to diffuse populist xenophobic sentiment through positive campaigning. Local government policies and NGO initiatives also have the power to shift this hostility towards immigrants. As Hidalgo (2019) argues, ‘it’s possible to change minds on

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<sup>35</sup> However, external validity beyond Switzerland may be difficult for several reasons. Switzerland is unique due to its direct-democracy and fierce immigration debates during the last half-century. It is also unique due to its exceptionally large immigrant population and its integration of four different language traditions in one multi-lingual federation.

immigration' (p. 188). Analyses could also move beyond traditional media sources to look into how these xenophobic discourses emerge in social media and online forums.

Finally, areas of future research could focus on the 'cleavages' in modern day democracies regarding globalization and preferences towards immigration. The urban-rural divide is not a unique phenomenon to Switzerland. Indeed, internal divisions and problems of identity are increasingly present, or at least politicized, in modern day democracies. Future studies could work to draw correlation between regions which converse negatively about immigration and integration and regions that have insufficient integration strategies. This would complement current analyses of anti-immigrant sentiments in multicultural societies.

The results of this study have implications for the growing body of literature on direct democracy as well. Scholars have generally disagreed thus far about the impact of direct democracy on minority interests (see Hainmueller & Hangartner, 2012; Frey & Goette, 1998; Maskin and Tirole, 2004). The findings of this study align with the work of scholars such as Hainmueller and Hangartner (2013) who show how referenda on naturalization in some municipalities in Switzerland can be a site of discrimination. Their study titled "Who gets a Swiss passport? A natural experiment in immigrant discrimination" finds that the average proportion of "no" votes is about 40% higher for applicants from (the former) Yugoslavia and Turkey compared to observably similar applicants from richer northern and western European countries (p.1). Future studies could work to investigate why out-group minorities suffer when their civil rights are put to a popular vote.

Finally, studying populist discourses are not only relevant for parties like the SVP, but should also be extended to other major radical right parties in Switzerland like the Ticino League (Lega), and the Geneva Citizens Movement (MCG). Migration studies could benefit from

comparative studies in populist discourses and knowledge production. A comparative study in Switzerland could also highlight the consequences of populist parties that form part of governments and influence formal discourse.

### 6.5.3 *Consequences of the ‘vote against mass immigration’*

The striking result of the 2014 vote ‘against mass immigration’ should not be forgotten in the future of migration studies in Switzerland. Discourses of ‘the boat is full’, *Überfremdung*, and images of a weapon bearing migrant should not be ignored, dismissed, or contained. It is these historical discourses pre-existent in popular discourses in Switzerland which were instrumentalized by the SVP, and integral to the success of the vote ‘against mass immigration’. These powerful discourses worked to produce new channels of ‘truth’ and knowledge about migration in the country which were recontextualized in harmful media discourses. Such discourses did not end after the vote, but instead continue to affect the country by constraining the implementation of any liberal admission or citizenship policy in the future. The presence of these illiberal anti-immigration discourses in the Swiss parliament will also have a lingering impact on migration and integration policy in Switzerland if not addressed appropriately by local governments and non-state actors. Campaigns to counter misinformation about migration will be essential to diffusing this anti-immigration sentiment.

There are many more interesting questions which are unanswered by this study. Was it only a vote ‘against mass immigration’, or was it a popular initiative which gave those with general frustrations a chance to gain agency or to use foreign nationals as scapegoats? Was it a vote which won because existent minorities like the Italian-speaking Ticino in Switzerland did not feel like they were being represented in the federal democratic channels in the country, or did this vote have more to do with anti-Europeanization?

While this analysis does not leave room to address these unanswered questions, it has demonstrated how powerful discourses can have illiberal consequences in even the most sophisticated democracies. The SVP has used direct democracy as an apparatus of immigration governmentality to push forward their discourses, therefore using their power to create new channels of knowledge, in the debate surrounding immigration in Switzerland. What is most apparent in this analysis is the absence of migrants' voices in policy and media discourse in the public sphere. There is also little discourse which references the highly skilled international students and what they offer to the country. It is no longer the case that the discourses of the state are the only agents in generating 'truth' and 'knowledge' in society. This case serves as a caution for countries dealing with populist anti-immigration movements and demonstrates how fear can be generated and recontextualized to affect policy. Even in a country which serves as the 'epitome' of democracy, the construction of an anti-immigration 'truth' is capable through new technologies of immigration governmentality that, unless diffused, can undermine its very own liberal principles.

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